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**THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE POLITICS IN THE
CONSTRUCTION OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY: A CASE STUDY ON THE
ZAZAKI JOURNAL "VATE" (1997-2003)**

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The Role of Language and Language Politics in the Construction of Collective Identity: A
Case Study on the Zazaki Journal "Vate" (1997-2003)

Kolektif Kimlik İnşasında Dil ve Dil Politikalarının Rolü: Zazaca Dergi "Vate" Üzerine Bir Vaka
Çalışması (1997-2003)

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CUP	Committee of Union and Progress (İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti)
DDKO	Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları (The Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths)
DEP	Demokrasi Partisi (Democracy Party)
DH	Dil Heyeti (Language Council)
HADEP	Halkın Demokrasi Partisi (People's Democracy Party)
HEP	Halkın Emek Partisi (People's Labor Party)
NÇM	Navenda Çanda Mezopotamya (Mesopotamia Culture Center)
NSC	National Security Council (Milli Güvenlik Konseyi)
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
TIP	Türkiye İşçi Partisi (The Turkish Workers Party)
TKDP	Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi (Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey)
VSG	Vate Study Group (Grûba Xebate ya Vateyî)

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the history of a Zazaki periodical called Vate from its emergence in 1997 to 2003. Since the journal is currently kept published, the study is limited to the first period of Vate which emerged in Stockholm, Sweden. Being the founder of the journal, a brief history of the language group called *Grûba Xebate ya Vateyî* (Vate Study Group; hereafter the VSG) will be detailed as well. The question underlying this study is as follows: In the increasing nationalist fervor of the Kurdish organizations, what role did the Vate journal play in the construction of Kurdish national identity? Of crucial importance to the response to this question is that the assertion of Zazaki as a Kurdish dialect is currently considered the central principle for the editorial staff of the Vate journal. Based on this premise, the major characteristics of the journal will be discussed in order to get a better understanding of Vate's contribution to the promotion of the Kurdish national identity.

As the focus of this thesis is the Vate journal, major characteristics of the journal will be detailed in considering the promotion of Kurdish identity. The period from the emergence of the journal in 1997 to 2003 – when printing and distribution of the periodical were moved to Istanbul, will be analyzed. While the textual analysis of the journal, this first period will be considered with a brief history of language politics in Turkey and the rise of cultural activism. Through the thesis, the crucial role of the Vate journal in Kurdish national identity will be discussed based on not only the text analysis but also on the narratives of some VSG members. The interviews with some founding members of both the Vate journal and the VSG provided a better understanding of Vate's position in the construction of Kurdish national identity.

ÖZET

Bu tez, Zazaca yayınlanan Vate dergisinin yayın dönemi olan 1997-2003 yılları arasını incelemektedir. Dergi yayınlanmaya devam ettiğinden, bu çalışma derginin Stockholm'de yayınlanan ilk dönemi ile sınırlandırılmıştır. Tezde ayrıca, derginin kurucusu olan dil topluluğunun, yani *Grûba Xebate ya Vateyî'nin* (Vate Çalışma Grubu), kısa bir tarihçesi de aktarılacaktır. Bu çalışmanın temel sorusu ise şudur: Kürt gruplarının milliyetçi heveslerinin artmasıyla birlikte, Vate dergisi Kürt ulusal kimlik inşasında nasıl bir rol oynadı? Derginin editör kadrosunun Zazaca'nın Kürtçenin bir lehçesi olduğu yönündeki görüşünün merkezi bir ilke olarak kabul edildiği önermesi önemlidir. Bu önermeye dayanarak, Vate'in Kürt ulusal kimliğinin inşasına katkısının daha iyi anlaşılması için derginin ana özellikleri tez boyunca tartışılacaktır.

Bu çalışmanın odak noktası Vate dergisi olduğundan, derginin temel özellikleri Kürt kimliğinin teşvik edilmesi ana teması göz önünde bulundurularak açıklanacaktır. Derginin 1997'de yayınlanmaya başlamasından, 2003'te basım ve dağıtım merkezinin İstanbul'a taşınmasına kadarki dönemine odaklanılacaktır. Derginin metinsel incelemesi yapılırken, Türkiye'de kimlik politikası ve kültür odaklı aktivizmin yükselişi tartışmalarına odaklanan tarihsel bağlamı da göz önünde bulundurulacaktır. Tez boyunca, Vate dergisinin Kürt ulusal kimliğinin inşasındaki önemli rolü yalnızca metin analizine değil, Vate grubu üyelerinin anlatılarına da yer vererek tartışılacaktır. Vate dergisi ve grubunun bazı kurucu üyeleriyle yapılan mülakatlar, Vate'nin Kürt ulusal kimlik inşasındaki rolünün daha iyi anlaşılmasını sağlamıştır.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines the history of a Zazaki¹ periodical called *Vate* from its emergence in 1997 to 2003. Since the journal is currently kept published, the study is limited to the first period of *Vate* which emerged in Stockholm, Sweden. Being the founder of the journal, a brief history of the language group called *Grûba Xebate ya Vateyî* (Vate Study Group; hereafter the VSG) will be detailed as well. The question underlying this study is as follows: In the increasing nationalist fervor of the Kurdish organizations, what role did the *Vate* journal play in the construction of national identity? Of crucial importance to the response to this question is that the assertion of Zazaki as a Kurdish dialect is currently considered the central principle for the editorial staff of the *Vate* journal. Based on this premise, the major characteristics of the journal will be discussed in order to get a better understanding of *Vate*'s contribution to the promotion of the Kurdish national identity.

Since there is a considerable discourse about the Zazas, the terminology itself has become controversial and must be discussed before proceeding with analysis. First, as there is a long-lasting conflict surrounding the issue of whether Zazaki is a dialect of the Kurdish language or not. As such, the use of both concepts presents a challenge for this study. While one group insists that Zazaki is a separate branch of the Iranian language family, the others refuse this claim. According to this second group, Zazaki is a dialect of the Kurdish language, thus, the term Zazaki-Kurdish should be considered as proper use. The term 'Zaza' correspondingly refers to the language as conceptualized within the separatist approach that, for the sake of this project, needed to be ignored. Based on this dichotomy, I rarely use the term Zaza during this study. Instead, I rather use Zazaki-speaking groups. Based on this conflict, the language-dialect dichotomy appeared as another problematic both in academic and non-academic research.

¹ Since its globally understanding, the term *Zazaki* will be used among the other ascriptions during this study. For the same practical reason, *Bedîrxan Alphabet* will be preferred.

Zazaki is defined as the language of an indigenous Iranian people living mainly in eastern Anatolia; particularly in Dersim, Erzincan, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Bingöl, Muş, and Urfa (Siverek) provinces which officially located in Turkey.² Some research estimated at the number of speakers 4 to 6 million³, besides, approximately 300.000 Zazas live in European countries.⁴ Moreover, according to the Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger carried out by UNESCO in 2009, Zazaki was categorized as endangered language.⁵ After the list of endangered languages, cultural activists raised their voices in order to get public visibility for the vulnerable position of Zazaki. An MA student at Mardin Artuklu University, Mutlu Can, collected almost 1000 signatures for the petition in 2014 that Zazaki should be listed in UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. The signatories also requested that a series of regulation should be considered by state authorities in order to maintain the very existence of Zazaki.⁶

Status of Zazaki aside, there is an ongoing conflict is about whether Zazaki is a dialect of Kurdish. As I have mentioned above, there are basically two groups which respond to this linguistic question. It should be noted that the language-dialect dichotomy has been highly motivated by the political affiliation of each group. In other words, the discussion has precisely relied on identity schism within the Zazaki-speaking populace. The first group claim that the Zazas should be considered as a separate nation consists mainly of the individuals who frankly reject the Kurdish nationalism in favor of Zazaki seperatism. On the other hand, the other group – which is the case study of this thesis – declares the Zazas as a group belonging to Kurdish society at large. Hence, this approach maintains that the

² Garnik S. Asatrian, “Dimli,” in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, VI 4, 2012, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/dimli>.

³ Mesut Keskin, “Zaza Dili,” *Bingöl Üniversitesi Yaşayan Diller Enstitüsü Dergisi* 1, no. 1 (January 2015): 94.

⁴ Asatrian, “Dimli.”

⁵ “Atlas of the World’s Languages in Danger” (UNESCO, 2009),

<http://www.unesco.org/languages-atlas/en/atlasmap/language-id-1985.html#>.

⁶ Nuray Pehlivan, “İlk Zazaca Bibliyografya,” *Gazete Duvar*, February 22, 2018, <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/kitap/2018/02/22/zazalarin-dili-kirmanc-kird-dimili-zazaca/>.

Kurdish nationalist movement must be upheld in order to strengthen national unity in Kurdistan.

As far as we know, the very first Zazaki text is an Alevi manuscript founded in Diyarbakır in 1798. In this newly-found Zazaki manuscript, the Alevis and their religion are briefly described.⁷ Another text of special significance is *Mewlid*, written by *Ehmedê Xasî*. The religious content was common in this very first samples of the written Zazaki. *Xasî*'s text was published in Diyarbakır in 1899 in the name of *Mewlidê Nebî*. Another text, *Biyîşê Pêxemberî*, was written by *Osman Efedîyê Babij* in 1903 and published by Celadet Ali Bedirxan in Damascus in 1933.⁸ These are the written sources which were produced by the native speakers. On the other hand, the particular attention to the Eastern linguistic and culture of orientalist intellectuals can be seen in the history of Zazaki written culture as well. Peter Ivanowîç Lerch – as an orientalist researcher, is another significant writer for Zazaki. In 1858, a series of Zazaki texts were collected by Lerch, and published in St. Petersburg.⁹

Given the limited number of written sources, much discussion on written Zazaki has focused on the alphabet. There are two alphabets that are widely used in Zazaki sources: Ware/Jacobson Alphabet and Bedirxan Alphabet. Ware/Jacobson Alphabet was formed as a result of the studies carried out with linguist C. M. Jacobson led by Ware journal.¹⁰ This alphabet has been used by those who were considered Zazaki as a separate language. On the other hand, the opposite approach has used the Bedirxan Alphabet. Hawar – Latin for Kurdish – is also known as

⁷ Mustafa Dehqan, "A Zazaki Alevi Treatise from Diyarbekir," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 20, no. 3 (2010): 295.

⁸ J. İhsan Espar, "Kırmanccanın (Zazacanın) Standart Bir Yazı Diline Kavuşması İçin Yapılan Çalışmalar: Vate Çalışma Grubu ve Vate Dergisi," *Www.Zazaki.Net*, February 2011, 1, <http://www.zazaki.net/file/vate....pdf>.

⁹ Espar, 1.

¹⁰ Mesut Keskin, "Zazacadaki Alfabe Sorununa Bir Bakış ve Çözüm Önerileri" (I. Uluslararası Zaza Dili Sempozyumu, Bingöl Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011), 6.

Bedirxan Alphabet, presented in 1932 in a Kurdish periodical *Hevî* by Celadet Ali Bedixhan. From that period on, the northern Kurds used this script.¹¹

The current academic and non-academic research on the Zazas are limited. Ercan Çağlayan's recent book aims to contribute to the growing scholarship on Zazas. Çağlayan points out that there has been quite a lot of misinformation on Zazas. He complains about the disconnected context constructed by non-academic actors of the field and lack of historical context. While this work is a notable attempt to present an overview on Zazas from an historical perspective, the analytical discussion appears to be rather limited. In other words, the way the author uses the conceptual framework, which the discussion is built on, seems far from critically engaged.¹²

Thanks to the newly-emerged linguistic departments on the Kurdish language at Mardin Artuklu University,¹³ a few linguistic theses have recently been written in Zazaki for the first time.¹⁴ Under the Living Language Institute, the students have been educated in both the Kurmanji-Kurdish and Zazaki. As Zazaki lectures were designed based on the Vate perspective, Mardin Artuklu has been seen as a symbol of the approach that Zazaki is a Kurdish dialect. Some writers indeed have produced Zazaki books with this very motivation.¹⁵

Apart from being a fever discussion in terms of identity politics, the language-dialect dichotomy has rapidly emerged from the mid-1980s. Even today,

¹¹ "Kurdish (Kurdi / كوردی)," in *Omniglot*, accessed April 9, 2019, <https://www.omniglot.com/writing/kurdish.htm>.

¹² Gül Hür, review of *Zazalar: Tarih, Kültür ve Kimlik*, by Ercan Çağlayan, *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 211–13.

¹³ While I revised this study, the university senate has sent their decision on the close of *Living Languages Institute* to *YÖK* (Council of Higher Education). For more detail, see: "Yaşayan Diller Enstitüsü İçin Kapatma Kararı Alındı," *Gazete Duvar*, August 15, 2019, <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/gundem/2019/08/15/yasayan-diller-enstitusu-icin-kapatma-karari-alindi/>.

¹⁴ Nadire Güntaş Aldatmaz, "Folklorê Kirmancan (Zazayan / Kirdan / Dimilîyan) Ser o Cigêrayîşê" (master's thesis, Mardin Artuklu University, 2013).

¹⁵ For a recent study, see: Mutlu Can, *Bibliyografyaya Kirmanckî (Zazakî) [1963-2017]* (Istanbul: Vate Yayınevi, 2018).

the strict division between two approaches can be observed in every means of media. It seems difficult to show a common institution based on the first claim that the Zazas are a separate nation. In other words, those who maintain the premise that Zazaki is not a Kurdish dialect should be dubbed as ‘a perspective’ rather than been categorized as a homogeneous or institutionalized group. The heterogeneity of this perspective is more obvious than the other group which mostly gathered under the roof of Vate – as will be detailed through this thesis. Even though most of the individuals disseminate the obvious distinction between the Kurdish language and Zazaki in a range of means of media, very few of them share exactly the same understanding of cultural, social, and linguistic aspects of Zazaki-speaking populace. Moreover, there are a few long-lived periodicals which promoted this separatist approach, as well as some important cultural and linguistic journals which support the premise that Zazaki is not a dialect of the Kurdish language: *Munzur* (2000), *Miraz* (2006), *Bezuvar* (2009).¹⁶ One of the hometown solidarity associations (*hemşeri dernekleri* in Turkish) has also paid particular attention to Zazaki as a language, called *Komela Zıwan u Kulturê Zazayan (Zaza-Der*; Association for Zaza Language and Culture). Furthermore, only a few studies have concentrated on this individual effort to maintain Zazaki as a separate language.¹⁷

The second group of the discussion have gathered in a meeting held in Stockholm in 1996, and they announced the emergence of the Vate Study Group (the VSG) as the authority in setting a standard for Zazaki. 15 people attended this meeting and decided to meet up regularly. Not less than twice a year, the VSG members organized regular meetings dubbed as ‘*Kombîyayîşê Kirmanckî*’ (The Meeting for Zazaki) to carry out this mission.¹⁸ After these meetings results were

¹⁶ İsmail Söylemez, “Geçmişten Günümüze Zazaca Dergiler: Kronoloji, Sorunlar ve Çözümler,” 2011, 186–90.

¹⁷ There is a recent MA thesis which investigates linguistic activists for Zazaki. This study focuses on Zazaki activists in Zaza-Der in order to detail the history of Zazaki language right struggle. For more detail, see: Zeynep Yeşim Gökçe, “History of Zazaki Language Rights Struggle in Istanbul: A Case Study on Zaza-Der Association” (master’s thesis, Istanbul Bilgi University, 2018).

¹⁸ Espar, “Kırmanccanın (Zazacanın) Standart Bir Yazı Diline Kavuşması İçin Yapılan Çalışmalar: Vate Çalışma Grubu ve Vate Dergisi,” February 2011, 2.

declared to the Zazaki-speaking populace. The Vate journal, thus, has emerged as a result of these meetings to announce the VSG report. In addition, the VSG aimed towards reaching all Kurdish groups in order to promote the idea that the Zazaki-speaking groups must be seen as Kurd. Even though the VSG strongly defends this premise, identity crisis between the Kurdish groups could not be avoided for a long time.

The majority of northern Kurds consist of Kurmanji-speaking Shafiis. At some points, a variety of Kurdish groups have experienced conflict between each other along the lines of identity. For example after the 1990s, the separation between Kurmanji-speaking north and Sorani-speaking south appeared in Iraqi Kurdistan appeared.¹⁹ Correspondingly, some Zazaki-speakers in Turkey claimed that they no longer want to be mentioned with the Kurds because they were originally a separate nation whose existence was denied by both the Turkish authority and by the Kurdish movement.²⁰ In light of this transformation in the Kurdish community, the VSG retained their loyalty to the Kurdish identity despite these newly-emerged separatist groups.

Devotion to the Kurdish national identity has played a central role in the VSG's mission. The founding members of the VSG – the editors of the Vate journal – were themselves motivated with national loyalty. In my opinion, as an unofficial attempt, the Vate journal is a critical instance considering as a long-lived project. In other words, the adamant assertion that Zazaki was in need of standardization without any official support created a unique case for the construction of Kurdish identity. The personal effort of the VSG members is also another point of critical significance. Indeed, Malmîsanij – as the founder and chief editor of the Vate journal – is the best instance for this claim. Since his migration to Sweden in 1982, Malmîsanij applied for the department of linguistics and successfully received a

¹⁹ Martin van Bruinessen, "Kurdish Nationalism and Competing Ethnic Loyalties," 1994, 1.

²⁰ Bruinessen, 1.

master of arts degree from Goteborg University.²¹ In addition, he highlighted his enthusiasm about the linguistics and correspondingly, regardless of the political atmosphere, how he insisted on study Zazaki.²² Since his research has continued more than 30 years, he describes his personal story as one of ‘persistence’. Similar to the highly motivated attempt which Malmîsanij has, the awareness of the cultural rights was getting increase not only in Turkey but also in world politics as a new phenomenon during the 1990s.²³ The definition of Malmîsanij, ‘persistence’, was a kind of comprehensive term to indicate the individual effort against the assimilatory state policies.

Since the early 1990s, both religious and linguistic groups²⁴ have experienced the identity revival in which periodicals were used specifically in order to advocate for cultural rights. In other words, identity politics has become the newly-emerging phenomenon and has affected the cultural groups while their cultural activism. The ending of the long-lasting Cold War, the beginning of the Iraq-Iran War, and the liberal political discourse as an increasing phenomenon throughout the 1990s changed the political discourse in Turkey as well.²⁵ Under this political transformation, one can easily observe a flourishing of publications based on the identity revival of cultural groups. The means of media played a significant role during this period. *Nûbihar* (1992, Kurdish), *Welat* (1992, Kurdish), *Ogni* (1993, Laz), *Alaşara* (1995, Circassian), *Agos* (1996, Armenian), and *Kafkasya Yazıları* (1997, Circassian) are the periodicals which published in Turkey in order to maintain linguistic and cultural visibility of each cultural group. These periodicals also played a mediator role between the populace and the well-educated

²¹ “Malmîsanij,” August 4, 2009, <http://www.zazaki.net/haber/malmisanij-22.htm>.

²² Mehemed Malmîsanij, interview by Gül Hür, in Diyarbakır, March 2, 2019.

²³ Nazan Üstündağ, “1990’lar Nasıl Tartışılmalı?,” in *1990’larda Kürtler ve Kürdistan*, ed. Bülent Bilmez et al. (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2015), 15–16.

²⁴ During this study, the term ‘cultural group(s)’ will be used in order to describe both religious and linguistic groups.

²⁵ Martin van Bruinessen, “Global Perspektifle 1990’larda Kürtler,” in *1990’larda Kürtler ve Kürdistan*, ed. Bülent Bilmez et al. (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2015), 9.

intellectuals. In this study, the Vate journal will be examined in considering the process of advocacy for linguistic and cultural rights.

During my research, the very first challenge was that I had limited experience in written Zazaki. To read more than 25 issues of a Zazaki journal gained me to a better understanding of Zazaki written culture. On the other hand, when I was moving from one article to another while reading the Vate journal, I have deeply felt the emic and etic discussion. As I have experienced both of them, the strict distinction between emic and etic approaches were overlapped during my research. In social sciences, the emic perspective involves perceiving culture from 'inside' while the etic approach refers to external factors with an outside understanding.²⁶ In my personal experience, reading an article in the northern accent was like being in the safe zone as a person born and raised in a family from the north of the Zazaki-speaking region. On the contrary, the southern accent was relatively worrisome to me. This process was kind of discovering my own journey throughout many years, and consequently, of confronting it. In some articles and poems, however, I've encountered some individuals I had met before. While I was reading them over a journal I have surprised, wondered about, and sometimes laughed at. It was a chance for me to compare both their previous works and personalities, as far as I know, with entire articles through the Vate journal.

The VSG and Vate journal will be examined in considering the historical context. Before that, the theoretical and conceptual framework of the thesis will be detailed. While third chapter will detail the history of the VSG, the textual analysis of the first period (1997-2003) of the Vate journal will be examined in the fourth chapter. The interviews with some of the VSG members²⁷ will also be occupied a critical role within the history of both the group and journal as well as the textual analysis. The first period of the journal has provided me more critical concepts such

²⁶ Michael W. Morris et al., "Views from Inside and Outside: Integrating Emic and Etic Insights about Culture and Justice Judgment," *Academy of Management Review* 24, no. 4 (1999): 781–82.

²⁷ Since a considerable portion of the VSG members lives in the European diaspora, the interviews were limited.

as diaspora, identity politics, language standardization, Kurdish movement, and Kurdish nationalism. Textual analysis will be used for this period of the journal. In addition to this textual analysis, interviews conducted with three actors of the editorial staff (Deniz Gunduz, Mehemed Malmîsanij, and Seyîdxan Kuriş) will help to detail how the periodical have taken position within the construction of the Kurdish identity. Moreover, I had two interviews with Deniz Gunduz in Istanbul and one with Mehemed Malmîsanij in Diyarbakır and Seyîdxan Kuriş via video call. In addition, I interviewed with Sami Tan via video call, who is one of the senior actors in the Kurdish media. I aimed at receiving a broader outlook for the Vate journal. Since the Vate perspective claims that Zazaki is a dialect of the Kurdish language, the perception of Kurdish-Kurmanji media also seems critically significant. Unfortunately, because I have limited time, I was unable to interview more individuals both from the Vate journal and the Kurdish press.

Throughout this study, English translation from the Vate journal will be written in the main body. However, the original language of the citation can be seen in the footnotes. Although there are a considerable number of Zazaki alphabets proposed by different groups, I will use each group's own preference while Zazaki statements will be stated during the thesis. In other words, the written choice of each group will be considered in order to prevent any situations wherein I would personally assume the authority to choose one of the alphabets as the correct one.

CHAPTER I: LANGUAGE, LANGUAGE STANDARDIZATION, AND DIASPORA

During this chapter, I will concentrate on the discussion about the concepts which I endeavor to instrumentalize towards my case study of the Vate Study Group (hereafter, VSG) and their periodical in the Zazaki language. The theoretical framework will also pave a fresh and fertile path along which will follow the focus of this study.

1.1 Language Standardization

There exists a prevalent assumption that orally transmitted languages, those passed down verbally for generations, are likely to lose their inherently performative feature when met with written culture. The critical approach to transition can be clearly seen in the case of in Zazaki from oral to written culture – particularly in relation to the homogenizing character which the attempts have.²⁸ Similar discussions are run almost in every case in terms of uniformity and assimilationist language policies.

Ruth Finnegan narrates how a friend of her disappointedly reacted when she has read the African animal tales from a written source. In her words, since the reality lay in performance, the written texts had failed to capture stories in full.²⁹ In

²⁸ Mesut Keskin is currently doing his PhD research on the Zazaki language. He has a popularity among the Zazas thanks to his research interest. Keskin also supports the premise that Zazaki is a separate language, not a dialect of the Kurdish language. In an interview, he stated that building Zazaki written culture rather seems harder than the ancient languages such as English, French, and Germany. For more detail, see the following link: Mesut Keskin, Dilbilimci Mesut Keskin ile Zazacanın standardizasyonu, “Kırmanc” ve “Kurmanc” tanımlamalarının arasındaki ortak ve ayrıştırıcı özelliklerini ve de bölge halklarının bakış açılarını konuştuk, interview by Zeynep Arslan, October 30, 2015, <https://www.zeynemarslan.com/dilbilimci-mesut-keskin-ile-zazacanın-standardizasyonu-kirmanc-ve-kurmanc-tanimlamalarının-arasındaki-ortak-ve-ayrıştırıcı-özelliklerini-vede-boelge-halklarının-ba/>.

²⁹ Ruth H. Finnegan, *Where Is Language? An Anthropologist's Questions on Language, Literature and Performance* (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 3.

her words, the performance has multidimensional and participant character.³⁰ This performative heterogeneity of vernacular language can sometimes refer to intonation as well. Finnegan also emphasizes how the intonation of Limba stories which she recorded were similar to those of the West African languages, Mossi, of which she knew none.³¹ Such testimonies lend to the claim that the manifold dimensions which languages have can only be observed through the orality of vernacular. Some scholars agree with the claim that language standardization process naturally suppresses the variability and vitality of language; hence, it can be observed that non-standardized languages permit more variability than standard ones.³² Does a language standardization, indeed, refer to one-voiced medium of writing? How have critical approaches to the standardization process been raised among native speakers and linguists?

Language standardization involves selecting and establishing a standard norm out of certain variants of linguistic habit in order to create a new, general linguistic and communicative context.³³ The process itself does not always enable the authorities to regulate it grammatically; instead, the absence of the state power can open a path for those capable of autonomously intervening standardization process, such as language societies, academies, and individual dictionary and grammar writers.³⁴ In the case of Zazaki, decision-makers arose from a group of individuals whose efforts targeted the comprehensive archive of Zazaki written culture towards a standardized of Zazaki grammar.

The responses from those who were adamant that Zazaki must be adopt a written culture in order to create a common intellectual sphere were embraced by followers of the Vate approach. Not surprisingly, the fervent defense of building an

³⁰ Finnegan, 3.

³¹ Finnegan, 4.

³² James Milroy and Lesley Milroy, *Authority in Language: Investigating Standard English* (Abingdon, Oxon; New York: Routledge, 2012), 6.

³³ Ana Deumert, *Language Standardization and Language Change: The Dynamics of Cape Dutch* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), 2–3.

³⁴ Deumert, 3.

intellectual language as necessitating a standardized language was also understandable among the natives. By following this ultimate goal, language documentation has become a major activity in accordance with Vate Group's criteria. The language documentation, however, is a human process of selection, analysis, and manipulation rather than a matter of detached and objective gathering.³⁵

It should be noted that the process of language planning is closely tied to nationalism; thus, as a consequence, the planning process was an integral part of nation-building.³⁶ Throughout the process of identity construction, nationalist discourse entails a standard language in order to institutionalize education, administration, and science.³⁷ In the Vate gatherings, the correlation between identity construction and language standardization can be clearly observed by framing their publications as a manifesto. Moreover, from the very beginning of their attempt on, they always insist on the importance of becoming Zazaki language into an intellectual one.³⁸

1.1.1 Language Group

Speaking a language inheres a loaded meaning, since it has been seen not only the communication tool but also the mediator among its native speakers. A language enables the mobilization of its speakers who share the lands in which they live. Moreover, it is comprised of the many characteristics of culture, characteristics of cultures, unique expressions, and other such political aspects as well. In other words, the language is one of many politics in today's world might become

³⁵ Finnegan, *Where Is Language? An Anthropologist's Questions on Language, Literature and Performance*, 14.

³⁶ Sue Wright, *Language Policy and Language Planning: From Nationalism to Globalisation*, 2nd ed. (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 11.

³⁷ Janet Byron, *Selection Among Alternates in Language Standardization: The Case of Albanian* (The Hague: Mouton, 1976), 11.

³⁸ Deniz Gunduz, interview by Gül Hür, in Istanbul, January 4, 2018.

inconvenient those who were politically marginalized. Frantz Fanon, for instance, details his own experience of going back his homeland after his education in France.³⁹ In his narrative, he has sadly transmitted that how the locals had high opinion of him for speaking French instead of his mother tongue. This experience basically refers to the political dimension of being a member of the minority language group, as the reaction of his own people is closely related to colonialist domination over the African states.

Throughout the years, many African scholars have tried to tackle the question of the cultural degeneration following the colonial conquest of the continent. Frantz Fanon himself – as both a writer and an activist – forged a groundbreaking path in opposition to the colonialist mindset. On the other hand, the critical role of speaking mother tongue is directly related with the producing cultural sphere against the colonialist mindset. The great importance of speaking mother tongue and producing the cultural sphere with this motivation, in Ngugi wa Thiong'o's view, reflects directly upon the political opposition which has to flourish in African continent. Apart from being a critical vehicle, the erasure of language is also a means of spiritual subjugation.⁴⁰ That's why assimilation politics over the cultural minority groups have always been so crucial in the eyes of colonial and imperial policy-makers.

Apart from the aforementioned functionality of speaking in one's own mother tongue, the challenges which might be faced with are much common for the minority language groups. Especially in relation to the terms of 'nation' and 'nation-state' as they are used within political arena, it is crucial to not that the numbers of native speakers many minority languages have dramatically decreased in the last century. Interestingly, despite the dramatic loss of linguistic plurality all

³⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Siyah Deri Beyaz Maske* (İstanbul: Versus Kitap, 2014), 36.

⁴⁰ Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (Oxford: Currey, 2005), 9.

around the world, the politics of the last century has also witnessed not only the flourishing in the identity politics but also the cultural revival of the cultural groups.

Ensuing some sort of ‘renaissance’, many cultural groups have experienced a revival in the cultural sphere in recent decades. This cultural resurrection has comprised not only of publications which were established by the intelligentsia of a given linguistic group, but also an intellectual effort, in particular, in order to strengthen the language they speak. Mostly the upper-class members, indeed, have tried to enlarge the cultural sphere where the language live in.⁴¹ Language commissions/institutions, likewise, aims to embrace all the components of the official language in the nation-state. But undoubtedly, these institutions have quite a lot financial support from the modern states in order to serve the identity construction which puts them in stark contract with their counterparts among linguistic minority groups.

In this dissertation, a language group which has aimed at creating an intellectual field by concentrated on the Zazaki language will be discussed. According to their own writing, this self-proclaimed ‘study group’ had firstly the purpose was to determine the standard grammar rules of Zazaki. To do so, the members of the study group have been meeting regularly since 1996 onwards. Hence, the following questions hold special pertinence while discussing an unofficial and semi-professional ‘institution’. What is the fundamental motivation to sustain the intellectual effort which the group members have intended to expand? In which process they have gone through as a culturally minority group while practicing the state rules in modern Turkey? In addition to these two, the focus for this chapter is more about that the meaning of studying an unofficial language group within the academic framework.

⁴¹ Amir Hassanpour, *Kürdistan’da Milliyetçilik ve Dil: 1918-1985* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 2005), 629.

1.2 Diaspora and the Linguistic Activism

In terms of the spatial context, there is a clear difference between those who are opposing the nationalist identity politics which the state authority has supported in the homeland (Turkey) and those who are in the European diaspora. Apart from being spatially disparate from oppressive regimes, the diaspora basically enables cultural groups an appropriate environment to disseminate their thoughts on identity, culture, and language to society via the means of media platform and funding. Since it has published and disseminated in Stockholm until 2003, the first period of the Vate journal (1997-2003) was well-suited to the advantages that diaspora has provided. Yet, for the Vate case, the discussion of the term diaspora can become more coherent when diaspora and language standardization in the construction of collective identity properly correlated.

Both defining the term diaspora and listing basis on what kind of features a diaspora has seem problematic and essentialist. Since there are many diasporas around the world, it will not be an exaggeration to claim that each of them has unique characteristics. The diplomacy between the host country and homeland, the political motivation of migrants (and the sustaining relations between homeland), and the multi-layered structure of the immigrant group members differ from one diaspora to another. Furthermore, these dynamics are continuously changing in terms of migration policies the host country has, political balances between two countries, and global political environment.

Since it cannot be claimed that only one definition of diaspora exists, the question of who will be counted as the diasporic actors still seems appealing. For example, taking the Muslim diaspora in Canada as a homogenous group clearly refers to diluting the importance of plural dynamics of Muslims have. Here, the question of “Who is Muslim either?” ought to arise from the diasporic level. Bahar Başer elaborately indicates the figures and statistical results in which cover all peoples who have located in another country rather in their own country in order to

show how the statistics face with the absence of humanitarian scope. In other words, in spite of homeland they have migrated from (globally labeled as ‘Muslim’ country) the possible answers of being non-Muslim or atheist were ignored by those who have researched the diasporas’ size.⁴² In the Vate case too, the definition of diaspora included all these multi-layered and plural meanings.

