

T.C.
MARMARA ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
RADYO TELEVİZYON VE SİNEMA ANABİLİM DALI
SİNEMA BİLİM DALI

TOPLUMSAL HAFIZA, BELGESEL, SANSÜR:

BAKUR ÖRNEĞİ

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

TANER TAN

İSTANBUL, 2020

T.C.
MARMARA ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
RADYO TELEVİZYON VE SİNEMA ANABİLİM DALI
SİNEMA BİLİM DALI

**TOPLUMSAL HAFIZA, BELGESEL, SANSÜR:
BAKUR ÖRNEĞİ**

Yüksek Lisans Tezi

TANER TAN

Danışman: Dr. AYÇA ÇİFTÇİ

İSTANBUL, 2020

ÖZET
TOPLUMSAL HAFIZA, BELGESEL, SANSÜR:
BAKUR ÖRNEĞİ

Bu tez temel olarak Kürt sorunu bağlamında belgesel, sansür ve hafızanın kesişimselliği üzerine odaklanmaktadır. İlk olarak, bu çalışma belgesel ve hafıza arasındaki ilişkiyi irdeleyerek, belgesellerin sansürlenmesinin ne tür bir anlam yarattığı üzerine çeşitli önerilerde bulunmaktadır. İkinci olarak, bu çalışma Türkiye'nin en uzun soluklu sorunlarından birisi olan Kürt sorununun, Kürt kimliğinin sinemadaki yansımalarını takip ederek, Kürt kimliğinin sinemadaki temsilini tartışmaktadır. Bu noktada, Türk sinemasının yanı sıra, 1990'ların sonunda başlayıp, 2009 yılında Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi döneminde deklare edilen "Açılım" süreci ile ivme kazanan Kürt filmleri içerisindeki Kürt kimliğinin temsiline dair bir çerçeve çizmektedir. Ayrıca, bu çalışma 2000'li yıllarda artan Kürt filmleri içerisindeki belgesel sinemaya olan yoğun ilgiyi hafıza nosyonu ile birlikte ele almaktadır. Bu bakımdan, Kürt belgesellerine yönelik uygulanan sansür uygulamalarına dikkat çekerek, sansür ve hafıza arasındaki ilişkiyi ve dolayısıyla kamusal alanda Kürt sorunun hafızasına değinmektedir. Son olarak, bu tezin kapsamında, yönetmenliğini Çayan Demirel ve Ertuğrul Mavioğlu'nun yaptığı *Bakur* (Kuzey, 2015) belgeseli vaka çalışması olarak seçilmiştir. Açılım süreci ile üretilmeye başlanan *Bakur*, Açılım sürecinin sona ermesi ile sansürlendi. Bu noktada, bu çalışma bir taraftan *Bakur*'un Kürt sorununa bir belgesel olarak nasıl yaklaştığını analiz ederken, diğer taraftan sansürü Türkiye'nin siyasi değişim ve dönüşümlerinin bir parçası olarak okumaktadır. Ayrıca, *Bakur*'un sansürlenmesinden sonra hükümetin sansür politikalarına karşı ortaya çıkan tepkileri hafıza kavramı çerçevesinde yorumlamaktadır. Yöntemsel olarak, bu tez anlatımsal ve metinsel metodolojiden yararlanmaktadır. Son zamanlarda Kürt filmleri üzerine yapılan çalışmaların birçoğu sıklıkla Kürt filmlerini hafıza kavramı ile tartışmaktadır. Bu bakımdan bu tez, yapılan çalışmalara sansür kavramını ekleyerek, Kürt filmlerini belgesel, hafıza ve sansür kesişimselliğinde tartışmakla var olan literatüre katkı sunmayı hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: belgesel, hafıza, sansür, *Bakur*, Kürt sorunu

ABSTRACT
SOCIAL MEMORY, DOCUMENTARY, CENSORSHIP:
BAKUR

This thesis mainly concentrates on the intersectionality between documentary, memory and censorship in the context of the Kurdish question, which is one of the long-standing issues in Turkey. Initially, by analyzing the relationship between documentary cinema and memory this research makes various suggestions on what kind of meaning the censorship of documentaries creates. Secondly, following the reverberations of the Kurdish question, Kurdish identity in cinema, this research discusses the cinematic representations of the Kurdish identity. At this point, this study draws a framework concerning the representation of the Kurdish identity in Turkish cinema and in Kurdish films, started at the end of 90s and gained momentum with the declaration of the Opening process, launched during the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi/Justice and Development Party) era. In addition, this study deals with the tendency towards documentary films within Kurdish films, together with the notion of memory. Thirdly, by drawing attention to the censorship practices towards Kurdish documentaries, this research focuses on the relationship between censorship and memory and thus the memory of the Kurdish question in the public sphere. Finally, within the scope of this research the documentary *Bakur* (North, 2015) directed by Çayan Demirel and Ertuğrul Mavioglu was chosen as a case study. *Bakur* started to be produced with the declaration of the Opening process and was censored after the collapse of the Opening. In this context, this thesis analyzes how *Bakur* as a documentary approaches the Kurdish question and reads the censorship policies of the government as a part of political changes and transformations in Turkey. Also, this thesis interprets the reactions to the censorship policies of the government that emerged after the censorship of *Bakur* with the notion of memory. Methodologically, this thesis is composed of narrative and contextual analysis. Recent studies on Kurdish documentaries frequently highlight documentary's strong relationship with the notion of memory. In this respect, by adding the notion of censorship to the existing literature, this thesis aims to offer a wider reading of the Kurdish question within the framework of censorship, documentary and memory.

Keywords: documentary, memory, censorship, *Bakur*, the Kurdish question

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis emerged as a result of discussions in which many people's ideas came together. Without them, I want to say that I would not have managed to complete this thesis.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor, Ayça Çiftçi, whose untiring efforts brought this thesis to light. Her excellent courses and impressive interpretations on documentary and memory and our countless meetings on this thesis helped me to improve my ideas and strengthened the structure of this thesis. I would also like to express my deep sense of gratitude to other members of the Department of Cinema and Television at İstanbul Şehir University, Özge Özyılmaz and Canan Balan, whose courses have always been inspirational to me.

Heartfelt support and encouragement of my family have always been with me; they have never given up supporting me. My deepest thanks go to my family. I would also like to thank Dîlan, whose profound companionship helped me to find answers to my questions. I will always be grateful to Sebastian and Beyza for their careful proofreading and suggestions.

Taner TAN

İSTANBUL, 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ÖZET	i
ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: DEBATES ON CENSORSHIP, DOCUMENTARY AND MEMORY	7
2.1 The (New) Censorship Theory	7
2.2 Recording the Unrecorded through Documentaries	11
CHAPTER 3: KURDISHNESS ON THE SILVER SCREEN	18
3.1. The History of the Kurdish Question in Turkey	18
3.2 The (Mis)representation of Kurdishness in Turkish Cinema	23
3.3 The ‘Opening’ of Kurdish Films	26
3.4 Documentaries as a Tool of Questioning the Past	27
CHAPTER 4: CENSORSHIP AND THE SOLIDARITY CIRCLE AROUND <i>BAKUR</i>	31
4.1 Censorship during the Days of “Peace Talks”	31
4.2 <i>Bakur</i> : Another Face of the Mountain.....	34
4.3 The Solidarity Circle Surrounding <i>Bakur</i>	37
CONCLUSION	41
BIBLIOGRAPHY	45

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the Kurdish question, which is one of the most long-standing issues in Turkey, has undergone significant changes with the developments arising from the political field. These developments, which caused a transformation in many fields in the society, affected the field of cinema in Turkey as well. On the one hand, these changes and transformation led to an increase in perspectives on the Kurdish question, on the other, this situation also added new diverse approaches to the representation of Kurdish question/Kurdishness in the field of cinema. In the scope of this research, I will work to discuss these changes and transformations the lens of the Kurdish question by establishing a intersectionality between documentary, memory and censorship. I will endeavor to analyze Kurdish documentaries that were produced in recent years and look at how the political transformations of the Kurdish question have affected journey of these documentaries. In this regard, I want to draw a concise framework of this research.

Memory, and therefore past, has become one of the most discussed study areas of today's academy, perhaps more than ever. In this sense, how societies remember, which narratives prevail in society, whose story is spoken are often discussed. However, unlike the imagination which conceived of the future through the present, an understanding started to take place in which the present are questioned through the past. At this point, Anderas Huyssen (2003) claims that:

“One of the most surprising cultural and political phenomena of recent years has been the emergence of memory as a key cultural and political concern in Western societies, a turning toward the past that stands in stark contrast to the privileging of the future so characteristic of earlier decades of twentieth-century modernity. [...] Since the 1980s, it seems, the focus has shifted from present futures to present pasts.” (p. 11)

In line with this understanding, the questions of how the past is structured and how social memory is formed have come to agenda of many academics and researcher. In this sense, drawing attention to the impossibility of the one memory in a society Elizabeth Jelin (2003) argues that “normally, the dominant story will be the one told by the winners of historical conflicts and battles. Yet there will always be other stories, other memories, and alternative interpretations” (p. xvii). Thus, although Jelin underlines that only one story prevails in societies, she highlights the existence of different interpretations of these stories and this makes the past an arena of conflict. At this point, I would like to illustrate these arguments over the Kurdish question in Turkey.

Analyzing the construction of nationstates Philipp Ther (2014) states that “modern nationalism's conception of nation and the idea of the nationstate were both based on an ideal of homogeneity” (p. 50). In the case of the Kurdish question, in order to achieve this ideal of homogeneity, Oral Çalışlar (2013) argues that “the identity of the Kurds was denounced and they all were identified as Turks and Muslims in the way to establish a new nation” (p. 29). Following the foundation of the state, Welat Zeydanlıoğlu (2008) claims that “in the decades following the creation of the republic, with the intensification of the nation building process, the Kurds ceased to exist as a distinct ethnicity in official discourse and a systematic forced assimilation campaign followed” (p. 7). Therefore, all kinds of discourses and practices of Kurdishness and Kurdish identity were banned and the Kurdish question became invisible in the public sphere. In 1984, with the emergence of the PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party/Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan), an intense conflict period with Turkish state has begun. During the

conflicts, many villages were evacuated, many Kurdish intellectuals were assassinated and “houses, sheep pens, stored grains, fields and trees were often burnt during or soon after the eviction of the residents, either by the gendarmes or by accompanying village guards, to make return to the villages impossible” (Ayata and Yüksek, 2005, p. 16). During the 1990s, no strong resolution policy that would put an end to the Kurdish question had been developed and the Kurdish question remained unresolved until the 2000s. In the early 2000s, a new political actor came to power with the AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi/Justice and Development Party). The AKP created a democratic, secular and modernist image in which it persistently emphasized its distance from Islamic image because of the power of military circles who is seen as a protector of the secular Kemalist ideology since the foundation of the country (Öniş, 2013; Akça and Balta-Paker, 2013). As part of its democratic and inclusive pro-human rights image, the AKP brought the Kurdish question to the agenda and launched the Kurdish Opening in 2009.

One of the most crucial results of the Opening process in the scope of this research is that the Opening made it possible to discuss the many dimensions of the Kurdish question openly in which many of the state’s atrocities were brought out the agenda of the country, the discussions about the history of the Kurdish question were carried out (Aktoprak, 2010). Unlike the strict order of the state that made the Kurdish question invisible in the public sphere, the silence on the Kurdish question began to be broken and the possibility of peace in the society began to circulate. In this context, cinema became one of the main areas where the productions on the Kurdish question and Kurdish identity were very intense. During the Opening, many films pertaining to the Kurdish question started to be produced, Kurdish directors were invited to film festivals and received awards. However, after the Opening collapsed, the Kurdish question became a taboo again, and the censorship became a strict state policy (Siyahbant, 2016). At this point, I want to explain why I chose the intersectionality of documentary, memory, and censorship.

With the Opening, when the Kurdish question was officially recognized and thus became visible in public sphere, many stories regarding the Kurdish question began to be spoken in the public sphere. Experiences of Kurdishness in Turkey started to be discussed for the first time, and a narrative other than the official narrative appeared in the public sphere. We can say that the Kurds have opened their memories and thereby introduced new discourses to the public. Jelin (2003) states that “[i]f the state is strong and its policing includes control over ideas and freedom of expression in public space, alternative narratives take refuge in the world of private memories” (p. 27). In this sense, it can be argued that the private memories of the Kurdish peoples began to appear in the public sphere with the launch of the Opening. Thus, new truth claims about their history of the Kurdish question started to emerge and the official history began to be challenged.

In this period, cinema turned into an essential medium for conveying new perspectives on the Kurdish question. In her doctoral dissertation, Ayça Çiftçi (2015a) alleges that “[b]y screening state atrocities, [Kurdish] filmmakers aim to contribute to social confrontations with a dark history and they utilize the medium of film as a mechanism of reconciliation and social justice without waiting for the official mechanisms to be established” (p. 21). In the context of the second pillar of this research, I contend that filmmakers, who turned films into a mediator for the transmission of truth, discovered documentary filmmaking as the most suitable way for conveying the reality of silenced truths. Although Kurdish filmmakers found the documentary genre as the most suitable tool for reflecting their own truths, the

documentary genre should not be perceived as a genre used only by oppressed or silenced people; it can also be used for the dominant/sovereign ideology. In this sense, Patricia Aufderheide (2007) argues that “documentaries have been valuable to governments precisely because of their claims to truthfulness and fidelity to real life” (p. 65). However, the documentaries that I will exemplify in the following sections of this research were set around a perspective that challenges the hegemonic narrative and interferes with official history. In line with this argument, in the field of Kurdish filmmaking¹, during the Opening, we can observe a predominance of documentary films resulting from the fact that “Kurdish filmmaking relies on the traditional perception that considers documentary film as more entitled to ‘represent the reality’, or to be more competent in ‘unravelling the truth’ than fiction film” (ibid, 2015a, p. 22). Also, I would contend that the reason for this overabundance of documentary filmmaking is not only the wish to reveal the truths about the past but also an effort of recording the Kurds, who have experienced a lack of genuine representation in cinema and history. Ali Fuat Şengül (2016) points out that “[t]he filmmakers use the documentary form to speak the truth, or to have it spoken, and they turn to testimonial subjects to disclose and archive the events and embodied experiences silenced within the Turkish national-colonial epistemic regime” (p. 33). In the Kurdish context, I can say that Kurdish filmmakers who narrated Kurdish experiences through documentary, endeavored to show the possibility of another narrative and challenge the official history in Turkey. Therefore, in this research, while accepting the existence of the documentaries that act in harmony with the official/dominant ideology, I would like to discuss the critical view towards the official/dominant ideology, which is a general, observable tendency of Kurdish documentaries.

In this context, how freely can films that question and speak about vital issues such as nationality and official history, circulate in a country like Turkey, founded on a strong nationstate ideology? What sort of state policies do documentaries are exposed to? In the framework of these questions, the issue of censorship constitutes the third pillar of this research. Through this research I will analyze the censorship cases that Kurdish documentaries are exposed to. At this point, I would like to show the “destiny” of Kurdish documentaries in terms of how they are strongly related to political processes.

In this context, *Bakur* (North, Çayan Demirel and Ertuğrul Mavioğlu, 2015) has a unique place within the scope of this research, both with its censorship as a documentary and with its statements regarding social memory. The production process of this documentary film started in the positive political climate of the Opening and it was censored after the Opening ended. Moreover, considering the reactions to the censorship of *Bakur*, we can say that this case exhibits various specificities both in terms of social memory in Turkey and also the censorship issue. In this sense, *Bakur* is chosen as a case study within the scope of this research.

¹ Until today, many film scholars and researchers such as Ayça Çiftçi (2015a), Ali Fuat Şengül (2012), Can Candan (2016), Suncem Koçer (2014) and Özgür Çiçek (2016) have studied the definition and the content of Kurdish cinema. Expressions such as Kurdish films and Kurdish documentaries that I use throughout this research are not used to refer to Kurdish cinema as a concept. Rather, I use these expressions in the broadest sense for which films that are in an effort of deconstructing the official history that distorted the reality of the Kurdish question, creating a sphere for silenced memories to appear and initiating a discussion regarding the Kurdish question.

In this research, I benefit from a combination of narrative and contextual analysis. First of all, I used contextual analysis to understand how the political atmosphere affected the films' production and distribution in the context of the Kurdish question. Then, through narrative analysis, I worked to interpret the political and cinematic stories in everyday life in terms of their relations with film's circulation. In this respect, I will analyze some films which were produced in the 2000s; before and after the Opening process. Secondly, in parallel with this timing, by using contextual analysis, I approach the films from a wider perspective that includes the socio-political atmosphere in which the films were released in an effort to investigate the socio-political atmosphere of Turkey in relation to the Kurdish question and Kurdish films. Specifically, I will focus on the interrelation between censorship and memory. In the scope of this research, I conduct a literature review concerning the (new) censorship discussions and memory studies. By combining these two fields, I would like to understand the meaning of censorship practices over memory; memory of Kurds. In total, I benefit from academic literature, the press releases, and directors' interviews about their experiences in order to offer a picture relevant to censorship, memory, and documentary.

Basing my research on these three pillars, I aim to contribute to different areas. Firstly, because this research concentrates on documentary cinema and specifically examines Kurdish documentaries, I seek to contribute directly to the documentary cinema field. The notions of truth, reality, representation, and memory have been widely discussed in the field of documentary cinema. The documentaries constructing themselves on these concepts make various observations pertaining to the social issues. In this sense, the Kurdish documentaries also deal with the social issues arising from the denial policies of the state and similarly, Kurdish documentaries bring up the social issues that documentary cinema reveals through representation and testimony. In this respect, this research looks at the field of documentary cinema through the lens of Kurdish documentaries and this research may, therefore, enrich the existing documentary field. In addition, this study aims to contribute to Kurdish cinema by examining Kurdish documentaries. I will try to show the relationality between censorship and memory. As elaborated earlier, after the Opening was declared, the Kurdish question was acknowledged by the state and Kurdish documentaries tried to reveal "what remained outside the official history." However, as we see later, the circulation of the documentaries in the public did not happen freely; the government applied censorship practices. At this point, I will analyze the relationship between the censorship practices of the ruling party and the notion of memory. The questions such as why did the government apply censorship, what happens if a documentary, conveying the incidents of the past, is censored lie at the heart of this research. At this point, this research, by focusing on the intersectionality between documentary, memory, and censorship, alleges to go beyond the existing academic studies.

In Chapter 2, I present a literature review regarding the issue of censorship. Censorship discussions have been dispersed all across the social sciences; from linguistic studies to political science. In such a broad field, the definition of censorship has been expanded, and censorship has gained new meanings. New censorship theory highlights that censorship is a multilateral process rather than limited to a fixed binary axis. Furthermore, the institutions that impose censorship are not isolated entities; they are constructed in a process and the effects of censorship are understood as a constitutive and productive force, i.e. not only as repressive (Biltereyst, 2013). In this context, Chapter 2 discusses the new censorship theory and criticisms towards it. In addition to the censorship theory, Chapter 2 also covers the discussions about memory and documentary cinema. At this point, I would like to explain why I chose to combine censorship, memory, and documentary in one chapter. Censorship, as we know, is produced in reaction

to the potential reconfiguration of the public sphere and censorship obscures the silenced memories to rise to the public sphere. In this scope, I would like to understand what kind of roles the documentary cinema takes on in relation to censorship and memory. How does documentary cinema affect our memory and what kind of consciousness does documentary cinema offer us? In this sense, Chapter 2 also provides a general account of theoretical approaches towards documentary cinema in terms of the relationship between documentary cinema and the concepts of reality and representation. In this respect, while analyzing the relation of documentary with representation and reality, I argue that the direct connection between documentary and memory is another subject that I touch upon in this chapter. Also, I endeavor to show that memory is a construction and open to transformations. In this context, to elaborate on how memory is constructed, in this chapter I use Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann's theory of *cultural memory*. Aleida Assmann underscores the presence of power struggles during the formation of *cultural memory*. The notion of remembering and forgetting are quite problematic for Assmann, who emphasizes that the layers of the society are not made up of singular memory, but of plural memories. At this point, Assmann's debates on memory provide a strong theoretical basis for the memory that the documentary tries to reveal, the memory constructed in the society, and hence censorship.

Chapter 3 firstly reviews the historical background of the Kurdish question in Turkey and discusses how the state policy towards the Kurdish question during the AKP era transformed. I look at the discussions around the Kurdish Opening that emerged within the framework of the Kurdish question during the AKP era. By drawing a historical framework on the Kurdish question, I would like to show in what political processes Kurdish films were produced and censored and how the political context affected the content, theme, and subject of the films. Following the historical background of the Kurdish question, I examine the representation of Kurdishness in Turkish cinema. Until the 90s, Kurds were not represented explicitly but implicitly in the form of "eastern people" and "mountain Turks" (Çelik, 2012). In this sense, the denial policy that the state maintained since the foundation of the state found its reverberation in Turkish cinema as well. However, during the revival of Turkish cinema in the mid-1990s, the Kurdish question and Kurdishness were represented through a distinct perspective. In the second section of this chapter, I will show that while the new generation in Turkish cinema opened up significant space for Kurds to make their films, the Kurdish political movement prepared a fertile ground for the emergence of Kurdish films in Turkey as well. Additionally, with the Opening, we witnessed an increase of Kurdish films and their visibility in the public sphere. The Turkish film festivals began to host Kurdish films, new sections opened in Turkish film festivals, and many Kurdish films were funded by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. In this context, starting to circulate in a wider field, Kurdish films began to be used as a medium of conveying knowledge about Kurds, which had not been publicly articulated before. In analyzing Kurdish films, particularly those produced during the Opening process, I claim that each of them is strongly affiliated with the notion of memory. Each of them is in an effort of creating a new meaning of the past by deconstructing the official history. In this pursuit, films generally benefited from the documentary genre. Therefore, I refer to documentary as a tool for conveying the representations of silenced pasts.

In Chapter 5, while I examine censorship, I choose the documentary *Bakur* as a case study. *Bakur* started to be produced at the beginning of the Opening process and was censored at the end of the Opening. In this respect, *Bakur* is a unique case to observe in terms of how these political changes were reflected in the documentary at a time when the political context could change rapidly. Another reason why I consider *Bakur* as an important case within the scope of this research is that it is a case that includes

both censorship in cinema, beyond censorship itself, and also reactions against censorship. Many press statements and solidarity events were carried out by industry workers, cinemagoers condemning the attitude of the government. Analyzing these incidents, I argue that this “solidarity circle” surrounding *Bakur* emphasizes another possibility which strictly emphasizes a public sphere in which people come together and struggle against the censorship policies of the government. In this regard, I argue that such a state of coming together may make the struggle against the censorship visible and transcends the invisibility that the censorship tried to create. Therefore, I claim that the reactions emerged to the censorship of *Bakur* created a memory of struggle against the censorship. In Chapter 5, thus, I first trace the censorship cases imposed on films that touch on the historical background of the Kurdish question. In the last section of this chapter, what I want to state is that with the censorship of the documentary, the images and stories that the documentary wanted to remain in the social memory became invisible, but with all the voices, all the activities and reactions against censorship, the censorship of the documentary became visible. In this sense, the censorship censored the documentary, but censorship itself was not able to be censored. This situation marked a turning point in the journey of Kurdish films in Turkey and created its own memory. Thus, I contend that the solidarity circle around *Bakur* made *Bakur* louder, unlike the censorship that worked to silence the documentary.

CHAPTER 2: DEBATES ON CENSORSHIP, DOCUMENTARY AND MEMORY

2.1 The (New) Censorship Theory

The definition and the scope of censorship is generally thought of as an uncontested practice. It is perceived as a practice that targets to inhibit the dissemination of an information and occurs after/before a publication or screening. Beate Müller (2004) indicates that “two types of censorship were commonly distinguished: pre-publication censorship, or licensing, i.e. the control of material before it is published, and post publication censorship, which means curbing the dissemination and reception of material after it has been published” (p. 4). In addition to the lexical meaning, censorship is often conceived of within the scope of a binary structure between states or state-like institutions such as religious, military institutions on the one and those censored on the other. State or state-like institutions are located at the center of censorship practice and a vertical hierarchy is drawn to describe state brutality against artistic expression. It may be true that censorship involves these actors, but there have been attempts to replace this approach by a more complex and multilateral process. This kind of thinking emerged mostly in line with developments in sociology and political science; particularly in the realm of language and power relations. In recent studies, the term censorship has become the subject of discussion as regards its meaning, the practice it denotes and its place in social life. In this context, before moving into the new censorship discussion, firstly I want to touch on its theoretical background, then show how current debates on the subject have evolved.

In the new censorship discussion, the singularity and unidirectional intervention of agents have been the subject of debates. To begin with, the new censorship discussions are characterized by a distancing from the idea of taking the state and state-like institutions as the prime indicator of censorship, since according to new censorship theorists, censorship is omnipresent and diffused all around the social sphere. Even though state or state-like institutions certainly do practice censorship, they cannot be seen as isolated entities; they are part of a wider relationality. The roots of such an understanding of censorship are found in sociology and political philosophy. Pierre Bourdieu's works in which he regards language as power relations may be seen as one of the foundational works, when it comes to understanding the recent evolution of censorship studies. For instance, Bourdieu (1991) alleges that “censorship is a “structure of the field” and in this field censorship emerges through “the symbolic relations of power and the laws of group formation” (p.138).

“Among the most effective and best concealed censorships are all those which consist in excluding certain agents from communication by excluding them from the groups which speak and or the places which allow one to speak with authority. In order to explain what may or may not be said in a group, one has to take into account not only the symbolic relations of power ... but also the laws of group formation themselves (e.g. the logic of conscious or unconscious exclusion) which function like a prior censorship.” (ibid, p. 138)

In Bourdieu's account, the field is a “form of social organization with two main aspects: (a) a configuration of social roles, agent positions, and the structures they fit into and (b) the historical process in which those positions are actually taken up, occupied by actors (individual or collective)” (F. Hanks, 2005, p. 72). The construction of the field is not carried out spontaneously; it leans on a historical logic. By this historical logic, social roles, behaviors in positions are determined. Group formation, in this sense, is the field of invisible laws and hierarchies. The language that circulates in the field is not

something fixed, rather, constituted and produced within the array of power relations. Accordingly, Bourdieu criticizes the understanding that sees language as pure and natural. “The specialized languages that school of specialists produce and reproduce through the systematic alteration of the common language are, as with all discourses, the product of a compromise between an expressive interest and a censorship constituted by the very structure the field in which the discourse is produced and circulated” (1991, p. 137). Seeing all linguistic expressions as “euphemized” to some extent Bourdieu argues that “they [expressions] are modified by a certain kind of censorship which stems from the structure of the market, but which is transformed into self-censorship through a process of anticipation” (pp. 22-23).

To clarify, in the field, discourses are always in a competition; some discourses must be repressed in order for the field-specific discourses to circulate. Thus, it is obvious in his understanding that discourses are subject to the field that is based on power relations. According to Bourdieu (1991), specialized language and euphemization constitute censorship because they are in accordance with the norm of the field, and those discourses are produced and circulated depending on the characteristics of the field. All in all, Bourdieu, who studies the field of language, bases group formation on various elimination processes and underscores the process of the construction and use of language in the context of censorship and self-censorship. When elaborating on group formations, Bourdieu highlights the invisibility and unavoidability of censorship and self-censorship as an anticipation.

Another scholar whose works are part of the backbone of the new censorship theory is Michel Foucault. As a theorist, Foucault is crucial to new censorship theory due to his analysis of power, treating it as constitutive and not only as a repressive force. Trying to question the historical relationship between phenomena such as subject and discourse, Foucault attempts to deconstruct the traditional understanding of power. In one of his earlier works, *Power And Knowledge*, Foucault (1980) mentions about the new formation of modern society and remarks that:

“[modern society] has been characterised on the one hand, by a legislation, a discourse, an organisation based on public right, whose principle of articulation is the social body and the delegative status of each citizen; and, on the other hand, by a closely linked grid of disciplinary coercions whose purpose is in fact to assure the cohesion of this same social body.” (p. 106)

According to his understanding, the power who will govern that social body is not only ‘sovereign’ but also ‘disciplinary.’ Foucault (1980) explains disciplinary power in a detailed manner:

“In reality, the disciplines have their own discourse. They engender, for the reasons of which we spoke earlier, apparatuses of knowledge (savoir) and a multiplicity of new domains of understanding. They are extraordinarily inventive participants in the order of these knowledge-producing apparatuses. Disciplines are the bearers of a discourse, but this cannot be the discourse of right. The discourse of discipline has nothing in common with that of law, rule, or sovereign will. The disciplines may well be the carriers of a discourse that speaks of a rule, but this is not the juridical rule deriving from sovereignty, but a natural rule, a norm.” (p. 106)

Drawing attention to the increasing diversity of discourses around sexuality Foucault emphasizes in his book *History of Sexuality* that the aim of such a diversity needs to be understood in the context of the construction and production of sexuality. Therefore, the production and construction in question do not repress sexuality, but discipline it. Shortly, we can say that the logic that Foucault wants to draw is that of a structure that not only interferes but also produces.

“More important was the multiplication of discourses concerning sex in the field of exercise of power itself: an institutional incitement to speak about it, and to do so more and more; a determination on the part of the agencies of power to hear it spoken about, and to cause it to speak through explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail.” (Foucault, 1978, p. 18).

As a governing policy, “at the juncture of the ‘body’ and the ‘population,’ sex became a crucial target of a power organized around the ‘management of life rather than the menace of death’” (ibid, p. 147). Therefore, rather than a power that commands over death, what moves to the center of attention here, are the power relations that produce life. These power relations operate on the estimated behaviors of the “body” moving within “population”. This is, as Foucault summarizes, the “management of life”.

“There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses.” (ibid, p. 27)

Hence, in his writings, Foucault wants to understand the roles of discourses which are distributed, authorized and aimed to be used for the strategies of power. It is apparent that Foucault, while being concerned with unearthing the embedded codes and hidden forms of power in society, understands power as a way of governing the subjects.

With the contributions of Foucault and Bourdieu, new censorship theory has expanded the understanding of censorship as a merely repressive force toward the idea that it is also a productive and constitutive force. In a sense, the academic conception regarding censorship as a destructive practice has shifted to a more productive understanding. In her remarkable essay, *Writing The History Of Censorship In The Age Of Enlightenment*, Sophia Rosenfeld (2014) emphasizes that “[w]hat interest the theorist are restrictions on thought and expression that are not exceptional (like a jail term) but constant and unavoidable, not explicit or spectacular (like a book burning) but invisible because they arise spontaneously out of ordinary social forces” (p. 125). In this respect, we can say that censorship is hidden in all layers of information flows and is an integral part of life. Fused with the social in such a way, censorship is therefore invisible as much as unavoidable. This situation is also pointed out by Matthew Bunn (2015), who is highlighting that “[t]he central insight of new censorship theory has been to recast censorship from a negative, repressive force, concerned only with prohibiting, silencing, and erasing, to a productive force that creates new forms of discourse, new forms of communication, and new genres of speech” (p. 26). Rather than seeing censorship as a one-directional force from censor to censored, which only creates an absence, it is now highlighted that “prohibiting, silencing and erasing” constitute new disciplining discursive forms as well. “Censorship establishes the practices that define us as social subjects. Hence censorship transmutes from an external repressive force to a positive exercise of power that constitutes practices as it defines their boundaries” (Moore, 2013, p. 48). In the words of Özden Şahin (2009) “mythological boundaries between the censors and the censored could be restructured through the elimination of the conception of authority as a negative force imposed upon the censored by the censor” (p. 9).

In the context of film censorship, Annette Kuhn (1988) alleges that “Film censorship is a matter of relations, then: it is a process, not an object. Film censorship is not reducible to a circumscribed and predefined set of institutions and institutional activities, but is produced within an array of constantly

shifting discourses, practices, and apparatuses. It cannot, therefore, be regarded as either fixed or monolithic” (p. 127). In addition to Kuhn’s observations, Richard Burt (1994) articulates that “censorship operates negatively in more than one way, not unidirectionally along a binary axis of the repressed and the free but, more crucially, by delimiting what can be legitimately debated” (p. xvi). When thinking about Annette and Burt’s claims together with Foucault’s analysis, we can put forward that the production of subjects becomes possible through what is said and what is not is processed respectively. That is to say, the limits of what is said intersect with the management of life. Therefore, it can be argued that censorship is something that disciplines society. Censorship creates discourse, includes new actors and adds new meanings to the past meanings of discourse in accordance with the spirit of the context. At this point, analyzing the relationality of nudity and the changing contexts of Mexican cinema Francisco Peredo-Castro (2013) says that:

“In relation to the question of nudity in Mexican films, it is important to mention that by 1955 economic pressure led to a relaxation on the matter. In order to fight against television, Hollywood’s superproductions, films in color, or the success of foreign films, which showed nudes and eroticism (like that of the Italian bombshells) the Mexican film producers were allowed to show some nudes.” (p. 71)

Therefore, it becomes hard to identify a stable characteristic of censorship, since it transforms according to the needs of political interest and the economic situation. Particularly in the field of cinema, the artefact to be exhibited to the public is circulated by taking the ideological atmosphere of context into consideration. In addition to the main motivation of censorship as a constitutive force for the social sphere, new censorship theory considers that censorship practitioners may not be restricted to the state or its institutions. By the same token, their relationality cannot be limited to the traditional accounts of censorship.

“A censorship institution did not work in isolation, as well as it changed over time and reacted upon wider social, ethical, or political transformations. The files emphasize that the administrators were flesh-and-blood people who were not disconnected from society, and that they were willing to negotiate with filmmakers, scriptwriters, and other representatives of the creative industry.” (Bilteyrest, 2013, p. 3)

What this quote from Bilteyrest attests to is that unlike traditional accounts that located the state as the origin of censorship practices, new censorship theory offers a wider understanding. Because of the diffusion of power to quasi-hegemonic organizations, structures and people, one may say that there are different actors determining censorship. For instance, Laura Wittern-Keller (2013) indicates that “During World War I, the moguls of the American film industry, largely immigrants, hoped to prove their Americanism to audiences and politicians. No censorship was necessary when the industry eagerly abetted the federal government’s war messages by making inspirational movies” (p. 21). Therefore, new censorship theory reveals new layers of censorship and broadens the frame of the concept, following the assumption, as Janet Staiger (1995) says, that “censorship creates meanings” (p. 14). Hence, in the multilateral process of censorship, agents are not isolated entities, rather, they are part of a complex context. The crucial thing is to observe the relationality amongst them.

Even though the recent theorizations of censorship are appreciated and used by many scholars, there are also some criticisms towards that conceptualization. Does such a broad concept carry the risk of equating different forces? Does new censorship theory advocate a kind of ahistorical understanding? If censorship is unavoidable and invisible, how do we assess it? At this point, Helen Freshwater (2004)

suggests that “[i]f censorship is everywhere, unavoidable and ineluctable, then it is hard to believe that it is possible to intervene to counter it” (p. 241). Following her discussion of new censorship theory, Freshwater proposes an insight to be considered when analyzing censorship practices:

“Censorious events should be analysed with critical emphasis upon their socio-historical specificity: such an approach foregrounds the *differences* between different types of censorship and the decisions taken by numerous censorious agencies, as well as their interaction. Conclusions about censorship should surely be provisional, rather than fixed; plural, rather than singular; time and site-specific, rather than universal. Of course, responsiveness to charges of censorship should not obstruct investigation into the possible presence of complicitous relationships between censored individuals and censorious institutions.” (ibid, p. 242)

Opposition to new censorship theory is also voiced by Bunn (2015), who criticizes the universalizing aspect of new censorship theory, averring that “to study censorship naturally requires situating it within the communicative paradigms of specific historical contexts. No study of censorship, thus, can fail to address the specific ways in which censors related to historically specific authors, readers, and publishers” (p. 28). Also, when we consider this new constitutive understanding of censorship for researching a particular moment in history, Rosenfeld (2001) warns us that “if domination turns out to be everywhere, then all forms of repression – from that which results in murder to that which produces social conformity – can come to seem equivalent. It remains very important in writing the history of censorship to distinguish carefully between different kinds and forms of power belonging to different political and cultural moments” (p. 129). Considering the effect of censorship and struggle against censorship, Robert C. Post (1998) also suggests that:

“It tends to veer between the concrete mechanisms of silencing and the abstraction of struggle. The result seems to flatten distinctions among kinds of power, implicitly equating suppression of speech caused by state legal action with that caused by the market, or by the dominance of a particular discourse, or by the institution of criticism itself. . . . The challenge is thus how to preserve the analytic force of the new scholarship without sacrificing the values and concerns of more traditional accounts.” (pp. 34-35)

Taking everything into consideration, there are important points that traditional and new censorship theory offer us. First of all, the point that stands out in the discussion of traditional censorship theory is the possibility that censorship can still function in a primitive form. That is, censorship can occur clearly within a vertical hierarchy. Alongside traditional censorship, new censorship theory offers us a more sophisticated picture in which censorship is not only aimed at suppression but also production. In this sense, new censorship theory argues that censorship disciplinizes society and/or individuals. It also states that this situation can prevent possible counter-acts that may occur in society. On the axis of all these debates, the meaning that Freshwater attributes to the socio-historical specificity is crucial. This method gives us clues about actors and context of the censorship. Therefore, to concentrate on each censorship case in its socio-political context may reveal something crucial to their own socio-political codes.

2.2 Recording the Unrecorded through Documentaries

Documentaries have a genuine position in the field of cinema due to their close relationship with many vital concepts such as memory, reality and otherness. Its intense relationship with these concepts renders documentary film as one of the main tools of discourses about history and truth. One of the important

debates in the history of cinema in this respect is what the boundaries of documentaries are or how they should be defined. Yet, it is not possible to single out one prevalent definition, because, as Rabiger (2007) notes, “[t]here are no rules in this young art form [documentary], only decisions about where to draw the line and how to remain consistent to the contract you will set up with your audience” (quoted in Aufderheide, p. 3). A quite similar yet slightly different point of view, is put forward by Nichols (2010), who, in his seminal work, *Introduction to Documentary*, points out that “a concise, overarching definition is possible but not fundamentally crucial. It will conceal as much as it will reveal” (p. 6). Hence, it is not essential to give an all-inclusive definition of documentary. Instead, here, I will extract some key concepts from theorizations of documentary and discuss them in connection with the concepts of memory, reality as such.