Furthermore, diasporas are the political constructions in which the existence and dominance of nation-state must be still observed.⁴³ Whereas the general acceptance of that globalization defeated the nation-states⁴⁴, political constructs such as diasporas clearly show us that the effect of national belongings at the state level are themselves inexhaustible. As the cohesion among them seems inevitable, for this study, the relationship of nation-state, ethnicity, identity politics, collective identity, transnational identities, post-memory, forced or volunteer migration has an interwoven scope. Still, diaspora is needed to be described by keeping in mind its changing meaning in time.

The connotations for ‘diaspora’ notoriously transmitted among political agenda over the years. Due to the disrepute the term has, different diasporas widely spread have generally labeled as ‘the potential trouble-makers’ of homelands’ ruling class. As Moghissi, Rahnema, and Goodman underline: “The term is used today to refer to populations of refugees, migrants, guest workers, expatriates, and the exiled and self-exiled without much concern for the existence of common features or contextual applicability.”⁴⁵ Here is one of the aptly explained definition of diaspora:

⁴² Bahar Başer, *Diasporada Türk-Kürt Sorunu: Almanya ve İsveç’te İkinci Kuşak Göçmenler* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013), 81.

⁴³ Matthijs Van Den Bos and Liza Nell, “Territorial Bounds to Virtual Space: Transnational Online and Offline Networks of Iranian and Turkish–Kurdish Immigrants in the Netherlands,” *Global Networks* 6, no. 2 (2006): 208.

⁴⁴ For a detailed discussion, see: Robert Rotberg, “The Failure and Collapse of Nation-States: Breakdown, Prevention, and Collapse,” in *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, ed. Robert Rotberg (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2004), 1–51.

⁴⁵ Haideh Moghissi, Saeed Rahnema, and Mark J. Goodman, *Diaspora by Design: Muslims in Canada and Beyond* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 3.

“[...] Social action and cultural change, the way in which migrants construct meaning, develop subjectivities and identities, and embark on action, are central in our understanding of the notion of diasporas.”⁴⁶

Contemporary debates on both the definition and the scope of diaspora seem critically engaged. Different case studies among the body of scholarly research during the last decades enabled academia to initiate fresh and fruitful viewpoints for a better understanding of the diasporas' dynamics.⁴⁷ Each of them has shown that every single diaspora shifts within the political agenda it was engaged in, and also differs from another in accordance with the historical context it has laid. In spite of the differences they have, it can still be claimed that diaspora is a political project⁴⁸ which refers not to 'imagined' or 'given' societies since they are new types of identities.⁴⁹ Michel Bruneau remarks the very beginning usage of the term 'diaspora' was in reference to the Jewish community in order to indicate the dispersion of Jewish people throughout the world.⁵⁰ But today, the meaning of the term has enlarged to the area where all forms of migration and dispersion of a people dubbed as a diaspora.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Jessica Retis and Roza Tsagarousianou, *The Handbook of Diasporas, Media, and Culture* (The United States of America: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2019), 2.

⁴⁷ For a discussion of gender in West Indian culture in terms of nation and diaspora, see: Curdella Forbes, *From Nation to Diaspora: Samuel Selvon, George Lamming and the Cultural Performance of Gender* (Kingston, Jamaica: University of West Indies Press, 2005); For a detailed analysis of the Turkish and Kurdish immigrants in Germany, see the following study: Eva Ostergaard-Nielsen, *Transnational Politics: Turks and Kurds in Germany* (New York: Routledge, 2003); For more detail on the Muslims in Canada, see: Haideh Moghissi, Saeed Rahnema, and Mark J. Goodman, *Diaspora by Design: Muslims in Canada and Beyond* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); For a detailed study in which composed of the articles on Jewish, African, Armenian, and Indian etc., see: Robin Cohen, *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008).

⁴⁸ Rainer Bauböck, “Cold Constellations and Hot Identities: Political Theory Questions about Transnationalism and Diaspora,” in *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, ed. Rainer Bauböck and Thomas Faist (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 316.

⁴⁹ Jowan Mahmud, *Kurdish Diaspora Online: From Imagined Community to Managing Communities* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 47.

⁵⁰ Michel Bruneau, “Diasporas, Transnational Spaces and Communities,” in *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, ed. Rainer Bauböck and Thomas Faist (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 35.

⁵¹ Bruneau, 35.

The term diaspora will be used during the text with the political extent it inherently has. The other basis of the definition is that the loyalty based on the political agenda of the homeland.⁵² Although these two fundamentally take a place in the definition, I am aware of the possible shifts among the different actors of diaspora such as homeland and host country, immigrants and natives. Moreover, Karsten Paarregaard warns those who inquire distinctive changes of the term 'diaspora' about the main characteristics it inheres: Once we labeled a group as 'diasporic', it is important to ask whether the mentioned group created its own political and cultural forms of identification of not.⁵³

It is herein that the basis for a Kurdish diaspora can be claimed and depicted for the sake of this study. First, there is a notable difference between German and Swedish diasporas which exists clearly and strictly in the eyes of some Kurdish migrants who live in the European countries. Malmîsanij, for example, elaborately separates the Sweden diaspora from the Germany based on that the government itself enhances intellectuality in native languages, promotes the cultural revival, and financially supports the minority groups which fled to Sweden.⁵⁴ The host country for diasporas indeed has a crucial role for the minority groups while the migrant community's decision-making process. As well as financial support that the government provides opportunities for the immigrant groups, the political environmenttooplays a critical role in determining the way diaspora fights for and claims its voice.⁵⁵

⁵² Başer, *Diasporada Türk-Kürt Sorunu: Almanya ve İsveç'te İkinci Kuşak Göçmenler*, 79.

⁵³ Karsten Paerregaard, "Interrogating Diaspora: Power and Conflict in Peruvian Migration," in *Diaspora and Transnationalism: Concepts, Theories and Methods*, ed. Rainer Bauböck and Thomas Faist (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 94.

⁵⁴ Mehemed Malmîsanij, interview by Gül Hür, in Diyarbakır, March 2, 2019.

[“There is a significant difference between those who live in Swedish diaspora and the other European countries. The Kurds who fled to Sweden was mostly the revolutionist of the 70s, the ruling cadres, the leaders who ruled the political groups and the head of the organizations. Those who live in German diaspora, however, are quite different. They are generally labors, and speak Turkish, etc.”]

⁵⁵ Başer, *Diasporada Türk-Kürt Sorunu: Almanya ve İsveç'te İkinci Kuşak Göçmenler*, 84.

Second, contrary to the reputation of PKK activities in accordance with a globally-known organization, the non-PKK groups which have continued their existence in the European countries played a crucial role as well. Due to its well-known existence, PKK's active participation in politics during diaspora has been subject to scholarly researched while the involvement of other political organizations has been generally ignored.⁵⁶ The elaborate research of the VSG necessitates the active role on non-PKK groups, since the members of the group have been visibly associated with other underground organizations such as Kawa, Rizgarî, Özgürlük Yolu, and DDKO. In addition, the second generation of migrants – born themselves within the nations of their family's resettlement – who describes itself in terms of post-memory play a key role for those who study diaspora with its different dimensions.⁵⁷

Through this chapter, the importance of mother tongue in terms of cultural activism was highlighted. The defense of native languages at the political level certainly refers to an activist argument. Correspondingly, the struggle for the Kurdish language in general, Zazaki in particular, has been perceived as a resistance against the state-mind by the activist and nationalist groups. On the other hand, the European diaspora also enabled the Kurdish and Zaza refugees that to announce their political position frankly in terms of the dynamics of the Vate journal. In light of this terminological introduction, contextualization of language politics and the emergence of cultural activism will be examined during the next chapter.

⁵⁶ Başer, 78.

⁵⁷ Başer, 96.

CHAPTER II: A HISTORY OF LANGUAGE POLITICS AND CULTURAL ACTIVISM IN MODERN TURKEY

Before the analysis of the Vate journal, I will now continue with details of the historical context regarding the Kurdish diaspora in Europe. In addition to the general aspects of the Turkish politics of that period, the dynamics within the Kurdish diaspora community played a significant role in the emergence of both Vate study group and its subsequent periodical. For a better understanding, the historical context provided here will cover from the Committee of Union and Progress (hereafter, CUP) era to the 2000s. In this chapter, I first try to give a general view of the different language groups during the last decades of the 19th century in the Ottoman Empire. This general view provides a broader understanding that how modern Turkey has produced answers for the linguistic plurality which it inherited from the Ottoman era. Since the case study of this thesis examines the close ties between language planning and the language politics of both modern Turkey and Europe, both contexts will be briefly mentioned. Generally speaking, during this chapter the following questions will be discussed: How did the modern Turkey redesign the Ottoman legacy in order to enact the new language politics? During this process, how was different cultural groups in Turkey affected? What was the meaning of speaking a non-Turkish language in modern Turkey? More specifically, how did the Kurdish groups receive the language reforms? And finally, in what dimensions the Zazaki-speaking groups struggled for their mother tongue?

The Kurdish language in general, Zazaki⁵⁸ in particular, will be the focus of this dissertation in detailing the historical context towards the emergence of the Vate Study Group and the following attempt the Vate journal. A brief summary of the general view of the linguistic groups in Turkey and the change they have witnessed can create a fresh way for a better understanding of the emergence of the Vate

⁵⁸ There is a dichotomy between two groups on whether Zazaki is a separate language or a dialect of the Kurdish language. This separation between the two groups will be detailed in the last topic of this chapter.

journal. Since the founder members of the periodical strongly support the assertion that Zazaki is a dialect of the Kurdish language, the Kurdish nationalism appears a significant phenomenon among the Vate. As such, the position of the Kurdish communities will be indicated in the following sections. Although this study is built upon the work of groups which defend that the Zazas are the Kurds, opposing will be mentioned during this chapter.

2.1 The Transformation of the Cultural Plurality at the Age of Modern Turkey

As the focus of this study is the role of the language in the identity construction, linguistic plurality from the Ottoman era holds a position of special significance within the historical context. The position of both the linguistic groups and the confessional groups have been controversial for the governmental authorities in the history of modern Turkey. Before detailing the perception of modern Turkey, the last decades of the Ottoman Empire in terms of pluralism should be briefly mentioned. reference to the changing dynamics during the demise of the Ottomans can provide a better understanding for the recent developments in the struggle for mother tongue. For this study, the historical background can set the groundwork for understanding recent and contemporary activism for the Zazaki language which arose from the Kurdish nationalist movement.

In the recent decades, some of the academic research have widely argued cultural pluralism in the Ottoman era.⁵⁹ Correspondingly, most of the research about the emergence of modern Turkey has paid particular attention to the last decades of the Ottoman Empire. For this study, too, the historical context should be

⁵⁹ For more detail, see the following studies: George W. Gawrych, "Tolerant Dimensions of Cultural Pluralism in the Ottoman Empire: The Albanian Community, 1800-1912," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 15, no. 4 (November 1983): 519-36; Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

dated back the demise of the Ottoman era. Firstly, it must be noted that cultural plurality was problematic in the eyes of the Ottoman authorities as well. Thus, the last decades of the empire gained a critical role for analyzing the role of language and language politics for this thesis. Apart from the culturally plural communities which were relatively recognized by the Ottoman authority, cultural groups also considered their freedom for practice of their respective cultural obligations limited. Despite the strong existence and application of the Islamic codes, the non-Muslim groups had a relative independence at some levels such as that of bureaucratic or administrative appointments.⁶⁰

The last decades of the Ottoman Empire welcomed a wide variety of political solutions in order to avoid the state from the collapse. Some of the Ottoman intellectuals had an opportunity to travel abroad, thus, they received a college education in the European countries, particularly in Germany and France. This process produced a new terminology in politics at the dawn of modern Turkey. The philosophical interaction between the intellectuals and European ideas created not only nationalist thought and ideology as phenomena of increasing strength and salience, but also provided the political demands for the establishment of a constitutional, parliamentary regime. Moreover, Muslim intellectuals coming from Russia were aware of the identity question, and also began to develop a specific consciousness about being a 'Turk'. Truly, Feroz Ahmad underlines in his study that the increasing popularity of Turkish nationalism has arisen as a new phenomenon among those intellectuals.⁶¹ In other words, the political atmosphere of that time was correspondingly shaping under both ethnic and civic nationalist arguments.

As the number of answers to the identity question increased, so too the nationalist discourse of 'The Young Turks' started to gain a central role with its

⁶⁰ Ayhan Aktar, "Türkiye'de Gayrimüslimler: 'Kağıt Üzerinde' Vatandaşlar!," in *Aydınlanma, Türkiye ve Vatandaşlık*, ed. E. Fuat Keyman (Istanbul: Osmanlı Bankası Arşiv ve Araştırma Merkezi, 2008), 111.

⁶¹ Feroz Ahmad, *Turkey: The Quest for Identity* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2003), 44.

emergence in 1889. A group of well-educated Ottoman bureaucrats tried to respond to the weakness of the state under the influence of political philosophy remnant of the French Revolution.⁶² At the very beginning of their gatherings, the organization provided a platform for campaigns of agitation against Sultan Abdülhamit II. Their aim was to reinforce state power against the intervention of both the nationalist separatism and the European imperialism.⁶³ In addition to this growing nationalist sentiment, the time period just before the emergence of modern Turkey saw minority groups gradually eliminated from the state. This cleansing was a direct result of the increasing nationalist manner of the Young Turk ideology based on the premise that the non-Muslims benefited more from imperial rule in comparison to the majority.⁶⁴

Ali Pasha, one of the bureaucrats in the Young Turks, claimed that the state needs a nation.⁶⁵ By declaring the need for a nation, he also referred to the constructed nature of the national identity mostly drawn by the state elites. Meanwhile, almost after a decade later the activities of the Young Turks, the activist organizations abroad gathered against the Sultan in July 1908 in order to force him to reinstate both the constitution and parliament.⁶⁶ The Committee of the Union and Progress (CUP) emerged after 1908 revolt resulting in a period of absolute rule which lasted until the establishment of modern Turkey. CUP ideology was closely tied to the pan-Turkist opinions from 1906 onwards, which is dated the year of the increase of military members within the organization; i.e. the participation of Doktor Nazım, Bahattin Şakir, and Talat Pasha changed the dynamics.⁶⁷ The most active members of the CUP who declared the basics of the political program

⁶² Erik Jan Zürcher, “Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908–38,” in *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk’s Turkey* (London; New York: I. B. Tauris, 2010), 213.

⁶³ Zürcher, 214.

⁶⁴ Fatma Müge Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey: Redefining State and Society from the Ottoman Empire to the Modern Era* (London; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 4.

⁶⁵ Hamit Bozarslan, *Türkiye’nin Modern Tarihi* (Istanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 2008), 16.

⁶⁶ Zürcher, “Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists: Identity Politics 1908–38,” 214.

⁶⁷ Bozarslan, *Türkiye’nin Modern Tarihi*, 23.

towards the emergence of the Young Republic truly started to eliminate non-Turk actors from the entire society correspondingly. Thus, The intellectual heritage of the CUP was taken over by Republican ideologues whose main actors substantially overlapped with the CUP cadres, Likewise, the Kemalist ideology arose from as the proto-nationalist visions of this era.⁶⁸ Thus, the policy-making process – including that which came to dictate national language politics – should be analyzed with consideration to this transformation.

Before the popularity of the nationalist notion increased in the Young Turk discourse, it should be noted that the minority groups in the state were correspondingly influenced by this new political agenda.⁶⁹ In 1863, both the Armenian and Bulgarians have already achieved their emancipation in different levels. While the Armenian community created its own constitution and assembly, the Bulgarian church has declared its independence from the Greek Orthodox Church in 1870.⁷⁰ Throughout the dissolution of the state, the proposed solutions declared by the different groups. Although a few of the entire opinions were aimed at uniting the fragmented society, a significant proportion of the cultural groups demanded their own independence, as it can be seen from the Armenian and Bulgarians cases.

During this time period, some of minority groups also experienced a cultural renaissance in which the cultural codes and traditions became increasingly central to their political motivations.⁷¹ No doubt, publishing activities were – and still are – perceived as the significant mediator in disseminating nationalist motives.

⁶⁸ Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey: Redefining State and Society from the Ottoman Empire to the Modern Era*, 3.

⁶⁹ It seems to be a common problem in defining the term minority. First, the general use of the definition indicates the non-Muslim groups in modern Turkey which were detailed in the Lausanne Treaty. Second, the term sometimes refers to a quantitative meaning for the groups whose population is less than the others. For further discussion about the minority groups in Turkey, see the following study: Baskın Oran, *Türkiye’de Azınlıklar: Kavramlar, Lozan, İç Mevzuat, İctihat, Uygulama* (İstanbul: Tesev Yayınları, 2004).

⁷⁰ Ahmad, *Turkey: The Quest for Identity*, 36.

⁷¹ Ahmad, 36.

Similarly, the activities which Young Turks carried out in disseminating their political agenda included writing and distributing newspapers. In the very same period, some cultural groups started to declare their political demands by using the means of media. The Kurdish intelligentsia, for example, used the periodicals to mobilize Kurdish society and increase the awareness of the Kurdish national identity among the populace. Thus, the emergence of the Kurdistan newspaper in 1898 in Cairo inaugurated the Kurdish revival. As being the most influential periodical of its time, Kurdistan aimed at being a mediator between the intelligentsia and the Kurdish society. Furthermore, Kurdistan embraced the reformist approach rather than advocating for a sort of emancipation in Kurdistan.⁷²

2.2 Turkification Policies in the Republican Era

In the light of the abovementioned instances about the flourishing nationalist notions within the cultural groups in the Ottoman Empire, the cultural plurality can be observed at the dawn of the new state system. So, which sources can be used in conceiving the multicultural society? Following the changing dynamics of social and cultural pluralism during the dissolution of the Ottoman empire demographic figures have been utilized by many researchers in order to gain a clear understanding of the scale and intensity of said change. Charts recording the population census can be used for the categorization of the entire society; however, these figures should be critically reviewed in order to avoid an essentialist approach. This is to say that the ethnic distribution should address not only by using statistical numbers, but also consider the other changing factors of its respective time.⁷³ The following questions should bear in mind throughout the research. How did the

⁷² Hamit Bozarslan, “‘Being in Time’: The Kurdish Movement and Universal Quests,” in *The Kurdish Question Revisited*, ed. Gareth Stansfield and Mohammed Shareef (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 65.

⁷³ For a relevant example of the critical approach, see the following article: Oktay Özel, “Population Changes in Ottoman Anatolia during the 16th and 17th Centuries: The ‘Demographic Crisis’ Reconsidered,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 36, no. 2 (May 2004): 183–205.

census questions change in time? When did the dramatical increase or decrease in the figures appear? Did the governmental authority publish all the figures, besides, when did the statistics reveal?

The national census conducted between 1927-1965 has been widely discussed among academic research, partially because the authorities made the resulting population statistics public. Fuat Dündar was one of the scholars who studied the population statistics by focusing on the minorities in Turkey. Before the detailed discussion about minorities based on the figures, Dündar drew a historical background from the population statistics of the Ottoman era⁷⁴ in order to summarize the motivations for each state in documenting population statistics. The first among these motivations is that of fiscal policy. The state authorities, he states, collect the data of society in order to determine some sort of governmental income such as tax revenue. Second, the armed forces can be managed and organized as a result of the census. Finally, he concludes that the ruling class has a political motivation in archiving the collection of the social fragments among the populace so that it may be used as a reference in the policy-making process.⁷⁵

The ruling class of modern Turkey correspondingly needed to gather information about the labor and military force at its disposal.⁷⁶ While collecting this data, the amount of the linguistic and religious groups was needed to be documented as well. Thus, until the 1965 population census, the detailed questions of religion and language were asked to the populace. The linguistic groups in Turkey until 1965 can be observed from this population charts. Rumca (Greek), Ermenice (Armenian), Arapça (Arabic), Acemce (Persian), Yahudice (Jewish), Çerkezce (Circassian), Kürtçe (Kurdish), Tatarca (Tatar), Arnavutça (Albanian), Bulgarca (Bulgarian) were the main languages listed in the population statistics.⁷⁷ Until 1965, a series of changes applied to the question lists, besides, the answers changed as

⁷⁴ Fuat Dündar, *Türkiye Nüfus Sayımlarında Azınlıklar* (İstanbul: Doz Yayınları, 1999), 15–19.

⁷⁵ Dündar, 14.

⁷⁶ Dündar, 15.

⁷⁷ Dündar, 154–223.

well. Some languages were added to the list, or some of them removed from the list. Interestingly, some of the languages gathered under the topic called '*sair ve meçhul*', meaning 'other and unknown'.

The ruling elites of the new state used this collection to determine the non-Turk groups. Thus, subsequent policies focused on the elimination of the minority groups under the majority of the Turkish nation. Moreover, the statistics were used by the governmental authorities as a proof of unquestionable majority of the Turks in the Republic.⁷⁸ As such the modern definition of 'the Turk' has emerged in this very first decades of the emergence of the new state. This new kind of ascription comprises all the populations living in the Turkish Republic regardless of their ethnicity or religion.⁷⁹ From now on, those who were not included in the definition of 'Turkishness' would be eliminated. Moreover, such exclusion – precisely applied on the non-Muslim groups – open to negotiation the status of Kurds and Alawites who were not categorized as the minority because of the premise that they are Muslim.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the changing dynamics of the political discourse manipulated the religious groups as well as the linguistic groups. To give an example, the leading families of Bektashis started to lose their respected authority with the new state system. Indeed, the followers of the Bektashi orders, even today, strictly divide the two periods. The new orders of the Turkish Republic are remembered as a loss of prestige for the Bektashi families, while the Ottoman era is well-promoted.⁸¹

⁷⁸ The population statistics can be internationally used as proof for legitimacy the new state receives. Furthermore, the demographic indicators were particularly used – or were not used – in Armenian genocide discussions in order to demonstrate that Anatolia is a Turkish land. As well as the Turkish population, the Armenian population has correspondingly been the most debated issues regarding the minority groups at the dawn of modern Turkey. For an elaborately prepared demographic statistics of Harput Armenian, see the following Housamadyan article: George Aghjayan, "Harput - Demography," 2016, <https://www.housamadyan.org/mapottomanempire/vilayetofmamuratulazizharput/harputkaza/loc ale/demography.html>.

⁷⁹ Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey: Redefining State and Society from the Ottoman Empire to the Modern Era*, 5.

⁸⁰ Göçek, 5.

⁸¹ Meral Salman Yıkmış, *Hacı Bektaş Veli'nin Evlatları: 'Yol'un Mürşitleri: Ulusoy Ailesi* (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014), 49.

There are many instances which can be demonstrated in the continuum of political interaction between the last decades of the Ottoman Empire and the Republican era. The questions of language and identity can be traced by focusing on the different linguistic groups which resided in Turkey. The degree of recognition of these linguistic groups by the state authorities can be seen as a critical indicator for the changing dynamics of official language policies. The transformation of dynamics between the state and Armenian society, for example, serves as a critical example in order to properly illustrate and analyze the political agenda inherited by the Turkish Republic. The extermination of pluralistic coexistence as an approach to governing Ottoman subjects can be followed through the case study of the Armeno-Turkish press under the Ottoman reign. According to Murat Cankara, the Armeno-Turkish press declared that Ottoman subjects are needed to coexist under the protection of the well-established constitution. By regulating so, plural identities can stay long-lived without a rejection of their own ethnic identities.⁸² Cankara emphasizes the premise of Armeno-Turkish press as one which advocated for such identities under the established norm of an all-embracing Ottoman identity.

Considering the transformation in the policy-making process, it can be claimed that cultural pluralism started to be eliminated by the new state order. In the light of the focus of this study, this change should likewise be considered throughout a brief account of the historical context. Turkification policies, no doubt, played a significant role in the language reform as well. For instance, Mustafa Kemal himself indicates the superior position of the Turkish language compared to the Ottoman Turkish- furthermore he explicitly uttered his wish to defeat Ottoman Turkish language and culture entirely.⁸³ The Kemalist clique initiated to organize the language reform in excluding the Arabic and Persian

⁸² Murat Cankara, "Çifte Maduniyet, Çifte İşlev: Ermeni Harfli Türkçe Basında Dil ve Kimlik," *Ankara Üniversitesi İlefl Dergisi* 2, no. 2 (Autumn 2015): 126.

⁸³ Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 49.

vocabulary from the Turkish first. Despite the simplification policy for the Turkish language has started with Ahmed Cevdet in 1851⁸⁴, the rules of the new state too were motivated by this very notion. periodicals were used by the ideologues of the language reform during the second half of the 19th century in order to disseminate their political agenda on Turkish nationalism. The newspapers *Tercemânahval* held by Agah Efendi and Şinasi in 1860, and *Mecmuaifünun* which has published by Cem'iyet-i İlmiyye-i Osmaniyye in 1862 both played a substantial role in the history of the Turkish simplification movement.⁸⁵

As the political ascendancy of Sunni Muslim Turkish majority has been widely discussed, some of the scholars conceptualized the long-lasting relationship between the founding ideology and the ruling class for a better understanding of the dynamics in the history of modern Turkey. For instance, Barış Ünlü proposes two concepts – Turkishness and the Turkishness Contract – in order to get a better sense of the ethnicity question based on the lens of privilege. Ünlü explains the way he used the term as follows:

“By Turkishness, I mean a patterned but mostly unrecognized relationship between Turkish individuals’ ethnic position and their ways of seeing, hearing, feeling and knowing – as well as *not* seeing, *not* hearing, *not* feeling and *not* knowing. Turkishness also refers to a world of privilege. Turks enjoy a large variety of privileges vis-a`-vis non-Turks, take their privileges for granted and as natural, and do not problematize these privileges.”⁸⁶

By using this conceptualization, he also warns about the changing nature of the social contract. He follows the roots of Turkishness as far as the agreement among the Anatolia Muslims between 1915 and 1925 – dubbed as the Muslimness Contract and the Turkishness Contract, respectively.⁸⁷ The Turkishness Contract

⁸⁴ Lewis, 28.

⁸⁵ Agah Sırrı Levend, *Türk Dilinde Gelişme ve Sadeleşme Evreleri*, 2th ed. (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1960), 83.

⁸⁶ Barış Ünlü, “The Kurdish Struggle and the Crisis of the Turkishness Contract,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 42, no. 4–5 (2016): 398.

⁸⁷ Ünlü, 399.

also enhances varying degrees of the nationalist arguments which are included in the promotion of speaking Turkish. As it can be seen in the case of ‘Citizen, Speak Turkish!’ campaign, the components of both the Muslimness and Turkishness contract agree with an irreversible principle: speaking Turkish.⁸⁸ However, being a Muslim has been a critical criterion for the Turkishness. After the emergence of modern Turkey, these two identities were synthesized together into a single political unit.⁸⁹ Ünlü’s study clearly shows that the history of modern Turkey can be analyzed through a range of privileges. Speaking non-Turkish languages is obviously the reason for being excluded from this set of privileges. In considering the major place of speaking Turkish both in public and private spheres, how has been the Turkish government regulated the language policies throughout the history of the Turkish Republic?

As it can be clearly observed from the above-mentioned details, the language policies in Turkey are closely related to the nationalist perspective which was embraced by the New Republic. In the Turkish Republic, the language reform was perceived as a major tool in organizing the state body and its organs.⁹⁰ The Turkish language reform was regulated under the influence of westernization philosophy; besides, the direct impact of this approach was seen in the regulation of the Turkish alphabet in 1928.⁹¹ The institutions which established and carried out directly or indirectly by state organs have a critical role in the language policies in Turkey. First, The Language Council (Dil Heyeti; hereafter, the DH) was established by the İsmet İnönü government in 1926.⁹² On the other hand, the emergence of the Turkish Language Institute (Türk Dil Kurumu; hereafter, the TDK) in July 1932 is rather deeply rooted over the language policies in Turkey.⁹³

⁸⁸ Barış Ünlü, “Türklük Sözleşmesi’nin İmzalanışı (1915-1925),” *Mülkiye Dergisi* 38, no. 3 (2014): 69.

⁸⁹ Ünlü, 69.

⁹⁰ Uriel Heyd, *Language Reform in Modern Turkey* (Jerusalem: The Israel Oriental Society, 1954), 21.

⁹¹ İlker Aytürk, “Politics and Language Reform in Turkey: The ‘Academy’ Debate,” *Wiener Zeitschrift Für Die Kunde Des Morgenlandes*, no. 98 (2008): 13.

⁹² Aytürk, 14.

⁹³ Aytürk, 14.

Until the mid-1990s, language campaigns organized mostly by the TDK based on the several political motivations. In 1994, TDK gave start to a new campaign which has basically built on the elimination of foreign words from the Turkish language.⁹⁴ All this reform and campaign process has since been seen as linguistic engineering by some scholars, in particular it has come to be considered as a tool in the national engineering. In Geoffrey Lewis's valuable research on the language reform in Turkey, the linguistic engineering was correspondingly defined as follows:

“Not a few nations have gone in for linguistic engineering. By this I mean tinkering with language with the express purpose of changing people's speech habits and the way they write. [...] These, however, are not what I intend by linguistic engineering. I mean the sort of deliberate campaign that has been carried out at various times by Germans, Swedes, Hungarians, Finns, and Albanians, among others, for nationalistic reasons, to purge their languages of foreign words and substitute native words for them.”⁹⁵

The language reform in 1928 had a leading position in the minority groups in Turkey. This reform was regulated in accordance with the nationalist motivation which aimed at creating a wholly transformed society.⁹⁶ The spread of a common and standardized national language had been one of the main concerns of the state elite since the beginning of the Republic.⁹⁷ One key example of this is the ‘Citizen, Speak Turkish!’ campaign. Initiated by a group of university students in 1928, this campaign promoted national identity directly linking language to citizenship and thereby declaring that the non-Turkish languages should be eradicated from its public visibility and existence. The campaign warned society about speaking non-Turkish languages in order to strengthen the monolithic notion powered by the state elites. The campaign showed that each member of society was expected to become a fervent defender of the Turkish national identity as well as the state institution.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success*, 165.

⁹⁵ Lewis, 1–2.

⁹⁶ Melike Uzum and Nurettin Demir, “Minority Language Education and Policy in Turkey: The Case of Cankiri Poshas,” *Journal of Universality of Global Education Issues* 4 (2017): 7.

⁹⁷ Senem Aslan, “‘Citizen, Speak Turkish!’: A Nation in the Making,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 13, no. 2 (2007): 251.

⁹⁸ Aslan, 246.

Both the reign of the emergence of modern Turkey under the sway of Mustafa Kemal, and later on, the reign of National Chief İsmet İnönü were dominated by the Sunni Muslim Turkish majority. Thus, the policy-making process was regulated considering the nationalist notion which was taken over from the last decades of the Ottoman era. By the end of this period of repressive state policies, minority cultural groups in Turkey came to be partially eliminated. This elimination – either in totality or simply from the public sphere – remained the norm until until the 1960s which saw the emergence of the political phenomenon based on the dichotomy between the leftist and rightist ideology. This new reign brought not only the fervor that increased among the fragmented leftist and rightist groups, but also the changing dynamics in the Kurdish question. Furthermore, the history of modern Turkey witnessed a politically and socially new political agenda after the 1980 military coup. The following sections of this chapter will be mostly focused on that era.

2.3 From the Eradicated Subjects to the Cultural Activists

The long-lasting Kemalist regime resulted in a dramatic decrease in the number of linguistic and religious groups living in Turkey. The national census in 1927 shows us that Turkish was not the native language of 28 percent of the Istanbul population.⁹⁹ By the time that the results of the 1965 national census were declared, 90.2 percent of the state's total population identified Turkish as their mother tongue. After 1965, the religion and language questions were no longer asked in the national census. Furthermore, by 1980, the history of modern Turkey witnessed the extinction of both cultural and political pluralism. The military intervention to the government created radical nationalist policies over society. From that period on, political dynamics altered irreversibly for all political actors whose struggle against the mainstream state policy.

⁹⁹ Aslan, 250.