The key elements employed in the field of documentary cinema are of essential importance in order to grasp how documentary cinema has evolved. Thus, it is useful to review the main debates around the subject in order to gain a better understanding. In this regard, one of the first attempts to define documentary comes from John Grierson (1993) who identifies it as a “creative treatment of actuality” (quoted in, Renov, p. 33). Grierson was insistent about what would be the function of documentary film; in the preface to Rotha’s book, *Documentary Film*, he (1939) claimed that “the documentary film must pursue, in a deepest sense, the way of education, and long-distance education at that, or it loses its special claim to consideration” (p. 10). However, there have been some criticisms towards that definition, most of them holding this definition to be too vagueness and deficient. According to Nichols (2010),

“It leaves unresolved the obvious tension between “creative treatment” and “actuality.” “Creative treatment” suggests the license of fiction, whereas “actuality” reminds us of the responsibilities of the journalist and historian. That neither term has full sway, that the documentary form balances creative vision with a respect for the historical world, identifies, in fact, one source of documentary appeal. Neither a fictional invention nor a factual reproduction, documentary draws on and refers to historical reality while representing it from a distinct perspective.” (pp. 6-7)

In the course of the history of cinema, some movements have tackled the issue of reality as well. The most prominent among these movements are Cine-eye, Direct cinema and Cinema verite. All of them have developed different perspectives and attempts to capture the essence of documentary: reality. To clarify, in *A New History of Documentary Film*, Ellis and Mclane (2005) explain the motivation of directors of Cinema verite, stating that “they were hoping to find the reality of life, truth in people hidden under the superficial conventions of daily life” (p. 217). In this context, some of the theorists in the field of documentary cinema have concentrated on the never-ending debates revolving around truth and the possibility of capturing reality. Nichols (2010) indicates that “documentary is not a reproduction of reality, it is a representation of the world we already occupy” (p. 13). Similarly, problematizing the term reality, Aufderheide (2007) alleges that “documentaries are about real life; they are not real life. They are not even windows onto real life. They are portraits of real life, using real life as their raw material, constructed by artists and technicians who make myriad decisions about what story to tell to whom, and for what purpose” (p. 2). Also, in her book titled *Toplumsal Bellek ve Belgesel Sinema (Collective Memory and Documentary Cinema)* Susam (2015) argues that

“The reproduction of reality is ideological in the context of representational relations. This means that, representational relations are manipulative. Those attaining prominence in the process of the production of meaning preserve and assure their sovereignty through the hegemonic relations. Documentary cinema is both a site of memory and a site of struggle

against the manipulations of sovereign ideology in this context.” (translation is mine, p. 155).

As we clearly see, from early years to the present, reality is the most highlighted characteristics of documentaries. While almost all theorists are concerned with these “vague, hard to comprehend” notions, they still refer to them in order to describe the distinctness of documentaries. However, the common idea of what theorists have agreed with each other on the documentary is the impossibility of capturing reality as it exists. In this regard, what could be seen as the purpose of documentary films? Analyzing terms like memory, otherness, representation, and reality, Susam (2015) suggests that

“Documentary cinema takes on a function of arousing curiosity in society and leaving a question mark in minds. It prepares a ground for society to look at itself. Documentary is an opportunity to tear down cultural hegemony. While it keeps collective memory alive, it also leaves the path of historical and cultural continuity open. We can see documentaries as an effort of understanding the other and as a desire of building bridges to others.” (translation is mine, p. 131)

In a similar vein, de Leeuw (2007) points out that “documentary filmmakers dealing with historical events can be regarded as historiographers in the sense that they reconstruct and recreate history. By offering visualized comments and reflections, they intervene in the debate about historiography and historical representation” (p. 75). While arguing that it is the filmmaker who constructs reality, Leeuw implies that documentary filmmaking is something that challenges “constructed facts.” Bringing it together with Susam’s view of documentary, I want to extend Leeuw’s argument and submit that unlike *the history*, or what we could call official history, documentary makes *histories*. On the one hand, truth is structured around the subjectivity of filmmakers and arrived at through the gaze of filmmakers, on the other hand, documentary films add a new dimension to our perception of the world and contribute new understandings of social life by plunging into historical events. Therefore, we may suggest that documentary film plays a crucial role in revealing something that exceeds what we knew before. In this regard, do documentary films help the others to construct their own identities? Could we qualify documentary cinema as a site of memory and a site of struggle? Do documentaries record the ‘unrecorded’ that does not exist in official history?

“Almost all structures constructed by the perception of the Modern West began to be deconstructed. Linear progressivism left its place to the criticism of progressivism. This compelled the individual to continue its existence on a slippery ground, in a state of fluidity, while holding on to the present. The person, whose imagination of the future was under mortgage in every sense and who was faced with the threat of futurelessness, would often remember the past he/she had forgotten in order to cling to his/her present.” (translation is mine, Susam, 2015, p. 13).

This passage stems from Susam’s thesis, in which she thinks about documentary cinema through memory, and can be read as the background of what has triggered the use of memory in documentary cinema. The state of futurelessness described in the paragraph emerged as a result of social developments that occurred in many parts of the world after the 1980s. Developments such as the implosion of the Soviet Union, the emergence of identity politics, and reverberations of criticisms towards nation-state paradigm have fueled the discussion of the past as something obscured. The question of “whose history” had been written up to that time, began to become virulent in many areas. In this context, my intention is to look into the recent discussions in memory studies so as to be able to come up with a proper concept that can support a useful framework for documentary and its affiliation with memory.

A concise account of the field of memory studies should perhaps start with the pivotal reference to Halbwachs's concept of *collective memory*, one of the fundamental texts. Regarding memory as a collective phenomenon Halbwachs (1992) argues that "[i]t is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories.... In recalling them, I must rely entirely upon the memory of others" (p. 51). In the field of current memory studies, several arguments related to the theory of collective memory have been put forward. These do not at all dispense with collective memory, but analyze it by adding new dimensions. That is, while Halbwachs evaluated acts of forgetting and remembering in a collectivist sense and intellectualizes these acts in the context of the group, today the concept of collective memory has expanded and divided itself into many sub-areas of interest and writing. The common feature of these different texts is a problematization of the 'singularity of memory.' In the recent past, the notion of a unified and singular memory has been discussed and the practices that gave rise to this singular structure has been challenged. "The breaking of all canons, the juxtaposition of macro and micro history, the questioning of the ideas of objectivity and subjectivity in the historiographic rendering have taught us all to be prudent observers and to use the plural instead of the singular: no longer a unique memory, but many memories" (Fortunati and Lamberti, 2008, p. 128).

At a time when we speak of multiple pasts and histories, we naturally hit a remarkable terrain on which we can explore how the past is configured. In other words, the questions of how areas of remembering and forgetting are constructed, what kinds of memory are allowed to circulate, and what is not allowed to be known in society become a matter of debate. In this respect, I firmly believe that what is remembered in the present is strictly associated with whose past and what past is remembered. That is, as Erll (2008) suggests, it is an "interplay of present and past in socio-cultural contexts" (p. 2). Furthermore, the present is available as a result of power struggles over the past. That is to say, upon asking the question of whose past we remember, we are at the same time talking about a domination of one past over others. Hence, we think of memory in the area of power struggles. In current memory studies one of the most reasonable concepts providing such a structure of memory is concept of *cultural memory*. Highlighting the vitality of collective memory, Jan Assmann (2008) points out that

"Halbwachs, however, the inventor of the term "collective memory," was careful to keep his concept of collective memory apart from the realm of traditions, transmissions, and transferences which we propose to subsume under the term "cultural memory" ... We insist on including the cultural sphere, which he excluded, in the study of memory. We are, therefore, not arguing for replacing his idea of "collective memory" with "cultural memory." (p. 110).

It is important to understand the way in which the notion of culture is being handled in the cultural memory. First and foremost, memory is not a thing that could be transmitted through biology or genetics; rather it is transmitted through culture since humans create a temporal framework that transcends the individual life span relating past, present, and future.

"Cultures create a contract between the living, the dead, and the not yet living. In recalling, iterating, reading, commenting, criticizing, discussing what was deposited in the remote or recent past, humans participate in extended horizons of meaning-production. They do not have to start anew in every generation because they are standing on the shoulders of giants whose knowledge they can reuse and reinterpret." (Aleida Assmann, 2008, p. 97)

Aleida Assmann, who is dealing with the notion of culture in a very broad range, has an comprehensive approach to forgetting and remembering and their relations within the cultural sphere. According to

Assmann (2008), “forgetting as one of the elements of memory, has to be the starting point. It is a part of social normality”, which means that “as in the head of the individual, also in the communication of society much must be continuously forgotten to make place for new information, new challenges, and new ideas to face the present and future” (p. 97). However, what is important in her elaboration of forgetting is that she challenges the idea that forgetting is a natural phenomenon. She divides forgetting into two parts; the first being *active* forgetting, the second one *passive forgetting*. *Active* forgetting comprises practices that are intentional, such as trashing and destroying. I will try to elaborate on this idea, which I consider to be quite profound, in greater detail later on. In turn, *passive* forgetting denotes non-intentional practices: losing, hiding, dispersing etc. Correspondingly, Assmann makes the same distinction for practices of remembering: *active* remembering and *passive* remembering. Here, drawing a contrast between the active and passive dimensions of remembering she explains that “[t]he institutions of active memory preserve *the past as present* while the institutions of passive memory preserve the *past as past*. The tension between the pastness of the past and its presence is an important key to understanding the dynamics of cultural memory” (p. 98).

Assmann names the ‘past as present’ as *canon*, which is the memory in circulation, and the ‘past as past’ as *archive*, which refers to the stored memory. She arrives at the conclusion that the canon, as one side of remembering in the realm of culture, is “staged by carriers of power whereas the archive is unmediated testimonies of a former era that can tell a counter-history to the one propagated by the rulers” (2008, p. 99). Just as I noted above about the singularity of memory, the canon formation addresses the singularity of memory in which power aims to create a unified, coherent cultural sphere by reducing ‘*memories* to *memory*’. Therefore, as Grabes (2008) argues, “canon widely determines, after all, what remains in a society’s cultural memory, and this again influences the view of the present and the future” (p. 312). Canon is the active dimension of cultural memory supporting a collective identity and transmitting “national history” in order to succeed in instilling national unity and identity. Assman (2008) points out that “[n]ation-states produce narrative versions of their past which are taught, embraced, and referred to as their collective autobiography” (p. 101). At this point, so as to create a national coherence and belonging, all canons are subjected to a certain selection process by nation-states. By regulating all canons that will circulate in society, the nation-state tries to preserve or create a national consciousness.

In order to reveal the logic of the selection process in a more detailed way, canon, as a part of remembering, should be problematized exactly because of its status as canon. In other words, who determines its status, what are the criteria for something to become canonized? In “making the past” and thus playing a crucial role in the configuration of society “canons are objectifications of values, either individual or shared” (Grabes, 2008, p. 311). Assmann (2008), in this regard, points out that “selection presupposes decisions and power struggles” (p. 100). In a context where power is not distributed equally, the selection always has a tendency of being in favor of the dominant culture. Correspondingly, “what appears,” “what disappear,” and “what emerges” is connected to power struggles. The past, which will circulate in the public and cultural sphere, is in a constant process of configuration. That is to say, given the power struggles around the selection process of canons, what is remembered in a society is strongly dependent on external determination. While canon is central to the present configuration of society, archive can be regarded as the basis of what can be said about the present in the future, when it will have become the past. In her theorization of cultural memory one of the most profound observations made by Assmann pertains to the attitudes of totalitarian states towards *storing memory*. According to her (2008),

“[i]n totalitarian states, there is also no storing memory. Every scrap that is left over from the past has to be changed or eliminated because an authentic piece of evidence has the power to crush the official version of the past on which the rulers base their power.” (p. 105)

On the other hand, identifying archive as “an unmediated testimonies of the former era,” Assmann touches on an essential point. That is to say, any time an archive comes to light, it may become an enemy of the present since it may tell a counter-narrative that may affect the state negatively. The cultural sphere can be re-constructed through testimonies of past; archive brings the unspoken and unseen stories of people to light and these stories can create a new layer in the boundaries of a “homogenized nation”. However, if canons start circulating in society as the result of a selection process, the same holds true for archives. As Assmann (2008) remarks, “[w]e must acknowledge that archives are selective as well. They are in no way all-inclusive but have their own structural mechanisms of exclusion in terms of class, race, and gender” (p. 106).

Additionally, as part of her definition of active forgetting, Assman states that “acts of forgetting are a necessary and constructive part of internal social transformations; they are, however, violently destructive when directed at an alien culture or a persecuted minority” (Assmann, 2008, p. 98). Assmann here draws attention to the impossibility of one singular culture, which does not eliminate the possibility of one dominant culture in a given sphere. We can infer that active forgetting calls for a kind of institutional entity, that is to say, a state or state-like institutions, or one which is able to perform a hegemonic press. I have already indicated that canon formation requires external determination and now we see that the same is quite true regarding the imposition of active forgetting. When knowledge about a minority is circulated within the boundaries of the “national,” external structures will resort to destructive practice to attack this knowledge in order to curb the dissemination of ‘counter-knowledge.’ Therefore, it is plausible to say that the culture of the majority regulates or oppresses the culture of the minority through interventionist practices.

Taking everything into consideration, we can argue that the formation of the present becomes possible through the creation of the past. As Erll (2008) notes, the “past is not given, but must instead continually be re-constructed and re-presented” (p. 7). This makes acts of remembering and forgetting directly subjects of a series of practices. Assmann’s distinction between canon and archive on the one, and active forgetting on the other hand offers a strong analytical tool since it helps to show how the present is shaped. One of the most crucial factors in this respect are the power struggles surrounding memory. From this point of view, what Assman shows to us is that we are indeed always dealing with a coexistence of plural memories rather than with only one singular memory.

“One of the issues at stake here [...] is whether canons can be adequately comprehended as the expression of the interests of one social group or class against those of another. In view of the fact that one has to reckon with several “cultures of memory” existing simultaneously in one and the same society rather than with only one, there will certainly be competition between these memorial cultures and the canons that serve as their archives.” (Grabes, 2008, p. 313).

Approaching the main practices of memory, remembering and forgetting, in the context of their wider cultural formation, Assmann sees acts of remembering and forgetting as constructions rather than natural phenomena. In this sense, she underlines that any kind of questioning of forgetting and remembering should be aware of these problems. All things considered, it is possible to claim that the public and cultural spheres are areas that are organized around multiple pasts, including multiple narratives, but

they are also sites where nation-states attempt to create a single narrative of the past. All memories that will circulate in the cultural and social sphere are thus created through a power struggle between the oppressor and oppressed, between majority and minority. In this sense, in the cultural sphere, things or material objects may not have a memory of their own, however, they could be counted as carriers of memory that help us to construct our memory as human beings. To begin with, there could be a crucial connection between documentary films and memory. Documentary is not a document that brings reality to us, but thanks to documentary we gain 'distinct memories' from different perspectives, that is to say, we can call documentary 'distinct perspectives of memory.' We witness the lives of the social groups, with whom we are living together, through documentaries. Images offered to us by documentaries instill a consciousness; we can hear the voices of people that have not had a 'chance' to be recorded. From these distinct perspectives of memory, we see the others and fill the gaps, which were the result of their exclusion from official history. One of the key indicators of documentary cinema is no doubt its power to bring oppressed groups to the agenda; documentaries shedding light on the others' culture try to deconstruct the hegemonic/dominant memory, enabling individuals to construct their memories and become aware of their cultural identities. Additionally, if documentary cinema is thought in line with practices like "opening the memory to the public", "seeking truth", or a "rewriting of history", then as Burton (1990) says, "documentary provides a meaning that reconstructs historical events and challenges hegemonic and often elitist interpretations" (p. 6).

CHAPTER 3: KURDISHNESS ON THE SILVER SCREEN

3.1. The History of the Kurdish Question in Turkey

Studying the formation of nation-states Philipp Ther (2014) remarks that “modern nationalism’s conception of nation and the idea of the nationstate were both based on an ideal of homogeneity” (p. 50) and “homogeneity would be achieved “naturally” by marginal population groups assimilating to the majority or titular nation” (ibid, p. 50). In parallel with Ther’s remarks, the newly founded Turkish republic was established on the values of Kemalism, the official ideology named after the founder of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. According to Niyazi Berkes (1998), “what emerged from Mustafa Kemal’s drive [...] was the establishment of a nationalist regime with a new constitution on the basis of the sovereignty of the people as a nation” (p. 443). After the foundation of the new regime Henry Barkey (2017) claims that “Atatürk, the founder of the Republic, and his colleagues, in a rush to modernize the country and consolidate their hold, could not afford to repeat Ottoman mistakes of letting their periphery remain ungoverned” (p. 213) and therefore, according to Welat Zeydanlıoğlu (2012), “[they] intended to create a western and secular nation-state for the Turks and thereby leave behind their “Oriental” Ottoman past” (p. 100). In this context, Oral Çalışlar (2013) argues that “the “one nation” approach of the new republic denied the Kurds, Alevites, Christians, or Jews as separate entities. The identity of the Kurds was denounced and they all were identified as Turks and Muslims in the way to establish a new nation” (p. 29). The Turkification policies of the state or the efforts to establish a new regime in the republic, in this sense, were so intense that everything related to other identities was being erased from the public sphere, particularly Kurdish identity. At this point, Martin Van Bruniessen (1992) claims that “populism [one of the main principles of Kemalism] became the ideological justification for a policy of nation-building that denied the existence of a separate Kurdish culture and made the Kurds into Turks by decree” (p. 274) and after the foundation of the state Çalışlar (2013) argues that “a period of denial of Kurdish existence began” (p. 30).

After the foundation of the state, in reaction to these policies of denial several Kurdish uprisings such as Shaikh Said (1925), Ağrı (1926), and Dersim (1937) took place and they were suppressed by the state. Analyzing the Turkish state discourse on Dersim rebellion Yeğen (1999) claims that:

“in reconstituting the Kurdish resistance as the resistance of bandits, the discourse of the Turkish state removed the Kurdishness of this resistance. And hence, TSD [Turkish State Discourse] read the Kurdish question as something which emerged from the conflict between the modernity of the Republic and the pre-modernity of the Kurdish people” (p. 563)

Cengiz Çandar (2013) claims that after the uprisings mentioned above until the 1960s “the Kurdish issue was, seemingly, in a perennial lull” (p. 64). However, as in the other part of the world, Turkey also witnessed the rise of a leftist student movement in the 1960s and the 1970s. The Kurdish opposition of that period mainly consisting of students got integrated into the rising leftist movement in Turkey and adapted a socialist view, as Fuat Keyman (2012) put forwards, “during the 1960s and the 1970s revolutionary politics preached solidarity between the oppressed among Kurds and Turks for the transformation to a single socialist state for all” (p. 473). However, the failure of student demonstrations, according to Barkey (2017), “convinced some Kurds to strike out on their own” (p. 214). In such an atmosphere experienced in the political realm of Turkey, Cengiz Güneş (2017) remarks that “being

influenced mostly by Marxism-Leninism and articulating Kurdish identity and demands in terms of a discourse of national liberation, the PKK (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan/Kurdistan Workers' Party) emerged in the 1970s as a Kurdish movement" (p. 218). Later, on September 12, 1980 a military coup was carried out by Kenan Evren and his generals. According to David McDowall (2007),

"They [Kenan Evren and his generals] were galvanized by what they perceived as the imminent disintegration of certain core values of the Atatürk legacy: national unity, ethnic Turkism, populism and secularism, all of which were now under assault from the war between leftist and rightist groups, from Kurdish nationalists, Marxists and from Islamic revivalists." (p. 415)

Following the military coup, Hamid Bozarslan (2001) argues that "state coercion was intensified in the Kurdish areas to include assassination of Kurdish opponents, massacres in prisons and the systematic use of torture" (p. 46). Similarly, Güneş (2017) claims that "the widespread torture that the army inflicted on the Kurdish political activists in prisons, together with the widespread oppressive measures they used to intimidate ordinary Kurds [...] were seen as necessary and sufficient to suppress the rising tide of Kurdish political activism once and for all" (p. 187).