The response from actors whose very first aim was to strengthen cultural rights were gradually increased in relation to the rise of nationalist politics. Not surprisingly, the ideology of the cultural revival was disseminated by activists by means of media. In periodicals, most cultural activists raised their demand for human rights in accordance with demands stated throughout the cultural revival. They also wanted the populace mobilized with this intention. As such, periodicals have thus been used to promote cultural rights as a main human right. In the history of the Kurdish press, for instance, the very first periods were rather focused on the necessity for a well-organized educational system over the Kurdish populace. By doing so, the contemporary political issues could be captured- thus, the newspapers had also an educational mission.¹⁰⁰ And, media served as in this primarily as a tool through which to inform the mass both about the current political atmosphere and the demand for cultural rights.

What is the importance of the declaration of political agenda via the publications? How can media be used for the public visibility for advocacy? As it will be detailed in the next chapters about the Vate journal – the case study of this thesis – cultural right advocates are mostly apt to the premise that writing for one in her mother tongue is only resistance against the state policies. Indeed, Amir Hassanpour goes so far as to claim that writing Kurdish in the 15th century was itself a revolt since it has referred to the challenge against the linguistic and literary authority of the Arab Khalifa, and the relations between the Ottoman Khalifa who had naturally appointed.¹⁰¹

2.3.1 Writing in Mother Tongue in the Cultural Activism

¹⁰⁰ Ronayi Önen, “The Role of Language in the Discursive Construction of the Kurdish Nation: A Case Study on the Kurdish Periodical Hawar (1932-1943)” (master’s thesis, Istanbul Bilgi University, 2012), 61.

¹⁰¹ Hassanpour, *Kürdistan’da Milliyetçilik ve Dil: 1918-1985*, 124.

“Language is the main condition for existence; therefore, Hawar will first of all present our language’s existence. Then we will deal with all things related to Kurdishness; except politics. We will leave politics to those nations who have their own states. We will deal with science and arts.”¹⁰²

This statement, written by Celadet Bedirxan – one of the prominent actors in the Kurdish intelligentsia – was aimed at encouraging the Kurds to write in Kurdish. Celadet was a well-educated member of the most prominent Kurdish notable family in the late Ottoman period. As being an intellectual personality, he also focused on both the Kurdish nationalism and the modernization of the Kurdish-Kurmanji language.¹⁰³ As it can be clearly seen from the passage above, published in the first issue of Hawar periodical, Celadet declared that the Kurdish language would play a major role both in unifying the Kurds and in struggling for the national recognition.

Not only in Hawar, but also in nearly every other publication within the broader Kurdish press the community was encouraged to active use of the Kurdish language in every degree of daily life practice. Speaking and writing in the Kurdish language was an essential principle for the Kurdish nationalist movement. Although four pieces of Kurdistan have their own type of nationalism,¹⁰⁴ each perceiving the mother tongue as a medium is one of the necessities for the Kurdish nationalist movement. For example, the emergence of the Kurdistan newspaper in 1898 was a start for the Kurdish nationalist movement before the founding of the Turkish

¹⁰² I used Ronayi Önen's MA thesis in order to cite the English version of this passage published in the first issue of Hawar periodical. The translation from Kurdish to English belongs to Ronayi Önen herself. Ronayi Önen, “The Role of Language in the Discursive Construction of the Kurdish Nation: A Case Study on the Kurdish Periodical Hawar (1932-1943)” (master’s thesis, Istanbul Bilgi University, 2012), 111.

¹⁰³ Metin Yüksel, “Dengbêj, Mullah, Intelligentsia: The Survival and Revival of the Kurdish-Kurmanji Language in the Middle East, 1925-1960” (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 2011), 244.

¹⁰⁴ Fred Halliday, “Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Modernist Bir Tarihini Yazabilir Miyiz?,” in *Kürtler: Milliyetçilik ve Politika*, ed. Hoşam Davud and Falih A. Cabbar (Istanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları, 2017), 17.

Republic.¹⁰⁵ In other words, it can be claimed that the Kurdish enlightenment began with this very first periodical.¹⁰⁶ Although the editorial policy was rather related to the encouragement the Kurds about being educated,¹⁰⁷ some of the articles in the newspaper emphasized the major role of the Kurdish language in mobilizing the Kurds. As Ronayi Önen stated, the approval for publishing in the Kurdish language can be basically observed from the readers' letters which emphasized the necessity of writing in Kurdish.¹⁰⁸

The rebellious dimension of both speaking and writing in the mother tongue has been a growing phenomenon, particularly for the research about the colonial societies. During the struggle against the authorities which aim at annihilating the minority cultures, writing in minority languages gains an opponent dynamic. In the history of African colonialism, most of the scholars agreed on the critical role of native African languages. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is one of these scholars who is a professor of English and Comparative Literature, and a linguistic activist as well. Generally speaking, Ngugi underlines the major role of the native languages in advocacy for the cultural rights against both the colonial forces and the entire government. According to him, there is a need for African literature in native languages to be created as well. He claims that this new kind of opposition should be perceived as the struggle against the long-lasting intervention of both imperialism and European colonialism. Here is a passage from his valuable piece on the importance of writing in the African languages:

¹⁰⁵ Celîlê Celîl, *Kürt Aydınlanması: Ondokuzuncu Yüzyıl Sonu Yirminci Yüzyıl Başı* (İstanbul: Avesta Yayınları, 2013), 25.

¹⁰⁶ Celîl, 25.

¹⁰⁷ As Tahir Baykuşak stated in his MA thesis, the Kurdistan Newspaper can be examined in two periods. Every period has its own dynamics based on the editorial policy. Yet, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to detail the Kurdish press; besides, solely the promoted value of the Kurdish language in the Kurdish publications is significant to this study. For a piece of detailed information on the Kurdistan Newspaper, Baykuşak's study may be visited. Tahir Baykuşak, "The Role of the Press in the Construction of Kurdish Collective Identity: A Case Study on 'Jîn' Journal (1918-1919)" (master's thesis, Istanbul Bilgi University, 2014), 31.

¹⁰⁸ Önen, "The Role of Language in the Discursive Construction of the Kurdish Nation: A Case Study on the Kurdish Periodical Hawar (1932-1943)," 61.

“I believe that my writing in Gikuyu language, a Kenyan language, an African language, is part and parcel of the anti-imperialist struggles of Kenyan and African peoples.”¹⁰⁹

As Ngugi stated, the native languages are using as means of dissemination while producing the opponent arguments against the colonial regulations. In recent years, this perspective has been used adopted in response to Kurdish question wherein the Turkish authorities are positioned by the community as the colonial rulers over the Kurds. Thus, the Kurds correspondingly have been tackled by some scholars based on colonialism studies. İsmail Beşikçi, was the first intellectual whose very first research related to the Kurdish society referred to the colonial mindset of the Turkish state elites. During the second half of the 1970s, one of the Kurdish nationalist organization called *Rizgarî* correspondingly declared that Kurdistan was internationally colonized, thus, Turkey was a colonial state.¹¹⁰ In his well-known book, *Devletlerarası Sömürge Kürdistan*, Beşikçi also categorized the Turkish state as colonialist which produced policies over the Kurds in order to eliminate or assimilate the entire national identity.¹¹¹ He was dismissed from the university on the basis of his research interest, particularly about the Kurdish populated areas in Turkey. His research was perceived as a threat against the Turkish existence by the Turkish state authorities; consequently, he spent 17 years in prison.¹¹²

Through the emergence of the new political agenda in the Turkish Republic, the Kurdish question started to be increased by ever-evolving Kurdish nationalist movements. Until the 1990s, the Kurdish organizations had public visibility among others. Yet, as it can be seen in the next sections, the 1990s brought cultural revival movements to the core of the politics. From now on, not only Kurds but also almost all other cultural groups would increase the advocacy for cultural rights.

¹⁰⁹ wa Thiong’o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature*, 28.

¹¹⁰ Barış Ünlü, “İsmail Beşikçi Fenomeni: Bir Parrhesiastes’in Oluşumu,” in *İsmail Beşikçi*, ed. Barış Ünlü and Ozan Değer, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2011), 27.

¹¹¹ İsmail Beşikçi, *Devletlerarası Sömürge Kürdistan* (Istanbul: Alan Yayıncılık, 1990).

¹¹² Ünlü, “İsmail Beşikçi Fenomeni: Bir Parrhesiastes’in Oluşumu,” 39.

2.4 The New Scene in Turkish Politics: 1980 Military Intervention

The history of the 1970s witnessed the increase of the political fervor in which produced radical groups on both the political left and right. The violence among the political groups was also reached its peak towards the latter half of the decade. The military officials declared that the military forces had high degree of discomfort with the political atmosphere the society experienced, because the current government was unable to prevent terrorist activities.¹¹³ With this very motivation, the coup commander Kenan Evren announced on 12 September 1980 that the Turkish army has taken over the state administration in order to suppress terrorism and anarchy, restore economic growth and stability, introduce a new Constitution, and to collaborate with the civilian politicians for the effective arrangements.¹¹⁴

After the military coup d'état in 1980 conducted by General Evren, the political dynamics in Turkey changed radically. The regulations of this new military government were cruel on several counts. Apart from the dismissal of tens of thousands from the institutions or political parties, forced disappearance, imprisonment, torture, and execution of political targets were almost ordinary occurrences under the military regime. Moreover, the heavily censored media was unable to reveal the brutal policies of the military state. While the newly-emerged military arrangements were regulated, the citizens were allowed to vote for the new government in 1983. After 1983 elections, Turgut Özal was appointed to the prime

¹¹³ Tanel Demirel, "The Turkish Military's Decision to Intervene: 12 September 1980," *Armed Force & Society* 29, no. 2 (Winter 2003): 258–59.

¹¹⁴ William Hale, "Transitions to Civilian Governments in Turkey: The Military Perspective," in *State, Democracy, and the Military: Turkey in The 1980s*, ed. Metin Heper and Ahmet Evin (Berlin: De Gruyter, Inc., 1988), 166, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/bilgi-ebooks/detail.action?docID=3042449>.

ministry. the same year, the new government reformed the Constitution.¹¹⁵ The regulation prohibited the non-Turkish languages in the publishing:

“Aside from the first official language of states recognized by the Turkish State, the announcing, disseminating, or publishing of thoughts in any language is forbidden. (Article 2)

The use of any language but Turkish as a mother tongue or being engaged in any type of activity of its dissemination is forbidden. (Article 3a)”¹¹⁶

As it can be clearly seen in the articles above, advocacy for the cultural right was strictly limited both by the military regime and civil government as its partner. As a result of this process, a significant number of citizens fled to the European countries; however, forced migration created a new kind of political activism for the immigrants. The political advantages offered by most European countries opened a fresh path for identity politics as well. Furthermore, the Kurdish diaspora in Europe acquired critical importance for the Kurdish movement in Turkey.¹¹⁷ Moreover, Kurdish nationalist groups in Turkey were not only politically, but also financially supported by the European diaspora.

For the Kurds who fled to Europe, the number of linguistic and cultural activities also increased. Apart from the periodicals and books in Kurdish which were published in Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, these publications reached very large circulation among the Kurdish populace live throughout the European diaspora.¹¹⁸ Martin van Bruinessen details the interaction between the cultural activities in the European diaspora and in Turkey as follows:

¹¹⁵ “Türkçeden Başka Dillerle Yapılacak Yayınlar Hakkında Kanun,” 2932 § (1983), https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmc066/kanundmc066/kanundmc06602932.pdf.

¹¹⁶ The English version of these articles belongs to the Human Rights Watch report on the free expression in Turkey. “Restrictions on the Use of the Kurdish Language,” in *Violations of Free Expression in Turkey* (The United States of America: Human Rights Watch, 1999), 88–111, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/1999/turkey/turkey993-08.htm>.

¹¹⁷ Martin Van Bruinessen, “Shifting National and Ethnic Identities: The Kurds in Turkey and the European Diaspora,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 18, no. 1 (1998): 46.

¹¹⁸ Bruinessen, 47.

“The reading public of these publications has so far consisted of only a small fraction of the Kurds and 'potential Kurds' in Europe. But this readership and the contributing authors nevertheless constituted enough of a critical mass for the development of a modern written language. Returning labour migrants smuggled books and journals into Turkey, but they can hardly have reached larger audiences there than in Europe. This changed when in 1991 the law on publications in other languages than Turkish was withdrawn, and books and journals in Kurdish could be published inside Turkey again. Books that had earlier appeared in Europe were reprinted in Turkey, and several Kurdish journals moved their offices from Europe to Turkey. New Kurdish journals were also established, and there was a veritable boom in Kurdish publishing.”¹¹⁹

The political limitations and strict regulations in Turkey created a premise that diaspora had the potential to create a totally new political and cultural atmosphere. Although the changing dynamics resulted in an active diaspora, the aim was to reach the populace living in Turkey as well. While the activities were carried out in the European countries, some organizations gained importance by gathering migrants among the diaspora community. These gatherings were also arranged by the nationalist groups in order to continue active political participation.

The 1990s welcomed this ever-evolving agenda, dubbed now as identity politics. cultural groups internationally advocated for their public visibility. As Identity politics garnered increasing attention, cultural groups began to focus more on religious and linguistic research as well. During this very period, the demand for cultural rights was further raised; thus, multiculturalism and cultural pluralism became widely discussed both in politics and academia. cultural activists thereby started to find out cultural symbols and reproduce them both in discursive and performative dimension.

Under this newly-emerged phenomenon, the Özal Government reformed a law in 1991. This reform aimed at repealing 1983 law which prohibited publications in

¹¹⁹ Bruinessen, 47.

any languages but Turkish. Apart from an increase in cultural revival, these years were crucial for the Turkish government in considering the Kurdish question. Contrary to the cultural revival in this period, the oppressive regime continued to actively interfere with the Kurdish society.

2.5 The Fragmented Nationalism(s): The Kurdish Movement and Linguistic Activism for Zazaki

In this section, I will detail the relationship between the Kurdish movement and linguistic activism for the Zazaki language. Before analyzing the interaction among these two, some concepts must first be explained. First, I am aware of the fact that the Kurdish society is historically plural like any other societies. pluralism, in this sense, also refers to a range of different cultural, social and political expressions and resistance among the Kurds. The Kurdish movement is thereby used herein as a general signifier in order to indicate a plurality of political and/or military movements.¹²⁰ Throughout this study, I correspondingly used the term in order to indicate the plurality, which inheres the Kurdish populace and their political engagements.

The first structured Kurdish movement appeared in the first decades of the 20th century. Both the Kurdish intelligentsia and Kurdish clubs across Kurdistan produced a degree of national consciousness.¹²¹ The ever-evolving Kurdish nationalism, however, was cut off after the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Until the 1950s, their public visibility was absorbed by the state elites. As Hamit Bozarslan stated, even the ‘re-birth’ of the Kurdish movement in the 1950s and 1960s did not see the term ‘nationalism’ used by the Kurdish movements themselves.¹²² underground organizations offered a variety of political expressions

¹²⁰ Bozarslan, “‘Being in Time’: The Kurdish Movement and Universal Quests,” 61.

¹²¹ Bozarslan, 65.

¹²² Bozarslan, 63.

for the Kurdish community in response to the question of their continued existence and repression by the state . While some of the groups demand absolute Kurdish independence – i.e. establishment of an independent nation-state in which would be united the four pieces of Kurdistan (Turkey, Iraq, Iran, and Syria), others produced policies based on advocacy for the cultural rights for strengthening the democratic values in every piece of Kurdistan separately. Martin van Bruinessen explained the development of the Kurdish movement in Turkey as follows:

“In Turkey, the Kurdish movement developed in close relation with the Turkish left as well as in communication with the Iraqi Kurdish movement, and the same can be said, *mutatis mutandis*, of the development of Kurdish political identity in Iran and Syria. [...] Each part of Kurdistan had its own Kurdish movement, different in character from those of the other parts – although there was communication and occasionally co-operation between them.”¹²³

Türkiye İşçi Partisi (The Turkish Workers Party; TIP, hereafter) produced the first appropriate environment for the Kurds in the Turkish politics to fight for social and economic equality and justice.¹²⁴ As TIP served as a platform through which the oppressed classes and social fragments therein were actively able to participate in the politics, the Kurds also were affiliated with it. In 1965, *Türkiye Kürdistan Demokrat Partisi* (Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey; TKDP, hereafter) was announced as the first nationalist Kurdish organization in Turkey. TKDP was a supporter of the political answer to the Kurdish question that is the federation system in Turkey.¹²⁵ *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları* (The Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths; hereafter, DDKO) was warmly welcomed by most of the Kurdish intellectuals. DDKO was expected to be advocated the cultural rights for Kurds, in addition to raising the Kurdish voice with the help of

¹²³ Martin van Bruinessen, “Kurdish Identities and Kurdish Nationalisms in the Early Twenty-First Century,” in *Erken 21. Yüzyılda Kürt Kimlikleri ve Kürt Milliyetçilikleri* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2016), 2.

¹²⁴ Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 19.

¹²⁵ Marcus, 20.

the Kurdish organizations.¹²⁶ These nationalist groups rather used the term ‘Eastern’ instead of ‘Kurd’ in order to avoid the governmental pressure and censorship. The emergence of the DDKO was detailed by Bozarslan, as follows:

“The formation of the DDKO (The Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths), which championed a Kurdified version of Turkish left-wing discourses in the early 1970s, constituted an important landmark that would become a template for almost all future Kurdish organizations. For this organization, socialism was not only the solution to the Kurdish national issue, but also a way of combating the feudalism, backwardness, and underdevelopment that had been imposed on Kurdish society. Their slogan was ‘Only socialism can save the East.... Their slogan was ‘Only socialism can save the East.’”¹²⁷

As Bozarslan stated, the DDKO was an important start for future Kurdish organizations. A great number of fragmented groups arose from DDKO political cadres. Yet, the Kurdish question would be gained public popularity thanks to *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* (PKK, hereafter), which became the mainstream Kurdish organization shortly after its establishment. By the time of the PKK’s first attack in 1984 the Kurdish question reached the peak its fever in Turkish politics and with it a range of the Kurdish organizations gained public visibility throughout the 1980s. Abdullah Öcalan, the chief leader and ideologue of the PKK, himself declared that the history of the Kurds has based on the enslavement of the Kurds. Thus, he invited the Kurds to engage in violent resistance towards the goal of Kurdish emancipation (liberation might be a better word).¹²⁸ On the other hand, numerous critical responses and contradictory approaches to those of the PKK emerged within Kurdish politics around this time. Even though the warring groups founded their demand a sort of fantasy, the newly-emerged underground organizations rejected the PKK’s policies as being revisionist in nature.¹²⁹

¹²⁶ Marcus, 21.

¹²⁷ Bozarslan, “‘Being in Time’: The Kurdish Movement and Universal Quests,” 68.

¹²⁸ Bozarslan, 71.

¹²⁹ Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence*, 34.

In recent years, the term cultural rights gained popularity in Kurdish politics. Continued struggle against language policies has produced a contemporary mother tongue movement which has thus also reproduced the history and cultural symbol of the languages. After the 2000s, the mother tongue struggle reached its peak among the Kurds thanks to with student-led demonstrations. Among the issues raised by the contemporary Kurdish movement were concerns over the fact that major Kurdish organizations had not hesitated to produce monolithic policies which largely ignored plurality in the Kurdish lands. This rejection was flourished in the Zazaki-speaking groups in particular. Moreover, some Zazaki-speaking activists developed a political discourse on that the Zazas are not Kurds, rather that they are a separate nation. The political separation among these groups was based largely on the identity question as to whether the Zazas are Kurd. Zazaki-speaking activists also heavily criticized Kurdish politics for not giving opportunity for the Zazas and their languages Zazaki.

Although most Zaza nationalists were originally affiliated with the Kurdish movements, some of them refused Kurdishness as a national identity and, consequently, left the movement. The most popular claim by this particular group is that the Zazas have been suppressed by both the Kurds and Turks. Corroborating these claims, is the fact that the leftist-socialist majority also produced a set of assimilationist agenda over the Zazaki-speaking populace.¹³⁰ Moreover, the Zaza 're-birth' did not start with the Kurdish phenomenon, Nor did the awakening was declared through the Zazaki periodicals published in the European diaspora such as *Ayre, Piya, Raa Zazaistani, Waxt, Raştiye* etc. Indeed, it can be claimed that in the wake of mid-60s the periodicals published in the European diaspora was effectively used as a medium among the Zazaki-speaking groups in their own right.¹³¹

¹³⁰ Zilfi Selcan, "Zaza Ulusal Sorunu," 2004, 2, http://zilfiselcan.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Zaza_Ulusal_Sorunu_2004c.pdf.

¹³¹ Söylemez, "Geçmişten Günümüze Zazaca Dergiler: Kronoloji, Sorunlar ve Çözümler," 176.

As it currently stands, the question of identity brings some of the Zazaki-speaking groups into conflict with the Kurdish movement. Contrary to the separatist movement, some others have developed an alternative way in order to enhance the Kurdish identity. For example, the Vate Study Group promoted the Kurdishness with the help of their regular gatherings and publications. As the case study of this thesis, the history of the Vate Group will be detailed in the next chapters.



CHAPTER III: A PIONEERING ACTOR IN STANDARDIZING ZAZAKI: THE VATE STUDY GROUP

The focus of this study, namely the Vate Study Group (*Grûba Xebatê ya Vateyî*) has been working on Zazaki grammar since 1996.¹³² The group aims at offering a cultural package based on the vernacular language to protect cultural codes and traditions from nationalist state policies. The Vate Study Group (abbreviated as the VSG henceforth) thus highlights the importance of language standardization while promoting Kurdish identity. In this chapter, I attempt to detail the motivation of the members of the Vate Study Group. This chapter hence addresses the following questions: Who are the members of the group? What goals bring them together? What are their activities? What characterizes their publication activities, in general and the Vate journal, in particular? As such, this analysis of the Vate Study Group will complement the subsequent content analysis of the journal found in Chapter IV.

3.1 Malmîsanij in Sweden

A pioneering initiative in the study of Zazaki, the VSG is primarily comprised of those who strongly believe in the necessity of a standardized Zazaki as a dialect of Kurdish. Originally formed as a language course, the VSG evolved into a language group during the early 1990s aiming to focus on the fundamental problems which Zazaki faced. The language course from VSG emerged was initially established in order to reorganize the written sources produced by the émigrés living in Sweden.¹³³

Himself an émigré, Malmîsanij highlights the differences between the Kurdish diaspora communities living in Sweden and Germany respectively. Those who migrated to Sweden mostly maintained a critical role within the Kurdish

¹³² Mehemed Malmîsanij, “Grûba Xebate Ya Vateyî,” 2009, http://www.zazaki.net/html_page.php?page=gruba_xebate. (accessed: 12/07/2018)

¹³³ Malmîsanij, interview.

nationalist groups or Kurdish intelligentsia. As Malmîsanij describes, the Zazaki language course was organized for those individuals; however, considering their political affiliation, Malmîsanij was eventually confronted with a number of difficulties in administrating the class and, consequently, decided to abolish it altogether. Following this decision, a roundtable discussion was instituted in order to better fit the needs of those who practiced superior roles in the Kurdish nationalist groups.¹³⁴ By 1996, the group came together to discuss contemporary problems of Zazaki. The first meeting lasted three days with fifteen attendees in Stockholm. At the end of the meeting, they declared their aspiration to present a package for the Zazaki-speakers whose writing skills were inadequate due to the absence of a broadly agreed grammar.¹³⁵ They also added that the mentioned package was optional to apply, i.e. a proposed grammar would be presented to the Zazaki-speaking community.¹³⁶

The VSG started with the following personalities: Saît Aydoğmuş, Osman Aytar, Mûnzûr Çem, Memo Darrêz, Haydar Diljen, Nîhat Elî, J. Espar, Cemîl Gûndoğan, Lerzan Jandîl, Çeko Kocadağ, M. Malmîsanij, Selîm Mûrat, Kamer Söylemez, Kazım Temürlenk, and Harun Turgut.¹³⁷ At the very beginning of the meetings, the participants wrote several suggestions to name their initiative. Following a debate, upon Malmîsanij's suggestion, 'Vate' meaning 'word' in Zazaki, was accepted as the name of the group.¹³⁸

It should be pointed out that to set the standard for the written Kurdish language was a major topic among Kurdish intelligentsia, in general. Hence, the VSG was not the only group aiming to create a standardized grammar. For instance,

¹³⁴ Malmîsanij.

¹³⁵ The first two meetings of the group resulted in two brochures which listed the problems pertaining to grammar and their suggested solutions for these problems. These brochures were neither on sale nor available online. During my interview with him, Malmîsanij kindly allowed me to take photos of those brochures. For the cover page with an introductory article of the first brochure, see Appendix 1. For the brochure of the second meeting, see also Appendix 2.

¹³⁶ "Derheqê Rastnuştena Kirdkî (Kirmanckî) de Kombiyayîşê Stockholmi," no. 1 (1996): 2.

¹³⁷ "Derheqê Rastnuştena Kirdkî (Kirmanckî) de Kombiyayîşê Stockholmi," 1.

¹³⁸ Malmîsanij, interview.

the Committee for the Standardization of Kurdish Kurmanji is a study group focusing on Kurdish language planning in the diaspora. The committee was formed by Kurdish intellectuals in exile in 1987.¹³⁹ Malmîsanij was usually summoned to these organizations to contribute to the discussions with his knowledge and experience. Thus, he seems to have had a chance to observe the earlier groups and their debates before the emergence of the VSG.¹⁴⁰ What made the VSG unique, however, was that it focused on Zazaki as one of the dialects of the Kurdish language. Besides, the VSG was the first attempt in terms of that it has equally focused on both the Kurdish national identity and a standardized Zazaki.

The emergence of the VSG alongside the other Kurdish language groups in the diaspora should be located in the broader political and cultural context of the late 1980s in the Europe in general and in Turkey, in particular. After the mid-1970s, most of the European countries regulated immigration policies to reducing the non-European migration since foreign labor force was not in particular demand at that moment.¹⁴¹ On the other hand, the social and civil rights of the European countries enabled the guest workers to reunify their families. Because non-European labor was no longer temporal, Europe thus started to discuss explicitly how this multi-ethnic labor force would alter entire societies and the necessary process by which governments would respond in their respective legal frameworks.¹⁴² While the discussion of multiculturalism was solidified in Europe during this period, Turkey was undergoing a significant transformation itself concerning the issue of identity politics. Around the 1980s and 1990s, the modern Turkey encountered the newly-emerging phenomenon of neoliberalism. The economically liberal approach of Turgut Özal, the prime minister of the time (1983-

¹³⁹ Salih Akin, "Language Planning in Diaspora: The Case of Kurdish Kurmanji Dialect," *Esuka – Jeful* 2, no. 1 (2011): 10.

¹⁴⁰ Malmîsanij, interview.

¹⁴¹ Rita Chin, *The Crisis of Multiculturalism in Europe: A History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 81.

¹⁴² Chin, 82.

89),¹⁴³ transformed both economic and political dynamics significantly.¹⁴⁴ This political liberalization created a relative appropriate atmosphere to discussing identity politics in general and the Kurdish question, in particular. Despite Özal's reformist perspective in political discourse, the Kurdish question was still a fervor topic. During the 1990s' Turkey, the dichotomy between political liberalization and the oppressive regime was frankly articulated and experienced. Although the release of non-Turkish publication was one of the major signals in political relief, forced migration in the Kurdish villages and enforced disappearance of the Kurdish activists increased the tension. Thus, the individuals migrated from Turkey were rather motivated, at least on this front, by the ever-evolving discourse surrounding identity and multiculturalism in the European countries.

As mentioned above, being forced into exile after the 1980 military coup built an active Kurdish diaspora in regard to freedom of expression. The diaspora community in Europe was warmly welcomed this new political agenda. The activities which were relied on identity and language played a significant role in the dynamics of the Kurdish diaspora. Indeed, Kurdish language planning was one of the major points of discussions among the Kurdish intelligentsia therein. The construction of the national identity, no doubt, has had close ties between a standardized Kurdish language. The European diaspora thus enable the language groups to create platforms without any government support in order to revitalize linguistic discussions in and about Kurdish dialect.¹⁴⁵ The number of activities on the Kurdish written language increased in exile, mainly in the Western Europe, in addition to organization, establishment, and publication of several periodicals intended to reach their member population in the diaspora.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ He was then appointed to the presidency of Turkey between 1989 and 1993.

¹⁴⁴ Doğu Ergil, "Identity Crises and Political Instability in Turkey," *Journal of International Affairs*, Turkey: A Struggle between Nation and State, 54, no. 1 (Fall 2000): 56.

¹⁴⁵ Akin, "Language Planning in Diaspora: The Case of Kurdish Kurmanji Dialect," 16.

¹⁴⁶ Gertrud Reershemius and Yaron Matras, "Standardization beyond the State: The Cases of Yiddish, Kurdish and Romani," in *Standardization of National Languages, Symposium on Language Standardization* (Hambourg: Unesco Institute for Education, 1991), 108.

The VSG thus emerged in this transnational context and Malmîsanij played a crucial role in its formation. Through his research and the articles based upon it, Malmîsanij has always guided both group members and the Zazaki readers. The current director of the Vate journal, Deniz Gunduz also notes that the VSG would not come into existence without the personal efforts of Malmîsanij.¹⁴⁷

3.2 Methods of the Vate Study Group

The personal effort of Malmîsanij gathered the leading members of the group for the second time on 28-30 April 1997. Eighteen attendees met to discuss contemporary problems facing written Zazaki. The meeting resulted in a bulletin in which the discussion topics and suggested remedies to the linguistic problems were listed.¹⁴⁸ In addition to those who were present in the first meeting, the second meeting included the following personalities: Yildiray Beyazg l, H man   iyan, Husey n Kulu, Sey dxan Kurij, Rob n Rew en, and  ukr  Urgan.¹⁴⁹ The following three were absent in the second meeting: Sa t Aydođmu , Memo Darr z, and Kazım Tem rlenk. Since the members rarely change, the names who initially took part seems significant for the history of the VSG. Thus, the participants and their affiliation with the VSG perspective have played a major role over the years.

The debates in the second meeting paid attention to the necessity of a periodical rather than a short-lived brochure to ensure the continuity of the VSG. While the proceedings of the second meeting also appeared in the form of a bulletin; the suggestion that final declarations should be published in a periodical to reinforce long-term existence was accepted by the participants.¹⁵⁰ Therefore, from 1997 on, the Vate journal would become an essential means for those who identify as Zazas

¹⁴⁷ Gunduz, interview, January 4, 2018.

¹⁴⁸ "Derheq  Kirmanck  (Kirdk ) de Kombiyay   II.   Stockholm ," no. 2 (1997): 3-16.

¹⁴⁹ "Derheq  Kirmanck  (Kirdk ) de Kombiyay   II.   Stockholm ," 3.

¹⁵⁰ J. İhsan Epar, "Kırmanccanın (Zazacanın) Standart Bir Yazı Diline Kavuşması İçin Yapılan Çalışmalar: Vate Çalışma Grubu ve Vate Dergisi," *www.zazaki.net*, February 2011, 5.

within Kurdish society.¹⁵¹ In the very first issue published in the summer of 1997, the VSG warmly welcomed the readers with the introductory article entitled ‘Wendoxan rê’ (‘To the Readers’). The article appears to have been crucial in regard to the role which it played in setting the political tone and messages which the Vate journal would convey to its readers. The editorial staff persistently underlined how the Zazaki-speaking populace spread over Kurdistan. They warned the Zazaki-speakers not to assume that the best Zazaki could be found in their own particular locale. It pointed out that every region, even every village, has its own authenticity that resulted in the flourishing of local variations.¹⁵²

The aim of consciousness-raising among Zazaki-speakers about how widespread Zazaki thus appears to have been popular in the VSG. It is obvious that the group strongly believes in the necessity for eliminating the linguistic misinformation which basically based on questions of identity. Likewise, the founding members were adamant that the unity of the Kurds should come first – this being the precise reason why they note that the Zazaki-speaking populace should be informed properly of their own diversity within the community at large. Moreover, they called the audience’s attention to ‘the enemies’ of the society whose very first aim is to wipe out the Kurdish culture and language altogether. The following quotation reflects the journal’s aim of functioning as a popular platform in which its readers would be actively involved in the shaping of Zazaki:

“If you have an opinion or a statement let them out, send to us! Previously, you did not write because of the prohibition of ‘the enemy’ which caught you and did not let you write. Today, we wish the periodical we publish to become a platform for thoughts, arts, and your words.”¹⁵³

¹⁵¹ For a few examples of the Vate journal, see Appendix 3.

¹⁵² “Wendoxan Rê,” *Vate*, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 3.

¹⁵³ “Wendoxan Rê,” *Vate*, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 3.

[“Eke fikrê şîma estê wa sereyê şîma de, eke vateyê şîma estê wa fekê şîma de nêmanê, ma rê binusênê. Vizêr şîma nê nuştîni, dişmenî nêverdaynî şîma binusênê. Ewro na kovara ma wazena biba platformê fikr, huner û vateyanê şîma.”]

As the above quotation clearly demonstrates, the VSG would create a dynamic channel for debates within the community of Zazaki-speakers. In other words, the VSG members do not simply aim to impose their views of- and opinions on Zazaki upon their readers. This introductory editorial of the journal also made it clear that the VSG was organizing meetings in order to determine linguistic mistakes in the written Zazaki and solve them in a proper way. Undoubtedly, the suggested solutions primarily highlighted the need to standardize Zazaki.

The question of how the standardization process would take place was addressed in detail. In this sense, general aspects of the standardization were listed as follows: 1) etymological research by comparing to Farsi language family, 2) while foreign words and phrases were discussed, the origins of the words would be considered, 3) if commonly-used, vernacular variants are deformed, the variant close to the original form may be preferred even if spoken in a marginal area, 4) neologism will not be applied unless any other word could be found, 5) in case of conflicting views among the participants, the majority of votes will be accepted.¹⁵⁴

As it can be observed from the listed basics, Vate's perspective posited that the language standardization which they deemed necessary did not indicate the extermination of the local variants of spoken Zazaki. Truly, as Deniz Gunduz notes, the basics of the standardization process were always intent upon a strict boundary to prevent the assimilation of the local forms.¹⁵⁵ Contrary to popular opinion, the members declare that neologism would be strongly rejected except for in cases where another option did not exist. Unlike the criticisms which arose from the groups positioned in opposition to Vate, each individual attending the Vate gatherings emphasizes that the common goal was to present the Zazaki-speaking

¹⁵⁴ Bilal Zilan, "Vate Çalışma Grubu ve Kırmanccayı (Zazacayı) Standartlaştırma Çalışmaları" (International Conference on Zaza Studies, "The Zaza People: History, Language, Culture, Identity," Yerevan, 2011), 11.

¹⁵⁵ Gunduz, interview, January 4, 2018.

populace an easy-to-use written work of reference.¹⁵⁶ Although the opposing view claims otherwise, the group insists on that the Vate perspective involved the protection of the local expressions. Some of the warring viewpoints claim that the VSG has a political agenda which assimilates Zazaki to Kurmanji by replacing Zazaki words with the Kurmanji equivalents. Furthermore, they refuse the Vate attempt as being the first one, since some groups gathered many personalities to discuss about a standardized Zazaki. In his article in the *Ware* journal, Duzgin Rez invites those who would like to study Zazaki, to follow the earliest efforts.¹⁵⁷ These efforts, he says, relied on the premise that Zazaki is not a dialect of the Kurdish language. By claiming so, they tried to develop the principles which would serve to protect Zazaki from the ‘destructive’ Kurmanji impact.

Another question raised regarding the method of standardization pertained to the sources used by the VSG members in their research. In an essay about how to undertake standardization, Bilal Zilan indicates that the very first reference for research is written sources, namely ancient Zazaki texts, as well as modern literary works¹⁵⁸. Second to these, he claimed, should be oral sources which themselves have a major role in the Kurdish history in transmitting cultural codes over generations as well as a significant place in the VSG discussions. The vocabulary of each member also served as a valuable resource in collecting all local variants of a given word or expression.¹⁵⁹ Since the research was conducted by the participants to facilitate discussion, personal knowledge and experience become crucial. Hence, while evaluating one’s offer to become a participant of the VSG debates, the first criterion was to ascertain which local accent the person in question fluently spoke.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Espar, “Kırmanccanın (Zazacanın) Standart Bir Yazı Diline Kavuşması İçin Yapılan Çalışmalar: Vate Çalışma Grubu ve Vate Dergisi,” February 2011, 4.

¹⁵⁷ Duzgin Rez, “İsveç’te Gecikmiş Sabah,” *Ware*, no. 10 (1996): 108.

¹⁵⁸ The earliest known Zazaki texts are two Zazaki mawlıds [a poetic narrative of Prophet Muhammad’s birth] penned by two mullahs, namely Ehmedê Xasî and Osman Efendiyo Babij, in 1899 and 1905, respectively.

¹⁵⁹ Zilan, “Vate Çalışma Grubu ve Kırmanccayı (Zazacayı) Standartlaştırma Çalışmaları,” 2011, 11–13.

¹⁶⁰ Seyîdxan Kurij, interview by Gül Hür, Video call, February 10, 2019.

While the methodology was determined by the group members, the essential ethical principles were also listed outright. Before the standardization discussions which were carried out by the VSG members, some premises should be admitted. First, the group perspective essentially claims that the term Kurdish language includes not only Kurmanji but also Zazaki.¹⁶¹ However, it has been widely discussed among the Zazaki-speakers that the position of Zazaki paved a controversial way for linguistic research as well. Indeed, those who wished to attend the Vate meetings should first agree with that Zazas are certainly Kurds and, correspondingly, Zazaki is a dialect of the Kurdish language. Thus, the methodology of language standardization was built on this premise.

The discussions were conducting mostly by the founding members based on the pre-listed linguistic problems of Zazaki. By following this list, the members who would attend the meeting conducted research until the meeting day. During the meeting, the consequences of each individual's research were shared among the attendees. The discussion was run by these personal research, and at the end of the each presentation the standardized vocabulary would be determined.

3.3 Profiles of Vate Members

Since the mid-1990s, the wide variety (in terms of spoken vernacular) of meeting participants has frequently been underscored by the Vate precursors. Statistical maps and figures about the members have also been regularly shared online or published in order to display how important the pluralistic approach continues to be for the Vate perspective.¹⁶² As being highly motivated about diversity, those who

¹⁶¹ Roşan Lezgîn, Roşan Lezgîn İle Zazaca Kürtçesi Üzerine, August 6, 2009, <http://www.zazaki.net/haber/rosan-lezgn-ile-zazaca-kurtcesi-uzerine-79.htm>.

¹⁶² The statistics on the VSG were consistently prepared by the Vate members. The figures about both the articles and writers of the Vate journal was generally expressed by J. İhsan Espar. For a detailed evaluation of the history of the journal based on the statistical data, see: J. İhsan Espar,

I interviewed with also pointed out that pluralism is a fundamental rule both in terms of linguistic knowledge and of political affiliation.¹⁶³

However, Bilal Zilan gave a list of participants of the Vate gatherings by stressing the participants in particular. Being divided into two periods¹⁶⁴ hindered some of the members who adhere to the Vate perspective strictly in attending all discussions, Zilan explains.¹⁶⁵ In other words, the changing aspects of group dynamics proliferated the attendees as well as results in terms of cultural and political diversity. By 2000, 80 percent of the authors were those who were living in the European countries, as Îhsan Espar detailed.¹⁶⁶ Then the late era of the periodical witnessed a vivid flourishing of the followers from the homeland, Kurdistan. Moreover, the variety among the gathering participants or article writers is rather related to which accent they speak. In order to display this variety, all meeting participants have been written with their local origin included while publishing the results to the public opinion.

The increasing significance of being affiliated with the Vate Group raises the following question: What does a member mean to the VSG? Deniz Gunduz defined a Vate member that a Zazaki-speaking actor whose enthusiasm for Zazaki is explicit and who endeavors to write it down properly by using a standardized version.¹⁶⁷ The major principle of participating in regularly organized meeting is accepted by the members. Besides, a relatively long process of becoming a member was depicted by Gunduz. The candidates should be offered by one of the group members first. Their respective qualifications are listed and discussed by the current

“Kırmanccanın (Zazacanın) Standart Bir Yazı Diline Kavuşması İçin Yapılan Çalışmalar: Vate Çalışma Grubu ve Vate Dergisi,” *www.zazaki.net*, February 2011.

¹⁶³ Seyîdxan Kuriş, interview by Gül Hür, Video call, February 10, 2019. Originally raised in a conservative family which was under the sway of the rightist approach, Kuriş says, he had a chance to encounter with the left-wing thanks to the Vate gatherings.

¹⁶⁴ 2003, which is the year of publishing it in Istanbul, refers to the beginning of the second period. This second stage of the periodical will be detailed afterward.

¹⁶⁵ Zilan, “Vate Çalışma Grubu ve Kırmanccayı (Zazacayı) Standartlaştırma Çalışmaları,” 2011, 5.

¹⁶⁶ Espar, “Kırmanccanın (Zazacanın) Standart Bir Yazı Diline Kavuşması İçin Yapılan Çalışmalar: Vate Çalışma Grubu ve Vate Dergisi,” February 2011, 7.

¹⁶⁷ Deniz Gunduz, interview by Gül Hür, in Istanbul, February 4, 2019.

participants. At the end of the discussion session held by the current participants, finally, the potential applicant's affiliation is decided by vote. The criteria considered to be basic by the members is; 1) Extensive knowledge of the Zazaki language, 2) A good knowledge of different regions of Zazaki-speaking society, 3) Be educated in cognate languages will be preferred, 4) Since gender mainstreamed meetings are promoted, women participation will be encouraged by the Vate perspective.¹⁶⁸

Generally speaking, the role of the actors within the Vate study can be divided into three: the founder members (the editorial staff), members, meeting participants, and followers. The separation among them is quite undefined. Yet, the whole process has enabled the actors who have close ties to the Vate (as a definition refers to a wide perspective in terms of identity, culture, language, and in general of politics) to transverse limits among the roles played therein. The founder members precisely can be identified with the close attachment that an individual has, such as Malmîsanij, Îhsan Espar, Seyîdxan Kurij, and Deniz Gunduz do.¹⁶⁹ Unlike a founder member, the others count as a contributor which has a parallel meaning with the meeting participant. The ambiguous difference between these two is in regard to sustainability. Although the enrollment in the group requires a full-featured effort, some of the individuals demonstrated an unwillingness to participate regularly. In sum, one has an opportunity to attend the meetings when they meet the aforementioned prerequisites. Yet, in case of a dispute, a short-lived contribution is quite possible.¹⁷⁰ Last, the followers can be defined as the audience

¹⁶⁸ Mehemed Malmîsanij, interview by Gül Hür, in Diyarbakır, March 2, 2019. As those all who I interviewed with stated, the last criterion is the weakest one. Apart from being a wishful criterion, unfortunately, women members are still less. Malmîsanij also criticized the whole standardization process that creating a male-dominant research area (actually for the lexical compilation) with expressing his sorrow.

¹⁶⁹ These names have active roles in the meeting organization, publications, and research. Despite he personally took a major role after 2003, Deniz Gunduz occupies a substantial role within the Vate Group.

¹⁷⁰ Mehemed Malmîsanij, interview by Gül Hür, in Diyarbakır, March 2, 2019. Truly, Malmîsanij explained the conflict among the members which resulted in that some of the opponents rejected to participate in the gatherings thereafter.

as well, who passively supported the group perspective by receiving the cultural and political package they offer.

Pertaining to the significance of the roles played by founding members, the biographies of the editorial staff must be discussed in regard to their position within the Vate study group being ones so crucial. Malmîsanij, Deniz Gunduz, and Seyîdxan Kuriş will be explained because of their current role. Malmîsanij¹⁷¹ as the chief editor of the periodical also initiated the Vate attempt in Sweden under the language course he has organized. He was born and raised in Diyarbakır in 1952. As the member of a conservative Muslim family, he was raised under the influence of traditional Muslim doctrine. After he was educated within the faculty of theology, he was appointed to Adıyaman as a teacher. As he was affiliated with the Kurdish nationalist groups, he has stated that he was frequently expelled by the Ministry of National Education at the time. Despite the political despotism levied by the state against Kurds, he insisted on the research on the compilation of the local words and expressions in Zazaki. After the 1980 military coup, he was forced to flee abroad. In 1981, he took refuge in Sweden through the Black Sea and Syria. Malmîsanij spent most of his life in Sweden. Moreover, he also held a master's degree from Goteburg University with a dissertation on multiculturalism in Sweden. He studied Farsi both in Uppsala and Sorbonne University as well.¹⁷²

Apart from his position as the founder of an attempt that studying a standard Zazaki, Malmîsanij has also extensively researched on Kurmanji. He contributed several studies about Kurdish society as well. He is the writer of the following books: *Ferhengê Dimilkî-Tirkî* (Uppsala, 1987), *Folklorê Ma ra Çend Numûney* (Uppsala, 1991), *Said-i Nursi ve Kürt Sorunu* (Stockholm, 1991), *Cızira Botanlı Bedirhaniler ve Bedirhani Ailesi Derneği'nin Tutanakları*¹⁷³ (Stockholm, 1994),

¹⁷¹ Despite the fact that his real name is Mehmet Tayfun, the pen name Malmîsanij (in Zazaki it means one who is from the village *Malmîsan*) becomes more popular than his official name.

¹⁷² Malmîsanij, interview.

¹⁷³ One of his acknowledged books on Bedirhan family published by Avesta Publishing House in 2000 in Istanbul.

Şêx Seîd Dî (Istanbul 2009), Kûrtçede Ses Değişimi (Istanbul, 2013), and Kurmancca ile Karşılaştırmalı Kırmancca (Zazaca) Dilbilgisi (Istanbul, 2015). Besides, he has a full mastery of Zazaki (native-speaker), Turkish (native-speaker), and Kurmanji language; in addition, he has working knowledge of Swedish, Farsi, Gurani, and Sorani.

On the other hand, Deniz Gunduz who is the current owner of both the Vate Journal and Vate Publishing House has enormous influence within the Vate perspective in terms of his long-termed effort. Indeed, Malmîsanij explained that Deniz Gunduz occupied a key role in that moving the periodical in Turkey thanks to his personal devotion.¹⁷⁴ Deniz Gunduz was born and raised in Muş in 1976. In Bitlis, where he moved to continue the high-school education with the help of his older brother, he encountered with the left-wing groups. Towards his early 20s, Gunduz pointed out that the significance of the Kurdish identity started to enlarge in his political opinion.¹⁷⁵ While he left the bachelor degree in Art History from Anadolu University in Eskişehir, he was working on his Zazaki novel which was written based on the folktales of Armenian-Kurdish relationship in Varto, Muş. He worked in Komal Publishing House between 1996-1998. In 2000, he finally published the first Zazaki novel entitled as *Kilama Pepûgî* (The Song of Bird) with the financial support of Vartan Company. Since 2003, he is official owner of both the periodical and publishing house of Vate. In addition to his literary works, he prepared the Zazaki grammar book for the beginners as well.¹⁷⁶

Finally, Sadi Koçak, or with his pen name Seyîdxan Kurij¹⁷⁷, was born in Bingöl in 1960. As an individual who experienced urban way of life thanks to his parents' connection, Kurij underlined that he did not face the obstacles which most of the Kurds were subjected to. In 1980, he was accepted in Mechanical Engineering at Uludağ University in Bursa. After his graduation in 1987, he worked as an engineer

¹⁷⁴ Malmîsanij, interview.

¹⁷⁵ Gunduz, interview, January 4, 2018.

¹⁷⁶ Deniz Gündüz, *Kürtçe Kırmancca/Zazaca Dil Dersleri* (İstanbul: Vate Yayınevi, 2013).

¹⁷⁷ In Zazaki, Kurij means the one who is from the village *Kur*.

in a dam. Thereafter, he migrated to Germany as a refugee in 1988. Besides, he received a master's degree in Mechanical Engineering as well. He now works for the official authorities as a certified translator both in Zazaki and Kurmanji.¹⁷⁸

In sum, the personal effort of some actors has frankly opened a fresh approach towards a language group which aims to develop written Zazaki without excluding the Kurdish identity. As the bearer of Zazaki-speaker voice, the group also intends to enrich Zazaki as an intellectual language. All the activities which the Vate Group carried out indicate an effort to reinforce Zazaki-speakers as belonging within the Kurdish identity. The next chapter of this thesis will be focused on the periodical of the group in between 1997-2003 in order to articulate a better understanding of the role of the Vate journal in constructing the Kurdish identity.

¹⁷⁸ Kurij, interview.

CHAPTER IV: THE ANALYSIS OF THE VATE JOURNAL (1997-2003)

This chapter addresses the major topics which were discussed during the first period (1997-2003) of the Vate journal. In this first period, the Vate journal was published in Stockholm by a group of Zazaki-speaking activists who fled to Sweden. the journal aimed at reaching the Zazaki-speaking audience living primarily in the European diaspora. The second distinct period of Vate publishing started with that the printing and publishing activities of the periodical moved to Istanbul in 2003. The first period of the journal consists of the topics which have mostly referred to the Kurdish national identity. Since this study concentrates on the role of the Vate journal in the construction of the Kurdish identity, the first period will be used in order to provide a comprehensive context for analysis. Moreover, the first period enabled this study to focus on the term ‘diaspora’ as well. major themes of the articles published in the first period will be detailed during this chapter; however, Before analyzing the journal articles by considering with the identity construction, I will first present a brief historical background of the Vate Study Group (hereafter, the VSG) in order to underscore the significance of the journal’s division into two periods.

Under the changing dynamics of modern Turkey, the VSG emerged in the European diaspora. First, the VSG established in diaspora as a result of the military government of the 1980 coup. During the 1980s, Turkish military involvement in politics created a long-termed pressure over the activist groups – particularly Kurdish activists. Not only were the activities of activists limited - regardless of their political affiliation - but also civil and political rights were limited by the National Security Council (hereafter, NSC).¹⁷⁹ Thus, political oppression has caused the displacement of thousands of people, mostly to the Western countries. Some of the political actors fled to Western-Europe, which has resulted in the newly emerged, politically active diaspora. The European diaspora also provided the

¹⁷⁹ Elifcan Karacan, *Remembering the 1980 Turkish Military Coup d’État: Memory, Violence, and Trauma*, 2014, 81.

political refugees fresh platforms where they can discuss the ethnic crisis in terms of identity politics, multiculturalism and cultural plurality.

Due to the nationalist policies of the Turkish military government, demand for the cultural rights by Kurdish nationalist organizations emerged in the European diaspora. Thanks to the diaspora, the Kurdish groups who have forced into exile experienced a fresh way of political participation in terms of human rights of the minority groups. Both social and financial support from some of the European governments¹⁸⁰ encouraged these minority groups in creating new platforms. By these means, the periodicals published by the minority organizations were used among the minority groups to increase national awareness.¹⁸¹ Furthermore, the periodicals played a mediator role in mobilizing the members of the cultural groups in the diaspora. The increasing number of the periodical publishing indeed is a major signal for an active diaspora in terms of political participation. Vate, thus, emerged within the supportive policies of the Sweden authorities.

While the European countries were discussing the integration of the immigrants in the light of the terms such as multiculturalism and pluralism during the 1990s, the ethnic groups in Turkey, too, were faced with a political transformation. The history of modern Turkey has experienced a political transformation through the 2000s. Most of the taboos, which were deeply rooted in

¹⁸⁰ The minority politics in Sweden, for example, seems rather be supportive in funds to make sure that the mentioned groups practice daily life without excluding their own culture, tradition, and language. That is why all of the VSG members I interviewed with eulogized the Swedish diaspora. For the list of the organizations with financial support by the Swedish Integration Board, see: Miguel Benito, "Active Civic Participation of Immigrants in Sweden," Country Report (Oldenburg: POLITIS, 2005), 34, www.uni-oldenburg.de/politis-europe. While Northern European countries seem to be promoting multicultural policies since the 1970s, Germany, for instance, regulated the immigration policy based more on the term integration in the first period of the 1990s. The German diaspora besides is known as being more indecisive to the immigrant communities. For a comparison between the German and Swedish diaspora in terms of multiculturalism, also see: Bahar Başer, *Diasporada Türk-Kürt Sorunu: Almanya ve İsveç'te İkinci Kuşak Göçmenler*, 1st ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013), 99–149.

¹⁸¹ Funding of books and journals and financial support to ethnically based organizations are the main implementation of the immigrant regulation of Sweden. Lisa Åkesson, "Multicultural Ideology and Transnational Family Ties among Descendants of Cape Verdeans in Sweden," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37, no. 2 (2011): 219.

the political discourse, were eventually deconstructed after the 2000s. The forward steps to European Union to meet the membership criteria, Justice and Development Party's (JDP) election win, and increasing neoliberal discourse as a newly-formed phenomenon raised a number of changes in Turkey's politics.¹⁸² Additionally, the vivid dynamics of the Kurdish question were needed to be discussed in terms of identity politics, which was another increasing phenomenon of the 2000s. After 2000, the gatherings on the recognition of the Kurdish question arranged by both intellectuals and human right activists. Moreover, universities such as Istanbul Bilgi, Boğaziçi, and Sabancı organized the conferences on confronting the past aiming at deconstructing the mainstream narrative of Kemalism on the ethnic groups in Turkey, but mostly the Kurds.¹⁸³ Some NGOs also contributed to the current discussions held by academia. These newly-formed activities which the non-governmental organizations carried out received financial support namely from European Union (EU) Commission.¹⁸⁴ All the discussions held by both academia and the NGOs presented a fresh agenda for the governmental authorities to revise the lasting nationalist ideology of the state. In sum, the 2000s paved a way through the reformation of nationalist politics over the ethnic groups, including, but not limited to, the Kurdish community.

The relatively relieved atmosphere surrounding the Kurdish question encouraged those whose political activities were rapidly interrupted by the military government in 1980. The founding members of the VSG were also arguing the current changing dynamics in Turkish politics after the 2000s. After a brief evaluation, the editorial team of the Vate journal decided to move printing and publishing activities from Stockholm to Istanbul.¹⁸⁵ This relocation has been called 'the second period' by the editorial cadre. The very first issue published in 2003 in

¹⁸² Cengiz Gunes, *The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey: From Protest to Resistance* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 3.

¹⁸³ Ayşe Betül Çelik, "Turkey: The Kurdish Question and the Coercive State," in *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: Concepts, Cases, Lessons*, ed. Thaina Paffenholz (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2010), 164.

¹⁸⁴ Çelik, 165.

¹⁸⁵ Malmîsanij, interview.

Istanbul enumerated as 'the 1st issue' in order to emphasize the changing dynamics in the periodical as well.

The journal was henceforth divided into two periods wherein the second one signals a newly-emerged agenda. The agenda was that Turkey Kurds were no longer compelled to raise their voice from diaspora since hometown was open to them. The first issue of this new era was announced with the good news that the Vate had an office in Istanbul.¹⁸⁶ That said, the announcement of the second period was not the only signal for change. In 2003, Vate Publishing House launched in Istanbul in order to encourage the authors who write based on the Vate standard. The increasing role of Deniz Gunduz also emerged in this very period as he undertook the responsibility of both the journal and publishing house.¹⁸⁷ Gunduz himself underlines the need for the publishing house in which Zazaki literary works could have taken place.¹⁸⁸ Thus, the holistic approach to written Zazaki emerged through the establishment of both the journal and publishing house in Istanbul as the bearer of the standard Zazaki.

In early 2010, it can be observed that the political content within the journal articles tended to decrease. Instead, the editorial staff would rather enlarge the scope of the intellectual expression in Zazaki such as translating from world literature to Zazaki, and publicizing literary works written by the authors who have used the Vate standard.¹⁸⁹ Generally speaking, this second period of the journal does not have a direct bearing on the focus of this study. Since the thesis tries to argue that how the Vate perspective, in general, played a role in the construction of the Kurdish identity; the publishing activity of the VSG gains importance based on the mediator role that the periodical has played. As such, the Vate journal can be

¹⁸⁶ "Wendoxan Rê," *Vate*, no. 1 (21) (Autumn 2003): 3.

¹⁸⁷ C.Z. Pîranij, "Weşanxaneyê Vateyî Yew Îhtiyac Bî," in *Veng û Vate* (Istanbul: Vate, 2009), 46.

¹⁸⁸ Gunduz, interview, January 4, 2018.

¹⁸⁹ It is beyond the scope of this thesis to compare these two periods in detail. Although this study focuses on the first period, the era after 2003 will be the reference for the comparison in some instances.

considered as a tool for disseminating the premise that the Zazas belong to Kurdish national identity. Ever since its emergence, the Vate perspective clearly has been motivated by this premise. Finally, the first period of the journal (1997-2003) not only provides a broader historical context for this study but also contributes by integrating a newly-emerged term, diaspora to the conceptual framework which comprised mainly of language politics and language standardization.

Before analyzing the first era of the Vate journal, it is necessary to reveal some remarks on the common aspects related to the content. First, several topics dominated content within the first period. The prominent topics between 1997-2003 have close ties with the motivation that VSG was built on: promoting the Kurdish identity. Since the VSG's motto is that the Zazas are Kurds and Zazaki is a dialect of the Kurdish language, national belonging appears as a major point at first glance. Undoubtedly, an absolute amount of the group members agrees on this motto regardless of their political affiliation.¹⁹⁰ It is also obvious that the differing political affiliation of the members did not affect the motivation of supporting the Kurdish identity at all. The emergence of this motto is precisely what allows rounding up all the other subjects in a coherent whole.

Apart from the announcement of national belonging to the Kurdish identity, the content of the articles published in the journal shaped under the influence of this common premise. It can be clearly observed that the other subjects which were issued by the authors somehow refer back to the identity question. Even though the Vate journal emerged by the effort of a group of Zazaki-speaking volunteer in order to set a standard for Zazaki, language politics, language standardization, and activism for mother tongue came second. In other words, all the topics related to the language were presented with a close tie to Kurdish national identity. The linguistic problems are thus the other major topic which held prominence among

¹⁹⁰ Mehemed Malmîsanij, interview by Gül Hür, in Diyarbakır, March 2, 2019. Whole group members praise the politically plural structure of the VSG and the journal. Although the political affiliation of both the authors and audience of the Vate journal radically differ, the only principle has been agreed with: The Zazas are Kurd, therefore Zazaki is a dialect of the Kurdish language.

the articles published in the Vate journal. Since the language-dialect dichotomy has always been one of unremitting conflicts among the Zazaki language activists, the position of Zazaki has also been a mediator in promoting the Kurdish identity. The standardization of Zazaki, struggle against the language assimilation over Kurdistan, strengthening knowledge and production in Zazaki written culture, and empowering the lexical works are crucial categorizations which consisted in the great importance of mother tongue. Here is the correlation between language and dialect:

“Since this historical process can be indefinitely repeated, the two terms are cyclically applicable, with “language” always the superordinate and “dialect” the subordinate term. This is also clear from the kind of formal structures into which they can be placed: “X is a dialect of language Y,” or “Y has the dialects X and Z” (never, for example, “Y is a language of dialect X”). “Language” as the superordinate term can be used without reference to dialects, but “dialect” is meaningless unless it is implied that there are other dialects and a language to which they can be said to “belong.” Hence every dialect is a language, but not every language is a dialect.”¹⁹¹

The self-ascription of the group members predominantly gains a more comprehensive meaning in terms of the linguistic position of Zazaki, which includes all the dialects of the Kurdish language such as Kurmanji, Gorani, and Sorani. Especially the editorial staff, but also almost all followers of the Vate standard, claims that the definition of ‘the Kurdish language’ should be used as a blanket term. Mehemed Malmîsanij, for instance, classifies Zazaki as a dialect of the Kurdish language at the very beginning of one of his featured studies.¹⁹² Through this claim, Malmîsanij also defines ‘the Kurdish language’ in the aforementioned meaning, as a blanket term in which Kurmanji, Gorani, Sorani, and Zazaki have been included in. He first warns the audience about the position of Zazaki, thereby the detail of his entire study comes later. On the other hand, in the website zazaki.net – which was created as a platform for both the writers of the

¹⁹¹ Haugen Einar, “Dialect, Language, Nation,” *American Anthropologist* 68, no. 4 (1966): 923.

¹⁹² Mehemed Malmîsanij, *Kürtçede Ses Değişimi*, 1st ed. (Istanbul: Vate Yayınevi, 2013), 11.

Vate journal and the followers of the Vate standard, the articles with a declaration that Zazaki is a dialect of the Kurdish language were also published. Zeki Alimoğlu, one of the followers of the VSG's study, wrote his opinions on Zazaki by detailing the Zaza's Kurdishness first.¹⁹³ As can be seen from both examples, the Vate perspective generally asserts that the writers to clearly declare that Zazaki is one of the dialects of the Kurdish language. After this stage, contemporary linguistic problems can be discussed in the light of this warning.

The other dominant subject issued in the journal is directly related to some Islamic commentaries in the Zazaki-speaking regions. The Vate journal has a prominent characteristic in that it is consistently promoting the role of religion (precisely, of Islam) in the discursive construction of the Kurdish nation by imposing the national duty of Zaza mullahs. As will be seen during the next sections of this study, the cultural right of the individuals, in general, is supposed to be maintained through Islamic references. The mullahs, who are native speakers in Zazaki, should subsequently use these references in order to enhance the national conscious among the Zazaki populace. Moreover, it is expected that the religious ceremonies held by Zaza mullahs must be performed in Zazaki.¹⁹⁴ In sum, the relationship between the Zazaki-speaking community and the religious obligations will be detailed.

Lastly, the massacres committed by Turkish nationalism over Kurdistan and its people has been frequently written to the Vate journal. In the eyes of the VSG,

¹⁹³ Zeki Alimoğlu, "Zazaca Kürtçenin Bir Lehçesidir," 2010, <http://www.zazaki.net/haber/zazaca-kurtcenin-bir-lehcesidir-721.htm>.

¹⁹⁴ In 2013, I visited Mardin Artuklu University's featured institute by the name of Institute of Living Languages. I have met the students of the Zazaki class who were attending the lectures from different Zazaki-speaking provinces such as Urfa, Bingöl, Elazığ, Muş, and Dersim. One of the students I had a chance to meet were holding religious ceremonies as a mullah. His entourage call him as Seyda, which means superior of a religious order, i.e. a title of respect. Once Seyda mentioned the great importance of speaking for one in her native language, because it is definitely a religious obligation in the light of the Islamic perspective he had. Additionally, he stated that refusing her own culture and language is a deadly sin either. That is why he performed all the ceremonies in Zazaki, and also highly recommended for Zazaki-speakers who were appointed to a religious duty to follow the same obligation.

all brutal interference from the Turkish government to the eastern part of Turkey should be dubbed as massacre (in some cases, as genocide) against the Kurdish society, because the Vate perspective strongly supports the unity of Kurdistan. Undoubtedly, the military intervention to Dersim region in winter 1937, too, is the result of this brutal state policy. Therefore, the Dersim tragedy in 1937-1938 is the last topic which has been usually occurred in the periodical. In the Vate case, Dersim '38 has been often written based on the oral tradition which has been widely discussed as an alternative historical source.¹⁹⁵ As will be detailed below, Mûnzûr Çem, in particular, focuses more on 1937-38 massacre among the other writers. Yet, the Vate perspective as a whole has been interested in Dersim massacre in order to highlight the shared collective identity built on the oppressive Turkish policies over Kurdistan.

Apart from the abovementioned major subjects issued in the journal, several more characteristics of the Vate periodical should be listed. First, the self-ascription of the Zazaki-speaking populace radically changes based on the region it has spoken.¹⁹⁶ In the light of this plurality, the preference of the editorial staff seems interesting. Zazaki, as a globally-known name, has been rarely used by the Vate editors among the others, because 'the Zaza' itself was perceived as a signal of supporting the separatist groups with an absolute rejection of the Kurdish identity. Instead, the founder members chose to use the local variations for standarding the name of the language. At the very beginning they used both '*Kirmanckî* (*Dimilkî*)'¹⁹⁷ and '*Kirmanckî (Zazakî)*'. The difference between these two is not

¹⁹⁵ The acknowledged musicians Metin and Kemal Kahraman, who are both composers and local ethnographers, are performing Dersim traditional music for years. Because their recent musical interest is the '38 laments, they have released an album called *The Politic Laments of Dersim* in 2019. The vocal of the album, Maviş Güneşer explains the unusualness of using the term 'politic' while describing the musical performance. She adds that Dersim laments which refer to the historical tragedies such as wars, massacres or genocides also emerged as the historical source. For more detail, see: Ali İsmail Kaçar, "Çanakkale'den Kore'ye Dersim, Ağıtlarla Dile Geldi," T24, March 25, 2019, <https://t24.com.tr/haber/canakkale-den-kore-ye-dersim-agitlarla-dile-geldi,813796>.