After the years under the control of the military regime in Turkey, Çalışlar (2013) points out that "in 1984, by attacking a military regiment in Eruh, Siirt, the PKK gave the signal that the armed uprising had started" (p. 34) and the Kurdish question turned into an armed conflict that would last decades. At this point, it is important to note that there are many approaches to defining the Kurdish question and to explaining how the Kurdish question evolved into an armed conflict. According to Özcelik (2006),

"First, the Kurdish question is basically seen as external and internal terrorism that becomes a military and foreign policy issue. Second, it is perceived as an economic inequality, underdevelopment, and unemployment issue that leads to violent, low-intensity conflict. Last, it is, in fact, more an ethnic and identity conflict than terrorism and economic hardship. Turkish policy makers and public opinion at large believe the Turkish state discourse that is based on the homogenous "Turkish" identity and rejects the idea that there is a separate Kurdish identity." (p. 134)²

At the beginning of the 1990s, according to Yeğen (2015), "while the PKK had turned into a huge military organisation keeping up a low profile war against the Turkish army and a political-complex that operated newspapers and TV channels mobilising thousands of civilians in Turkey and Europe" (p. 3), Güneş Murat Tezcür (2013) claims that "the state opted for a variety of harsh means to curtail the growth of the PKK including forced evacuation of thousands of villages, systematic torture, and extrajudicial execution of civilians suspected to be PKK supporters" (p. 70). The rising armed conflict between the PKK and the state in the 1990s displaced many Kurds from their home. According to McDowall (2007), "[i]n July 1995 a government minister admitted that no less than 2,664 villages had been evacuated, with well over two million rendered homeless" (p. 440) and, as a result, "the extraordinary atmosphere in the region since 1984 has disrupted the major social patterns and institutions of daily life. A new Kurdish generation has come to the fore, one that was socialized in turmoil, armed battle, and poverty" (Bacık and Balamir Coşkun, 2013, p. 149).

Analyzing the Kurdish question in Turkey Ayşe Betül Çelik (2012) states that "it took almost two decades for state officials to come to terms with the fact that Kurds do exist and this problem is also one

² Even though there are these kind of approaches that interpret the evolution of the Kurdish question, it must be acknowledged that Turkey, the U.S. and the EU countries have listed the PKK as a terrorist organization (Haner, et. al, 2020).

that demands recognition of Kurds as a distinct group in Turkey” (p. 250). In this sense, it can be argued that from the foundation of the state to the 2000s the Kurdish question was not recognized officially and any definitive policy that could put an end to the armed conflict did not develop. This also led to an absence of genuine discussion on the Kurdish question in public sphere. As a result, until the 2000s, Elçin Aktoprak (2010) states that “bans on cultural rights [of Kurds] continued and the Kurdish question was still a terrorism issue for the state” (p. 646).

In the 2000s Turkey has entered a new turn with the coming of the Islamic-oriented AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi/Justice and Development Party). As a new political party the AKP, headed by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, was established in 2001 and won the majority of seats in parliament in 2002. According to Aktoprak (2010), “the AKP refrained from identifying themselves as Islamists and chose the concept of conservative democracy for redefinition” (p. 648). The military, regarded as “the guardian of Turkish secularism” (Akça and Balta-Paker, 2013, p. 84), can be seen as one of the reasons behind choosing such a definition. In this context, “they [the AKP] adopted a discourse on democracy, human rights and the rule of law as a means to protect themselves against the power of the Kemalist/secularist center” (Dagi, 2006, p. 8). After coming to power, the AKP adopted a new policy towards the Kurdish question. In this context, various external and internal developments including Turkey’s relations with the European Union and Iraq and the conflict between the military and civil politics can be counted as to why the AKP adopted a new approach for the Kurdish question. For example, it was thought that the KRG (Kurdistan Regional Government), which gained an autonomous power in Iraq, would lead to separatist tendencies in Turkey since it was “becoming magnet for Kurds from all over the region, but especially from Turkey” (Marcus, 2007, p. 301). Alongside the relations with the KRG, those between Turkey and the European Union also contributed to a reconsideration of the Kurdish question. In order to fulfill the EU’s membership conditions, the AKP had to take a more democratic approach towards the Kurdish question and they made some regulations such as “a compensation law for displaced Kurdish villagers, the abolishment of the state security courts and the lifting of the state of emergency regime in the remaining two provinces in the Kurdish region” (Kurban, 2013a, p. 2). Although the AKP introduced some reforms between 2002-2009, it was the launch of the Kurdish Opening in 2009 which represented a historical step towards the solution of the Kurdish conflict in Turkey.

After the declaration of the Opening, the Kurdish question was officially recognized as a democratization problem by the state for the first time. As Çelik (2012) points out “for the first time in the history of the Turkish Republic, the Kurdish Question is being discussed along all of its dimensions” (p. 256). The strict policy of denial began to be broken in public sphere and the Kurdish identity came to be recognized within the official discourse for the first time in the history of Turkey. Overall, the Kurdish Opening marked a historical period in Turkey where a nation-wide public debate on the Kurdish question was officially encouraged for the first time.

“This open discussion environment familiarised Turkish public opinion with Kurdish demands and the Opening engendered an irrevocable road on the Kurdish question. Moreover, the Kurdish question has turned out to be a signifier of Turkey’s democratization process. Redefinition of citizenship and improvement of cultural rights have been on the agenda mostly because of the Kurdish question, and they have been debated more openly than they were ten years before.” (Aktoprak, 2010, p. 667)

In the political field “the government’s will to address the issues around the conflict was welcomed by the pro-Kurdish party of that time” (Çelik, 2012, p. 254). Accordingly, in the first term of the Opening,

new reforms pertaining to the Kurdish question were introduced. Removing restrictions on Kurdish language, opening a TV channel broadcasting in Kurdish called TRT-6 can be counted among the relevant reforms. In addition, “the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) resolved to establish Kurdish language and literature departments in universities” (Yeğen, 2015, p. 6). Although these reforms within the scope of Kurdish question were the first in the history of Turkey, the political manoeuvres of the AKP nevertheless became target of criticism. To exemplify, Kurban (2013b) states that TRT-6 “meant little for the Kurds who have for years been following the world in Kurdish through the Europe-based Roj TV” (p. 4). The opposition parties also accused the government of “separatism, [bowing] to the goals of the terrorist PKK, violating the Constitution, causing fratricide and/or ethnic polarization between Kurds and Turks, being an agent of foreign states, and even betraying the country” (Gunter, 2013, p. 89).

Although the steps taken by the government drew criticisms from the opposition parties, the endeavors towards the resolution of the Kurdish question continued. Both sides, the government and Kurdish representatives, discussed the future of the Kurdish question. “The government with time was further emboldened to start negotiations with the imprisoned PKK leader Öcalan, perhaps the most reviled person in all of Turkey, and allowed him to communicate indirectly with his organization’s leadership based in qandil in northern Iraq” (Barkey, 2017, p.218). In this context, as part of the Opening, eight PKK militants and 26 refugees were allowed to enter Turkey on 19 October 2009 via Habur Border Gate. The group called “Peace group” was welcomed by thousands of enthusiastic Kurds with applause and cheers in Diyarbakır. “This “return-home” operation, which was necessary and appropriate on the road to the success of the opening under normal conditions, became the main reason for the dampening of the opening within just a few days” (Çakır, 2010, p. 181). Opposition parties claimed that “the AKP has surrendered to terror in Habur” (translation is mine, “Devlet teröristin,” 2010). After the Habur crisis, the pro-Kurdish party DTP (Demokratik Toplum Partisi/Democratic Society Party) was closed down by the Constitutional Court on the grounds of the DTP’s strong association with the PKK. After the closure of the DTP, the party’s co-chairs, Aysel Tuğluk and Ahmet Türk were expelled from parliament and they were sentenced to a five-year political ban. Following the DTP’s closure, the BDP (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi/Peace and Democracy Party) took part in politics as a pro-Kurdish party. Soon after the closure of the DTP, police operations against the KCK (Koma Civakên Kurdistan/Kurdistan’s Communities Union), the organization allegedly founded in 2005 as an urban branch of the PKK, were carried out. “1,500 Kurdish politicians, including mayors, were handcuffed and arrested on charges of “being a member of the KCK” during operations that started on April 14th and continued in a second wave on December 24th” (translation is mine, “Kürt siyasetçiler,” 2010) and “the KCK detentions involved people who were never associated with terrorism, even intellectuals who opposed the violence” (Çalışlar, 2013, p. 40).

During the process, the ruling party became the target of harsh criticism from diverse political actors and from conflicting perspective on the Kurdish question. For example, the KCK operations were interpreted as a menace due to the fact that “the timing of the first arrests, two weeks after the March 2009 municipal elections, was interpreted by the Kurds as the proof of the AKP’s intention to penalize the Kurds for having voted for the BDP” (Kurban, 2013b, p. 4). Commenting on the Turkish nationalist reactions triggered by the Habur incident Çakır (2010) argues that “the Kurdish political movement in general, and DTP in particular, either did not or could not see or care what kind of feelings this development, which was a welcomed one for them, could cause among the rest of the population in the

country” (p. 187). Also, criticising the approach of the government Aktoprak (2010) claims that “the Opening was initiated without any detailed and viable road map, and this unawareness about the process further complicated the issue” (p. 667). Similarly, Çelik (2012) remarks that “even though, the so-called Kurdish initiative was welcomed by the Kurds and most Turks its popularity decreased as the government did not clarify its contents, all the while silencing the legal Kurdish voices” (p. 255). In addition, Kurban (2013b) argues that “what has consumed the AKP government’s credibility and trustworthiness in the eyes of the Kurds [...] was the detention on remand of thousands of Kurdish politicians, mayors, activists, lawyers and journalists under the pretext of preventing the PKK’s domination of civil politics in the Kurdish region” (p. 4).

On 21 March 2013 a proposal for peace and resolution prepared by PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan was read in Diyarbakır during the Newroz celebrations in which millions of people participated. “He pronounced that “the period of armed struggle is ending, and the door is opening to democratic politics.” He went on to insist that “we have now arrived at the stage of withdrawing our armed forces outside the borders” (Park, 2017, p. 210). After Öcalan’s announcement, the PKK decided to withdraw its troops to Iraqi Kurdistan. While the resolution policies towards the Kurdish question were being debated in Turkey, the Kurds in Syria were under the attack of “a new, and radical, religious movement, the so-called Islamic State (IS), and in particular with its offensives against Sinjar in northern Iraq and Kobanî on the Syrian–Turkish border” (Leezenberg, 2017, p. 33). Soon after the attacks of the IS, some of Kurdish people in Turkey hit the streets.

“On 6-8 October, the Kurdish people poured into the streets to protest against the week-long siege of Kobani in Syria by the IS and the government’s “apathy” towards or even “contentment” with the siege and the possible fall of Kobani. Almost a civil war, the Kobani events resulted in the death of more than forty civilians, most of whom were HDP [successor of the BDP] supporters.” (Yeğen, 2015, p. 10)

Even though the street demonstrations caused a tension between the Kurdish political party and the government, the peace process continued. “The process culminated in a public meeting at the ornate Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul, where the Interior Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, and Kurdish MPs announced a roadmap” (Barkey, 2017, p. 218). The HDP (Halkların Demokratik Partisi/People’s Democratic Party), presented a 10-article draft prepared by Öcalan in order to improve the current situation and consolidate the process. “Öcalan had called upon the PKK to hold an extraordinary congress to take a strategic and historic decision to abandon the armed struggle based on ten articles he suggested for implementing democratic politics” (Gunter, 2017, p. 232). For the first time there were officials from both sides, the government and HDP, in the meeting known as Dolmabahçe Agreement (*Dolmabahçe Mutabakatı*).

Later on, Öcalan wrote a letter to be read at the 2015 Newroz celebrations and drew attention to the necessity for a truth and reconciliation commission whose members would be selected from parliament (Başer, 2015). However, Erdoğan stated that he was “firmly opposed to such a monitoring commission” (Kocaaslan, 2015). In mid-2015, Turkey was once again facing a very chaotic picture. On 5 June 2015, a bomb attack was carried out during the rally organized by the HDP in Diyarbakır for the June 7 elections. Despite the tension, the election took place on 7 June and the HDP achieved an unprecedented success. It was a turning point in the recent history of Turkey, when for the first time after 13 years of governing alone, the AKP was unable to gain absolute majority that would have carried it to power alone again. According to Ziya Öniş (2016), “in June, the vitality of Turkish democratic processes was on

display: A long-ruling party, rocked by several years of protests and scandals, took a pounding.” (p. 152). After the election, on 17 July 2015, Erdoğan stated that he “recognized by no means the expression Dolmabahçe Agreement” (“Erdoğan Dolmabahçe,” 2015). In the same period, the President made the decision for an early election and the Supreme Electoral Council YSK set the date 1 November 2015 for new elections due to the fact that no party was able to form government alone. In the reiterated election AKP achieved the absolute majority. Analyzing the election between June and November Talha Köse (2015) claims that “identity related fault lines in Turkey had been re-activated during the campaign processes of both June and November 2015 General Elections. Turkey experienced a turbulent political environment within the interim period between the June and November elections which alerted the Turkish electorate” (p. 119). Similarly but slightly from a different perspective Öniş (2016) argues that:

“in November, however, the persistence of authoritarian pressures and the ability of incumbents to play on fear were highlighted. In the midst of instability and violence, Turkish voters signaled their desire for stability and order. As a result, the monopoly that Erdoğan and the AKP enjoy at the center of the Turkish political system seems once again assured.” (p. 152)

On 22 July 2015 two police officers were shadily killed in the Ceylanpınar district of Şanlıurfa and the incident became the main factor that ended the process. The murder was attributed to the PKK by the government, but the PKK denied its responsibility (translation is mine, “Çözüm sürecini,” 2018). The failed negotiations between the state and PKK sparked renewed conflicts and eventually escalated into urban conflict. In cities such as Diyarbakır, Şırnak, and Hakkari, which are mostly populated by Kurds, the PKK declared self-governance (*öz-yönetim*). In reaction, the government announced intermittent curfews with “thousands of troops serving with combat-ready infantry, artillery and armoured army divisions, as well as the Turkish Air Force” (OHCHR, 2017, p. 5) in the Sur district of Diyarbakır, the Cizre district of Şırnak, and the Yüksekova district of Hakkari.

As a result of the historical development summarized above, it can be said that the Kurdish Opening was initiated with the promise of democratization, peace and solution. However, after the collapse of Opening process, the Kurdish question deepened further and left its place to a worse transformation. “After the collapse, human security deteriorated sharply in the Kurdish-populated areas of Southeast Turkey, and thousands more people were displaced by the resurgent violence between the Turkish state and the PKK” (Baser and Ozerdem, 2019, pp. 16-17). However, in spite of the short duration of the Opening process, the promise of democratization and peace affected many areas, many institutions and people had relatively benefited from the peace atmosphere in the country and the field of cinema was directly influenced by the Opening. In the next section, before moving into the developments in cinema that emerged with the launch of the Opening, firstly I would like to draw attention to how Kurdishness evolved in Turkish cinema. By doing so, I would like to look at how the policy of denial that employed since the foundation of the state affected Kurdish identity in cinema. Then, I will track the cinematic reverberations of the Opening process and thus how political field affected the cinematic field in Turkey.

3.2 The (Mis)representation of Kurdishness in Turkish Cinema

The above illustrated official policy of denial towards the Kurdish identity has manifested itself in the cinema of Turkey, up until recent years. In his doctoral dissertation entitled *Türk Sinemasında Kürtlüğün Kuruluşu* (*The Construction of Kurdishness in Turkish Cinema*), Sebahattin Şen (2016) problematizes

the construction of ‘Turkishness’ and ‘Kurdishness’ in Turkish cinema and claims that “while those living in the geographies affiliated with Kurds were constructed as “they” within the process of making cinematic object, which includes indigenous-Kurdish-peasant-feudal-backward, the positive equivalents of these terms such as white-Turkish-secular-civilized-modern-urbanite were categorized as “we”, which mark Turkishness in Turkish cinema” (translation is mine, p. 245). In this respect, it has been possible to observe a common portrait of Kurdishness in Yeşilçam cinema, which is known with its melodramas until the late 1980s. During Yeşilçam era, Kurds existed with their faces but without their ethnic names; on the one hand, “with their implicit, accented Turkish and dark skin, Kurds were portrayed as Anatolian people” (translation is mine, Dallı, 2011, p. 87), on the other hand, “the names of the cities the Kurds came from were known, but the subject of who they are was left unclear” (translation is mine, Uluç, 2011, p. 70). Similarly, Devrim Kılıç (2009) argues that “even though there are some films about Kurdish people, the language used in these films is Turkish and Kurds are portrayed as Turks living in rural areas, not as Kurds” (translation is mine, p. 11).

On the other hand, it was not only the Kurdish identity but also the Kurdish geography that was reconstructed and misrepresented in Yeşilçam cinema. In this context, Ali Fuat Şengül (2012) problematizes the construction of the notion Doğu (the East) in Turkish cinema and argues that “the East was deemed a part of the national territory not fully integrated into national modernization. Doğu [the East], in this way, emerged as a ‘problem’ obstructing spatial modernization, namely the production of national space (p. 1). Şen (2016) claims that “[i]n the films of the 1960s, Kurdistan and those living there are imagined as wild and barbarian since the ‘Kemalist enlightenment movement’ has not yet reached them and they are civilized by engineers, soldiers and teachers coming from within the circle of Turkishness” (translation is mine, p. 297). In a similar vein, in his book entitled *Türk Sinemasında Kürtler (Kurds in Turkish Cinema)*, Müslüm Yücel (2008) argues that “in the films about Kurds or in the films where Kurds are symbolically depicted there is one word that is underlined: feudal. There is someone or somebody shown and Kurds are just material to be shown” (translation is mine, p. 101). A similar imagination is seen in the films of the 1980s, where “Kurdistan is conceived of as authentic and archaic, as a sort of museum object from pre-modern times (translation is mine, Şen, ibid, p. 296).

Here, it is essential to mention the cinema of Yılmaz Güney due to his distinct perspective in terms of his representation of Kurdishness on screen. Written, directed and produced by Yılmaz Güney, *Seyyit Han (The Bride of the Earth, 1968)* was one of the social-realist films in which Kurds were represented in a tacit manner. Based on a Kurdish epic, the characters were given Kurdish names, however, *Seyyit Han* was censored because of the characters’ Kurdish names. Directed by Zeki Ökten and written by Yılmaz Güney, *Sürü (The Herd, 1978)* mainly concentrates on a nomadic Kurdish family whose life gets caught up and stuck in the maelstrom of modernization. In the film, many motifs such as geography, the characters’ names, and music, as Roy Armes (1987) states, mark “Güney’s return in inspiration to the region in which he was born” (p. 278). In his interview with the French journalist Chris Kutschera (2009), Güney states that “[t]he *Herd*, in fact, is the history of the Kurdish people, but I was not even able to use Kurdish language in this film; if we had used Kurdish language, all those who took part in this film would have been sent to jail” (p. 132). Following *Sürü*, Güney wrote the screenplay for *Yol (The Way, 1982)*. The film is about a group of prisoners visiting their families after receiving permission to leave from the prison administration. The film deals with a range of issues from feudal and patriarchal structures to the relationship of the Kurds with the state and women’s issues. Güney tries to establish a parallelism between oppression by the state and local pressures. What makes the film more striking is

the inter-title “Kurdistan”, appearing on the screen when the prisoners travel from the west of the country to the east. In this regard,

“The film not only produced an uncompromising critique of the repressive state apparatuses within the eastern region, an impossible task due to the film censorship and the ideology of cinematic production, but also, for the first time the cartography of cinematic space diverged from the national cartography and ‘Kurdistan’ entered the cinematic space.” (Şengül, 2012, p. 156)

In this respect, we can say that the distorted depiction of *Doğu* constructed through the melodramas of Yeşilçam, are represented from a more realistic perspective in the films of Yılmaz Güney. Moreover, this was a time when Turkey had witnessed its third military coup in 1980, which made it nearly impossible to use elements like the mentioned inter-title in film: “The Kurdistan banner was removed even from the illegal video copies of the film that were found on the black market in Turkey during the 1980s” (Arslan, 2011, p. 280). With *Yol*, Yılmaz Güney won the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1982. Yılmaz Güney left behind a great legacy and his films have been repeatedly referenced by many contemporary Kurdish filmmakers in Turkey as a big source of inspiration.

The mid-1990s marked a turning point in the cinema of Turkey in terms of the representation of the Kurdish question on screen. After a severe stagnation period, the mid-1990s witnessed the revival of Turkish cinema in two distinct areas: “a new popular cinema achieving considerable box-office success, and what might be called an ‘art cinema’ receiving critical acclaim and awards at national and international festivals” (Suner, 2004, p. 306). This new vein in Turkish cinema “takes place in the territories of Turkishness, representing the different faces of the nation and identity through conflicting power struggles” (Gökçe, 2007, p. 4). In this framework, with its high box-office success *Eşkîya* (*Bandit*, Yavuz Turgul, 1996) is a unique example. The film was regarded as an “oasis in the desert” (Yılmazok, 2010, p. 99), given the crisis that the cinema of the country was going through after Yeşilçam. Arslan (2011) states that “while the rural bandit is replaced by the urban mafia, warfare, or violence, the film, despite the characters’ obvious Kurdish names, does not make any deliberate references to Kurds and their sociopolitical situation” (p. 255). *Eşkîya* was followed by the release of Reis Çelik’s *Işıklar Sönmesin* (*Let There Be Light*, 1996) in the same year. Due to the fact that the film focuses on the close contact between a Turkish soldier and a Kurdish militant, we can say that it offers a direct representation of the Kurdish conflict. The film was criticized because of the ‘misrepresentation’ of the soldier and the militant (“Reis Çelik’ten,” 2004).

Later on, in 1999, *Güneşe Yolculuk* (*Journey To The Sun*, Yeşim Ustaoglu) was released and it was received as a groundbreaking film because of its perspective on the Kurdish question. *Güneşe Yolculuk* tells the story of Mehmet, Berzan and Arzu whose paths coincidentally intersect in İstanbul. Mehmet, a young Turkish man is mistaken for a Kurd due to his dark skin. Berzan is a Kurdish guy coming to İstanbul after his father is killed by the state forces. When Berzan joins a demonstration of the Kurdish movement in İstanbul, he gets murdered by the police. After being killed, Berzan’s corpse is taken by Mehmet to Berzan’s village. The film mainly aims to create a complicated illusion about the Kurdish problem by placing the identity problem in its center and by providing an overview of how identities are perceived in society. Briefly, we can say that the film is a journey between identities; the dark skin of Kurdish Berzan is replaced with the white skin of Turkish Mehmet.

The film was subject to much criticism due to the fact that its release date coincided with the capture of Abdullah Öcalan. The criticism was so fierce that Ustaoglu became the first and only director “who was offered to wear a bulletproof vest” in a press conference in Berlin (Dönmez-Colin, 2006, p. 130). Thus, in terms of its success and the way in which Kurds and Kurdish question are represented, *Güneşe Yolculuk* can be seen as a milestone in the history of Turkish cinema. In conclusion, it is evident that until the 2000s, there have been only a limited number of films in Turkish cinema that directly deal with the Kurdish question and explicitly represent Kurdishness.

3.3 The ‘Opening’ of Kurdish Films

The period, which witnessed the revival of Turkish cinema, also marked a new era in terms of the emergence of Kurdish films in Turkey. On the one hand, it was the new generation of Turkish cinema which paved the way for young Kurdish filmmakers. On the other hand, certain arts and culture institutions established within the Kurdish political movement, also played a key role in the emergence of Kurdish films in Turkey. Suncem Koçer (2014) indicates that Kurdish films, “proliferated mostly in and through spaces reclaimed by the Kurdish political movement” (p. 480). In this context, the most prominent institution where the production of Kurdish films was initiated was the MKM (Mezopotamya Kültür Merkezi/Mesopotamia Cultural Center). The center was launched in İstanbul in 1991 and “throughout the 1990s in Turkey, NÇM [in Turkish MKM] was the main actor to define and put into practice the [Kurdish] movement’s cultural policies” (Scalbert-Yücel, 2017, p. 263). In 1995, MKM’s cinema unit was established. The unit, which started working with a considerable group of students in the field of cinema, yielded its first outputs in the late 1990s. Many names such as Kazım Öz, Hüseyin Karabey, Özkan Küçük, who have achieved a certain prominence in the field of cinema, received education in the cinema unit of the MKM. In an interview about the establishment of the cinema unit, Kazım Öz makes the following explanations: “If you ask me why we founded it [the cinema unit], that happened with the discourses of alternative cinema, revolutionary cinema and especially Kurdish cinema. The 90s are the years when Kurds discovered themselves. In cinema, theater, painting...” (translation is mine, “Kazım Öz,” 2015).

The first film produced by MKM’s cinema unit is *Ax* (*Land*, 1999), a short film directed by Kazım Öz. The story of the film revolves around an elderly man who lives a Kurdish village that is evacuated by the state forces. Refusing to leave the village, the main character Zelo, walks around and remembers the daily life of the village which he yearns for. While the film was screened at many film festivals around the world, it was censored by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and rejected by the Ankara Film Festival. Even though *Ax* was censored by the Ministry, the film played a historical role in terms of visibility of Kurdish film.

At a time when Kurdish films began to be produced in Turkey, Kurdish directors and their films started to be recognized in the international arena as well. One of the most essential incidents that brought forward the notion of ‘Kurdish cinema’ globally was Bahman Ghobadi’s success at Cannes Film Festival where his film *Zamani Baraye Masti Asbha* (*A Time For The Drunken Horses*, 2000) was awarded with the Golden Camera. Ghobadi was the “first filmmaker to vocalize the notion of Kurdish filmmaking on the international scale” (Çiftçi, 2015a, p. 104). With Ghobadi’s success, as Mehmet Aktaş points out, “the expected birth happened” (translation is mine, 2009, 67). Another factor that facilitated the circulation of the term Kurdish cinema was the burgeoning of Kurdish film festivals

around the world. London Kurdish Film Festival and Hamburg Kurdish Film Festival are the first Kurdish film festivals organized around the world. Besides London and Hamburg, cities such as Diyarbakır, Van, Mardin, Tunceli, and İstanbul in Turkey as well as Duhok and Sulaymaniyah in the autonomous Kurdistan Region of Iraq organize film festivals for the development of Kurdish cinema.

The journey of Kurdish films in Turkey gained momentum with the Opening process which was mentioned in the previous sections. As the Kurdish question started to be discussed in the public sphere, the production and distribution of Kurdish films also increased in number. Starting from the 2009, many film festivals in Turkey began to host many Kurdish films touching on various aspects of the Kurdish question, Kurdishness and daily life of Kurds. For example, *Min Dît (The Children of Diyarbakır)*, Miraz Bezar, 2009), as the first ever Kurdish film selected for a Turkish festival. The film tells the story of two siblings whose father, mother and six-month-old brother were killed by paramilitary forces. The film was awarded with the Special Award of the Jury at the 46th Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival. In the same year, another groundbreaking film, *İki Dil Bir Bavul (On the Way to School)*, 2009) directed by Orhan Eşiköy and Özgür Doğan, was screened at Antalya Golden Orange Film Festival. In the film, a year of a Turkish teacher who is appointed to a Kurdish village, where students do not know how to speak Turkish, is narrated. *İki Dil Bir Bavul* too was awarded in the festival. After their selection to the festival, the films hit the headlines in Turkey as “Kurdish Opening in Cinema” and “Kurdish Opening at the Golden Orange” (translation is mine, Şeyben, 2009). In the same year, *Kirasê Mirinê: Hewîtî (A Fatal Dress: Polygamy)*, Mizgin Müjde Arslan, 2009) were hosted at 28th International İstanbul Film Festival. Inspired by the story of her aunt, Arslan depicts the stories of women forced into marriage to be second or third wife of old men. In 2009, *Pirdesur (Red Bridge)*, Caner Canerik, 2008) was programmed to be screened at the International İstanbul Film Festival. In the film, Canerik sheds light on the seasonal migration of people living in Tunceli.

In Turkey, as it can be understood from the films quoted above, there was a great transformation towards Kurdish films in terms of their increase in number and visibility. The effects of the Opening process even reached such a stage that !f İstanbul Bağımsız Film Festivali (!f İstanbul Independent Film Festival) announced a section named “Opening Continued”, referring to both the Kurdish Opening and the opening of the festival. (Can Candan, 2016). In this context, many films about the Kurdish question and daily life of Kurds were produced during the Opening process. Some films were funded by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. These films began to reach different segments of society in a way they had never been able to before. The films’ storylines went into dialogue with people from different backgrounds. Kurds watched themselves from their own perspective for the first time after the invention of cinema. Thus, we can note that Turkey bore witness to extraordinary days in cinema following the Opening.

3.4 Documentaries as a Tool of Questioning the Past

After the declaration of the Opening in 2009, the official policy of denial seemed to come to an end, albeit at a slow pace. With the softening of the state policies towards Kurds, as discussed in the previous section, an explosion of Kurdish films happened in Turkey, focusing on various aspects of Kurdish question and Kurdishness. One of the striking features among the Kurdish films produced was that these films were mostly inclined towards the documentary genre. Many reasons can be given to explain why Kurdish filmmakers tended to use the documentary genre. In this sense, Çiftçi (2016) argues that “in

order to break down some deep-seated ideological prejudices, to overcome the problem of persuasion, the Kurdish issue is mostly told in the documentary format” (p. 93). Similarly, Zeynep Yaşar (2016) puts forward that “Kurdish documentaries reclaim one-sided histories by intervening in them through their own, “truthful” version, one that is based in lived—rather than strategically distorted—realities” (p. 127). In a similar vein, Koçer (2016) claims that “for peoples who lack the official means of writing their own history, such as the Kurds, documentary film functions as a productive site through which counter-histories and memories as well as imagined identities can crystallize” (p. 132). In this context, it is evident that the main motivation that drove the Kurdish filmmakers towards the documentary genre was to unveil the historical realities of the Kurds, which had previously been hidden from sight in the public sphere. The documentaries that Kurds regard as the most suitable way for conveying their realities, in this sense, have a wide range palette. In this research, I will present some of them as examples to illustrate how and why Kurdish filmmakers use the documentary genre.

The documentary *İki Tutam Saç: Dersim'in Kayıp Kızları* (*The Missing Girls of Dersim*, Nezahat Gündoğan, 2010) focuses on the quest of young Kurdish girls whose parents were killed during the Dersim massacre in 1937-1938. After being taken away from their living relatives, the girls, whose numbers are estimated as hundreds, were adopted by high-ranking soldiers of the Turkish army to be raised as Turks. Asked about the results of the state’s adoption policies in an interview by the interviewer, Nezahat Gündoğan gives the following response:

“It’s got to be put this way: it has brought about a cancerous civilization. What is defined as civilization means Turkification anyway. That is the issue. The thing called civilization does not mean the farsighted, civilized, and scientific reasoning of human beings but of course an approach centered around Turkification. Those who were too young naturally became assimilated quickly, in fact, there are ultra-nationalists among these women adopted by the soldiers.” (translation is mine, Bozgan et. al, 2010)

Using a variety of materials such as archival footages, newspaper clippings, and official documents and employing traditional documentary codes such as voice-over narration and talking-head interviews, Gündoğan endeavors to deploy the documents to highlight the problem’s factual existence. In a sense, the documentary can be seen as an effort of bringing “untold history,” of the missing girls of Dersim to light.

Çayan Demirel’s documentary *5 No’lu Cezaevi* (*Prison No.5*, 2009) deals with another aspect of state atrocities committed against Kurds and denied until more recently. The documentary tells of the Diyarbakır Prison No. 5, which caused the deaths of thirty-four prisoners during the time from the military coup of September 12, 1980 until 1984. The documentary focuses on the memories of the prisoners of the period, which prisoners call “the period of brutality”, while military officials of the period called the prison as “military school.” The many traumatic experiences in this prison including rape, memorizing the Turkish national anthem forcibly torture and these experiences’ deteriorating effect on human dignity are highlighted in the documentary. The documentary consists of many interviews, featuring several familiar faces from politics and art. Emphasizing a continuity between the Dersim massacre and the Diyarbakır Prison No. 5 as two sites of Turkification, Çayan Demirel states:

“We took on this kind of work in order to become witnesses in the place where we live and to be able to retain our dignity and virtue. There are so many topics we need to confront in this country. My concern is with the creation of a healthy society through a culture of facing our past. Through the works I do I try to serve such a culture of facing with our past” (translation is mine, “5 No’lu,” n.d.).

Faîlî Dewlet (Official Murders, Veysi Altay, 2011) is about the people who were killed by the state forces between 1990-1995 in Cizre, Şırnak. The director describes Cizre as “one of the places where the state committed murder most blatantly. The state did not feel the need to hide itself” (translation is mine, “Faili meçhul,” 2012). *Ez Firiya Tu Mayî Li Cih* (I Flew You Stayed, Mizgin Mijde Arslan, 2012) is another documentary that looks at different aspects of the Kurdish question. The documentary is the story of a woman looking for her militant father. The documentary is personal journey of the director. After attending a meeting in Armenia, the director meets a woman who grew up in a refugee camp in Iraq. Following the meeting, this woman tells the director that she knows her father and the director decides to find her father.

Bûka Baranê (Rainbow, Dilek Gökçin, 2013) is also about the 90s in Turkey. The documentary opens with a photograph portraying children in front of their village school.

“The story begins with the childhood years, when the children first encounter the state and the Turkish language at school, have their names changed by the Turkish school teacher, when the village guard system was first introduced along with a “state of emergency”... This film focuses on the stories of children of the 90s at any school in the predominantly Kurdish-populated areas whose dream of a peaceful world devoid of war and clashes is as unimaginable as jumping over the rainbow.” (Candan, 2016, p. 21)

As seen in the documentaries cited above, in the course of the Opening, it became apparent that “[b]latant state efforts to ignore and erase a long history of violence have, conversely, bolstered subjects’ desires to record the reality of facts and rewrite their histories” (Uskan Selvelli, 2016, p. 217). With respect to the characteristics of Kurdish documentaries, it can be argued that a narrative from bottom to top, which is intended to challenge the official narrative, plays a crucial role. Kurdish documentaries developed a stance as having ‘a claim of truth’ that stands against state’s official history. As Çiftçi (2016) argues, “speaking out about long-silenced issues, and thus building a communicative sphere for social confrontation, is the main motivation behind the emergence of Kurdish films” (p. 93). In this context, the past which had been constructed by the state became the main element to which Kurdish filmmakers tried to give meaning. In this sense, Elizabeth Jelin (2003) claims that “actors and activists “use” the past, bringing their understandings and interpretations about it into the public sphere of debate. Their intention is to establish/convince/transmit their narrative, so that others will accept it (p. 26). What is more important, being established around the notion of reality, Kurdish films are not simply individual expressions of a few directors but can rather be considered a manifestation of a collective consciousness. Hence, most of the documentaries made during the Opening established their narrative explicitly or implicitly with reference to memory. At this point, I want to say that memory should be analyzed as not only the content of the films, but also a phenomenon upon which Kurds construct themselves. Through documentaries, albeit partially, a unifying effect is produced regarding the Kurds’ fragmented national identity. So, through memory, as Özgür Çiçek (2016) holds, “the invention of Kurdish people” became possible (p. 80). To paraphrase, if we consider Kurds as an “unrecorded people”, Kurdish films can be regarded as an effort of historicizing and contextualizing Kurds in a certain period and place in the history.

As the documentaries cited above show, Kurdish documentaries produced during the Opening found a moment to touch on the Kurdish question in Turkey. Most of them told the stories which the public sphere had not been unfamiliar with before. In this framework, Kurdish filmmakers used the documentary genre as a tool of transmitting the ignored stories of Kurds. While some of them, as seen

in case of *Dersim'in Kayıp Kızları* and *5 No'lu Cezaevi*, tried to reveal the state atrocities committed against Kurds, the others looked at the years of the conflict. Therefore, it can be argued that Kurds opened their memory to the public and wanted their histories to be seen. At this point, Uskan Selveli (2016) claims that “using a camera to investigate an unresolved issue in history, or trying to find solutions for today’s problems by locating the living witnesses of the past and inviting them to talk, are indicative of the specificity of such documentaries” (p. 218). The efforts of Kurdish filmmakers to bring to light the realities of the Kurdish question were not only about Kurds, but also about other segments of the society because the their memories were composed of a misrepresentation related to the Kurdish question in cinema, politics. In this sense, Çiçek (2016) argues that “Kurdish films reveal certain ‘histories’ of Kurdish and Turkish people and carry an archival potential that shapes the memories of both Kurdish and non-Kurdish people” (p. 75). Hence, it is reasonable to argue that during the Opening, on the one hand Kurdish documentaries found a moment to “record Kurds” in history, on the other hand they called the public to witness how the Kurdish question/Kurdishness has evolved in Turkey.



CHAPTER 4: CENSORSHIP AND THE SOLIDARITY CIRCLE AROUND BAKUR

4.1 Censorship during the Days of “Peace Talks”

In the previous chapter, in parallel with the developments concerning the Kurdish question in Turkey, I have argued that a serious increase was observed in the number of Kurdish films. One of the most important aspects of this increase was an observable tendency towards documentary filmmaking. After a long representation void, the Kurdish issue started to be narrated from the Kurdish perspective. The various aspects of the Kurdish question were explicitly carried on to the silver screen. However, the documentaries that brought forward the “unheard truths of the past” have not been exempt from censorship. Even in the period of the Opening process, where certain democratic steps were taken, number of Kurdish films, mostly documentaries, have been subject to various censorship practices. In other words, although Kurdish films in general gained considerable visibility as a result of the Opening process, it was not a period where the state oppression over the Kurdish voices narrating the Kurdish issue completely ceased. In this chapter, I will focus on some of the examples that manifest different form of censorship and discuss the ambivalent nature of the government’s attitude towards Kurdish films in this specific period.

In 2010, New Horizons Film Festival was held in Poland and the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism was one of the main sponsors. The festival announced a section titled ‘The Cinema of Turkey.’ Alongside many directors from Turkey, two films of Kazım Öz, *Fotoğraf* (*The Photograph*, 2001), *Demsala Dawî: Şewakan* (*The Last Season: Shawaks*, 2010), and Hüseyin Karabey’s film *Gitmek: Benim Marlon ve Brandom* (*My Marlon and Brandom*, 2008) were invited by the festival, whose selection committee consisted of members from both Turkey and Poland. *Fotoğraf* is the story of two young men, who coincidentally meet when they sit next to each other in a bus. While one of them joins the army to complete his military service, the other one endeavors to go to the mountains to become a militant. Immediately after the film’s selection to the festival, the festival committee called the production company, MKM, and explained that they would not be screening *Fotoğraf* because the Ministry of Culture and Tourism had declared that they would not support the festival if the film was shown (translation is mine, “Fotoğraf Polonya’da,” 2010). After this incident, Kazım Öz withdrew the his second film, *Demsala Dawî: Şewakan*, from the festival, was to be screened, and described the incident as a “cross-border operation” (*sınır ötesi operasyon*), (translation is mine, “2000’lerde sansür,” 2014) a term frequently used by the state in media, referring to the operations carried out to destroy the PKK camps in Iraqi Kurdistan.