¹⁹⁶ Mesut Keskin, "Zaza Dili," *Bingöl Üniversitesi Yaşayan Diller Enstitüsü Dergisi* 1, no. 1 (January 2015): 94–96.

¹⁹⁷ Bîrgülê, "'Vate'yî Ser o Kombîyayîş,'" *Vate*, no. 2 (Autumn 1997): 92.

obvious at all. The instability of the group while standardizing the language spoken by ‘the Zazas’ was stressed by Malmîsanij as well.¹⁹⁸ He points out the variety of names which are using all parts of Zazaki-speaking regions for years. Since there is a flourish naming such as Kirmancki, Dimîlkî, Zazakî, and Sobe, the founding members singled out two of them.¹⁹⁹

Although the dominance of the subjects related to the Kurdish history and language is obvious, it is be noted that there are certain responsibilities shared among the founding members of the periodical. Since the emergence of the periodical, there has been a core cadre whose responsibilities, in an intellectual meaning, is specifically shared. For example, Mehemed Malmîsanij who is the chief authority both in the periodical and VSG, generally writes up the basis of Zazaki grammar in frequently refering the local variants of Zazaki. Not only in Turkey but also in all pieces of the divided Kurdistan, there are few small groups who are speaking in Zazaki-similar languages. Malmîsanij seeks out these kinds of groups and examines thoroughly the characteristics of the languages they speak as well. Hewrami/Hawrami, for instance, is one of the languages which Malmîsanij has found out.²⁰⁰ Despite the fact that there are some other writers who are interested in lexicology within editors, Malmîsanij usually wrote about it as well.²⁰¹ On the other hand, Lerzan Jandîl²⁰² is a chronicler whose very first aim is to emphasize the social, economic and political situation of the Kurds in four regions,

¹⁹⁸ Malmîsanij, interview.

¹⁹⁹ Both the brochures of the 1996 and 1997 meetings were titled different by the founding members of the periodical. “Derheqê Kirmanckî (Kirdkî) de Kombiyayîşê II. ê Stockholmî,” no. 2 (1997): 3–16; “Derheqê Rastnuştina Kirdkî (Kirmanckî) de Kombiyayîşê Stockholmî,” no. 1 (1996): 1–16.

²⁰⁰ Malmîsanij, “Lehçeya Hewramkî (Gorankî) Ra,” *Vate*, no. 7 (Spring 1999): 4–33.

²⁰¹ Mûnzûr Çem, *Ferheng: Kurdî-Tirkî (Zazakî)*, 1st ed. (Stockholm, 1994).

²⁰² During the interview, Seyîdxan Kurîj frankly mentioned the separations of some VSG members. He also stated that Lerzan Jandîl was one of them who left the VSG meetings at the very beginning of the periodical. Seyîdxan Kurîj, interview by Gül Hür, Video call, February 10, 2019.

particularly during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire and the emergence of the modern Turkey.²⁰³

Generally speaking, Mûnzûr Çem is responsible for both Dersim '38 massacre and Dersimli personalities who are culturally active, such as the poets, writers, and musicians. Almost in every single issue until the 20th issue of the *Vate* periodical, Çem writes up at least 10-page articles about Dersim region. Indeed, the first year of the publication (1997-1998) has witnessed the intensity of the articles about Dersim tradition and history. Moreover, the *Vate* journal initially published one of Mûnzûr Çem's article about '38 tragedy as the very first article for the first issue.²⁰⁴ This article was an interview with Civrayîlê Hemê Dundî who was a witness during the military interference to Dersim in 1937-38. Çem was asking questions about the interference in detail in order to learn who exactly were massacred by the state force. Throughout the first period of the journal, the history of Dersim has issued in detail especially by Mûnzûr Çem. Then, what is the meaning of both the history and tradition of Dersim for the *Vate* perspective? Why did the *Vate* journal issue Dersim region in a broader context? As it can be seen during the next sections, the history of Dersim plays a crucial role in the construction of the Kurdish identity. That is why Dersim is unique for the *Vate* perspective both in the VSG and in the periodical.

After a brief account of the shared responsibilities among the editorial staff, I finally refer to the audience of the periodical. The audience of the *Vate* has at first shaped around the political organizations which have refused to be a supporter of the mainstream Kurdish parties by the name of *Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan* (hereafter, PKK). These groups blamed PKK for not fighting for the unified Kurdistan. Instead, they claimed that the PKK-like organizations rather defend

²⁰³ Lerzan Jandîl, "Sedserra 19îne de Halê Împaratorîyê Osmanîyan û Vurîyenê Demî II," *Vate*, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 22–31; Lerzan Jandîl, "Sedserra 19îne de Halê Împaratorîyê Osmanîyan û Vurîyenê Demî," *Vate*, no. 2 (Autumn 1997): 59–75.

²⁰⁴ Mûnzûr Çem, "Roze ve Roze Pê Ma Xapit, Hata Ke Ma Qir Kerdîme," *Vate*, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 5–21.

coexistence of the Kurds with the dominant nationalities such as the Turks, Persians, and Arabs. Not only the national identity but also the Kurdish language has been in danger under the sway of these states. It is, however, a necessity to avoid the interference of the nation-states over the fragmented Kurdistan. The Zazaki-speaking separatist personalities were closer to the Vate perspective since the founding members of the periodical generally affiliated with the following Kurdish organizations: KOMKAR, Rizgarî, Özgürlük Yolu (Path for the Emancipation). In other words, although the basic principles of the group have embraced the very existence of different political affiliations – i.e. a wide scope from the national separatism to nationalist-conservatism – all the founder members were related to the non-PKK organizations. These Kurdish groups also agreed with that Kurdish-Kurmanji has a major role in those groups. That is why the Zazaki cannot find a place among these organizations. This common approach has brought some of the Zazaki-speaking groups and the Vate initiative together with particular attention to the unity of the Kurds. The first period of the periodical was basically shaped under the influence of these discussions held by the diasporic actors. In the next sections, promoting the Kurdish identity as a prominent agenda of the periodical will be detailed. Moreover, setting a standard for the Zazaki language – and all other topics related to the mother-tongue struggle – will be discussed in the light of the role of the construction of the national identity.

4.1 Promoting the Kurdish Identity

This section of the textual analysis concentrates on the construction of the Kurdish identity with a particular attention to the role of Zazaki-speaking activists who are also founding members of the Vate journal. After a brief account of the role of periodicals in mobilizing the populace towards identity construction, I offer a textual analysis of the articles related to the Kurdish national identity published in the Vate from 1997 to 2003. This analysis will illustrate how the Vate journal served

as an agent of promoting the identity construction within the Zazaki-speaking community.

As it was detailed in the previous chapters, the Vate perspective is based on the premise that the Kurdish society has divided into including subgroups including the Zazas, and as such the term ‘the Kurds’ should be used as a blanket concept.²⁰⁵ In light of this premise, the Vate perspective also insists on that the unity of the Kurds is necessary for the Kurdish emancipation. Even though the VSG itself has a variety of approaches to the Kurdish question, there is a flourishing diversity among the articles. The Kurdish movement incorporates a diverse range of political opinions which have mostly been shaped by those who speak different dialects of the Kurdish language. It can also be claimed that some of the Kurmanji-speaking and Zazaki-speaking groups were facing with the tension in the 1990s and onwards in terms of the Kurdishness and nationalism. Moreover, the tension was based on the political affiliation of the individuals. Deniz Gunduz correspondingly mentioned the lack of knowledge of Kurmanji-speaking groups on Zazas and Zazaki language, both in Kurdish politics and in Kurdish media:

“They [the Kurdish publishing houses] had some sort of ignorance about Zazaki. At that time, Zazaki was quite unknown by those who had a close connection with the Kurdish organizations. At first glance, the Kurdish publishing houses did not have a comprehensive viewpoint over Zazaki language. But it was the general approach for those days. Moreover, it was not only about publishers but also about the atmosphere the Kurds have

²⁰⁵ Sami Tan, interview by Gül Hür, Skype, April 9, 2019.

I have interviewed with Sami Tan who is one of the acknowledged Kurdish linguists and journalists. He first worked for the most featured Kurdish newspaper in its times, by the name of Welat. Until 2005, he worked for the following newspapers which were mainly aimed at Turkey Kurds: Azadiya Welat, Welatê me, and Özgür Ülke. Sami Tan was one of the founding members of the Dicle Haber Ajansı (Dicle News Agency) and was the first chief editor. He also held the presidency of Enstîtuya Kurdi ya Stenbolê (the Kurdish Institute of Istanbul) until it shut down by the regulation in 2016 of the state of emergency. Tan published a dictionary and a grammar book in Kurdish-Kurmanji with the label of the Kurdish Institute of Istanbul. He kindly accepted the interview when I explained my ongoing research on the role of the Vate journal in the construction of the Kurdish national identity. After he gave a brief account of his personal history, I asked him the meaning of 'the Kurdish language'. He described it by referring all dialects of the Kurdish language. Although his mother-tongue is Kurdish-Kurmanji, he stated that the Kurdish language should be used as a blanket term.

experienced. The music bands, for instance, was performing only one Zazaki song as a sampling. It was about the spirit of that era. After that, when we published it [the Zazaki novel which Gunduz wrote] it became quite popular within the Kurdish populace. As soon as the book was published, it was well-received by the public. Özgür Gündem [the most well-known Kurdish publication of the time] offered us an interview, henceforth, they introduced the book to the Kurdish community.”²⁰⁶

In the light of his defense of Kurmanji-speaking groups, it can be claimed that the disagreement about the position of Zazaki language rather been ignored for the sake of the unity of Kurdish populace. In the eyes of Gunduz, I, as an outsider, had the potential to misunderstand his criticism to some of the Kurds. That’s why he has elaborately endeavored to make me fully clear about his thoughts and explanations on politics in particular. Questions naturally have arisen from his expression: In which process did members of the Vate group participate in the Kurdish identity struggle? How and why did they turn their faces towards the nationalist movement? In what dimensions can they attribute a crucial meaning to the mother tongue?

Similar to most of the Kurdish activists,²⁰⁷ VSG members have also discovered national identities throughout their high school or college education. In accordance with their ages, they usually meet nationalist thoughts during the high-school, and afterward, encountered the fervor of revolutionary opinions continues during undergraduate education. By indicating age, I stress the awareness of the difference between, for example, Malmîsanij and Deniz Gunduz. The more they get older, the broader political experiences they have. As the experiences of Malmîsanij

²⁰⁶ Deniz Gunduz, interview by Gül Hür, in Istanbul, January 4, 2018.

[“Yani o şekilde, pek yani hem şeyleri yoktu. O konuyla ilgili bir bilgileri yoktu işte. Yani Zazaca o dönem çok şey bilinmiyordu yani şey yapılmıyor. Zaten Kürt yayınevlerinin de şey bir, yani bir sahiplenici başta böyle bir şeyleri falan yoktu, rolleri falan yoktu. Zazaca’ya karşı. Genel şey o zaman öyleydi yani. Sadece yayınevleri değil, genel atmosfer öyleydi yani. İşte müzik grupları oluyordu. İşte müzik grupları göstermelik Zazaca parça söylerlerdi falan. Öyle bir dönemdi. Ondan sonra, neyse. Biz onu basınca tabii, o biraz ses getirdi tabii. Ondan sonra, çıktuktan sonra tabii sahiplendiler. Özgür Gündem’de röportajlar falan oldu. Özellikle onlar çok geniş tanıtım falan yaptılar.”]

²⁰⁷ Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence*, 17.

were dating back to the mid-1960s, he witnessed a wide range of political conflicts in comparison with the other members of the group. Regardless of their political affiliation, the process they participated in the Kurdish politics approximately follows the similar path: born and raised in one of the Kurdish villages, moved to the nearest city center in order to continue their education, encountered the political environment, and get closer one of them.

The political ambition for a united Kurdistan was mentioned by most of the Vate writers in order to highlight the national awareness of the Zazaki-speaking populace. Since 1997, the Vate audience has been motivated with a particular attention to the Kurdishness of the Zazas. The Vate perspective also claims that the Zazas were hitherto inherently seen as a part of the Kurdish society. The VSG gathered to discuss this identity question with a specific focus on linguistic research. As all the members were living in the European diaspora – particularly in Sweden, the circulation of the thoughts on the national identity became easier. As in a range of nationalist movements past, publishing journals and books have been commonly used in the dissemination of political agenda. That is why the VSG chose to declare their opinion on the identity question via periodicals.

The periodicals truly played the role of the mediator in order to mobilize the populace for the nation-building process mostly based on the arguments produced by the educated elites. Throughout the dispersal of the Ottoman Empire, most cultural groups used periodicals as a tool of mobilizing society towards national awakening. For example, some notable Kurdish families and intellectuals used both the journals and books as a medium to disseminate nationalist ideas. In these publications, Kurdish language was also highly promoted.²⁰⁸ Indeed, the first attempts to get a start and spread the Kurdish nationalism over the Kurdish populace by Mikdat Mithat Bedirxan. As a chief editor, he published the Kurdistan newspaper in 1898 in Cairo, as it was briefly mentioned in the previous sections.

²⁰⁸ Hassanpour, *Kürdistan'da Milliyetçilik ve Dil: 1918-1985*, 131.

By doing so, Mikdat aimed at reaching the Kurds located in all pieces of Kurdistan in order to raise the national awareness among them. On the other hand, the newspaper paid a particular attention to the traditional leaders such as sheiks, landowners, and emirates in order to remind their national responsibilities to the Kurdish society.²⁰⁹

It can be claimed that as a nationalist group properly delivers its political agenda to all degrees of the social classes, it gains public visibility and acceptance. As it was stated above, it was thanks to the means of media that national awakening could be easily disseminated among society. The motivation of the VSG was, too, based on this principle. The Kurdish national identity, indeed, was predominately issued especially in the first period of the Vate journal. Thus, the Vate journal has emerged not only with the support by the nationalist organization followers in diaspora but also by a group of Zazaki-speaking educated individuals. Pertaining to the focus of this thesis, the individual effort has a great importance in promoting Kurdish national identity.

The role of intellectuals in identity construction has been widely discussed among scholars. The role of the well-educated elites mostly played a central role in the construction of national identity. As Miroslav Hroch stated, the initial period of a national movement, the energies of the activists were more focused on scholarly inquiry and dissemination of an awareness of the linguistic, cultural, social and sometimes historical attributes of the non-dominant group.²¹⁰ well-educated individuals in the VSG typically endeavored to empower a set of intellectual spheres for Zazaki. According to Anthony Smith, intellectuals are also responsible

²⁰⁹ Baykuşak, "The Role of the Press in the Construction of Kurdish Collective Identity: A Case Study on 'Jin' Journal (1918-1919)," 31.

²¹⁰ Miroslav Hroch, "From National Movement to the Fully-Formed Nation: The Nation-Building Process in Europe," in *Mapping the Nation*, ed. Gopal Balakrishnan (London: New York: Verso, 1999), 81.

for the rediscovering of history, traditional ceremonies, and language.²¹¹ Additionally, they produce all these set of values in the national consciousness.

Even though the Kurdish nationalism formulated by the Western-educated intelligentsia or secular intellectuals who were often educated in Europe,²¹² it is hard to claim the same for the VSG members. In the Vate case, the emergence of the periodical was motivated by scholarly inquiry. The intellectuals such as Mehemed Malmîsanij, Mûnzûr Çem, Seyîdxan Kuriş and J. Îhsan Espar were definitely well-educated. Yet, in comparison with the Kurdish awakening, these individuals were not from the notable families. As I mentioned earlier, they all were born and raised in the local towns of Kurdistan as the members of the lower social class families.

4.1.1 The Dissemination of National Awakening

The first period of the journal particularly concentrated on building national awareness in the Zazaki-speaking populace. A variety of the articles in this very period emphasized the nationalist regulations of the Turkish Republic which had resulted in the gradual annihilation of the Kurdish society based on the social, cultural, political, and historical attribute. State authorities were criticized by some of the writers for not considering the Kurds as political actors, or more broadly not recognizing the Kurdish nation. Thus, the increasing political interventions which aimed at assimilating the Kurds were issued in detail. These arguments were a signal for the newly-emerged historiography in Zazaki. Lerzan Jandîl correspondingly indicated the close ties between historiography and national emancipation.²¹³ He claimed that scholarly inquiry is necessary for national historiography which was narrated by the non-dominant groups. By claiming that,

²¹¹ Anthony Smith, *National Identity* (London: Penguin Books of London, 1991), 140–41.

²¹² Yüksel, “Dengbêj, Mullah, Intelligentsia: The Survival and Revival of the Kurdish-Kurmanji Language in the Middle East, 1925-1960,” 10.

²¹³ Jandîl, “Sedserra 19îne de Halê Împaratorîyê Osmanîyan û Vurîyenê Demî,” 62.

he also indicated the great importance of history-writing by the liberated nations. For him, history cannot be narrated without an independent nation.

The way of publishing the letters sending from abroad to the editors can be seen as a generic identifier in national identification. In the readers' letters section, all the letters were written with the information of the country and local town. Besides, the historical and unified ascription of Kurdistan was acknowledged by the editors. On the other hand, the Western part of Turkey was assumed as Turkey. For example, while *Pulur* (an Eastern city) recognized as a Kurdistan town, *Bursa* (a Western city) perceived as Turkey.²¹⁴ In the very first declaration of the *Vate* journal, the letters from audience were frankly requested:

“If the readers from Kurdistan and Turkey would send us letters, we will certainly be pleased. Because they generally mention about our homeland. From now on, we are waiting for your letters.”²¹⁵

Similarly, one of the footnotes in the third issue, *Mose* – a city in Turkey, explained as follows: “The Turks now changed it into ‘Çayırılı’ which is a city located in Erzincan.”²¹⁶ Using the term ‘the Turks’ instead of ‘the Turkish state’ is correspondingly more related to the political motivation of the VSG. The hostile state practice of the Turkish Republic to the Kurds was always condemned by the *Vate* perspective. In spite of the fact that the policies of modern Turkey vigorously eliminated the minority groups, it is needed to be declared in the journal in order to rise public awareness. They constantly stated that the Turkish state authorities produced a set of nationalist regulations in order to collapse the unity of the Kurdish populace – as over any other non-dominant groups.

²¹⁴ “Wendoxan Ra,” *Vate*, no. 2 (Autumn 1997): 114.

²¹⁵ “Wendoxan Rê,” *Vate*, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 3.

[“Bi taybetî yê ke Kurdîstan û Tirkîya ra nusenê, seke bûya welatî xo reyra bîyarê, moralê ma pêt kenê. Hîna zaf zî gama ke behsê hedîseyanê welatî û şarê ma kenê. Ma ewro ra pey zî nuşte û mektubanê şima pêroyînî pawenê.”]

²¹⁶ Çeko, “Dengbej û Şahîrêde Hêca, Dewrêş Baba,” *Vate*, no. 3 (Winter 1997): 7.

[“Tirkan nika nameyê na qeza kerdo ‘Çayırılı’. Girêdayîyê Erzinganî ya.”]

According to the Vate perspective, the fragmented Kurdish society should be unified. Since Kurdistan is unfairly divided into four pieces between Syria, Iraq, Iran, and Turkey, the sole way to emancipate the Kurds is to unite all the parts. So that, the journal also refused the boundaries among the divided Kurdistan. However, the state mind of each piece of the fragmented Kurdistan has been based on the nationalist policies of the dominant groups. That makes the role of terminology central. The commonly-used terminology by the VSG should be considered in discourse analyses of the Vate periodical. As it can be observed from the instances above, the wording has been editorially produced. The word choices in the journal can provide a better understanding of the political motivation the editors have.

Vate editors, contributors, and followers seem adamant that the united Kurdistan would solely liberate the Kurds. The political aspiration for a liberated Kurdistan was fictionally narrated by some of the Vate authors. For instance, Mûnzûr Çem depicted an imagined Kurdistan that includes a variety of natural sources. Here is an epic narrative of Çem:

“The name of their school was *Mektebê Alîşêrî* (The School of Alîşer). *Mektebê Alîşêrî* was a white clean building located near *Çemê Muzirî* (Munzur River). One could not resist the beauty and clarity of *Çemê Muzirî*.

The statue of *Alîşêr Efendî* were settled in the center of the city. He was holding a book, laughing with the children. The statute was around a variety of colorful flowers such as roses. These were under his feet, and the river arose from the ground. The ducks were walking around. Walnut, berry, pear, apple, plum trees were all together in the backyard of the school.”²¹⁷

²¹⁷ Mûnzûr Çem, “Hewnê Newroze,” *Vate*, no. 7 (Spring 1999): 51.

[“Nameyê mektebê înan “Mektebê Alîşêrî” bî. Mektebê Alîşêrî, dîyarê Çemê Muzirî ra, bonêde diqato sipîyo pak bî. Hem kî hen pak û rindek bî ke, mordemî nêwastêne ke çimanê xo ci ra dûrî fiyone. Meydanê verî de, heykelêde Alîşêr Efendî ronaye bî. Alîşêrî, kitabê kerdîbî xo dest, domanan de nîyadêne, huyêne. Dormê heykelî bi gul û çiçegan neqêşîyabî, bibî reng bi reng. Binê lingan de bilqe-bilqe bîye, awa sîsika kewîye hard ro girîyêne. Ordegan hope de azne kerdêne, bi çêf nat-dotî ser amêne-şîyêne. Hope ra dot, baxçeyê pêyê mektebî de gozî, tuyî, murîyî, sayî, hêrug û dare bîni kewtîbî têvirare.”]

In Çem's story, the natural beauties of Kurdistan were heavenly-described. The liberated Kurdistan portrayed as a paradise in which the cultural, social and historical attributes of the Kurds. Not surprisingly, the school's name was dedicated to one of the Kurdish heroes. *Alîşêr Efendî* is a well-known Zazaki-speaking, Alewite tribe leader who resisted against the military forces in 1920. He was born and raised in Koçgiri, in 1882. As a member of *Şeyh Hasan* – one of the notable Zazaki-speaking tribes – was also a well-educated poet. In his poems, he rather concentrated on the history and tradition of Alewite culture. When the military forces defeated *Alîşêr's* rebellion in 1921, he fled to Dersim to collaborate with *Seyid Rıza* who was the leading figure of Dersim uprising in 1937-38. He was murdered in 1937.²¹⁸ Mûnzûr Çem no doubt would like to address to this glorious history in his fictional narrative. The symbolic construction of national identity relies on a set of political attributes created by practitioners of the new political culture. The modalities of politics and power are also a sort of cultural expressions.²¹⁹ In Çem's story, new culture history was indeed based on historical actors' practices, activities, and political ideas. What makes, then, the symbolic dimension of identity construction so crucial? Considering symbolic interactionism as a valuable analytical proposition in identity construction was detailed in Grzegorz Pożarlik's research as follows:

“An answer to this question could be found precisely in the condition of contemporary society – in this sense, postmodern society with emphasis given to fluidity, ongoing re-interpretations of norms, values, patterns of behaviour that constitute social order. Living in a society, which does not provide a safe haven from pressure of answering the daily existential question of who I am, reinforces temporality and an open-ended character of identity construction. Thus, identity is being formed in a process of

²¹⁸ All the details of *Alîşêr Efendî's* story are based on the following study: Erdal Gezik, “Varto ve Koçgiri: Aşiretten Cumhuriyet'e İki Alevi Örneği,” *Kırkbudak -Journal of Anatolian Folk Beliefs*, no. 4 (2005): 37.

²¹⁹ Margaret R. Somers, “What's Political or Cultural about Political Culture and the Public Sphere? Toward an Historical Sociology of Concept Formation,” *Sociological Theory* 13, no. 2 (July 1995): 127.

permanent redefinition of symbolic meanings of categories, which serve as frame of reference of self-identification.”²²⁰

Similar to *Alîşêr Efendî*, *Sheikh Said* has also mentioned by the Vate writers as a leading figure in the Kurdish history. *The Sheikh Said rebellion* in 1925 was a revolt against the Kemalist regime. It has also been argued among Kurdish nationalism pivots on whether it was more of a nationalist than a religious movement.²²¹ Some of the scholars, however, agree that it was both tribal and religious, and yet still national.²²² *Sheikh Said* played a central role in the construction of the Kurdish identity as a leading figure. Not surprisingly, one of the Vate articles was dedicated to the anniversary of the *Sheikh Said rebellion*. In the article, the writer detailed his own experience on his national belonging which was provided by orally transmitted *Sheikh Said* narratives from his childhood years on. He explained those years as follows: “I can clearly claim that my own consciousness of being a Kurd has grown with the influence of Şeyh Sait narratives.”²²³

As it can be observed, the Vate journal has been considered the leading figures or notable families of the Kurdish society. Similar to the mentioned Kurdish figures, the Bedirxan family frankly contributes to intellectual history of the Kurdish society. The remarkable role of the Bedirxan family has also been mentioned in the Vate journal. Celadet Alî Bedirxan – as the founding father of the Kurdish grammar, was periodically commemorated in the journal based on his linguistic research on the Kurdish-Kurmanji: “The only work on the standardization

²²⁰ Grzegorz Pożarlik, “Individual, Collective, Social Identity as (Most) Contested Social Science Concept in the Symbolic Interactionism Perspective,” in *Europe - Space for Transcultural Existence?*, ed. Martin Tamcke et al., vol. 1, Studies in Euroculture Series (Göttingen: Universitätsverlag Göttingen, 2013), 78.

²²¹ Robert Olson, “The Kurdish Rebellions of Sheikh Said (1925), Mt. Ararat (1930), and Dersim (1937-8): Their Impact on the Development of the Turkish Air Force and on Kurdish and Turkish Nationalism,” *Die Welt Des Islams*, New Series, 40, no. 1 (March 2000): 69.

²²² Mesut Yeğen, “The Turkish State Discourse and the Exclusion of Kurdish Identity,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 32, no. 2 (April 1996): 222.

²²³ Mehmet Uzun, “Guîn Rişya Arî Nidîyana, Este Şikyo Pîya Nidusyenû,” *Vate*, no. 10 (Winter 2000): 5.

[“Ez eşkena vacî ke kirdbîyayîşî xo ez pê nê meselan a hîşar bîya.”]

of the Kurdish-Kurmanji belongs to Celadet Bedirxanî. His compilation of the Kurdish grammar now is acknowledged such as ‘basic law’.”²²⁴ On the other hand, the Kurdistan newspaper and Mikdat Mithat Bedirhan’s individual efforts were appreciated based on its valuable contribution to the Kurdish enlightenment and modernization process.²²⁵

Throughout the first 18 issues of the *Vate* journal, Celadet Ali Bedirxan’s Kurmanji-French dictionary was continuously serialized. The question here is whether the audience received the journal’s message on the Kurdish national identity. Or more broadly, in what dimensions Bedirxan’s dictionary affected the *Vate* audience? I first thought that there was a concrete reference to the united national identity. Since the Zazas are a subgroup of the Kurdish society, the notables and intellectuals of shared Kurdish history should be embraced regardless of Kurdish-Kurmanji content. Indeed, Deniz Gunduz highlighted the central role of the Kurdish intelligentsia in the construction of Kurdish identity.²²⁶ But interestingly, Malmîsanij responded me that Celadet’s valuable work was given him by one of the Bedirxan family members. Thus, he wanted the *Vate* journal to publish this historical document in order to increase public visibility of the dictionary:

“The only reason of serializing Celadet Alî Bedirxan’s dictionary was a leading figure for the Kurdish-Kurmanji. He prepared the grammar, dictionary, and alphabet of the Kurdish language. That dictionary you’ve just mentioned were unpublished, and somehow, I received it. Hence, I wanted to publish it. That was the reason, nothing else.”²²⁷

Annual gatherings of the VSG correspondingly became general identifier in getting a better sense about the symbolic construction of the national identity.

²²⁴ Memo Darrez, “Standardîzekerdişê Kirdkî Ser o Çend Vateyî,” *Vate*, no. 6 (Autumn-winter 1998): 69.

[“Kurmanckî di qê standerdîzekerdişî ziwani di yew kitab zî nêresa ê Celadet Bedirxanî. Gramerî ey nika sey qanunanî esasîyan yenû qebulkerdiş.”]

²²⁵ Memed Drewş, “Wenden û Nuştana Kurdkî Ser o,” *Vate*, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 57.

²²⁶ Gunduz, interview, January 4, 2018.

²²⁷ Malmîsanij, interview.

After the regular linguistic gatherings to set a standard for written Zazaki, the standardized set of vocabulary was expected to be declared via the *Vate* journal. In the fourth meeting declaration, one of the topics in linguistic discussion is to set a standard for the political terminology. The vocabulary published as the abridged lexicon in the following issue of the *Vate* journal. At this point, some of the preferences of the VSG seem quite interesting. For example, a list of political and administrative terms published in the fourth issue. Interestingly, the vocabulary included in the terms, ‘ally’ and ‘enemy’.²²⁸ Why did these two concepts included in the list? In what dimension, these words can be assumed as the administrative concepts? Correspondingly, the standardized military terminology announced to the Zazaki-speaking community in the fifth meeting.²²⁹ It is obvious that the *Vate* editors was paid particular attention to disseminate a political agenda via linguistic research. Why did the VSG initially single out the administrative and military terminology?

The fourth and the fifth meetings were held on April 1998 and August 1998, respectively. For a better understanding of the terminology, which was focused in these meetings, the political outlook of the 1990s should be briefly mentioned. During the 1990s, all involved parties are united in the nationalist fervor to declare Kurdish liberation movement. The more the Kurdish question gained a central role in Turkey’s political history, the more opponent actors became radical. Preventing the development of an ethnic cultural and political movement provoked the Kurdish nationalist organizations. As becoming a mainstream political figure, PKK’s guerilla war against the Turkish military forces reached its peak throughout the 1990s.

At this very period, some Kurdish activists found an alternative platform to rise their voices: The Turkish Parliament. Legal activism started with a pro-Kurdish political party, *Halkın Emek Partisi* (People's Labor Party, HEP) which was

²²⁸ “Derheqê Kirmanckî de Kombiyayîşê Çarine,” *Vate*, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 10–18.

²²⁹ “Derheqê Kirmanckî de Kombiyayîşê Pancine,” *Vate*, no. 5 (Summer 1998): 4–22.

founded in June 1990. In HEP's public meetings, the Kurdish political and cultural rights were promoted; thus, this created concern among many bureaucratic and elected officials. As a result, HEP faced constant pressure from police, public prosecutors, members of Parliament.²³⁰ HEP was later closed by the Constitutional Court in July 1993.²³¹ Not only HEP, but also the following pro-Kurdish parties such as *Demokrasi Partisi* (DEP), *Halkın Demokrasi Partisi* (People's Democracy Party, HADEP) faced the pressure from the public authorities as well.

The political massacre of Kurdish notables, politicians and activists were continuously organized by the governmental authorities. The enforcement disappearance of the Kurdish notables was a hot topic for the Kurdish politics. According to the Truth Justice Memory Center report, the total number of disappeared during the 1990s was approximately 1500.²³² Ironically, the political conjuncture abroad was more focused on the discussion about the newly-emerged concepts such as identity politics, multiculturalism, and libertarianism.²³³ The politically-active individuals who live in the European diaspora were presumably more integrated to this new political discourse. But in Turkish politics, the state policies were still regulated as an obstacle against advocacy for the cultural rights of minority groups.

As it can be clearly observed, the changing dynamics of Kurdish question created a new language among the Kurdish politics throughout the 1990s. Being ignored by Turkish politics kept the cultural activists open to the activities of the Kurdish movement. A range of the underground organizations were born, and each created their own political agenda. Hence, the cultural and linguistic activists followed the platform which was produced by the Kurdish movement. The VSG

²³⁰ Nicole F. Watts, "Allies and Enemies: Pro-Kurdish Parties in Turkish Politics, 1990-94," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 31, no. 4 (November 1999): 631.

²³¹ Watts, 632.

²³² Özgür Sevgi Göral, Ayhan Işık, and Özlem Kaya, *The Unspoken Truth: Enforced Disappearances* (Istanbul: Truth Justice Memory Center, 2013), 24.

²³³ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 41.

itself also observed the Kurdish organizations in detail. Such that, the Vate journal published in detail the language policy which was announced by the Kurdish underground parties. The following argument of the article frankly indicates the transformation in political agenda: “The unity and progress of the Kurdish language and dialects are more about political dynamics, not about academic discussion.”²³⁴

Both linguistic research and advocacy for cultural rights prompted a radicalized language in the Vate perspective. Setting a standard for political and military terminology obviously arose from the political fervor of the 1990s. Consequently, national dynamics in Kurdish politics created its own agenda. The Vate journal, not surprisingly, produced its own dynamics by relying on this new kind of political atmosphere. In sum, putting a standard to the political, administrative and military terminology in Zazaki has close ties between the historical context of the 1990s.

4.1.2 Eliminating the National Symbols of the Turkishness

National awareness relies on social norms, values, patterns of behaviour, as well as it is related to the re-birth of cultural and traditional attributes. In addition to the central role of symbolic construction, the historical and cultural revival, too, promote the construction of the national identity. In terms of the Zazaki case, this re-birth experienced in modern times. The rediscovery of Zazaki tradition has started in the European diaspora in the late 1980s and has reached its peak in the second half of the 1990s. Those who have followed the premise that Zazaki is not a dialect of the Kurdish language started to publish journal and books in the European diaspora. *Ayre*, published in diaspora between 1985-1987, was the

²³⁴ Haydar Diljen, “Programandê Partîyandê Kurdan Di Persa Ziwanî,” *Vate*, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 19.

[“Persa (mesela) yewbîyayîş (jûbîyayîş) û raverberdişdê kurdî û persa lehçeyandê kurdî ewro persêda akedemiki vêşêrî persêda siyasî ya.”]

earliest attempt for the written Zazaki.²³⁵ From now on, Zazaki-speaking groups would sorely espouse their own way of analyzing the social, historical, and linguistic attribute of the Zazaki language.

As the history of Zazaki periodicals can clearly show us, not only the cultural awakening but also the political agenda have been promoted via books and journals. For groups which explicitly defend the premise that Zazaki is a dialect of the Kurdish language, ignoring the cultural codes of the dominant group was vital for the re-birth of Zazaki. For the *Vate* journal, eliminating the Turkish way of thinking has a central role in the construction of the Kurdish identity. By doing so, the Zazaki cultural heritage should be mined by Zazaki-speaking individuals. In an interview with *Dengbej Serdar*, Serdar claimed that searching for new music genres is a futile effort. Instead, traditional sounds should be rediscovered; so, it should be kept in mind that the resurrecting of traditional music plays a central role in identity politics.²³⁶ Similarly, *Dengbej Rêzan* indicates the forgotten folkloric values because of the ongoing war in each part of Kurdistan.²³⁷

The argument that advocacy for cultural rights is a must for the Kurdish society can be found in the *Vate* articles. For example, the comparison between the Turks and Kurds in terms of cultural rights was issued in an article. Heyder Sever narrated a memoir of about Bülent Ecevit. He portrayed how Ecevit has given a speech on the cultural and linguistic rights of the Turks live in the European diaspora. That said, while he advocated human rights of the Turkish immigrants in Europe, he totally overlooked the Kurds who could not even speak Kurdish in their own country.²³⁸

²³⁵ Söylemez, “Geçmişten Günümüze Zazaca Dergiler: Kronoloji, Sorunlar ve Çözümler,” 178.

²³⁶ Mehmet Uzun, “Dengbej Serdar: To Ke Xo Nas Nêkerd Kes Qîymet to Nêdano,” no. 4 (Spring 1998): 36.

²³⁷ Seyîdxan Kurij, “Rêzan: Dêngbêjê Weş a, La Miyûnî, Şarî Xwi Di,” *Vate*, no. 5 (Summer 1998): 25.

²³⁸ Heyder Sever, “Ê Min û Karaoxlanî 10, Winter 2000,” *Vate*, no. 10 (Winter 2000): 64–65.

At some point, the political motivation of the VSG evolved into the struggle against the Turkish tradition, culture, and language. Some of the VSG members strongly believed that the Turkish language should be seen and treated as a colonial language in relation to the Kurdish communities. Even the letters of the Turkish alphabet should not be used in Zazaki written sources. Here is an interesting example for this claim: W. K. Merdimîn writes a story from his hometown, *Çewlîg* (*Bingöl* is the current official name). There is a Turkish expression in the story which was written in Kurdish alphabet as follows: “Bu zati goruyor musunuz? Bu zat olmasaydi bîzîm kemîklerîmîz şîmdî yerîn dîbîndeydi / Do you see that man? Our bones would be under the ground if he does not be with us.”²³⁹

In Kurdish alphabet, *î* uses instead the Turkish *i*, and *i* uses for the Turkish *ı*. Most of the Kurdish activists reject to use Turkish letters ‘*ı, ğ, ü, ö*’ etc. But some of the articles, the writers chose to use the Bedîrxan (Hawar) Alphabet even in the Turkish sentences. In other words, the editorial staff of Vate journal rarely allowed the use of characters of Turkish alphabet such as ‘*ı, ğ, ü, ö*’ – *even* when Turkish names were using during the texts. The denial of the Turkish letters in the Vate articles can be usually observed in the first period of the journal. Here is another example of using ‘the Kurdish *î*’ instead of ‘the Turkish *ı*’: “Tevgerê rizgarîya netewî (ulusal kurtuluş hareketî) ra dime halê cenikanê kurdan binêna bî rind. / With the emergence of the National Liberation Movement (Ulusal Kurtuluş Hareketî), the position of the Kurdish women is getting better.”²⁴⁰

The denial of the Turkish alphabet can be clearly observed in the first period of the Vate journal. For instance, the editors explained in the footnote how the original piece of the the article was edited based on the Vate principles of standard Zazaki: “In the original of the article, the author Harun Turgut used the letters ‘*Ğ, İ, Î, û, U*’. We have changed those into ‘*X, î, U, û*’. -The editorial staff.”²⁴¹ The

²³⁹ W. K. Merdimîn, “Mi Rê Vûnî Yadîn! Xelasê Şima Mi Dest Ra Çîne Ya!,” *Vate*, no. 16 (Winter 2002): 23.

²⁴⁰ Seyîdxan Kurij, “Nîlufê Akbal: Lawikî Ruhê Mi Îfade Kenê,” *Vate*, no. 2 (Autumn 1997): 33.

²⁴¹ Harun Turgut, “Veng, Pyec û Zimmeyîş Ra Nomê û Fîl,” *Vate*, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 48.

editors absolutely refused to use any of the Turkish letters. To give another example of this rejection, the Vate editors preferred to use any other languages except Turkish for some standardized versions. For example, the word *Marok* means Morocco in the standard Zazaki. It is obvious that the VSG refused to use, *Fas*, the Turkish version of the word.²⁴² Instead, the VSG chose to use the English equivalent of the word.

As it can be seen in the following sections, Zazaki-speaking religious figures were constantly published by the Vate journal. As there is a central role of the religious figures in the construction of the Kurdish identity, these interviews should be paid attention in detail. These individuals also announce a religious obligation to protect and maintain the mother tongues. For example, a Zaza mullah who lived in Lice – located in Diyarbakır – explained his opinion about public visibility of Zazaki:

“Zazaki TV shows generally broadcast in the Dersim variant of Zazaki. These shows are not fully-understandable for us. The Çewlîgî (Bîngolî) variant of Zazaki has been rarely broadcasted. Besides, those who were invited to the TV shows do not adequately speak Zazaki. I believe that they have been ruined our language.”²⁴³

Although the basics established by Vate were accepted by all the members, the tension among these individuals can occasionally be observed. These conflicts mostly occurred around the concepts and practices of linguistic research. The case of Roşan Lezgîn is one of the obvious examples of turmoil within the VSG. In his very first contribution to the journal, he rigorously blamed the VSG members for

[“Eslê nî nuştêyî (yazî) de, nuştex Harun Turgutî herfê Ğ, I, Î, û, U nuştîbî, ma nê herfî vurînay (bedilnay) û herinda înan de X, î, U, û nuştî.- Redaksîyon.”]

²⁴² “Derheqê Kirmanckî (Kirdkî) de Kombîyayîşê Hîrêyîne,” *Vate*, no. 2 (Autumn 1997): 7.

²⁴³ Roşan Lezgîn and Yekta Lezgîn, “Vanê ‘Şaîrî Sey Ecacê Pêlê Behran A...’,” *Vate*, no. 16 (Winter 2002): 43.

[“Programê Medya-tv yê ge zazakî vecênê, zefhê şarê Dêrsimî yê. Merdim yîne ra zehf fam nêkeno. Hinkî ê Çewlîgî (Bîngolî) zî vecênê la tayê. Ê zî rey-rey meymanê. Yanî ê zî tam nêzanê, zîwanê yîne zehf şîno tirkî ser. Ez vana qey zîwan xerepnê.”]

not using a proper Zazaki.²⁴⁴ J. Îhsan Espar responded Lezgîn's article – somehow – in the same issue of the journal. J. Îhsan Espar points his disagreement about one of the Zazaki grammar, which most of the group members have agreed with:

“[...] The voice already exists, and it won't disappear with this apostrophe. We decided in our regular meeting that we do not use that apostrophe from now on. But still, I think that if we have used, it would be helpful for the audience of the journal.”²⁴⁵

The conflict between Roşan Lezgîn and the rest of the group can be observed until the 11th issue of the *Vate* periodical. In this very issue, Malmîsanij gently tried to criticize Lezgîn's article in the same issue of the periodical. He also revised Lezgîn's previous article and corrected the misused words by explaining his proofreading.²⁴⁶

In Lezgîn's claim, *Vate* gathering reports showed that the group was presumably maintaining its linguistic research under the effect of the Turkish language. To prove his claim, Lezgîn gave some lexical examples which the VSG has already decided their standardized versions. '*Qelesa riji*' is one of them. The word means 'kurşun kalem' in Turkish; 'qelem' is 'kalem' and 'rij' is 'kömür/kurşun'. This instance demonstrated how the standard Zazaki vocabulary was literally translated from Turkish.²⁴⁷ This is merely an ordinary example to prove Lezgîn's claim. However, the current members of the VSG claim the opposite. It is interesting to note that Deniz Gunduz's experience on the loyalty of the *Vate* perspective to the Kurdish language is a sort of proof against Lezgîn's claim. Gunduz mentioned about his journey to Sweden to attend the Kurdish class which organized by Malmîsanij's effort.²⁴⁸ He talked about a memoir of his in

²⁴⁴ Roşan Lezgîn, “Boya Welatî,” *Vate*, no. 8 (Summer 1999): 58–65.

²⁴⁵ J. Îhsan Espar, “Derheqê ‘Boya Welatî,’” *Vate*, no. 8 (Summer 1999): 77.

[“[...] Veng xora esto, ez apostrofi nê nusa zî o veng vîni nê beno. Dim a ma kombîyayîşêk de qerar da ke ma nê apostrof nênuşî. Labelê goreyê fikrê mi bibîynî wendoxî rê faydey ey bi.”]

²⁴⁶ Malmîsanij, “Ver Bi Etîmolojîyê Kirmanckî,” *Vate*, no. 11 (Spring 2000): 33.

²⁴⁷ Roşan Lezgîn, “Bersiv,” *Vate*, no. 11 (Spring 2000): 78.

²⁴⁸ Gunduz, interview, January 4, 2018.

which the strict rules among the Zazaki-speaking individuals. He narrated that even if they accidentally spoke in Turkish, they were forced to wash their mouths!²⁴⁹

While the discussions regarding the standard Zazaki were held among different groups, cultural activists endeavored to create new platforms for providing mother tongue struggle. The reaction to all degrees of symbolic construction in the Turkish nation led to the creation of many new platforms for the Kurdish activists, such as stage and the performing arts. Apart from refusing the Turkishness with its all social, traditional, cultural and historical dynamics, these cultural activists were adamant that the Kurds must build their own artistic existence. *Seyr-i Mesel* is one of the Kurdish theatre groups which aims to reach highly-qualified performing arts in Kurdish. The group rehearsed and performed in *Navenda Çanda Mezopotamya* scene. *Navenda Çanda Mezopotamya* (Mesopotamia Culture Center; NÇM, hereafter) was the most popular artistic platform for both Kurdish performers and musicians. The NÇM was founded in 1991 and warmly welcomed Kurdish artists until its close by a regulation of the state of emergency in 2016. Kurdish language was maintained within these institutions in which linguistic, cultural, and historical attributes appeared. The *Vate* journal also gave wide coverage to these artistic efforts for providing the Kurdish language.²⁵⁰

4.2 The Revival of Zazaki Language

The central role of the language has been constantly stated in the *Vate* journal. As such, there are two important principles of the editors: Zazaki is one of the Kurdish dialects, and, thus, the Zazaki-speaking groups are Kurdish. For VSG principles, the dialects of the Kurdish language divided into four: Kurdish-Kurmanji, Kurdish-Gurani, Kurdish-Sorani, and Kurdish-Zazaki.²⁵¹ The disparate groups, however,

²⁴⁹ Gunduz.

²⁵⁰ C. Zerdüş Pîranij, "Bi Kirmanekî Tiyatroyê 'Saye Moru'," *Vate*, no. 3 (23) (Zimistan 2005): 21–36.

²⁵¹ In some sources, Luri language is categorized as one of the Kurdish dialects. Mutlu Can – who was an MA student, and lecturer for an online language course for Zazaki at Mardin Artuklu

agreed on the *against* this linguistic explanation. From this position, Zazaki is the North-Western Iranian branch of the Indo-European language family.²⁵² Thus, Zazaki belongs to a totally separate branch in comparison to other dialects of Kurdish language. As such, Zazaki is not a dialect of Kurdish and Zazas are certainly not the Kurds.

The tension among these two opponent groups was specifically focused on the periodicals in Zazaki. Some of the activist groups which have been advocated linguistic rights for Zazaki-speaking populace strongly disagreed that Zazaki is a Kurdish dialect. Interestingly, there are very few articles in the Vate journal which detail this conflict. The very first criticism of the opponent groups was written by Mûnzûr Çem. His criticism was more about the attempts to create a new Zaza alphabet. Instead, he offered the Kurdish alphabet – in accordance with the Vate principles.²⁵³ Generally speaking, the editors of the journal offer the Zazas to follow their ongoing linguistic research:

“We wish both the writers and audience would follow the Vate annual gatherings. Besides, you kindly request you to read the meeting reports in detail, and to send your argument to the editorial cadre [of Vate]. If you want Zazaki to be standardized, give priority to our aspiration. Until 2000, Zazaki was still not standardized. Don’t you think that it is too much? Ask it yourself and always keep in mind that you better write for the Vate journal; because we always write for all of you.”²⁵⁴

University, kindly sent me one of his presentations for the beginner class. At the very beginning of this presentation, he gave a brief account of what the Kurdish language is. He stated that the Kurdish language consists of five dialects, including Lurrki-Kurdish. Mutlu Can, “Rastnuştîşê Kirmanckî (Zazakî) 1” (n.d.).

²⁵² Keskin, “Zaza Dili,” January 2015, 96.

²⁵³ Mûnzûr Çem, “Karê Ziwan û Kultura Ma de Gamêda Newîye: ÎKK,” *Vate*, no. 13 (Autumn-winter 2000): 100.

²⁵⁴ “Wendoxan Rê,” *Vate*, no. 11 (Spring 2000): 3.

[“Ma hêvî kenê ke nuştux û wendoxê ma tesbîtanê Kombiyayîşanê Kirmanckî ser o vindê (vinderê), nînan dîqçetî reyra (bi dîqçet) biwanê, munaqêşe bikê, fikranê xo ma rê binusê û nuştîş de nê tesbîtan tetbîq bikê. Eke şîma wazenê kirmanckî aver şêro û standardîze bibo, naye peygoş (ihmal) mekênê. Hetanî serra 2000î kirmanckî standardîze nêbîya. Qey êdî (hinî) bes nîyo? Na perse xo ra zî bipersê û ma xo vîr a mekerê, ma rê binusê, çimkî ma şîma xo vîr a nêkenê û şîma rê nusênê.”]

The language-dialect dichotomy has been widely discussed among the cultural and linguistic activists for Zazaki. Interestingly, even the VSG itself acknowledged that the political affiliations of the activist groups played a central role in the language-dialect debate. Those who supported the Kurdish movement claimed that Zazaki is a dialect of Kurdish, as well as those who rejected the Kurdish movement alleged that Zazaki is not one of the Kurdish dialects. Cemîl Gundogan also accepted that this dichotomy arose from the opponent group's political agenda.²⁵⁵ In another of his articles, Cemîl Gundogan detailed the language-dialect discussion. He detailed the two opponent groups, and also criticized both of them for being too radical in defending their own positions.²⁵⁶ Here is a passage from this distinction:

“The objections by the first group, however, can be summed up as follows: What about the periodicals written in Zazaki? This type of works has similar perspectives to our ‘enemies’. Since they target the dialect Kurdkî, they want to take a position in the Kurdish society. Those friends who are fighting for Zazaki are certainly close to the enemy. Of course, we know that the Kurdish language has many dialects, and they should be written by the natives. Zazaki is one of them as well. Yet, according to this opinion, it is not needed a fully-Zazaki periodical. We know that there are lots of Kurdish journals and newspapers. Zazaki contents should publish with them. The position of Zazaki hitherto was like we have recommended. No one keeps Zazaki-speaking friends’ way, which is always open for them. If they do not benefit from the advantage of the Kurdish periodicals, it means that they also do not have good intentions.”²⁵⁷

²⁵⁵ Cemîl Gundogan, “Kovara Vateyî û Tekilîya Lehçeyanê Kurdkî Ser o,” *Vate*, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 49.

²⁵⁶ Gundogan, 49.

²⁵⁷ Cemîl Gundogan, “Kovara Vateyî û Tekilîya Lehçeyanê Kurdkî Ser o,” *Vate*, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 51–52.

[“Wûnca zî mordem şîkîno îtirazê nî hevalan bi no hewa (şekîl) kom bikero: Na kovara tenya zazakî kotî ra vejîya? No karo nîyanên karê dişmenî yo. Dişmen wazeno ke wertê kurdan de çiyabiyayîş peyda bikero û semedê na armanca xo dest erzeno lehçeyanê kurdkî. Nî hevalê ke dewa zazakî kenê, ê zî benê aletê nî planê dişmenî. Temam, ma zî zaneme ke tayê lehçeyê kurdkî estê û ganî nî lehçeyan de zî bero nuştene. Zazakî zî înan ra yew a. Labelê luzum nêkeno ke kovarêde tenya zazakî bero vetene. Hûnde kovar û rojnameyê kurdan estê, mordem şîkîno înan de ca bido nuştayanê zazakî. Xora rewş (durum) heta nika zî wina (nîya) bî. Kesî hevalanê zazakîqeseykerdoxan re raye nêgûretîbî; verê înan rakerde bî. Ê ke nî îmkanan ra îstîfade nêkenê, hûrînda aye de kovarêde tenya zazakî vejenê nîyetê înan pak nîyo...”]

For a better understanding of the linguistic position of the Vate journal, I will concentrate on a range of dimensions present within the linguistic inquiries which were issued in the first period of the journal.

4.2.1 The Need for a Standard Zazaki

The need for a standard national language in the construction of national identity has been widely discussed. Some of the arguments emphasized the integral connection between national language and identity. Haugen Einar stated in his earliest studies that a significant requirement for a standard language is that it be written.²⁵⁸ Besides, Fishman defined the national languages as important symbols and media of the new authenticity.²⁵⁹ Similarly, language planning is also perceived as a must in the nation-building process.

Unlike the earliest instances, setting a standard for written Zazaki is recently developed. The founders of the Vate journal scholarly inquired the language planning terminology in order to develop a better sense for their linguistic research on the Zazaki language.²⁶⁰ Basic principles for a standard Zazaki were set by the VSG members in 1996. The VSG first arranged a meeting in 1996 in order to make an agreement on practices for creating an intellectual platform for Zazaki. The first issue of the Vate journal was published in 1997 in order to declare the new standard Zazaki to public opinion. In other words, the first issue was also the first announcement of this newly-emerged standard written principles. Those who participated in these very first meetings determined the basics of the upcoming

²⁵⁸ Einar, "Dialect, Language, Nation," 929.

²⁵⁹ Joshua Fishman, "The Impact of Nationalism on Language Planning: Some Comparisons between Early Twentieth-Century Europe and More Recent Years in South and Southeast Asia," in *Can Language Be Planned? Sociolinguistic Theory for Developing Nations*, ed. Joan Rubin and Björn H. Jernudd (University of Hawai'i Press, 1971), 17, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctv9zckn9.5>.

²⁶⁰ Gunduz, interview, January 4, 2018.

linguistic research on Zazaki. These principles were listed by J. İhsan Espar who is one of the VSG founding members as follows:²⁶¹

- Those who attend the Vate meetings is expected to identify Zazas as Kurd and their language, Zazaki is a dialect of the Kurdish language.
- The linguistic contribution of the participants will be considered regardless of their religious belongings, political motivations or other personal choices.
- Participants will be chosen from different regions of Zazaki-speaking areas.
- Participants are expected to be enthusiastic about linguistic research.
- The meetings will be arranged in order to regulate two main topics:
 - Establishing both writing and orthographic rules and,
 - Creating terminologies in Zazaki.

VSG members were first expected to abide by these principles. Moreover, the members should be fluent in Zazaki and should have enthusiasm about linguistic research. More importantly, the research group should be motivated by promoting the Kurdish national identity because, a standard Zazaki – as a Kurdish dialect – would play a significant role for the national awareness. Describing linguistic position of Zazaki as a Kurdish dialect has been a must for these individuals. Otherwise, the denial of dialect argument would definitely result in the collapse of national loyalty. The disruptive potential of the transformation of a dialect into language was explained by Einar. He correspondingly emphasizes the French revolutionaries' tension about the dialects as follows:

"The dialects, at least if they threaten to become languages, are potentially disruptive forces in a unified nation: they appeal to local loyalties, which could conceivably come into conflict with national loyalty."²⁶²

²⁶¹ Espar, "Kırmanccanın (Zazacanın) Standart Bir Yazı Diline Kavuşması İçin Yapılan Çalışmalar: Vate Çalışma Grubu ve Vate Dergisi," February 2011, 3.

²⁶² Einar, "Dialect, Language, Nation," 928.

First, it is necessary to accept that Zazaki is not a separate language in order to ensure the unity of the Kurds. As a language can be seen as a unitary structure²⁶³, the Kurdish dialects should be collected under this blanket concept. Moreover, the motivation behind listing the basics of standardization as a group of individuals who have enthusiasm for cultural and linguistic research is needed to be revealed. Why did an activist group decide to set a standard for written Zazaki? How did they legitimize the standardization process? Is it possible to be approved by the public opinion without an official institution? It is obvious that all nation-states need a standardized language and education system in order to create and strengthen national identity.²⁶⁴ Without a nation-state, then, how did the VSG continuously gather to standardize the Zazaki language? Not surprisingly, some VSG members initially declared their opinions on the written Zazaki. Lerzan Jandîl, for example, detailed his motivation in promoting Zazaki as a dialect of the Kurdish language. He also refused to use the term ‘Zaza’:

“The term ‘Zaza’ refers a pejorative meaning such as ‘mute, stutterer, dummy, and idiot.’ Good! Then who did study this ‘Zazakî’ or will study? Only a few individuals. Most of them write in Turkish or Kurdish-Kurmanji. Moreover, they claim that Zazaki is an independent language!”²⁶⁵

In the *Vate* journal, some articles displayed the mediatory role of the journal in comparison with the Turkish Language Reform. For example, in an interview with two readers of the periodical had substantial messages for the language standardization. One of the interviewees compared the Turkish Language Reform with the VSG’s standardization research:

²⁶³ Einar, 925–26.

²⁶⁴ Ayşegül Aydıngün and İsmail Aydıngün, “The Role of Language in the Formation of Turkish National Identity and Turkishness,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, no. 10 (2004): 422.

²⁶⁵ Lerzan Jandîl, “Ziwanê Kurdî (Dîyalekta Kirmanckî) de Zemîrî,” *Vate*, no. 8 (Summer 1999): 18.

[“‘Zaza’ manaya ‘lal, pelt, kekeş, bêheş û bêfam’ de amo û êno vatene. Rind! Ma kam nê ‘zazakî’ ser ro xebetîyo yan zî ser ro xebetîno? Teyna da-vîst mordem. Zafêrîyê xo yan tirkî nivisnenê yan zî kurmanckî. Seke nivana ‘na dîyalekte xo ra ziwan nîya!’”]

“One should bring to the attention to Mustafa Kemal’s Nutuk and should determine whether the Turks are able to read it. By the way, how many words in the whole text are etymologically Turkish? How many Turkish words will remain if we draw the Persian and Arabian vocabulary out? The authorities apply non-stop regulations for constructing a new language for more than 80 years. Nevertheless, some people still claim that it is impossible to make scientific research in Zazaki. Moreover, they even don’t shame about their illiteracy on this claim. For this opinion, neither education nor scientific research in Zazaki is possible. If we have the conscience and if we are also sons of these ancestors, we have to protect Zazaki which orally transmitted over generations.”²⁶⁶

In this interview, the follower tried correlate language standardization and the construction of national identity. One of them claimed that setting a standard for the Turkish language also aimed to reinforce the Turkish national identity. While reforming the Turkish language, the Turkish authorities ruined the language. Besides, Turkish nationalism as encoded in state policy manipulated the Kurdish community by claiming that the Kurdish language is not capable of being used within the education system and towards scientific research. Indeed, the recent studies showed that Turkish language – as a part of modernization process, eliminated the authenticity of the language:

“Turkish language planning was a part of Atatürk’s overall program of modernization. No nationalist movement, however, can continue to push modernization without regard for authenticity. Thus, the break with the holy Arabic script soon came to be defended on the ground that it was unsuited for the requirements of authentic Turkish phonology.”²⁶⁷

²⁶⁶ W.K. Merdimîn, “‘Ti Heta Mîra Kirî, Şar Patîle Dûno Pera,’” *Vate*, no. 17 (Spring 2002): 19. [“Merdîm ‘Nutuk’ê Mistefa Kemalî bîyaro vera pirnikê eyî de rono û vajo: ‘De hêwekî biwûn û biûmare! Gelo se ra çend hebî kelîmûnê (çekuyanê) eyî tirkî yê?’ Kelîmûnê erebkî û fariskî ma tera biweçînî, veji, gelo çend hebî kelîmeyê tirkî mûnenî? Mêrikî da-heştay ser ra zêd o ke bi zuar û tehndayîşê dewlet xebitîyê û xo rê yew ziwûn pêra nayo. Û tayê nêşarmîyenê û serevdûn konê (kuwenî) ma wa, vûnî ‘ihna yew ziwûn çin o. Bibo zî zaf têpya mendo, pey îlm û tehsîl nêbeno.’ Eke ma de biney xeyret û wîjdûn esto, eke ma rašta lajê babîyê xo yê, çik ra nêbo zî înadûnê bêmradûn ra, ma ko waharê (wayîrîyê) ziwûnê babî û kalikûnê xo bivejîyê.”]

²⁶⁷ Fishman, “The Impact of Nationalism on Language Planning: Some Comparisons between Early Twentieth-Century Europe and More Recent Years in South and Southeast Asia,” 12.

As it can be observed from the Turkish Language Reform – such as any other nation-building processes – nation and language are inevitably overlapped. Thus, every nation must have a national language. According to this perspective, the national language should also be written and standard such as to exist as a fully developed language.²⁶⁸ In the example of Vate, the critical argument is of whether setting a standard for Zazaki creates an ‘artificial’ language. As a response to the criticism that the VSG has become a medium in policing the authenticity, Malmîsanij stated that the Vate perspective protect a range of variants of Zazaki:

“In fact, my own dictionary that I’ve prepared in 1987 [...] While I’ve prepared it, I’ve noticed. For instance, I even wrote it for the foreword of this dictionary. I explained that the ‘created words’ which have not used in public do not fall into within this work. Because at first glance, the local language of the society should be collected properly. After that, if you still insist on lexicalizing, it is needed to be detailed grammatically. The difference between the lexicalized and local vocabulary should be lucid. After that, one can produce new words.”²⁶⁹

Similar to Malmîsanij’s argument on the variants of Zazaki, Vate’s perspective claimed that the local variants needed to be collected as well. On the other hand, there remains the critical question regarding individuals or organizations becoming decision-makers of a language’s grammar and vocabulary: What kind of authority can establish the rules about grammar? My question is more about the individuals who have the ‘right’ to categorize the agenda of the meeting. By what process can a few individuals come to describe themselves as decision-makers on such problematic areas like language and its orthographic rules? The answer(s), thus, dates back to the very beginning of the 1980s. In the summary of the meetings, at the very beginning of the upcoming issue of Vate, the standardized

²⁶⁸ Einar, “Dialect, Language, Nation,” 927.

²⁶⁹ Mehemed Malmîsanij, interview by Gül Hür, in Diyarbakır, March 2, 2019.

[“Hatta o sözlüğüm, o 87’de ben yani, ıh, o zaman da bunun farkındaydım. Mesela o sözlüğe hatta önsözünde de yazdım yani. Yani halkın kullanmadığı türetme sözcükler bu sözlükte yoktur dedim yani. Çünkü önce bir yani halkın dilinin önce olduğu gibi bir yansıması lazım. Sonra onun üzerine sözcük de türettiğin zaman dersin ki ben bunları türettim yani. Türetmeyle gerçek halk arasında kullanılan sözcükler belli olsun. Sonra o türetilen sözcükleri diyelim sen türetebilirsin.”]

grammar rules were explained as follows: *meylê kombîyayişi* – means the choice of the group in Zazaki. For the question raised above, here is the explanation offered by J. Îhsan Espar:

“If one can fully understand the meaning of grammar, so she rather comprehends that we do not ‘built’ the *Kirmanckî* language at all.”²⁷⁰

All the documents produced by Vate members or followers insist that the standardization has been researched in considering local variants of Zazaki.²⁷¹ The premise that local variants are needed to be collected, will be detailed in the following section.

4.2.2 The Need for an ‘Intellectual’ Zazaki

“For the first time, you [W. K. Merdimîn] have mentioned about the Vate journal in 2001 summer. You said to me that there is a periodical which published in Zazaki and has scholarly inquiries instead of political contents. Besides, those who write for the journal mostly made research about Zazaki.”²⁷²

The editorial staff paid particular attention to the visibility of the Vate journal. From Vate’s perspective, the position which the journal held in regard to academic representation played a major role in public visibility of the VSG overall. All the VSG members with whom I have conducted interviews have detailed the content of the Vate journal by setting priority to its role as an intellectual platform created for the Zazaki language. As can be seen in the quote above, the followers of the

²⁷⁰ J. Îhsan Espar, “Derheqê ‘Boya Welatî,’” *Vate*, no. 8 (Summer 1999): 76.

[“Eke manaya gramerî weş bizano, ganî bizano ke ‘ma keranê hîmê rê zîwanê kirmanckî’ nênanê ro, ma gramerî nêvirazenî. Sey heme zîwanan gramerê zîwanê ma esto û bi milyonan kurdî goreyê nê gramerî qisey kenî.”]

²⁷¹ Bilal Zilan, “Vate Çalışma Grubu ve Kırmancayî (Zazacayî) Standartlaştırma Çalışmaları” (International Conference on Zaza Studies, Yerevan, 2011), 6.

²⁷² W. K. Merdimîn, “Ti Heta Mîraz Kirî, Şar Patilê Dûno Pera,” *Vate*, no. 17 (Spring 2002): 15. [“Serrê 2001 de ûmnûnî (hamnanî) ewilî tu mi rê behsê Vateyî kerdbi. Tu vatbi ihna (wina) yew dergî esta; siaysî nîya akademîk a. În merdîmê ke tede xebitîyenî meselûnê zûnî (zîwanî) ser o xêlekî sarê xo dejnenî.”]