Nonetheless, after the censorship of *Fotoğraf*, the third film selected for the festival, *Gitmek: Benim Marlon ve Brandom*, was screened at the New Horizons Film Festival. However, this is also where the story of censorship gets more confusing and complicated, since *Gitmek: Benim Marlon ve Brandom* had been removed from Culturescapes-Türkei Festival in Switzerland in 2008 following the threats of the ministry, though it had in fact funded the film before. In short, the ministry had funded the film, but then wanted to have it removed from the Culturescapes-Türkei festival in 2008, while again the same ministry allowed the film to be selected for the New Horizons Film Festival in 2010. Hüseyin Karabey explained the situation in an interview:

“The film was released and received several awards in Turkey, but some parts of society were obviously not able to accept that. The film was selected for a program of a festival in Switzerland which Turkey was also a part of. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism was one of the main sponsors of the festival. In that period, the conflicts were very intense and the country’s agenda was constantly changing. A bureaucrat from the ministry had called the festival executives and said that they would cut their financial support if the film was not removed... The Minister of Culture, Ertuğrul Günay made an unfortunate statement on the subject. Later he realized his mistake and corrected it. The film was then screened at a gala in Ankara, in which the Minister of Culture and Kurdish deputies participated” (“2000’lerde sansür,” 2014).

Freshwater’s proposal on how to examine censorship is important in this context. Freshwater (2004) suggests that “censorious events should be analysed with critical emphasis upon their socio-historical specificity: [...] Conclusions about censorship should surely be provisional, rather than fixed; plural, rather than singular; time and site-specific, rather than universal” (p. 242). In line with Freshwater suggestion, it can be argued that the fate of *Gitmek: Benim Marlon ve Brandom* can be seen as a clear example of how the censorship mechanism has been shaped by everchanging political dynamics in Turkey in those days.

Instead of the “direct” censorship practice, as seen in the case of above mentioned *Fotoğraf* for example, Zeynel Doğan’s film *Dengê Bave Min* (*Voive of My Father*, 2012) shows another side of censorship with its “indirect” form. Doğan (2013) stated that while on the set of *Dengê Bavê Min* in Maraş, rumors spread that a PKK movie was being shot. Following these rumors, the municipality of Elbistan cut all the financial support it had promised before – even though the film was funded by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Also, Doğan stated that “they were under police custody during the shootings. Police officers did not interfere directly. Their presence, however, created constant unrest and tension on the set” (translation is mine, Siyahbant, p. 10). Although it was exposed to this kind of an indirect censorship during its production process, the film later was shown in many prestigious festivals such as International Istanbul Film Festival, International Adana Golden Boll Film Festival, International Ankara Film Festival and it received various awards. The film also received widespread media attention in Turkey.

The case of *Dengê Bavê Min*, which can be read as one of the reflections of the inconsistencies of the Opening process in cinema, also sheds light on different dimensions of the concept of censorship. Censorship is not only a film not being allowed to be shown at a festival; filming under the gaze of security forces can also be included in censorship practices. At this point, Moore (2013) argues that “censorship transmutes from an external repressive force to a positive exercise of power that constitutes practices as it defines their boundaries” (p. 48). In line with the Moore’s argument, it can be said that the censorship seen in the case of *Dengê Bavê Min* marks the boundaries of what would be produced or not produced.

In 2010 the documentary film *Destaneke Serhildanê: Bêrîvan* (*The Legend of Rebellion: Bêrîvan*, Aydın Orak, 2011) was banned by the Governor of Batman on the grounds of “violating the main principles of the Constitution, aiming to disturb public order, distorting historical events, inciting hatred among society, disrupting the unity and integrity of the Turkish nation, and making propaganda for the PKK” (translation is mine, Siyahbant, 2012, p. 64). The director comments on this decision as follows:

“In the film, there is not a single piece of footage that is fiction, not a single sentence that I wrote myself. It has been said that there is PKK propaganda in the film. Everything that

we say about Kurds is propaganda according to them. They label everything as “propaganda”, if it is not serving their purpose.” (translation is mine, *ibid*, p. 64)

After the documentary was banned, Cannes Film Festival became the stage of a real complication. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism selected the documentary to represent Turkey at Cannes. However, after the news was leaked in the media, the ministry denied the situation. Following the statement of the ministry, director Orak (2011) interpreted the ministry’s attitude as “the image of someone who is acting despotic inside, while trying to look like a democrat on the outside” (translation is mine, Foça).

The documentary *Dersim 38* (2006) directed by Çayan Demirel is about the Dersim massacre that took place between 1937-1938. The documentary returns to the survivors of the Dersim massacre, records their memories and thereby functions as an archival study. While the documentary deals with the Dersim massacre on a grand scale, its story on the other hand is also “a family tragedy for the filmmaker, as 54 members of his extended family were killed” (Candan, 2016, p. 11). In 2007, the documentary was going to be shown in a festival in Tunceli, the name given to Dersim after the Dersim massacre. Coming to the festival site, police officers asked for Intellectual Work Operation and Distribution License (*Eser İşletme Belgesi*) which is issued by the Directorate General of Intellectual Rights at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

“Intellectual Work Operation and Distribution License is in fact a requirement brought to protect the rights of the producer. However, the imposition of this document to documentary films, which have no commercial screenings, too, and to form, in this way, a controlling structure, unfortunately was also adopted, over time, by many festivals as well.” (Kaya and Ögünç, 2020, p. 46)

In need of such a license, the director made his application but was unable to obtain it for reasons already observed in the case of *Destaneke Serhildanê: Bêrîvan*. Later on, the issue was taken to court, where the director initially won the case, but then the ministry appealed the court’s decision. Subsequently, the case went to the Council of State, the higher court. After the Opening was declared, the Dersim massacre came to the agenda of Turkey as part of the Kurdish question. In 2011, the minister, who had banned the documentary *Dersim 38* two years ago, interpreted the Dersim massacre as “fascistic.” Even the prime minister of the time, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, apologized for what happened during the Dersim massacre in 1938 (“Başbakan Erdoğan’dan,” 2011). This censorship case once again demonstrates how the official attitude towards Kurdish films shifted quickly, in line with the shifting political discourses and policies.

As discussed in the previous section, the Opening process marks an important period in terms of where the production and the visibility of Kurdish films enhanced in the public sphere. Many stories regarding the Kurdish question that were silenced for decades come out through the medium of cinema during the Opening process. As Kurdish films gained “legitimacy”, were shown in prestigious festivals and received positive comments even from the mainstream media, new Kurdish films were encouraged by these developments. However, on the other hand, the circulation of these films (and thus the stories of Kurdishness narrated by these films) were still under the strict control of the state, and at this point, censorship came into play. As a result, as the examples mentioned above demonstrate, there have been contradictory and inconsistent attitudes towards Kurdish films in terms of encouraging/discouraging and supporting/censoring them. The complicated policies of the Opening directly targeted Kurdish documentaries. In this regard, I argue that the censorship practices exercised on the mentioned documentaries emerge as a field of struggle concerning what is remembered or not remembered, and

what will be the dominant narrative in the public sphere. The struggle for “rewriting the histories”, which the documentaries embarked on, comes to a point where “the history is written” through a hegemonic perspective through censorship. Hence, by censoring documentaries about the Kurdish question, the state curtailed the reality of the Kurdish question one more time.

4.2 *Bakur*: Another Face of the Mountain

While all the above discussed cases display how the destiny of Kurdish films have been shaped by the political turbulences during the Opening process, the censorship of *Bakur* (North, Ertuğrul Mavioğlu and Çayan Demirel, 2015) stands out as a unique case which makes the interplay between political context and censorship even more observable. In a short period of time, from the beginning of the production of *Bakur* to the moment it was finished, there had been great changes in the political field of Turkey and these changes determined the destiny of this documentary film. *Bakur* is also an interesting case for this study because of the anti-censorship reactions it triggered in public space. At this point, Josh Carney (2016) states that “*North* continues to be the watershed moment for the movement against censorship in Turkey, both because of the *de facto* shift in the system brought about by the ban, and because of the solidarity shown by the cinematic community” (p. 155). Thus, including these reactions into the analysis I would like to deal with the censorship in the framework of this actions and reactions. Bunn (2015) claims that “censorship naturally requires situating it within the communicative paradigms of specific historical context” (p. 28). In a similar vein, I want to examine the censorship case of *Bakur* by analyzing within its agents and its context. Therefore, by expanding the scope of censorship, I would like to investigate the interaction of censorship in context and show the formation in the public sphere that was created by censorship and reactions to the censorship.

Bakur focuses on the withdrawal of the PKK militants across the border, following Abdullah Öcalan’s historical call on March 21, 2013, during the Opening. Generally speaking, the daily life of the PKK militants becomes the pivotal frame of the documentary. This includes everything from the flag game and baking bread to the story of a militant going to the mountains and playing marble, as Carney (2006) says, “all of which humanizes a group most frequently portrayed as treacherous by mainstream Turkish media” (p. 141). During the interviews in the documentary, the PKK militants explain their perspective about gender issues and how they deal with gender equality. Another salient aspect of the documentary is the devotion to the mountains and the Kurdish lands expressed by militants. As everyone who grew up in Turkey and is familiar with the news about the PKK can understand, through such a depiction the documentary reveals something that people are unfamiliar with; the documentary introduces a distinct face of the mountain. In this context, Çiftçi, in an assessment of Kurdish films, states that in the films before *Bakur*, the image of the mountain was an integral part of Kurdish films as well, but in those films, the image of the mountain was produced not by looking directly at the mountain, but by looking at the people left behind by those who went to the mountain and Çiftçi suggests that for the first time, *Bakur* looks at the mountain through close-ups (translation is mine, 2015b). Rather than looking at the mountain from afar, *Bakur* is a journey to the heart of the mountain, where the PKK militants have faces. That is to say, the narrative of the mountain that had remained vague until the Opening process, was shaped in flesh and bones with *Bakur*.

Bakur was shot during the days of “peace talks” when, there was a strong belief that peace could finally be achieved in the country. Upon the ceasefire enabled by the Opening, the camera focuses on one of

the actors of the ongoing peace process. In an interview, the co-director Ertuğrul Mavioğlu says “I argue that people, who are prone to exhibiting ‘state reflexes,’ should watch this movie. Let them see the people who died, whose corpses were taken and dumped, who remained unknown for years, let them see what they eat, drink, wear, and how they look at the mountain” (Aytaç and Köstepen, 2015, p. 33). These words of Mavioğlu reveal the motivation behind the production of the documentary. After the 40 years-long armed conflict, a documentary like *Bakur* was able to be filmed. The promise of democratization, normalization and peace that came after decades made *Bakur* possible. Regarding *Bakur* as a mirror, film critic Kaya (2015) emphasizes that “*Bakur* is a journey to an unknown world for the audiences in the west of Turkey” (p. 37). In this sense, I argue that *Bakur* takes on a very strong position as a meeting sphere where the audiences in the west of the country meet “unfamiliar knowledge” about the Kurdish question. Thus, we can say that *Bakur* “opens the door to all kinds of history, memory, and curiosity that we ignored, never touched on, that were hidden from us, that we never knew, or saw but never recorded” (translation is mine, Gökçe, 2015).

Although production process of *Bakur* started at a time when winds of peace were blowing in Turkey, its release coincided with the collapse of the Opening process. In other words, *Bakur* started to be produced when the Opening was declared, and it was censored when the Opening collapsed. It can be argued that these changes emerging in the political arena of Turkey, in a sense, decided *Bakur*’s fate. It was agreed that the first screening was going to be held on 12 April 2015 at the 34th İstanbul Film Festival. With only a few days left until the festival, the documentary was excluded from the festival’s selection on the grounds that it did not have Intellectual Work Operation and Distribution License (translation is mine, “*Bakur belgeseline*,” 2015). However, Mavioğlu had been targeted in the newspaper *Vahdet* on 10 April 2015, two days before the screening. “Here is the director of that treacherous PKK movie” (Siyahbant, 2016, p. 4), it said in the newspaper. After the censorship incident, several interviews and press releases were made concerning the censorship of *Bakur* by the General Director of Cinema and IKSİ (İstanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts), the foundation in charge of the festival. Director of the İstanbul Film Festival, Azize Tan, stated that they received the official letter indicating the requirement of Intellectual Work Operation and Distribution License regarding the Turkish films to be screened at the festival, and said “there is no difference between films for us. Saying that there are double standart between foreign films and domestic films Tan stated that a similar incident happened last year, and the problem was solved by sending film list to the Ministry (translation is mine, “*Bakur belgeseline*,” 2015). It was evident that the reason for cancelling the screening was not a “technical issue” but rather a political issue. In this framework, Alisa Lebow claims (2016) that “*Bakur (North, 2015)*, was subjected to tacit censorship at the İstanbul Film Festival, when the government decided to arbitrarily enforce a generally ignored law requiring a screening certificate in order to show the film (the certificate would almost surely have been denied)” (p. 232).

Even though *Bakur* was not screened at İstanbul Film Festival, many festivals hosted the documentary in order to show their solidarity. *Bakur* was screened at Yılmaz Güney Cinema in Batman in May 2015. The directors of the documentary, Çayan Demirel and Ertuğrul Mavioğlu, were sued and charged with “making terrorist propaganda” in 2015. The court sentenced Mavioğlu and Demirel to 3 years in prison in 2019 without having taken their closing arguments. Increasing the penalty due to the fact that the “crime” was committed through media, the court decided to apply a judicial control measure in the form of a ban on leaving the country. Following the decision of the court, the directors and the producer wanted to make a public announcement at Beyoğlu Cinema, but this was prevented by the police.

Finally, the press release was moved to a hotel in Taksim Square. There, Mavioğlu made the following statement:

“I do not think that the decision is unrelated to the punishment given to the peace academics, the students who are in jail because they publicly uttered their objections and what happened to thousands of political prisoners. In this sense, when asked “Did you get punishment for *Bakur*?” I say “No, I was punished for defending freedom of expression and for seeking truth.” (translation is mine, “Bakur filminin,” 2019)

Towards the end of the Opening, the case of *Bakur* meant a crystallization in terms of the censorship policies of the government. Carney (2016) states that “North’s [*Bakur*] ban by an increasingly authoritarian and nationalistic Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi - AKP) was a crucible moment for [...] the rise of media censorship, particularly with regard to documentary film” (p. 141). Although censorship was the “sword hanging above the heads” of Kurdish documentaries (and their directors), it was still difficult to talk about a fully organized censorship mechanism before this case. However, after the censorship of *Bakur*, censorship emerged as the most important political force that determined the fate of Kurdish documentaries. In this context, Candan (2016) states that “censoring of *Bakur* meant that it was effectively banned from commercial distribution in Turkey, and the government was threatening all festivals that might dare to show such films (p. 23). Many Kurdish documentaries, as well as some other documentaries that deal with contemporary political issues in Turkey, were censored after the censorship of *Bakur*; *Bîra Mi Têtin* (*I Remember*, Selim Yıldız, 2015), *Nû Jîn* (*New Life*, Veysi Altay, 2015), *Sûr: Ax û Welat* (*Sur: Land and Country*, Zana Kibar and Hicran Ürün, 2017), *Yeryüzü Aşkın Yüzü Oluncaya Dek* (*Love Will Change the Earth*, Reyan Tuvi, 2014). Evaluating the policies of the government towards documentaries, Necati Sönmez, film director and festival organizer, borrows the term *documentaphobia*, originally coined by Matthew Bernstein. While Bernstein uses the term for those who do not acknowledge documentary as documentary but see it as fiction, Sönmez borrows it for the censorship cases in Turkey. Sönmez (2015) matches documentaphobia with *eisoptrophobia*, the fear of mirrors, referring to the ones who do not want to see themselves in the mirror. In this way, Sönmez defines documentaries as mirrors. Therefore, it can be argued that while documentaries work to be a “mirror” to the society with their different perspective, the censorship means “covering up this mirror”.

Taking everything into account, even though the procedure conducted in the context of the Intellectual Work Operation and Distribution License seems to be associated with “cinema itself”, if we consider the area of application of this certificate, it becomes more evident that the certificate was used as the main tool for the government to carry out its policies of censorship. In other words, censorship as a political force was employed under the guise of the Intellectual Work Operation and Distribution License. The Intellectual Work Operation and Distribution License, according to Kaya and Ögünç (2014), “is the transformation of an assurance of rights into a censorship mechanism” (p. 46). Therefore, it can be argued that *Bakur* was censored not for procedural but for political reasons. In addition, *Bakur* was shot after the mutual dialogue between the state and the PKK was established. In this context, Carney (2016) states that “North was both made possible by, and undertaken in the hope of, a historic peace process negotiated by the AKP leadership in Ankara and Abdullah Öcalan, the jailed leader of the PKK” (p. 142). Thus, the political atmosphere that emerged after the Opening made *Bakur* possible. However, the censorship of *Bakur* that came after the collapse of the Opening underlines the fact that

the worsening political atmosphere determined the *Bakur*'s fate. In this sense, this case shows the interplay between political dynamics and Kurdish films, in the days of "peace talks".

4.3 The Solidarity Circle Surrounding *Bakur*

In the previous chapters, I have presented a series of ideas such as documentaries focusing on social events, highlighting the cleavages existing in the society about the unspoken past. I have discussed how *Bakur* was censored and what was the reason behind the censorship. In this section, what I would like to state is that the reactions that emerged after the censorship imposed on *Bakur* created an alternative way of thinking or a form of solidarity. I contend that the reactions that emerged after the censorship provided a subjectivity to the case *Bakur*. That is to say, I do not want to say that the censorship imposed on *Bakur* was eliminated, but rather I would like underscore that the state of coming together, when *Bakur* was censored, created a new area. In this new area, the circle established around *Bakur* by filmmakers, industry workers and, cinemagoers emphasized the importance of coming together and they discussed how to overcome the censorship problem. Within all these efforts, their struggle against censorship made *Bakur* more visible. Also, by drawing attention to the political atmosphere in Turkey, the people taking place in this circle highlighted the necessity of documentary cinema as a way of building peace in Turkey. In addition, all these reactions after the censorship created a memory, as I touched on earlier, the reactions following the censorship of *Bakur* enabled *Bakur* to be included in the public memory. In this context, after the censorship of *Bakur*, many unions, directors, and cinema-related institutions gathered in Istanbul to condemn the censorship.