Vate perspective also claim that the journal does not have political contents. In using the term 'political', they presumably refer to promoted political aspirations based on both political and financial support of any Kurdish organizations. In Malmîsanij's words, the Vate journal is not financially supported by any of the Kurdish organizations.²⁷³ That is why there are no political articles in this sense, but rather linguistic and intellectual content. Although there are no articles in the first period to publicly promote any underground nationalist organizations, the Vate journal itself has emerged as a result of a political motto: setting a standard for Zazaki in order to empower the construction of Kurdish national identity. Most of the articles – as analyzed throughout this thesis – refer to the major role of national identity, national awareness, and language.

The idea that Zazaki must become an intellectual language in order to maintain its existence is explicitly stated by the current owner of the journal, Deniz Gunduz. He also declared the Vate journal as a mediator for this very aim. In his opinion, solely providing intellectual platforms for the language can keep Zazaki alive.²⁷⁴ Furthermore, some of the Vate articles correspondingly emphasized the central role of the journal itself in providing an intellectual Zazaki. For example, Cemîl Gundogan detailed the story of Nobel Prize in order to mention about his desire for the Kurdish language to reach an intellectual level. He added this wishful thought: "I hope that the wealthy Kurds should serve their own society, such as Alfred Nobel did."²⁷⁵ How, then, a periodical can play a mediator role in proving intellectual platform for a minority language? What did the Vate perspective exactly do for promoting intellectual aspiration of the linguistic activists?

As David Swartz stated, intellectuals – as the specialized producers and transmitters of culture – play key roles in shaping cultural arenas and their

²⁷³ Malmîsanij, interview.

²⁷⁴ Gunduz, interview, January 4, 2018.

²⁷⁵ Cemîl Gundogan, "Alfred Nobel û Xelata Nobelî Ya Edebiyatî," *Vate*, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 48. ["Merdîm hîvî kenû ke yew rucc mîyon zengînanê kurdan ra zî taynî însanî vicî ke xo rî Alfred Nobelî numûne (mîsal) bigerî û quwetê xo guere na millet rî yew xizmet bikerî."]

institutionalized hierarchies.²⁷⁶ The role of intellectuals in the construction of national identity has been widely discussed in light of the different case studies. In the Soviet Union, for instance, the state authorities tried to enrich cultural and intellectual values in order to create a new historical community.²⁷⁷ For the case study of this thesis, the VSG members played this key role in building a national consciousness over the Zazaki-speaking populace. Undoubtedly, the Vate journal has been used as a mediator for national consciousness. The question here is that how a group of individuals may be capable of – as members of a nation without a state – mobilizing society in terms of national awareness.

Although there is a variety of conceptualizations and practices of what constitutes a nation, I will use Montserrat Guibernau's definition.²⁷⁸ In his definition, he refers "a human group conscious of forming a community, sharing a common culture, attached to a clearly demarcated territory, having a common past and a common project for the future and claiming the right to rule itself."²⁷⁹ In my opinion, the two main indicators have been aptly experienced by the Vate journal: a common past and a common project for the future. The VSG has clearly rediscovered the cultural and traditional value of the Zazaki-speaking community. By using these set of values, the VSG members endeavor to create a common future project. Hence, I believe that the Vate journal also can be defined as a mediator in modernization project in reference to Kurdish national identity and denies being a separate nation. On the other hand, Guibernau defines 'nations without state' as follows:

²⁷⁶ David Swartz, *Culture and Power: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (The United States of America: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1.

²⁷⁷ Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism: Concepts in Social Thought* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 25.

²⁷⁸ The discussions on the different definitions of 'nation' are beyond this thesis scope. Here, I solely indicate the cultural and intellectual production of the Zazas as a nation without state.

²⁷⁹ Montserrat Guibernau, "Nationalism and Intellectuals in Nations without State: The Catalan Case," *Political Studies* 48 (2000): 989.

“By ‘nations without states’ I refer to nations, which, in spite of having their territories included within the boundaries of one or more States, by and large do not identify with them.”²⁸⁰

According to Guibernau’s statement, these nations maintain a separate sense of national identity generally based upon a common culture, history, attachment to a particular territory and the explicit wish to rule themselves. In terms of the special focus of this study, this statement opens a discussion about whether the Zazaki-speaking populace has its separate sense of national identity. In other words, I would like to emphasize the cultural, social and traditional heterogeneity within the populace as being of critical importance. As far as I investigate, there is no previous scholarly inquiry comparing social fragments among the Zazaki-speaking community. Yet, I – as a member of the Zazaki-speaking populace - can definitely claim that there is a clear distinction between the Alawite and Sunni tradition among the Zazas. This distinction becomes publicly visible in the practices of daily life. On the other hand, it should be noted that the heterogeneity is not exclusively about the Zazas, but all societies. Since it is beyond the scope of this thesis, I will not give more detail about this discussion. What is interesting for this study is the Vate's ambition that the Zazaki-speaking populace is needed to be considered as Kurd and whether they have a common sense of national identity or not.

What, then, was the Vate's offer for providing a set of intellectual values in Zazaki? In which methodology, these values can be increased? The Vate editors chose to publish an article about Dante for the very first issue of the journal. Memo Darrêz wrote this Zazaki article in terms of philosophical terminology, presumably in order to create a relatively new area for the written culture.²⁸¹ By publishing this text, the Vate perspective also aimed to prove intellectual capability Zazaki inherently has. It can be claimed that the VSG tried to carry out this project by

²⁸⁰ Montserrat Guibernau, “Nations without States: Political Communities in the Global Age,” *Michigan Journal of International Law* 25, no. 4 (2004): 1254.

²⁸¹ Memo Darrêz, “Dante û Tradîsyonî Îdealîstan,” *Vate*, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 24–28.

encouraging Vate contributors to write in a wide variety of disciplines, such as philosophy. Malmîsanij explains linguistic capacity of Zazaki as follows:

“You know that our society has always been peasant, and over the years, they have become an agricultural society. But we also aware that the terminologies of different disciplines play a critical role in linguistic research. For example, terminology of philosophy, sociology, psychology, and economics. That's why we intended to solve the terminology problem.”²⁸²

Intellectuals in minority groups should also be considered as a resolution mechanism. They determine the current situation of the nation and aid their communities in imagining new and possible alternatives.²⁸³ In Vate's case too, social, cultural or political conflicts were revealed and analyzed the editorial cadre of the journal. Likewise, they worked to provide a solution for the conflict. The previous argument by Malmîsanij shows us that there is a need in Zazaki language for standardized terminologies. Interestingly, the key role of intellectuals was also discussed among the Vate articles. Against the assimilatory state policies it is not only the intellectuals, but also all members of society have to take responsibility.²⁸⁴ Due to the total struggle in which all fragments of the daily life would flourish the liberation of the Kurds, the intellectuals take responsibility.²⁸⁵

Not surprisingly, the Vate journal refers a range of mediums in modernization process. Similar to an article on Dante, some of the musicians who have performed in Zazaki were interviewed in order to ask their opinions of both the current and future appearance of the Zazaki-speaking community. For example, Nîlüfer Akbal – a well-known Zaza musician, detailed her aim at performing traditional Zazaki music with the modern Western sound-system, such as opera.²⁸⁶

²⁸² Cemîl Oguz, “Malmîsanijî Va,” *Vate*, no. 16 (Winter 2002): 71.

[“Ti zanî, şarê ma hîna zaf dewij o; zîret de meşxul bîya, no ware de termî (terim) estî. Labelê mavajî termê felsefe, sosyolojî, psikolojî, îqtisadî çîne yî. Ma vaşt naye rê çare bivînî”.]

²⁸³ Guibernau, “Nationalism and Intellectuals in Nations without State: The Catalan Case,” 1003.

²⁸⁴ Kuriş, “Nîlüfer Akbal: Lawikî Ruhê Mi Îfade Kenê,” 40–41.

²⁸⁵ Kuriş, 41.

²⁸⁶ Kuriş, 32.

While the Vate journal is providing a set of intellectual values for Zazaki, the editorial staff noted that there are some responsibilities of society as well. During the following section, I will detail Vate's public appeal for linguistic activism and sharing national responsibilities.

4.2.3 Collecting Local Variants of Zazaki

While setting a standard for a minority language, it is crucial to note that language planning process has its own characteristics. Most of the scholarly inquiries agree that nationalism is a medium for creating large communities of communication.²⁸⁷ Thus The nation-state's aim to create and maintain a standard range of national identifiers such as language and education. In minority groups, however, this assumption can similarly emerge as a defensive response to coercive nation state-building.²⁸⁸ For this thesis's focus, the Vate perspective should be analyzed in considering these dynamics. Still, it should be noted that the minority groups can react as majority under the effect of nationalism.

As was previously detailed, Kurdish nationalism excessively affected the VSG meetings. Although the language standardization process has been organized by a minority group, the national responses can and did still appear. For example, Malmîsanij stated that setting a standard for orthographic rules can not be scholarly explained. It is rather based on the common tendency among VSG members.²⁸⁹ Not surprisingly, the common opinion of the group members on these rules is itself shaped against Turkish grammar. Hence, it can be claimed that the linguistic denial of the group based on its nationalist arguments.

²⁸⁷ Wright, *Language Policy and Language Planning: From Nationalism to Globalisation*, 225.

²⁸⁸ Will Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism and Citizenship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2.

²⁸⁹ Malmîsanij, interview.

Although the VSG represents a majority, the local variant of Zazaki have an important role in the linguistic research. The group not only collects all variants of the words but also encouraged those who write in their local variant. Yet, these writers are still expected to write with the Bedirxan Alphabet. Malmîsanij himself, as a chief editor of the journal, frankly declares that authenticity of Zazaki should be protected. Furthermore, traditional narratives from each part of the Zazaki-speaking region must be collected with consideration for their linguistic authenticity:

“In my opinion, it will be the most proper way for the interviews that interviewee's local accent should be considered. While the interviewer writes these stories down, he/she should not proofread interviewee's local accent.”²⁹⁰

The interaction among Zazaki variants sometimes issued in the *Vate* journal. Although the readers' letters do not always represent *Vate*'s perspective, they seem crucial in terms of linguistic debates. In the very first issues, some of the readers frequently sent letters to the journal. Serdar Bedirxan is one of these readers as well as a writer in his own right. In one of his letters, Bedirxan stated the major role of Zazaki variants. In his opinion, all Zaza writers should be fluent in every variant:

“Each writer should not write only in his/her local variant. Instead, one from Pîran should learn Çewlig variant, one from Dêrsim should also learn Pîran variant, etc. If everyone becomes familiar with all Zazaki variants, they get a better understanding of the Zazaki language.”²⁹¹

²⁹⁰ Malmîsanij, “Deyîra Zulmê Dewletê Yo Ke Dêrsim de Biyo: Kulê 38,” *Vate*, no. 9 (Autumn 1999): 86.

[“Fikrê mi gore merdim ke roportaj keno, çekuyanê qiseykerdoxî nêvurîno, fekê ey/aye ra çî vejino binuso hîna baş beno.”]

²⁹¹ Serdar Bedirxan, “Wendoxan Ra,” *Vate*, no. 2 (Autumn 1997): 116.

[“Wa her nuştox şîweya xo reydi ney, wa yewna şîwe reydi binuso. Ma vajê nuştoxê pîranijî wa şîwey Çewlîgî, nuştoxê dêrsimijî wa şîwey Pîranî, nuştoxê çewlîgijî zi wa şîwey Sêwregî reydi binusê. Ebi enewa wa pey nuştoxan rê şîwey bînî xudîg (xudîk) nêrê ki ameyîşê têlewe di, pey meylê xo hina weş bieşkênê tesbît bikê, yanî zorey zaf nêro meydan.”]

Similarly, VSG members emphasize the importance of the variants of Zazaki, particularly for the folkloric collections. From the Vate perspective, these set of traditional narratives should be compiled by local ethnographers with special consideration for their authenticity. For instance, the basic expressions in Zazaki are detailed in one of the Vate articles. In this article, both the adverbs of time and the traditional ceremonies – such as *Xizir*, *Qere Çarşemeyê Martî*, *Hawtemal*, *Des û di îmamî*, etc., were explained.²⁹² Furthermore, the writer preferred to use the local variants of these concepts, instead of Vate standard for Zazaki. In spite of the fact that the VSG endeavors to protect the authenticity of Zazaki variants, they still insist on the necessity of the language standardization in order to provide a written Zazaki. In light of this superiority, the following passage seems interesting:

“When you read the journal, it is possible to encounter with the different variants of Zazaki from different areas, such as Dêrsim, Çewlîg, Sêwreg, and the others. No doubt, we want to set a standard for our language. Yet, it should be kept in mind that this is a process rather than being a short-lived project. [...] Furthermore, we should also be aware of the very existence of the other regions which have local variant of Zazaki. We certainly cannot claim that Kirmanckî we speak in our hometowns is unique and mere.”²⁹³

It is a common assumption that there is a perfect harmony between language and community.²⁹⁴ This claim produces the premise that each member of society speaks exactly the same language in terms of phonology. In contrast to this premise, Vate has tried to issue local narratives all around the Zazaki-speaking region. In their opinion, there is a wide variety of local accents in every society. Hence, they affirm the notion that the authenticity of Zazaki should be protected as well. Indeed, a variety of articles written in local accents of Zazaki have been issued in the

²⁹² Çeko, “Rojên Bi Rûmet û Ziqnawitî,” *Vate*, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 28–41.

²⁹³ “Wendoxan Rê,” *Vate*, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 3.

[“Şima ke Vate wend şima vînenê ke nuşteyê ciya-ciyay ebi şiweyanê ciya-ciyayan nusiyayê. Ma vajî şîweya Dêrsimî, Çewlîgî, Sêwregî û cayanê bînan. Bêguman ma wazenê ke zîwanê xo standardîze bikerî, labele no kar rojê de yan zî aşmê (mengê) û serrê de nêbeno. [...] Ganî ma xo vîrî nêkerî ke kirmanckî kirmanckîya dewa ma û şaristanê ma tena nîya, dew û şaristanê bînî zî este!”]

²⁹⁴ Richard A. Hudson, *Sociolinguistics*, Cambridge Textbooks in Linguistics (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 6.

journal. During my research on the Vate journal, I have noted that there are approximately 35 articles which refer to major role of local variants for maintaining the authenticity of Zazaki.²⁹⁵

4.2.4 Encouragement of Society for Linguistic Activism

“Language is not exclusively about communication. More importantly, it is a tool for thinking. The language makes thinking possible. Namely, the thoughts occur thanks to the language.”²⁹⁶

The Vate journal was designed not only as an intellectual platform for dissemination the Vate gathering results and linguistic research, but also as a medium for social mobilization. By doing so, the Zazaki-speaking audience was targeted in two ways: First, to encourage them to practice Zazaki in every fragment of daily life and, second, to share in responsibility for the journal. The responsibility here is more about producing Zazaki literary texts. The quoted passage is a remarkable instance of how they want the audience to experience linguistic revival. This argument was written by Haydar Diljen. In his article, he detailed the close ties between language and national identity in order to encourage the Zazaki-speaking populace to speak in their mother tongue. Diljen also stated the central role of Zazaki in creating intellectual and philosophical platforms. The Vate journal openly denounced the state ideology in order to raise linguistic awareness in the Zazaki-speaking community. As I mentioned earlier, the intellectuals are also responsible for producing a variety of solutions to end the conflict.²⁹⁷ Here, the problem is obvious: the Zazas were unable to write in Zazaki because of the assimilatory policies. To fight with this problem, it is needed to be created sustainable platforms such as the Vate journal:

²⁹⁵ There are average 18 articles in every issue for the first period (1997-2003) of the Vate journal.

²⁹⁶ Haydar Diljen, “Nuştox, Ziwan û Şexsiyeto Neteweyi,” *Vate*, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 64–65.

[“Ziwan wasiteyê têkilîviraştişî tenya nîyo. Ey muhîmêrî, aletê fikirîyayişî yo. Wexto ki kes fikirêno, kes ziwanî bi kar ano. Yanê fikrê kesî bi ziwaniya peyda beno.]

²⁹⁷ Guibernau, “Nationalism and Intellectuals in Nations without State: The Catalan Case,” 1003.

“If you have an opinion or a statement on national and linguistic issues, send us! Until today, you are not able to write in Zazaki because of the enemy's political pressure. But now, there is Vate journal which aims to become a platform for your thoughts and artistic works.”²⁹⁸

Almost in every issue, the readers constantly encounter leading figures of the journal who are adamant that the only way to maintain Zazaki is to speak Zazaki! Moreover, that Zazaki language needs a written culture so the standard Zazaki can be used to reach this purpose. Even though improving written culture in Zazaki has been a challenge under the political pressure of the Turkish Republic, the European diaspora provided new opportunities for the minority groups. Thanks to the political and financial support of the multicultural state policies, the number of Kurdish written sources has increased in the European diaspora.²⁹⁹ Likewise, the number of Zazaki books and journals increased as well.³⁰⁰ The ever-evolving multicultural politics in Western Europe paved a new path for the Kurdish national awakening. So, the VSG has benefited and advanced supportive policies in order to mobilize the Zazaki-speaking groups.

The nationalist discourse of the Vate journal was mostly observed in the introductory article dubbed as *Wendoxan rê* (to the Readers). This section of the journal was also prepared as an introduction to give a brief summary of the entire issue. In the first issue, this introduction included an invite for the Zazaki-speaking groups in order to create an intellectual platform for the Zazas.³⁰¹ In other words, it was an announcement that the importance of written culture was emphasized. On the other hand, some of the Vate writers revealed the opposite thoughts which were arisen from some Kurdish groups. For example, Memed Drewş depicted some of the Kurds whose approach on Zazaki is as follows: “[...] This is the time for

²⁹⁸ “Wendoxan Rê,” *Vate*, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 4.

[“Eke fikrê şîma estê wa sereyê şîma de, eke vateyê şîma estê wa fekê şîma de nêmanê, ma rê binusênê. Vizêr şîma nê nuştîni, dişmenî nêverdaynî şîma binusênê. Ewro na kovara ma wazena biba platformê fikr, huner û vateyanê şîma.”]

²⁹⁹ Memo Darrêz, “Nuşttoxîyê Kurdan û Neşrkerdîşî Kitabanî Kurdkî,” *Vate*, no. 7 (Spring 1999): 83–88.

³⁰⁰ Malmîsanij, interview.

³⁰¹ “Wendoxan Rê,” Summer 1997, 4.

fighting, not for learning a language. And, we should not waste our times for reading and writing in our language.”³⁰²

Despite the fact that Vate aware of the political heterogeneity of the Kurdish organizations, the editors have insisted on mobilizing the Zazaki-speakers. No matter what the Kurdish organizations claim, the Vate journal would not stop implementing its own agenda. In the third issue, Vate correspondingly appealed to those who are 'addicted' to linguistic activism not to hesitate to write in Zazaki. Because the responsibility for keeping Zazaki alive not only belongs to the Vate editors but also all members of the Zazaki-speaking populace:

“Those who are the followers of the Vate! The burden of the Kurds is heavy in terms of cultural and linguistic revival. You should keep in mind that this burden does not only belong to a few members of the Vate Study Group, but also each members of society, Individuals should take responsibility. Write for the journal, announce its very existence, subscribe, and make persons subscribe etc. These responsibilities can be shared among the individuals. Moreover, ask yourself that who else would take responsibility, if not we ourselves?”³⁰³

Similar to the Vate’s appeal, the reader letters have also displayed the key role in developing a written culture of national liberation. No doubt, these letters should be critically engaged in future academic work. The reaction, criticism, or support of which, as acknowledged by the editorial team, were presumably seen as the means of communication with Zazaki-speaking community. Moreover, the reactions from the audience were probably perceived as a medium able to refer proof of the periodicle’s reaches towards the populace. Using the positive

³⁰² Memed Drewş, “Wenden û Nuştana Kurdî Ser o,” *Vate*, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 59.

[“Nika wextê zıwanmusayine nıyo, wextê cengî yo û ma wextê xo bi zıwanê xo musayine, bi zıwanê xo wenden û nuştene meravêrnımı.”]

³⁰³ “Wendoxan Rê,” *Vate*, no. 3 (Winter 1997): 3.

[“Wendoxê delalî yê ke vateyî ra hes kenê! Ganî şıma xo vîr a nêkênê ke barê zıwan û kulturê ma kurdan barêdo giran o. Xo vîr a mekênê ke no, tena barê çend endamanê (azayanê) redaksiyonê Vateyî niyo, barê her heskerdaxê zıwan û kulturê ma yo. Ma her kes ganî hetê ra ardim bikî. Nuştene, vilakerdene, abonebîyene, abonekerdene û karanê bînan ra çî kar kamî ra yeno ganî biko. Xo ra biperse: Ti nêkî/nêka, ez nêka, kam keno?”]

interaction of the reader letters, the editorial staff may have overrated them. One of the letters, the Vate reader correspondingly emphasized the central role of the language: “If we do not want to become a cultural group such as Native Americans – a nation without history – then we should maintain our mother language.”³⁰⁴

It is critical to ask if the Vate journal created a difference among Zazaki-speakers. Have these set of messages been received well by the audience? It seems difficult to answer this question. Yet, the VSG members frankly claim that there is an increase in the number of the Zazaki written source thanks to the Vate journal. Malmîsanij also stated the obvious transformation of the Vate readers claiming that the cultural productions in Zazaki dramatically increased with the motivation provided by the Vate journal. Thus, it can be argued that the consequences were certainly well-received by the audience of the Vate journal, as evidenced by an increase in the number of writers.³⁰⁵ The statistical figures on both the writers and audience of the journal were frequently declared by the VSG. In these figures, the history of the Vate journal was detailed based on the journal’s content.

4.3 Searching for National Identity Among Belief Systems

Throughout the textual analysis of the Vate journal, I tried to concentrate on the major characteristics of the periodical. As I have mentioned before, most of the special focuses in the articles basically refer to the Kurdish national awakening. First, the Vate journal was introduced not only as an intellectual platform for dissemination of the Vate gathering results and linguistic research in Zazaki but also as a medium for mobilizing society. To achieve this aim, the mediums of social interaction has been considered in detail by the founding members. Since its

³⁰⁴ Serdar Bedirxan, “Wendoxan Ra,” *Vate*, no. 7 (Spring 1999): 94.

[“Eke ma nêwazenî sey çermsûran (kizilderîliyan) bibî, eke ma nêwazenî bibî bêtarix, gani ma ziwane xo rê wayîr vejîyî.”]

³⁰⁵ Mehemed Malmîsanij, interview by Gül Hür, in Diyarbakır, March 2, 2019.

[“Ve yani okuyucu üzerinde de olumlu etkisi olduğu belli oluyor. Çünkü dediğim gibi yazar sayısı arttı yani.”]

emergence in 1997, not only the well-educated Zaza activists but also the religious figures have been played a significant role in producing the journal's content. Since there are two main traditions among the Zazas, both of them was needed to be mentioned in national awakening: Alawite and Sunni Islam traditions. The Zazaki-speaking groups belong to the Sunni Islam – mostly Shafii tradition, and a significant number of them belong to the Alawite faith, with the exception of a small number of Christian populations.³⁰⁶

The following sections will be focused on the religious context among the journal articles in order to get a better understanding of Vate's agenda. First, the representation of Zaza mullahs will be detailed. Later on, the Alawite tradition will be concentrated in terms of the history of Dersim. Since Alawite tradition has rarely been issued directly in the journal, Dersim's history will be used to find out the role of Alawite belief system in the construction of Kurdish identity.

4.3.1 The Role of Religion in the Identity Construction: Zaza Mullahs

VSG members provided a common platform for all social classes in Zazaki-speaking community, as well as a set of intellectual values. Hence, individuals who maintained Zazaki in everyday life – regardless of their political or social affiliations – have been issued in the Vate journal. The mullahs who performed religious orders in Zazaki played an important role for the editors of the periodical. By promoting the Zaza mullahs in the articles, the Vate journal tried to increase national awareness among the Zazaki-speaking groups. These individuals have been represented in the journal in two ways: by publishing their religious texts in Zazaki and through personal interviewing with them.

³⁰⁶ Ercan Çağlayan, *Zazalar: Tarih, Kültür ve Kimlik* (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2016), 130.

Before detailing the selected passages from the journal, a brief account of mullahs in Kurdistan seems significant. As Martin van Bruinessen states that the mullah (in Kurdish: mele, mela) in Sunni Islam leads all religious ceremonies at the village level.³⁰⁷ The average mullah had studied at traditional Koran schools. Bruinessen also shares his own experience that in a few villages, the mullah was a powerful personality to whom many listened because he was really wise, while in the other villages many people considered the mullah an old fool.³⁰⁸ Although madrasa education in village level for young Kurds has been led by the mullahs, mullahs themselves are mostly not attained a politically important position.³⁰⁹ On the other hand, Amir Hassanpour describes the Kurdish mullahs as the oldest poets in the Kurdish history.³¹⁰

As I stated before, interviewing with Zaza mullahs has become common in the journal. During the interview with mullahs, interviewers have generally insisted on inquiring the critical role of maintaining mother tongue. As one of the most significant writers of the journal, W. K. Merdimîn interviewed with a Zazaki-speaking mullah, *Mela Kamilê Puexî*. *Puex* is a village located in the center of Bingöl and the name of a local tribe as well.³¹¹ The mullah got his name from this village where he was born. Not surprisingly, the role of the language in the Kurdish society was asked to the mullah. Here is his response: “One of the Quran verses says as follow: *‘Wextîlafû elsînetikum we elwanîkum’*. It means that you all have different languages and different colors as well.”³¹² On the other hand, there is a

³⁰⁷ Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London: Zed Books, 1992), 209.

³⁰⁸ Bruinessen, 209.

³⁰⁹ Bruinessen, 210.

³¹⁰ Hassanpour, *Kürdistan’da Milliyetçilik ve Dil: 1918-1985*, 122.

³¹¹ W. K. Merdimîn, “Mela Kamilê Puexî: Werrekîna Inî Melay Mumtazî Biûmênî Yew Ca, Derheqî Nuştişî Zûnî Xwi de, Tarîxî Xwi de Eserêk Biviraştênî,” *Vate*, no. 18 (Summer-autumn 2002): 82.

[“Puex: Nameyê yew mintîqa u eşir o. Dewê Puex (yani Dewa Cerin, Dewa Miyûnin, Çiris, Şawûn, Kuermun, Matun) pabesteyê merkezi Çewlîgi ye.”]

³¹² W. K. Merdimîn, “Mela Kamilê Puexî: Werrekîna Inî Melay Mumtazî Biûmênî Yew Ca, Derheqî Nuştişî Zûnî Xwi de, Tarîxî Xwi de Eserêk Biviraştênî,” *Vate*, no. 18 (Summer-autumn 2002): 86.

statement in one of the readers' letters which was very similar to the verse that *Mela Kamilê Puexî* quoted:

“In Quran, our beloved and holy Allah mentions about a variety of mankind. All languages were created by him. In Quran, he says, “We created you into different groups and tribes that you will be able to recognize each other easily.” By so doing, you should not deny each other and not become enemies. In Islamic order, there is one important rule to obey: Quran should be properly learned by Muslims. If one denies other cultures, he/she have to be excommunicated immediately.”³¹³

He correspondingly added that *Allah* created mankind as located in different areas with their own societies. That is why people should recognize the unique existence of others. In other words, our holy *Allah* built the reality in which we live, so, we should respect the differences among us. Similar to these arguments, *Mela Mehemed* emphasized that speaking Zazaki in daily life is a religious obligation in order to lead a more virtuous life in terms of Islam. It is also interesting to note that the mullah referred to a range of historiographers in order to reject the claims that the Zazas are not included in the Kurds. He said that history has always written that the Zaza tribes are the Kurds.³¹⁴ Moreover, he mentioned his literary texts written in Kurdish-Kurmanji. Apart from being the literary language at the time, Kurdish-Kurmanji played a major role in madrasa education. While detailing the close relationship between Kurdish-Zazaki and Kurdish-Kurmanji, he also mentioned about four pieces of Kurdistan. *Mela Mehemed* stated that religious sources were transmitted from the other parts of Kurdistan – especially from Syria – and were circulated among religious figures in Turkey.³¹⁵

[“Ayetêka Qur’anî de vano ‘Wextîlafû elsinetikum we elwanikum’, yanî ‘Ziwan û rengê şîma cîya-cîya ye.’”]

³¹³ Serdar Bedirxan, “Wendoxan Ra,” *Vate*, no. 7 (Spring 1999): 96.

[“Rebbîl alemîn Quran di behsê tewir-tewir biyayîşê reng û ziwananê merdîman keno. Heme ziwani û însani Hûmay xelq kerdî. Quran di vano “Mi şîma millet-millet, qebîle-qebîle xelq kerdî ki şîma yewbînan nas bikî”, ne ki şîma yewbînan înkâr bikî û yewbînan di duşmeney bikî. Bisilmaney di yew qeyde esto: ganî (gerek) bisilmaneyî ayetanê Quranê Kerîmî têdînî ra bawer bikî. Eke tede yew zî înkâr bikî, dîn ra vejîyênî.”]

³¹⁴ Lezgîn and Lezgîn, “Mem (Mela Mehemed): Vanê ‘Şairî Sey Ecacê Pêlê Behran A...’ Ê Min Ez Anî Nîya,” 49.

³¹⁵ Lezgîn and Lezgîn, 38.

Apart from the state madrasas, another category of madrasa in Kurdistan have been led by mullahs as more independent schools attached to some of the village mosques. As Bruinessen states, these did not educate their students for official positions but to become mullahs serving the village and town population.³¹⁶ Furthermore, this education served the emergence of Kurdish national awareness. The Kurdish language was encouraged among the students who came from a variety of regional and social backgrounds. Truly, the Vate articles on the Zaza mullahs – or more broadly on their religious practices, predominantly refer to the national awareness:

“*Miho*, the Quran you read every day – which certainly do not understand anything – is totally the history of the Arabs! Why do you need their history? You should learn your own history, the history of the Kurds!”³¹⁷

I believe that this argument can be considered as a generic identifier of the Vate journal. It is obvious that the journal has aimed at reaching all social fragments of the Zazaki speaking populace in order uniting them regardless of their social or political position. As it will be detailed in the following section, all these differences are ignored by the Vate perspective in order to construct a unified Kurdish identity. At this very point, all social fragments become meaningless according to the Vate editors. Yet, I think that promoting a few similarities among social, religious and traditional heterogeneity of Zazas would create a set of ‘structured’ values which is considered as shared history and tradition.

4.3.2 Revisiting the History of Dersim

³¹⁶ Martin van Bruinessen, “The Kurds and Islam,” *Les Annales de l’Autre Islam* 5 (1998): 23.

³¹⁷ J. Îhsan Espar, “Beyi Se Bena? - II,” *Vate*, no. 3 (Winter 1997): 58.

[“*Miho*, Qur’ano ki ti her roj wanenî û ti ra çiyekî fam nêkenî tarîxê ‘ereban o! To rê tarîxê ‘ereban çî lazim o? Xo rê tarîxê kurdan biwani, tarîxê xo bizani!”]

In this section, I will try to pay a particular attention to Dersim narratives published by Vate which refer to Alawi tradition among the Zazas. Since only a few articles have directly referred traditional symbols in Alawi belief, the role of this tradition will be detailed in considering Dersim narratives. according to the Vate perspective, history is clearly full of evidence that Dersim region has been a Kurdish settlement., The culture and tradition of Dersim has been aptly used by the Vate editors as a set of historical evidence in order to increase the awareness of Kurdish national identity.

How can we find out Alewi symbolism/tradition in considering the Vate articles about the history of Dersim? Although it has been widely discussed in a considerable volume of academic and non-academic research, Bruinessen notes that most of the Kurdish Alevis speak Zaza dialects. That said, it should be noted that there are also Kurdish-Kurmanji speaking Alewis, and that the majority of the Alevis in Turkey are not Kurds but Turks.³¹⁸ He also explains that Zazaki is spoken by a large number of tribes in northwestern Kurdistan which covers greater Dersim.³¹⁹ As being a significant Alewite settlement, Dersim region should be thoroughly discussed in order to build a better understanding of major characteristic of the Vate journal.

Even though the current use of Dersim refers to Tunceli (a city of Turkey)- its official name – Dersim has been indicated to the historically broader area included Tunceli, Erzincan, parts of Bingol and Diyarbakir. Dersim was renamed as Tunceli in 1935 with a special law enacted for the region and the name of Dersim.³²⁰ Furthermore, the use of Dersim by the natives generally refers to a ‘special’ place based on the glorious history that it has.³²¹ With the acceptance of

³¹⁸ Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*, 23.