"As cinema workers, we refuse to submit this document regardless of whether we have an Intellectual Work Operation and Distribution License or not. We announce that we will not show our films at the Istanbul Film Festival in any way until the censorship of the documentary *Bakur* is lifted and the festival screening of the film is held freely. Under these conditions, we announce to the public that we demand Istanbul Film Festival to stop all screenings." (translation is mine, "Bakur'a sansüre," 2015)

Following the statement, all feature films in the national category were withdrawn in a very short time, which led the festival jury to recede from its position. The festival committee announced that the National and International Golden Tulip Competitions and the National Documentary Competition were cancelled (translation is mine, "Bakur'a sansürde," 2015). *Bakur* could not be shown at Istanbul Film Festival, but was screened concurrently in Istanbul and Diyarbakır. Later on, *Bakur* was shown in Mardin at Çerçi Film Günleri (Çerçi Film Days) on May 3, during Kürt Kültür Sanat Günleri (Kurdish Culture and Art Days) in Istanbul on May 12, and in Documentarist's section of Censored Documentaries on June 15. These are evident attempts to create a network of solidarity around *Bakur*. In the scope of this research, all these screenings address a crucial point; unlike the ruling party's attempts to paralyze Kurdish documentaries, these incidents led people to come together and demand freedom for the documentaries. Hundreds of cinema workers and cinemagoers held a demonstration in Istanbul, chanting slogans such as "This is just the trailer, the film is just starting", "Don't stop the film, stop the censorship", "Long live cinema, death to formality." In the press statement they (2015) announced:

"It seems highly likely that films and festivals will face much greater barriers in the upcoming periods. We declare that we will fight with all our strength to remove all implicit or explicit practices that allow censorship as soon as possible. As the first step of the long-

standing struggle against censorship, we demand the urgent removal of the Intellectual Work Operation and Distribution License in festival screenings.” (translation is mine, “Sansüre karşı,”)

On March 18, 2015, one day after the editing of *Bakur* was completed, Demirel’s heart stopped and he was revived fifteen minutes later. It was thanks to an ambulance passing by that he survived at all, but he went into a coma for months because of the lack of oxygen he had suffered. Today, Çayan Demirel continues his life with a 99 percent disability report. In the name of solidarity with Demirel, many events have been organized by people from industry workers, his friends and cinemagoers. Furthermore, the Cinema for Peace Initiative that was founded in 2016, made a film called *Arkadaşımız Çayan* (*Our Friend Çayan*) to show the daily life of Demirel. According to Baş and Köstepen, who are part of the collective that prepared the movie *Our Friend Çayan*,

“The important thing for us is to at least raise public awareness, to invite people to witness the life of this person [Çayan Demirel], to stir a reaction in the people seeing this film, which was made against this injustice. The crucial thing is awareness and to acknowledge that we are dealing with a form of oppression.” (translation is mine, Oğuz and Atılgan, 2020)

Documentarist, a documentary festival, and the MKM organized screenings of the film to draw attention to the health problems of Çayan Demirel and to censorship practices with respect to documentaries. During these events, the main topic was the censorship policies of the government and the solidarity for Çayan Demirel.

Throughout the entire thesis, it has been highlighted that documentaries are a subject of struggle, revealing narratives that had previously been silenced in the societies to counter cultural and political hegemony. In this sense, I argue that the struggle that unfolded in the social field after the censoring of *Bakur*, in a sense, led *Bakur* to be approached from a different perspective. Considering the quotation that I used from the director of the documentary, Mavioğlu, it can be said that *Bakur* was offering a distinct picture of the Kurdish question for different segments of society to come together and have a discussion. Also, regarding *Bakur* as a mirror Kaya’s emphasis also reminds us that *Bakur* was made in an effort of making a mutual exchange of experiences among the people living in different parts of the country. However, censorship was used as a tool to curb the meetings of these different circles of society. The dynamics that I have tried to list, however, show another vital focus for us to analyze *Bakur*’s censorship in a different way. In this context, what made *Bakur* particularly unique was the people coming together around *Bakur*. They discussed the processes they went through and tried to undermine the policies of the government with the press statements they made, participating in the courts that *Bakur* was on trial. While the censorship made the documentary *Bakur* invisible, the struggle against the censorship of the documentary became more visible. In this sense, it can be assessed that while one of the main motivations of the documentary, bringing different segments of the society and thereby preparing a ground in which different memories would meet, was prevented by the censorship; the circle that formed by the people who came together against the censorship of the documentary created another memory. It can be argued that *Bakur* gained a ground in memory as a struggle against the censorship. Therefore, the existence of different memories that circulate in the society, unlike the collective autobiography in Assmann’s words, which are tried to be created by the state, created a completely different memory in public sphere.

Taking everything into account, in the Opening process the Kurds who have suffered from a lack of genuine representation in the cinema and other fields of the public sphere, found a ground in which Kurdish stories were carried to the silver screen by Kurds; the distorted representation of Kurds was re-represented by Kurds' own viewpoint. In relation to political initiatives, Jelin (2003) reminds us that:

“[p]olitical openings, thaws, liberalizations, and transitions give a boost to activities in the public sphere, so that previously censored narratives and stories can be incorporated and new ones can be generated. Such openings create a setting for new struggles over the meaning of the past, with a plurality of actors and agents who express a multiplicity of demands and claims.” (p. 28)

In this atmosphere, Kurds could tell their own stories related to their repressed past. Kurds regarded the documentary genre as the most suitable way of conveying knowledge of their silenced memory. Also, in the process that started with the Opening, Kurdish documentaries highlighted multiple memories against the singular memory constructed by the state, thus emphasizing that the state is “crisscrossed by multiple and competing readings, reflecting the variety of meanings of the past that circulate in the societal scenario” (ibid, p. 29). Even if Kurds demanded a confrontation with the past through the Kurdish documentaries, this effort was prevented by the ruling party by imposing censorship mechanism on the documentaries, even during the Opening process. “This paranoid effort is deemed necessary for the protection of the state because an independent reference to the past can trigger a counter-history that challenges the totalitarian version of the past and undermines the state (Assmann, 2018, p. 105). In the scope of this thesis, by concentrating on the documentary *Bakur*, I have endeavored to show how a documentary meets at the intersection of memory and censorship. At this intersection, I worked to explain how a documentary could contribute to the formation of memory through itself and its censorship. *Bakur*, which gained a place in the public memory with its reactions against censorship, became a site of struggle in this sense. If the memory of the future is formed with the actions of today, *Bakur* as an archive took its place in the memory of the future with the reactions against censorship. As Assmann (2008) states “the archive is unmediated testimonies of a former era that can tell a counter-history to the one propagated by the rulers” (p. 99). At this point, Esra Özyürek (2011) touches on the term public culture, coined by Arjun Appadurai, and states that culture is a “zone of debate” or “an arena where other types, forms, domains of culture are encountering” (p. 8). Then, she claims that collective memory, considered to be a unified phenomena, does not match all groups' memory; the public consists of different groups who share memories that are different from each other. In this sense, what makes *Bakur* important in the context of censorship in this chapter is the reactions of industry workers, audiences and cinema lovers, who transcended the censorship by attending *Bakur*'s courts, making press statements or screening *Bakur* at various festivals, thereby making the censorship mechanism more visible.

In contrast to the government that imposes active forgetting on the subjects by using censorship mechanisms, the segments promoting counter-narratives appeal to the notion of remembering. At this point, the voice that was created around *Bakur* went beyond the censorship mechanism and the invisibility of the documentary made the censorship more visible through the struggle against censorship. What is more, the discourse that *Bakur* itself would produce in relation to memory was conveyed through the struggle against censorship. With the censorship of *Bakur*, I would like to re-highlight the discussion of Özyürek, who stated that public memory is a “zone of debate” where a single hegemony cannot be established completely. This is because “there will be others who – whether in the

form of private oral stories or as practices of resistance to power – will offer alternative narratives and meanings of the past, threatening the national consensus that is being imposed” (Jelin, 2003, p.28). In this context, unlike the rulers who work to reconstruct and re-present the past, those who constructed the past were the industry workers, cinemagoers and audiences in case of *Bakur*. Therefore, it can be said that as there is no general “consensus on memory” in cultural and public spaces, the narratives that were suppressed continue to circulate in different ways in different places by different circles.



CONCLUSION

In this research, I established the intersection around the Kurdish question, consisting of the concepts of memory, documentary and censorship, and made suggestions on the meanings of these concepts. I tried to analyze each of these concepts in relation to the Kurdish question by using the press statements and directors' interviews of the period, academic literature. I based my research on narrative and contextual analysis.

The pro-Islamic AKP, which came to power in 2002, launched the Kurdish Opening with the intention of resolving the Kurdish question, which is one of the most long-standing issues in the history of Turkey. With the Opening, the Kurdish question started to be discussed from a broader perspective. Various aspects of the Kurdish question were addressed in different areas and cinema became one of the pivotal fields in terms of exhibiting salient features of the Kurdish question. While a literally dramatic increase of films was to be observed in the field of Kurdish filmmaking during the Opening, the intense use of documentary films can moreover be seen as another equally important characteristic of this explosion.

During this research, while arguing the role of documentaries, I have regarded documentary, in a sense, as a conveyor of historical facts; at least I have contended that some of directors of that period were guided by such a motivation. In this respect, I have indicated that documentaries pour onto the silver screen through the subjectivity of their respective directors. Placing documentary films at the juncture where historical facts are revealed or shown, I argue that documentaries have a strong bond with the concept of memory. On the one hand I claimed that there is an important link between documentary and memory, I on the other hand problematized the narrative of what is remembered and forgotten in the public sphere. In short, I claimed that the concept of memory refers to a constructed phenomenon. Here, I benefited from Jan Assman and Aleida Assmann's theory of *cultural memory*, which is a sub-theory of Maurice Halbwachs's *collective memory*.

With respect to cultural memory, Assmann emphasizes that acts of remembering and forgetting cannot rely on an intact situation; instead, they are of a much more problematic and constructed notions. Accordingly, dividing acts of remembering and forgetting into internal categories, Assmann alleges that narratives - and thereby memories - circulating in society are formed through power struggles. That is, any past circulating and remembered in the present is available at the expense of surpassing other 'pasts.' Assuming that there are two dynamics inside remembering, Assmann avers that when a narrative about the past is established in society, this narrative emerges as a result of the tension between the *pastness of the past* and the *presence of the past*. In her theorization, as a part of remembering, *canon* presents the presence of the past; it is a narrative circulating in society. On the other hand, *archive*, as another part of remembering, refers to the pastness of the past that might be used when needed. Therefore, what is remembered in cultural memory is determined through the internal dynamics of remembering. In other words, the past we remember today arises from the conflict between *canon* and *archive*.

While Assmann analyzes remembering by way of separating it into two internal categories, she applies the very same methodology to the acts of forgetting. On the one hand, *passive forgetting* denotes non-deliberate acts: losing, covering up, scattering. *Active forgetting*, on the hand, is purposeful, for example, destroying. At this point, active forgetting signifies the intervention of an alien entity. The intentional intervention by an external entity may be directed to acts of forgetting. That is to say, the intentional act

directed to memory is intended to cause forgetting. Therefore, memory is extremely open to the effects of not only individuals to which it is biologically connected, but also the wider social sphere that individuals are socially and politically bound up with. In short, acts of remembering and forgetting are always in a conflict and thereby in a process of construction.

From such a point of view, I have regarded the documentary genre as presenting the distinct memories of a society that have remained under the canonical narratives. More specifically put, I have dealt with documentary on the axis of remembering and forgetting. On this axis, the documentary genre has the potential to change the direction of remembering and forgetting; I have alleged that documentary weaves a narrative that can challenge the acts of remembering and forgetting that have been constructed by external dynamics, and, in this sense, documentary explicitly interferes with the field of history. Therefore, documentaries pose an interference with what is remembered and what is forgotten in society.

In addition, as a vital pillar of this research, I have concentrated on censorship. Unlike the traditional understanding of censorship, which conceives of it in a more limited way, the new understanding of censorship sees censorship practices as a productive rather than only repressive force and also rejects the view of censorship practices as binary oppositional relationships. In the traditional approach, censorship as a meaning and result were deemed as a fixed phenomena. However, with the advent of new censorship theory, this understanding has been undermined; the idea that censorship refers to fixed and repressive phenomena was challenged by the perspective that censorship is a process that constructs the subjects. In other words, the traditional approach that regards censorship as simply “erasing and silencing” phenomena has been criticized and it has been argued that the main purpose of censorship is not to erase or silence, but rather to produce subjects and society by creating new discourses and delineating the boundaries of what is allowed to be said and what is not. What is more striking in the new theorization of censorship is the unavoidable and invisible aspects of the censorship. Accordingly, censorship is an integral part of life; it is a way of governing society. However, there have been several criticisms towards such a theorization, since some theorists believe that this understanding of censorship erases the importance of struggling against censorship. Here, I have dealt with censorship by seeing it as a determinant of what can be said in society. I have regarded censorship as the governing policies of a power. I have understood censorship as a way of creating a singular narrative that silences other narratives, thereby aiming to create a society that believes in a singular past.

With respect to the Kurdish question, I first of all discussed the Turkification policies of the state during the nation-building process and the policies of denial and assimilation that accompanied the Turkification policies. On the one hand stating that the Kurdish question had been largely ignored until the 1980s, after the emergence and the quick mobilization of the PKK in the 1990s, on the other, caused a transformation in the society and the political realm. In the 2000s, various political developments on regional and international scale forced the AKP to take serious steps to solve the Kurdish question. This includes, for example, Kurdistan Regional Government acquiring the status of an autonomous regional government, and thereby increasing the visibility of Kurds, the EU membership criteria and the PKK’s regional power. Taken together, these led to a shift from a predominantly military and violent to a more democratic approach.

Following demands for a democratic society, in 2009 the Kurdish Opening was launched. Many reforms were introduced in the scope of the Opening, yet they were deemed insufficient in terms of their capacity to solve the problems. Even though the reforms were not adequate, these efforts regarding the Kurdish

question were appreciated by many institutions, politicians and at least some strands of the society. Therefore, the possibility of a democratization of the country through the resolution of the Kurdish question, gave people hope for the future of the country. However, the incidents that I tried to explain led to the collapse of the Opening. After the Opening process collapsed, Turkey has sunk into an even more horrific and violent situation in terms of civil society and the Kurdish question when compared to the past. ‘The experience of the 90s’ that caused many traumas for Kurds has become the new normal for Kurds in the 2000s.

Just as the Kurdish question has followed complicated trajectories politically and socially since the foundation of the republic, it is possible to say that the same thing is quite valid for cinema. During this research, I tried to trace the practices of representing Kurdishness in the field of cinema in Turkey. While Kurdishness had been a victim of national desires until the 1990s, the corresponding image of Kurds as barbarian and primitive changed towards a more positive perspective at the end of 1990s. During the Opening process, numerous films were produced about the Kurds and the Kurdish question; some of them were funded by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, some received awards at the Turkish film festivals. Various parts of the general public watched the Kurds from a perspective different from the one offered in Yeşilçam, in which Kurdishness was represented in a distorted way. I have suggested that what was crucial during the Opening was the motivation of Kurdish films, namely trying to unveil the unseen face of the historical reality underpinning the Kurdish question. Correspondingly, the notion of reality turned into the fundamental component of Kurdish films during the Opening. Moreover, it was not only a small number of Kurdish films that were structured around reality; intense use of reality became the main element of the films of this period. While most of the movies made during the Opening built their story expressly or certainly upon the notion of reality, the historical incidents relating to the Kurdish question were the main resource for directors to establish their narratives upon. Consequently, memory became the integral part of the Kurdish films. This circumstance situated Kurdish movies for the most part in the documentary genre.

I tried to show that on the one hand, Kurds, who did not have an explicit history for almost a century, turned faces towards their own history and shot films about the state’s atrocities and their culture, and everyday life. On the other hand, they used documentaries to call on society and the state to face the past. That is, Kurdish filmmakers struggled to destroy their own informal status, to record themselves and to deconstruct the dominant memory of the society. Thus, by destroying the singular narrative about the Kurdish question that had been circulating for a century, Kurdish documentaries revealed the plurality of narratives that had remained under the shadowy darkness of the official narrative. In this research, one of my propositions was that even though we can talk about a boom of Kurdish documentary films during the Opening, this does not mean that repression on Kurdish films would have stopped in this process. More precisely, although not all films were exposed to state censorship, some of them did in fact become the target of censorship practices. Moreover, censorship continued even during the Opening process, which was promoted as a so-called “Peace Process.” *Fotoğraf*, *Gitmek: Benim Marlon ve Brandom*, and *Dengê Bavê Min* can be referred to as fiction films which were directly exposed to or at least facing the threat of censorship, while *Destaneke Serhildanê: Bêrîvan* and *Dersim 38* are all documentaries, which were censored during the Opening process. I have contended that despite the fact that the Opening was drawn up in order to fathom the Kurdish question, the censorship cases of Kurdish films show that the Opening was brimming with inconsistencies. In the light of these censorship practices Kurds, who constructing their past and thereby their identity through

documentaries, were exposed to the state's policies for yet another time. Hence, censorship was utilized by the state as an instrument to "blot out the reality of the Kurdish question."

While the censorship mechanism in Turkey always constituted a threat to Kurdish documentaries, this situation reached its peak with the end of the Opening, with the censoring of *Bakur*. The censorship of *Bakur* signifies a milestone in terms of censorship practices and the Kurdish question because, firstly, production of the documentary began under the "spirit of the Opening that promised freedom" and it was censored at a time when the Opening collapsed. Secondly, the movie shed light on another face of the mountain in a different way than other documentaries and fiction films did and thirdly, because of the developments that followed in the media and cinema-related milieus after *Bakur* had been censored. All in all, it is a documentary that represents the spirit of the period.

I propose that *Bakur* is a documentary that creates a zone, in which new meanings and discourses about the Kurdish question are produced. I have contended that unlike the previous films that saw the mountain from afar, *Bakur* entered into the mountain and established its perspective within the mountain. At this point, such getting closer with the mountain can be read in relation to the political atmosphere in Turkey, which changed with the declaration of the Opening process. However, after the collapse of Opening process, the censorship of *Bakur* shows how the destiny of Kurdish documentaries are strictly linked with the political climate in Turkey. In this sense, the claim of confronting the invisible aspects of the Kurdish question that emerged with the Opening in public sphere ended with the censorship that imposed on the Kurdish documentaries after the collapse of the Opening. To put it another way, attempts to confront the past through Kurdish documentaries or to reveal the different truths of the Kurdish question were rejected again by the censorship mechanism. At this point, I argued that the Kurdish question which had been ignored until the Opening, was ignored again with the censorship practices. If we consider all these things in the context of the Kurdish question, this allows for the observation that *Bakur* became the victim of this violent process in the field of cinema in much the same way as a democratic and non-violent resolution to the Kurdish question has been suspended in the political field by the collapse of the Opening. In a sense then, *Bakur* is a representation of the Opening in the field of cinema.