³¹⁹ Bruinessen, 22.

³²⁰ Hüseyin Ayrılmaz, “Dersim ve Tunceli,” *Dersim Gazetesi*, July 5, 2019, <https://dersimgazetesi.org/dersim-ve-tunceli/>.

³²¹ Aylin Demir, “Oral Poetry and Weeping in the Case of Dersimli Women” (master’s thesis, Middle Eastern Technical University, 2010), 24.

the Bill of Tunceli by the National Assembly in 1935, the Kemalist elites started to plan the military intervention to Dersim, which would last between 1937-1938. According to the official reports, almost 10 percent of the entire population of Tunceli was killed by the Turkish military forces.³²²

The Dersim tragedy has been widely discussed with its social and political consequences. However, it is obvious that there are considerable discussions among researchers whether 1937-38 military intervention was genocide, massacre or rebellion. Although this debate is beyond the focus of this study, İsmail Beşikçi's research on this tragedy seems critical in terms of the colonial Kemalist discourse. His claim can be considered as a fresh perspective based on that the Kemalist regime aimed at pacification of the rebellious Kurdish district of Dersim.³²³ As there is a special focus of the Vate journal to Dersim 1937-38, it should be noted that oral culture in Dersim has a considerable role in remembering this tragedy.

As I mentioned in the previous chapters, some major topics have been shared among the Vate writers. Dersim '38 is one of them which has been usually issued by Mûnzûr Çem. Before detailing his narratives on Dersim, there is a variety of writing preferences of Dersim's historical use. Some of the Dersimli people prefer to use *Desim*. It should be noted that the writing of Dersim in standard Zazaki is as follows: *dêrsim*. Among the different ascriptions, Vate editors prefer to use *Dêrsim* instead of *Desim*. Some claims that *-der* means 'the door', and *-sim* means 'silver' in Kurdish, thus *Dersim (or Dêrsim)* means 'silver door'. On the other hand, *Desim* explicitly follows in the traditional of native use.³²⁴ Even though there is no previous explanation on the standard version of this word, I think that the VSG has searched for a symbol related to the Kurdishness of Dersim.

³²² Martin Van Bruinessen, "The Suppression of the Dersim Rebellion in Turkey (1937-38)," in *Conceptual and Historical Dimensions of Genocide*, ed. George J. Andreopoulos (University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), 6.

³²³ İsmail Beşikçi, *Tunceli Kanunu (1935) ve Dersim Jenosidi* (İstanbul: İsmail Beşikçi Vakfı Yayınları, 2013).

³²⁴ Hasan Dursun, "Dersim Mi, Dersim Mi; 'Dêsim' Mi?," *Gazete Çıla*, 2015, <http://www.cilagazete.com/14572/.html>.

Dersim '38 was considered – by the Kurdish nationalism – as a revolt against the Kemalist regime which was highly motivated with national awareness. That is why the *Vate* articles instead emphasized the glorious resistance by local tribes. That said, the mass violence over the local residents was remembered as well. Mûnzûr Çem – as being responsible for Dersim region, was honored to write the very first article for the first issue of the journal. The 15-page-article was written based on the witness narratives. emphasized during the narrative were the following elements: a) military forces were against unarmed populace in case of the future revolt, b) mass violence was perpetrated against innocent villagers, c) the events caused a national awakening of some tribe leaders, c) there were present some conflict among the local tribes; and finally, d) there existed a close relationship between the Dersim massacre and the Armenian genocide in terms of the consequences of the military interference.³²⁵ One of the interviews of Çem, Dersim '38 witness listed all these elements in a row.³²⁶

The history of modern Turkey witnessed a range of the military intervention and mass violence against the Kurds. The Kurds experienced violent suppression which the state cruelly organized in 1925, in particular – the revolt led by *Sheikh Said*, and military action in 1937 and 1938 which aimed to abolish the resistance in Dersim region against Kemalist regime. The discourse of Kurdish nationalism has embraced Dersim '38 as an inseparable whole of the Kurdish collective identity. Dersim '38 was the last military operation to suppress Kurdistan after a series of Kurdish uprising against the Kemalist regime.³²⁷ Indeed, a range of brutal military attacks by the Turkish Republic against the Kurds were demonstrated by the *Vate*

³²⁵ Mûnzûr Çem, “Qesêykerdana Civrayîlê Hemê Dundî, Dewa Hêyderû Keklige Ra: ‘Roze ve Roze Pê Ma Xapit, Hata Ke Ma Qir Kerdîme,’” *Vate*, no. 1 (Summer 1997): 5–21.

³²⁶ Mûnzûr Çem, “Tertelê 38î Ra Ma Kî Bara Xo Gurete,” *Vate*, no. 3 (Winter 1997): 35–50.

³²⁷ Hamit Bozarslan, “Some Remarks on Kurdish Historiographical Discourse in Turkey (1919-1980),” in *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism* (California: Mazda Publisher, 2003), 26.

editors as well: “After *Pîran*, *Zîlan*, and *Agrî*; *Dêrsim* was massacred as well, and the villages were burnt.”³²⁸

As depicting a nationalist rebellion, *Dersim '38* was issued by Çem for the second time.³²⁹ In this very article, Çem detailed the role of Kurdish notables in *Dersim* rebellion against the state authority. In his words, the leading figures in *Dersim* organized for the Kurdish emancipation. His statements on *Dersim* is as follows: “In that time, the nationalist thoughts were increasing in *Dêrsim*.”³³⁰

A range of interviews with massacre witnesses were issued by different *Vate* authors; some narratives, however, has presented considerable symbols for getting a better sense about state violence over the innocent mass. For example, the story of *Amik Mele* referred to military’s ferocity as follows: “The soldiers around us sobbingly cried out.”³³¹ She stated that even the Turkish soldiers wept for them because the interference was incredibly brutal.

Although state ferocity was detailed with these narratives, the glorious insurgency of the *Dersim* tribes was considered as reference for Kurdish nationalism. In consequence, the Kurds were encouraged based on this respected rebellion:

“We are not alone, sisters. We are the daughters of *Sêykalî Dede*. Keep in mind that the honor of our beloved father is the most important value to protect... How do we let the faithless and dishonest abuse our honor?”

³²⁸ “Wendoxan Rê,” *Vate*, no. 2 (Autumn 1997): 3–4.

[“Pîranî û Zîlan û Agrî dim a kurdê Dêrsimî amey qirkerdene, dewî û şaristanê ma amey veşnayene.”]

³²⁹ Mûnzûr Çem, “Serra 60 Ya Sarewedardena Dêrsimî Ser o: ‘Ez Verva Dismenî Çok Ronênan,’” *Vate*, no. 2 (Autumn 1997): 13–14.

³³⁰ Mûnzûr Çem, “Serra 60 Ya Sarewedardena Dêrsimî Ser o: ‘Ez Verva Dismenî Çok Ronênan,’” *Vate*, no. 2 (Autumn 1997): 14.

[“O sire de fikro netewî (yurtseverlik düşüncesî) kî mîyanê sarê Dêrsimî de xêlê avêşîyaye (aversiyaye) bî.”]

³³¹ Kazim Temurlenk, “Meleka Memedê Xidê Rey: ‘Qe Diramê Ci Ra Nêmend,’” *Vate*, no. 2 (Autumn 1997): 42.

[“Uza di eskero dorme ma de eve veng berbayî.”]

We now observe that our society has lamented Dêrsim massacre. They created a historiography by using the *kilams*.³³² Thanks to the *kilams*, we have heard the murder of *Şahan Axa*, the miserable children, and the state's cruelty."³³³

This statement correspondingly refers to a newly-emerging perspective in a considerable number of academic and non-academic research on Dersim history. Indeed, Dersim laments are currently considered as an alternative source in Dersim historiography. Metin and Kemal Kahraman – as local ethnographer and musicians from Dersim, states that laments present fresh perspective for the history of modern Turkey.³³⁴

The Vate perspective paid a particular attention to brutal military intervention of the Kemalist regime against all minority groups in modern Turkey.³³⁵ It is interesting to note that some of the writers mentioned the Armenian genocide as a proof of the Sunni Muslim Turkish majority of the state. In the second issue of Vate journal, Malmîsanij wrote a review on 'Gulîzar's tragedy' which is the story based on the kidnapping of an Armenian woman by a Kurdish tribal chief.³³⁶ After giving the details on the story, Malmîsanij stated that this kind of cruelty is rarely seen in the Kurdish history.³³⁷ Because of the continuous insults to the Kurdish society based on this tragedy, he complained about this injustice.

³³² *Kilams* are orally transmitted traditional songs which mostly refer to social, cultural, and historical symbols of Dersim. It should be noted that more broadly, *kilam* has been used not only in Dersim but also in the other Zazaki-speaking regions.

³³³ Mûnzûr Çem, "Vîlikê Verê Vare," *Vate*, no. 4 (Spring 1998): 72.

[“Teyna ma nê wayê, teyna ma nê. Ma çênê Sêykalî Dedeyî me. Şerefê piyê ma, her çî ra ravêr o, ma gereke naye xo vîr ra mekerîme... Ma çituri firset bidîme nê bêdîn û bêîmanan ke leke bîyarê namusê pî û kalikanê ma ser?

Inkê ma vînenî ki şar ma tertelê Dêrsim ser her çî pê kilamûn vatû. Şar ma pê kilamûn tarîx xwî nuştû. Ma êr ruej kiştîş Şahan Axay, bêbextê ceşûn, zulm dewlet inî kilamûn ra musenî.”]

³³⁴ Metin Kahraman and Kemal Kahraman, *Zazaca Müziğe Adanmış Hayatlar: Metin ve Kemal Kahraman*, interview by Bircan Değirmenci, accessed May 6, 2019, <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/sanat/195862-zazaca-muzige-adanmis-hayatlar-metin-ve-kemal-kahraman>.

³³⁵ Mûnzûr Çem, “Komara Tirkîya û Dêrsim,” *Vate*, no. 6 (Autumn-winter 1998): 44.

³³⁶ Arménouhie Kévonian, *Gulîzar'ın Kara Düğünü*, 2nd ed. (Istanbul: Aras Yayıncılık, 2015).

³³⁷ Malmîsanij, “Kitaban Ra: Zewajê Gulîzare Yo Siya,” *Vate*, no. 2 (Autumn 1997): 98.

Moreover, Vate writers do not hesitate to compare the military intervention of the Turkish Republic with the ferocity of German Nazis while referring to the Armenian genocide.³³⁸

Based on Dersim '38 narratives, the Vate journal has provided a set of social, politic, and historical values in considering the other Kurdish rebellions. In the case of Dersim, tragic stories of massacre witnesses have been played major role. However, nationalist motivations behind the events of Dersim '38 were of special focus to Vate writers as a part of their own political project. Dersim tragedy has been considered as an inseparable symbol for the Kurdish history.

³³⁸ Çem, "Komara Tirkîya û Dêrsim," 46.

CONCLUSION

“[...] Should we demand something different, some frozen essence, once a language is classed as endangered?”³³⁹

Since Zazaki has been listed as an endangered language in 2009 according to UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger, I have inspired by Finnegan's question. Once it was listed as endangered, I myself witnessed those who vehemently search for 'true' and 'unique' essence in the name of linguistic activism for Zazaki. All conflicting parties – regardless of their opinion on linguistic position of Zazaki – proposed a set of solution against this problematic. Zazaki has been considered as frozen by both the Vate Study Group (the VSG) or the others. I believe that increasing conflict between two opponent groups basically refers to this frozen essence. In other words, they both are searching for an 'original' language to maintain it.

As an endangered language, Zazaki has been linguistically discussed among academic and non-academic groups. A range of research basically focused on linguistic discussions. Only a few studies have provided a fresh perspective for political, historical or cultural analysis of the Zazaki-speaking populace. During my research, I tried to emphasize more on a historical analysis in order to get a better sense on the long-lasting conflict in this relatively small community. Focusing on the Vate journal has inspired me to readdress the changing dynamics in the Zazaki speaking groups. I have experienced political heterogeneity among these groups and have seen firsthand how once plural radical approaches have decreased over time.

Throughout this thesis, I tried to investigate the unique place of the Zazaki-speaking groups in the construction of Kurdish identity. Focusing on the Vate journal provided me a fresh perspective through which to explore t how social,

³³⁹ Finnegan, *Where Is Language? An Anthropologist's Questions on Language, Literature and Performance*, 12.

cultural, and most importantly political heterogeneity have been and continue to be practiced among the community. The first period of the Vate journal (1997-2003) enabled me to categorize the history of modern Turkey first, and of Kurdish nationalism as well. On the other hand, the period after 2003 – when the editorial works move to Istanbul, has continuously experienced changing social and political dynamics. Thus, it is difficult to claim the same sort of concrete arguments on this currently ongoing process. On the other hand, I will evaluate my overall research in considering the most prominent topics: major characteristics of the Vate journal, the relationship between journal and the Kurdish identity, and finally language-dialect discussion.

As a special focus of this study, I clearly observe a political fervor in the first period of the Vate journal. Almost every piece of written Zazaki was loaded with a political agenda of its time. Evidence of this fervor can be seen in every layer of the organization and the individuals involved, including the editorial staff, writers, contributors, followers, and audience of the journal. According to these individuals, the major obstacle against linguistic activism was absolutely the Turkish state authorities. A wide range of assimilatory policies of modern Turkey has been criticized correspondingly. More interestingly, they were also adamant that the mainstream Kurdish movement is needed to be deconstructed. This argument is asserted because some of the Kurdish organizations have gradually contributed to vanish the Zazaki language by ignoring active use of Zazaki among both the political struggle and everyday life.

The challenging political atmosphere of the Turkish Republic forced some linguistic activists to flee to the Western-Europe. The European diaspora provided fresh political agenda for the minority groups to carry out a series of cultural, traditional, and political activities. Thus, the emergence of the VSG and the Vate journal might be considered as a result of political pressure of Turkish politics. Since the Swedish diaspora both politically and financially supported these individuals, linguistic activism for Zazaki found a chance to disseminate their

thoughts to the Zazaki-speaking populace. They encouraged the community to constantly speak and write Zazaki in everyday life. Additionally, they expected to be supported by the community in turn.

The VSG aimed to build a set change in written Zazaki. They think that a nation cannot exist without a standard written culture. Their original and unique contribution to the written Zazaki relied on this very motivation. Since 1997, they have made a range of linguistic research in order to establish a standard grammar and vocabulary for written Zazaki by using the Vate journal as a medium for the declaration of the research results. I should note that I clearly observed the change in written Zazaki based on not only my research during MA thesis but also my long-lasting research interest as a native speaker in Zazaki. Apart from the critical approach which claims that authenticity of the language was diminished by the VSG, I think that they have reached their overall objective that builds a standard and intellectual Zazaki. However, the opposing argument to the VSG is also needed to be discussed. Because of the time limitation, I was unable to investigate this group of individuals. Although I tried to reach the written sources based on the critical approach, the individuals that I have requested for provided me very few texts.³⁴⁰

National loyalty of the Vate perspective to the Kurdish language has been widely discussed by the opposing groups. The Vate journal has faced the accusation that its perspective serves 'the Kurdification' over the Zazaki-speakers. This argument ignored the standard Zazaki which the VSG members research on since they always prefer the Kurdish-Kurmanji version while conducting and directing the standardization discussion. As this study is not linguistic research, it seems difficult for me to claim that the Vate standard served as a tool for the Kurdification. Yet, it is obvious that the Vate perspective tries to investigate the close ties between

³⁴⁰ I appreciate my friend Mesut Keskin's valuable comments on the critical approach to the VSG. He kindly provided me a few articles of the opponent groups.

Kurdish society, correspondingly to integrate Zazaki grammar into the Kurdish language which is a blanket concept for all the dialects.

The Vate journal published a variety of articles which clearly promoted Kurdish national identity. In my opinion, the individual efforts of VSG members were not initially recognized by a range of Kurdish nationalists and their corresponding media outlets. However, the acceptance of the Vate standard has been accepted by the Kurdish nationalists over the course of time. Although some of the Kurdish nationalist, even today, still insist upon the minor role of the Zazaki language in the Kurdish community, scholarly inquiry toward the Vate principles among the Kurds has increased.

Interestingly, the VSG created a relatively isolated field for Zazaki. Their ongoing standardization research since 1996 has produced an undeniably important collection in Zazaki. More importantly, the motivation of the VSG that linguistic capacity of Zazaki is needed to be extended to create an intellectual language has indeed resulted in the increasing number of Zazaki written sources. By so doing, a new genre emerged both in the Kurdish language – as a blanket concept – and in an independent platform for Zazaki written culture. Yet, the Vate platform is not open for those who consider Zazaki as a separate language. The Vate perspective is aware of the possible danger that considering Zazaki as a separate language serves the destructive argument of ignoring the Kurdish identity. That is why they strictly reject this dissenting voice. According to the Vate perspective, these counter-arguments have the capacity to manipulate national belonging of the Kurdish identity.

I evidently observe that the Vate perspective has experienced a kind of dualism based on national loyalty to Kurdishness. While creating an intellectual platform for Zazaki, they knew that they must be careful about ‘the balance’ between being both ‘a Kurd’ and ‘a Zaza’. Hence, efforts towards a certain political correctness in Vate articles can be immediately observed. For example, they rarely

prefer to use the words 'Zaza' or 'Zazaki' without explanation. Instead, they use these as follows, respectively: Kurdish Zaza and Kurdish-Zazaki. As I have stated before, using these basic concepts became a problematic topic as well during my research. On the other hand, some other concepts about the Vate journal have also overlapped as it refers to a certain group of people or a political opinion. In other words, most of the time the use of the Vate journal, Vate Study Group and editors of the journal have overlapped, because all of them refers to the same thing: the Vate perspective. I use the term 'Vate perspective' on purpose to include all of the other concepts.

Generally speaking, the language-dialect dichotomy results in two polarized approaches among linguistic activists. Even though they both are aware that Zazaki was classed as endangered, they refuse the future collaboration. I believe that this dichotomy has created an obstacle in the path towards Zazaki revival. Although these groups contribute to the written Zazaki with their own methodology and through their own platforms, there are no proposed solutions produced by the natives against the endangered position of Zazaki. The political commitment of the individuals seems more critical than Zazaki's vulnerable situation. On the other hand, language-dialect question has certainly flourished a set of essentialist answers, such as any dichotomies. Both two arguments ignore that language is social that is able to transform. In fact, the political, social and historical changing dynamics directly affect linguistic transformation. Indeed, most of linguists agree languages themselves are alive. In other words, there are possible changes that a language can become a dialect or vice versa.

Finally, some other topics that I was unable to detail for this study must be mentioned. Since I am aware of the limitations of Vate's textual analysis in this thesis, I will summarize the possible research interests that I have investigated. First, gender roles among the Vate journal writers are, even today, a controversial issue. Unfortunately, I was not able to feature this prominent discussion within this humble study. Similarly, cultural heterogeneity among the VSG members seems

important to me. There is a variety of social and cultural differences among the members. I have listened to their stories about their first encounter with different cultures, such as meeting an Alawi activist as a Shafii Muslim or vice versa. Cultural plurality among the VSG must be considered as the key component in future attempts to overcome essentialist approaches regardless of political position. Lastly, the effect of the leftist movement over the emergence of VSG holds such prominence that it seems to be a crucial point of interest for future research to investigate. Future research on this variety of interactions might provide a fresh perspective for scholars.



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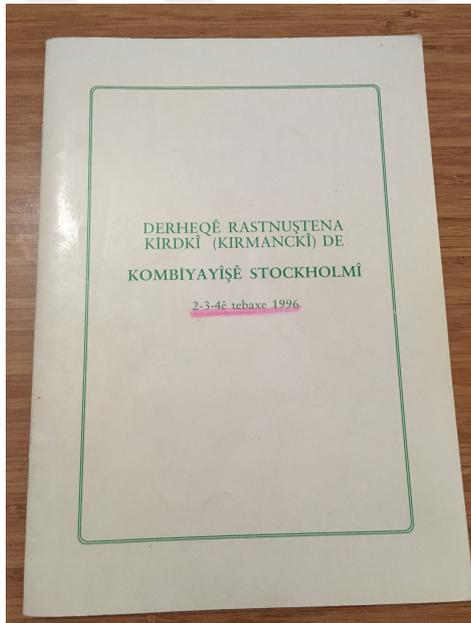
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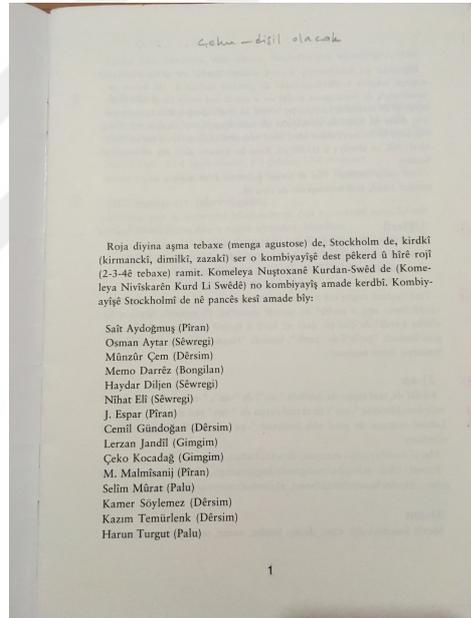
APPENDIX

1. Derheqê Rastnuştêna Kirdkî (Kirmanckî) de Kombiyayîşê Stockholmî, 2-3-4 August 1996

On 2-3-4 August 1996, the very first attempt of converting a language class into a study group gathered. I have received permission from Mehemed Malmîsanij to take the following photos since the first two brochures were available neither online nor on sale.



cover page



page 1

Bêguman no kombiyayîş wareyê zîwanê kurdî de û hîna zaf zî wareyê lehçeya kirdkî/kirmanckî de gamêda muhîm a. Nê kesan no kombiyayîş de rastnûştina kirdkî ser o meylê xwî tesbît kerdî. Nê kombiyayîşî de meselanê cêrînan ser o yew bi yew û derg û dila munaqesey biy. Şîma nê nuştî de netîceyanê nê munaqeseyan û meylan wanênê. Netîceyê ke ze meyl tesbît biyê, fikrê vêşaneyê (zafaneyê) nê kesan îfade kenê. Nê, ze tewşîye û teklîfî yê. Keso ke biwazo şîno zey nê meylan binuso.

Tanî çeku (kelîme) yan zî formê çekuyan ê ke ma no nuşte de ze nimûne nuştê, tanî mîntaqayan de ciya yê.

① 1)Herfî

Herfê elfaba ewroyî a kurdî nê 31 herfî yê:
A B C Ç D E Ê F G H Î J K L M N O P Q R S Ş T U Û V W X Y Z
a b c ç d e ê f g h i j k l m n o p q r s ş t u û v w x y z

②

Tanî nuştexî nuştewanê xwî de herfanê zey "Û" û "Ç" nusenê yan zî herînda herfa eyn a erebkî de îşaretê apostroffî (') ronanê. Madem ke elfaba kurdî de çînî yê, ganî nê herfî û îşaretî nêrê nuştene. Ma vajî, ganî herînda "gerîb"î de "xerîb", herînda "Hezretê 'Elî" de "Hezretê Eli" binusiyo (bêro nuştene).

③

2)-an

Kirdkî de, tanî cayan de, herînda "-an"î de "-ûn", "-on", "-û" yan zî "-o" vajiyêno. Herînda "-am"î de zî tanî cayan de "-ûm" yan zî "-om" vajiyêno. Labelê nuştene de ganî ebe formanê "-an" û "am"î binusiyo. Çend nimûney:

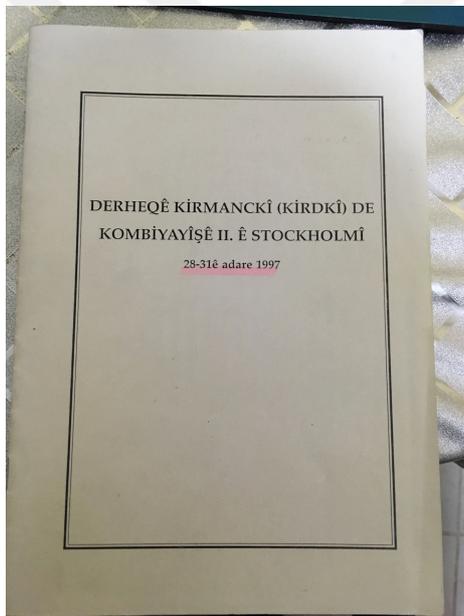
Meylê kombiyayîşî: mangan, dewan, banan, zanayan
Formê bîni: mûngûn/mongon/mûngû/mongo, dewûn/dewon/dewûl/dewo, bûnûn/bonon/bûnû/bono, zûnayûn/zonayon/zûnayû/zonayo

3)-am

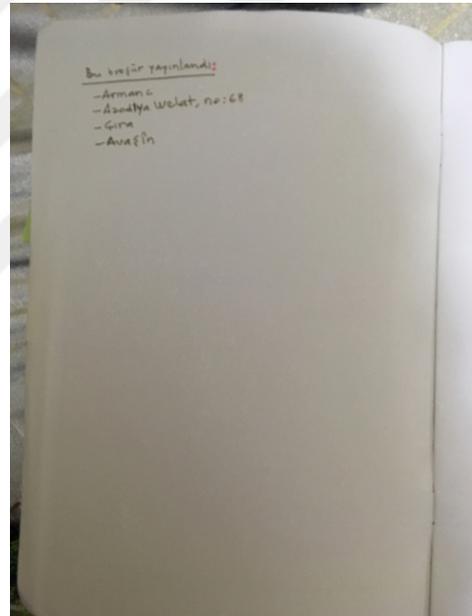
Meylê kombiyayîşî: cam, dame, lamba, name, tam, tamam, zama

2. Derheqê Rastnuştêna Kirdkî (Kirmanckî) de Kombiyayîşê Stockholmî, 2-3-4 August 1996

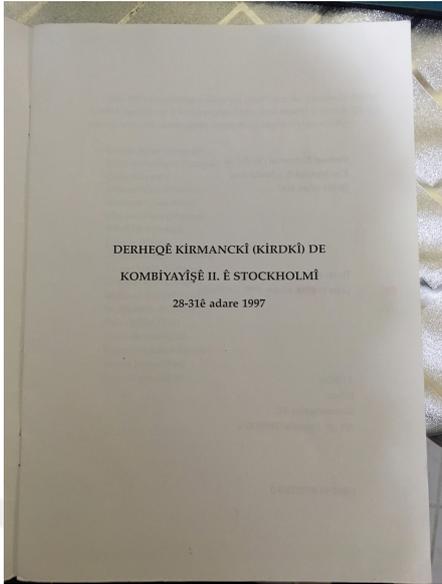
In 1997, the second meeting lasted four days with few changes in participants. The discussion sessions continued during the meeting. With this gathering, publishing a periodical to disseminate the discussion results was appointed as well.



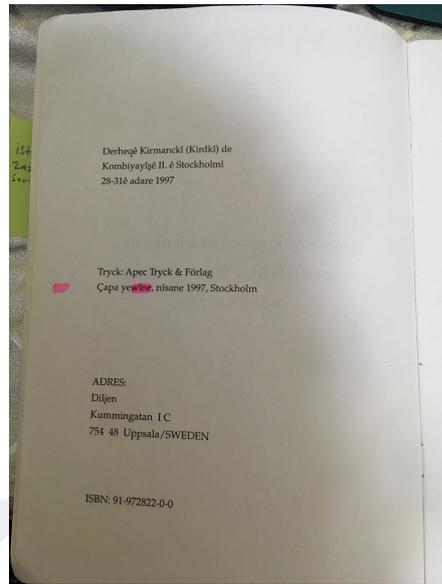
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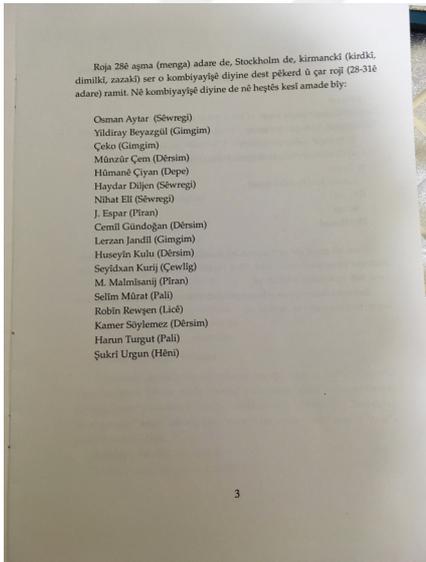
the notes of Malmîsanij



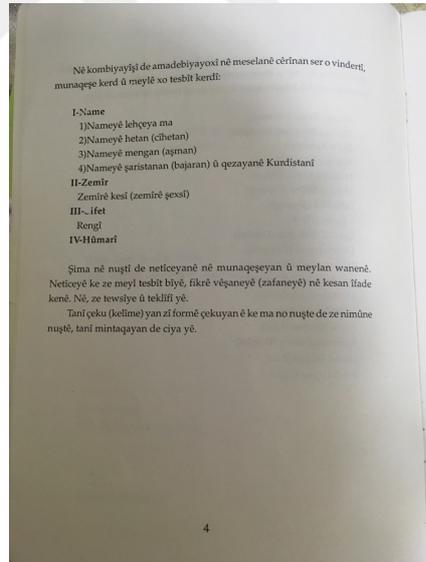
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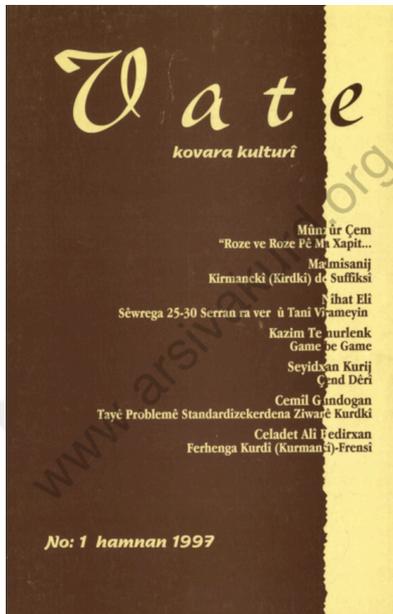


page 3



page 4

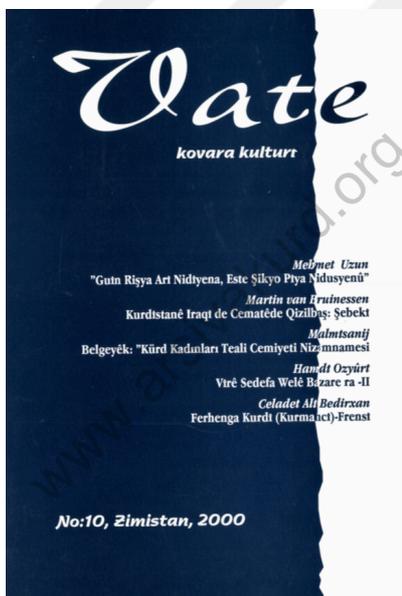
3. A Few Examples of the Vate Journal between 1997-2003³⁴¹



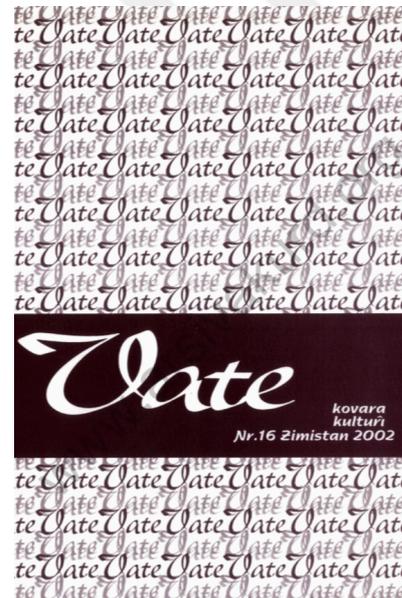
Vate 1, Summer 1997



Vate 5, Summer 1998



Vate 10, Winter 2000



Vate 16, Winter 2002

³⁴¹ Most of the online versions of the Vate journal in this thesis have been downloaded from arxivakurd.org. Deniz Gunduz kindly sent them to me via e-mail the rest of the issues that were neither published nor online.