When we think the documentary *Bakur* under the conditions of its time, I stated that it is the struggle against censorship formed around censorship that puts *Bakur* in a distinct place. That is to say, on the one hand *Bakur* is a sign of a political period on the other hand, the events around *Bakur* urge us to think of the documentary in a different way; while the censorship itself excluded *Bakur* from the public sphere, the events surrounding *Bakur* transcended the narrative conveyed by *Bakur* and made censorship itself more visible in the society. Thus, the struggle of industry workers, moviegoers and directors against censorship established a separate censorship memory in the society. In other words, the state of hiding, ignoring that the censorship tried to establish became more visible by the solidarity circle formed around *Bakur*.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Books

- Akça, İ. & Balta-Paker, E. (2013). Beyond military tutelage? Turkish military politics and the AKP government. In E. Canan-Sokullu (Ed.), *Debating security in Turkey: Challenges and changes in the twenty-first century* (pp. 77-92). Plymouth: Lexington Books.
- Aktaş, M. (2009). Kürt sineması: Artık bir gerçek. In M. M. Arslan (Ed.), *Kürt sineması: Yurtsuzluk, sınır ve ölüm* (pp. 56-68). İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı.
- Armes, R. (1987). *Third World Film Making and the West*. University of California Press.
- Arslan, S. (2011). *Cinema in Turkey: A new critical history*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Assmann, A. (2008). Canon and archive. In A. Erll & A. Nünning (Eds.), *Cultural memory studies: An international and interdisciplinary handbook* (pp. 97-107). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Assmann, J. (2008). Communicative and cultural memory. In A. Erll & A. Nünning (Eds.), *Cultural memory studies: An international and interdisciplinary handbook* (pp. 109-118). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Aufderheide, P. (2007). *Documentary Film: A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press.
- Bacık, G. & Coşkun, B. B. (2013). Explaining Turkey's failure to develop a political solution for the Kurdish problem. In F. Bilgin & A. Sarihan (Eds.), *Understanding Turkey's Kurdish Question* (pp. 141-164). Lexington Books
- Barkey, H. (2017). The transformations of Turkey's Kurdish Question. In G. Stansfield & M. Shareef (Eds.), *The Kurdish Question Revisited* (pp. 211-224). Oxford University Press.
- Berkes, N. (1998). *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*. McGill University Press.
- Biltereyst, D. (2013). Silencing cinema: An introduction. In D. Biltereyst & R. V. Winkel (Eds.), *Silencing cinema: Film censorship around the world* (pp.1-12). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. In J. B. Thompson (Ed.), Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Burt, R. (1994). Introduction: the "new" censorship'. In R. Burt (Ed.), *The administration of aesthetics: Censorship, political criticism, and the public sphere* (pp. xi-xxix). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Burton, J. (1990). *The Social documentary in Latin America*. Pittsburgh Press.
- Dagi, D. I. (2006). The Justice and Development Party: Identity, politics, and discourse of human rights in the search for security and legitimacy. In H. Yavuz (Ed.), *The emergence of a new Turkey: Democracy and the AK Parti* (pp. 88-106). Salt Lake City: Utah University Press.
- Ellis, J. C. & McLane, B. A. (2005). *A new history of documentary film*. New York: Continuum International Publishing.
- Can, C. (2016). Kurdish documentaries in Turkey: An historical overview. In C. Candan & S. Koçer (Eds.), *Kurdish documentary cinema in Turkey: The politics and aesthetics of identity and resistance* (pp. 1-32). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Carney, J. (2016). Regarding North: Bakur and the crystallization of cinematic censorship in Turkey. In C. Candan & S. Koçer (Eds.), *Kurdish documentary cinema in Turkey: The politics and aesthetics of identity and resistance* (pp. 140-164). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Çalışlar, O. (2013). The Kurdish issue in Turkey. In F. Bilgin & A. Sarihan (Eds.), *Understanding Turkey's Kurdish Question* (pp. 29-46). Lexington Books

- Çandar, C. (2013). On Turkey's Kurdish question: Its roots, present state and prospects. In F. Bilgin & A. Sarihan (Eds.), *Understanding Turkey's Kurdish Question* (pp. 59-74). Lexington Books
- Çelik, A. B. (2012). Ethnopolitical conflict in Turkey: From the denial of Kurds to peaceful co-existence. In D. Landis & R. Albert (Eds.), *Handbook of ethnic conflict: International perspective* (pp. 241-260). Springer.
- Çiçek, Ö. (2016). The fictive archive: Kurdish filmmaking in Turkey. In C. Candan & S. Koçer, (Eds.), *Kurdish documentary cinema in Turkey: The politics and aesthetics of identity and resistance* (pp. 70-85). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Çiftçi, A. (2015a). *The politics of text and context: Kurdish films in Turkey in a period of political transformation* [Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation]. University of London.
- Çiftçi, A. (2016). Kurdish films in Turkey: Claims of truth-telling and convergences between fiction and non-fiction. In C. Candan & S. Koçer (Eds.), *Kurdish documentary cinema in Turkey: The politics and aesthetics of identity and resistance* (pp. 86-112). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Dönmez-Colin, G. (2006). *Cinemas of the other: A personal journey with film-makers from the Middle East and Central Asia*. Intellect Books.
- Erll, A. (2008). Cultural memory studies: An introduction. In A. Erll & A. Nünning (Eds.), *Cultural memory studies: An international and interdisciplinary handbook* (pp. 1-15). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Fortunati, V. & Lamberti, E. (2008). Cultural memory: A European perspective. In A. Erll & A. Nünning (Eds.), *Cultural memory studies: An international and interdisciplinary handbook* (pp. 127-137). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Freshwater, H. (2004). Towards a redefinition of censorship. In B. Müller (Ed.), *Censorship & cultural regulation in the modern age* (pp. 225-246). Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *History of sexuality volume 1: An introduction*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings 1972-1977*. In C. Gordon (Ed.), New York: Pantheon Books.
- Grabes, H. (2008). Cultural memory and the literary canon. In A. Erll & A. Nünning (Eds.), *Cultural memory studies: An international and interdisciplinary handbook* (pp. 311-319). Berlin: Walter de Gruyter.
- Gunter, M. M. (2017). Contrasting Turkish paradigms towards the volatile Kurdish question: Domestic and foreign considerations. In G. Stansfield & M. Shareef (Eds.), *The Kurdish question revisited* (pp. 225-244). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Güneş, C. (2017). Mobilization of Kurds in Turkey during the 1980s and the 1990s. In G. Stansfield & M. Shareef (Eds.), *The Kurdish question revisited* (pp. 187-198). Oxford University Press.
- Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On collective memory*. University of Chicago Press.
- Huyssen, A. (2003). *Present pasts: Urban palimpsests and the politics of memory*. Stanford University Press.
- Jelin, E. (2003). *State repression and the labors of memory*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Kennedy, T. (2009). Bölünmüş bir halk olarak Kürtler ve Yılmaz Güney sineması. In M. M. Arslan (Ed.), *Kürt sineması: Yurtsuzluk, sınır ve ölüm* (pp. 89-129). İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı.
- Kılıç, D. (2009). Kürt sinemasının yükselişi. In M. M. Arslan (Ed.), *Kürt sineması: Yurtsuzluk, sınır ve ölüm* (pp. 3-27). İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı.
- Koçer, S. (2016). Ez Firiya Tu Mayî Li Cih (I Flew You Stayed / Ben Uçtum Sen Kaldın): An example of domestic ethnography. In C. Candan & S. Koçer (Eds.), *Kurdish documentary cinema in*

- Turkey: The politics and aesthetics of identity and resistance* (pp. 131-139). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Kuhn, A. (1988). *Cinema, censorship and sexuality 1909-1925*. New York: Routledge.
- Kutschera, C. (2009). Yılmaz Güney: "Sürü Kürt halkının tarihidir". In M. M. Arslan (Ed.), *Kürt sineması: Yurtsuzluk, sınır ve ölüm* (pp. 130-136). İstanbul: Agora Kitaplığı.
- Lebow, A. (2016). The plenary panel on Kurdish documentary cinema at the 17th Visible Evidence Conference (with a critical introduction by Alisa Lebow). In C.Candan & S. Koçer (Eds.), *Kurdish documentary cinema in Turkey: The politics and aesthetics of identity and resistance* (pp. 230-260). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Leezenberg, M. (2017). Religion among the Kurds: Between Naqshbandi Sufism and IS Salafism. In G. Stansfield & M. Shareef (Eds.), *The Kurdish question revisited* (pp. 33-46). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Marcus, A. (2007). *Blood and belief: The PKK and the Kurdish fight for independence*. New York: University Press.
- McDowall, D. (2007). *A modern history of the Kurds*. London: IB Tauris.
- Müller, B. (2004). Censorship and cultural regulation: Mapping the territory. In B. Müller (Ed.), *Censorship & cultural regulation in the modern age* (pp. 1-31). Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- Nichols, B. (2010). *Introduction to documentaries*. Indiana University Press.
- Özyürek, E. (2007). *The politics of public memory in Turkey*. Syracuse University Press.
- Park, B. (2017). Turkey's Kurdish problems, the Kurds' Turkish problems. In G. Stansfield & M. Shareef (Eds.), *The Kurdish question revisited* (pp. 199-210). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Peredo-Castro, F. (2013). Inquisition shadows: Politics, religion, diplomacy, and ideology in Mexican film censorship. In D. Biltereyst & R. W. Winkel (Eds.), *Silencing cinema: Film censorship around the world* (pp. 63-78). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Renov, M. (1993). Toward a poetics of documentary. In M. Renov (Ed.), *Theorizing documentary* (pp. 12-36). New York: Routledge.
- Rosenfeld, S. (2014). Writing the history of censorship in the age of enlightenment. In D. Gordon (Ed.), *Postmodernism and the enlightenment: New perspectives in eighteenth-century French intellectual history* (pp. 117-145). New York: Routledge.
- Rotha, P. (1939). *Documentary films*. New York.
- Scalbert-Yücel, C. (2017). The PKK, the Kurdish movement, and the emergence of Kurdish cultural policies in Turkey. In G. Stansfield & M. Shareef (Eds.), *The Kurdish question revisited* (pp. 259-274). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Staiger, J. (1995). *Bad women: Regulating sexuality in early American cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Susam, Asuman. (2015). *Toplumsal bellek ve belgesel sinema: 2000 sonrası Türkiye belgesellerinde gerçek - temsil ilişkileri*. İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları.
- Şahin, Ö. (2009). *Censorship on visual arts and its political implications in contemporary Turkey: Four case studies from 2002-2009* [Unpublished master's thesis]. İstanbul: Sabancı University.
- Şen, S. (2016). *Türk sinemasında Kürtlüğün kuruluşu* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. İstanbul: Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University.
- Şengül, A. F. (2012). *Cinema, space and nation: The production of Doğu in cinema in Turkey* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Austin: University of Texas.
- Ther, P. (2014). *The Dark Side of Nation-States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe*. Berghahn Books.

- Uluç, D. (2011). *Ulus, etnisite ve sinema ilişkisi bağlamında Türkiye sinemasında Kürt etnisitesinin temsili* [Unpublished master's thesis]. İstanbul: Maltepe University.
- Uskan Selveli, N. (2016). Kurdish documentary activism as a means of existence. In C. Candan & S. Koçer (Eds.), *Kurdish documentary cinema in Turkey: The politics and aesthetics of identity and resistance* (pp. 209-229). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Wittern-Keller, L. (2013). All the power of the law: Governmental film censorship in the United States. In D. Biltereyst & R. W. Winkel (Eds.), *Silencing cinema: Film censorship around the world* (pp. 15-32). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Van Bruinessen, M. (1992). *Agha, shaikh, and state: The social and political structure of Kurdistan*. Zed Books Ltd.
- Yaşar, Z. (2016). Negotiating clashing truths: Critical responses to the observational documentary mode in On the Way To School. In C. Candan & S. Koçer (Eds.), *Kurdish documentary cinema in Turkey: The politics and aesthetics of identity and resistance* (pp. 112-130). Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Yücel, M. (2008). *Türk sinemasında Kürtler*. Agora Kitaplığı
- Zeydanlıoğlu, W. (2008). The White Turkish Man's Burden: Orientalism, Kemalism, and the Kurds in Turkey. In G. Rings & A. Ife (Eds.), *Neo-colonial Mentalities in Contemporary Europe? Language and Discourse in the Construction of Identities* (pp.155-174). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

The Articles and Periodical Publications

- Aktoprak, E. (2010). The Kurdish opening and the constitutional reform: Is there any progress?. *European Yearbook of Minority Issues Online*, 9(1), 643-667.
- Ayata, B. and Yüksek, D. (2005). A belated awakening: National and international responses to the internal displacement of Kurds in Turkey. *New Perspectives on Turkey*, (32), 5-42.
- Aytaç, S. and Köstepen, E. (2015). Kadraja giren Kuzey. *Altyazı*, (150), 28-35.
- Baser, B. & Ozerdem, A. (2019). Conflict transformation and asymmetric conflicts: A critique of the failed Turkish-Kurdish peace process. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2019.1657844.
- Bozarslan, H. (2001). Human rights and the Kurdish issue in Turkey: 1984–1999. *Human Rights Review*, 3(1), 45-54.
- Bunn, M. (2015). Reimagining repression: New censorship theory and after. *History and Theory*, 54(1), 25-44.
- Çakır, R. (2010). Kurdish political movement and the “democratic opening”. *Insight Turkey*, 12(2), 179-192.
- Çiçek, C. (2011). Elimination or integration of pro-Kurdish politics: Limits of the AKP's democratic initiative. *Turkish Studies*, 12(1), 15-26.
- Çiftçi, A. (2015b). Kuzeye giden yol. *Altyazı*, (153), 40-47.
- Dallı, C. M. (2011). Türkiye sinemasında Kürt imgesi: Dünün Doğulu taşralıları, bugünün ressamı. *Birikim*, (270), 87-92.
- Gökçe, Ö. (ed.) (2007). *Turkish Cinema Now*. *Altyazı*, İstanbul.
- Gunter, M. (2013). Reopening Turkey's closed Kurdish opening?. *Middle East Policy*, xx(2), 88-98.
- Haner, M., Cullen, F. T., & Benson, M. L. (2020). Women and the PKK: Ideology, gender, and terrorism. *International Criminal Justice Review*, 30(3), 279-301.

- Hanks, W. F. (2005). Pierre Bourdieu and the practices of language. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, (34), 67-83.
- Kaya, E. (2015). Barış hayaliyle dağlarda. *Altyazı*, (150), 36-38.
- Keyman, E. F. (2012). Rethinking the 'Kurdish question' in Turkey: Modernity, Citizenship and democracy. *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 38(4-5), 467-476.
- Koçer, S. (2014). Kurdish cinema as transnational discourse genre: Cinematic visibility, cultural resilience and political agency. *International Journal Middle East Studies*, (46), 473-488.
- Köse, T. (2015). Identity dynamics of the june and november 2015 elections of Turkey: Kurds, Alevis and conservative nationalists. *Insight Turkey*, 17(4), 105-124.
- Leeuw, S. D. (2007). Dutch documentary film as a site of memory: Changing perspectives in the 1990s. *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 10(1), 75-87.
- Moore, N. (2013). Censorship is. *Australian Humanities Review*, 54(1), 45-65.
- Suner, A. (2004). Horror of a different kind: Dissonant voices of the new Turkish cinema. *Screen*, 45(4), 395-323.
- Tezcür, G. M. (2013). Prospects for resolution of the Kurdish question: A realist perspective. *Insight Turkey*, 15(2), 69-84.
- Ozcelik, S. (2006). Theories, practices, and research in conflict resolution and low-intensity conflicts: The Kurdish conflict in Turkey. *The Journal of Conflict Studies*, Winter, 133-153.
- Öniş, Z. (2016). Turkey's two elections: The AKP comes back. *Journal of Democracy*, 27(2), 141-154.
- Öniş, Z. (2013). Sharing power: Turkey's democratization challenge in the age of the AKP hegemony. *Insight Turkey*, 15(2), 103-122.
- Post, R. C. (1998). Censorship and silencing. *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 51(5), 32-35.
- Yeğen, M. (1999). The Kurdish question in Turkish state discourse. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 34(4), 555-568.
- Yılmazok, L. (2010). Turkish films co-produced within Europe: The Story after twenty years' experience in Eurimages. *Sinecine*, 1(2), 87-108.
- Zeydanlıoğlu, W. (2012). Turkey's Kurdish language policy. *De Gruyter Mouton*, (217), 99-125.

The Online Sources

- 5 No'lu Cezaevi (n.d. March 7). *Kameraarkası*. Retrieved from <http://www.kameraarkasi.org/yonetmenler/belgeseller/5nolucezaevi.html>
- 2000'lerde sansür dosyası: Tanıklıklar (2014, November 6). *Altyazı*. Retrieved from <https://altyazi.net/soylesiler/2000lerde-sansur-dosyasi-tanikliklar/>
- Bakur belgeseline bakanlık sansürü geldi (2015, April 13). *Cumhuriyet*. Retrieved from <http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/haber/bakur-belgeseline-bakanlik-sansuru-geldi-252941>
- Bakur filminin yönetmenlerinden Ertuğrul Mavioglu: Susarsak karanlığa gömülürüz (2019, July 22). *Evrensel*. Retrieved from <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/383468/bakur-filminin-yonetmenlerinden-ertugrul-mavioglu-susarsak-karanliga-gomuluruz>
- Bakur'a sansürde sinemacı dayanışması: Festivaldeki 3 yarışma ve kapanış töreni iptal edildi (2015, April 13). *Agos*. Retrieved from <http://www.agos.com.tr/tr/yazi/11262/bakur-a-sansurde-sinemaci-dayanismasi-festivaldeki-3-yarisma-ve-kapanis-toreni-iptal>

- Bakur’a sansüre tepki: 22 film festivalden çekildi (2015, April 12). *Evrensel*. Retrieved from <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/110223/bakura-sansure-tepki-22-film-festivalden-cekildi>
- Başbakan Erdoğan’dan Dersim özrü (2011, November 23). *BBC*. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2011/11/111123_dersim
- Başer, K. (2015, March 21). Öcalan’ın 21 Mart mesajı ne anlama geliyor? *BBC*. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2015/03/150321_ocalan_mesaj_kumru_baser
- Başığit, V. (2016). *Türkiye’deki film festivalleri ve sanatta ifade özgürlüğü*. Siyah Bant. Retrieved from http://www.siyahbant.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/SiyahBant_Rapor_Film-Festivalleri_2016.pdf
- Bozgan, E., Tümer, Ö., & Kara S. (2010, March 7). *İki tutam saç – Dersim’in Kayıp Kızları üzerine Nezahat Gündoğan ile söyleşi*. Retrieved from <http://www.bukak.boun.edu.tr/?p=287>
- Çözüm sürecini bitiren Ceylanpınar davasında karar: Tüm sanıklar beraat etti (2018, March, 1). *Diken*. Retrieved from <http://www.diken.com.tr/cozum-surecini-bitiren-ceylanpinar-davasinda-karar-tum-saniklar-beraat-etti/>
- Devlet teröristin ayağına götürülmüştür (2010, February 25). *Milliyet*. Retrieved from <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/siyaset/devlet-teroristin-ayagina-goturulmustur-1203969>
- Erdoğan: ‘Dolmabahçe mutabakatı’ ifadesini cımbızlarım (2015, July 17). *BBC*. Retrieved from https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2015/07/150717_erdogan_hdp
- Faili Meçhul Değil: “Faîlî Dewlet” (2012, September 20). *Hakikatadalethafıza*. Retrieved from <https://hakikatadalethafiza.org/faili-mechul-degil-faili-dewlet/>
- Foça, M. A. (2011, August 4). “Berivan” belgeseli Cannes’da: Bakanlık önce tanıttı, sonra red etti. *Bianet*. Retrieved from <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/sanat/131939-bakanlik-once-tanitti-sonra-red-etti>
- ‘Fotoğraf’ Polonya’da sansür yedi! (2010, July 1). *Beyazperde*. Retrieve from <http://www.beyazperde.com/haberler/filmler/haberler-15428/>
- Günel, A. (2012). *Yasaklanan “Bêrîvan” filminin yönetmeni Aydın Orak ile söyleşi*. Siyah Bant. Retrieved from http://www.siyahbant.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/siyahbant_kitap_final_web.pdf
- Gökçe, Ö. (2015, March 15). Sansüre karşı 12 nisan dayanışması. *Altıyazı*. Retrieved from <https://altyazi.net/altyazi/sansure-karsi-12-nisan-dayanismasi/>
- Kaya Ö. & Ögünç P. (2020). *Chess, hide-and-seek and determination: Civil society in difficult times*. Anadolu Kültür. Retrieved from <https://www.anadolukultur.org/EN/36-our-publications/989-chess-hide-and-seek-and-determination-civil-society-in-difficult-times/>
- Kazım Öz: Sinemada doğal hale gelmiş dolaylı bir sansür var (2015, November 13). *Sendika.org*. Retrieved from <https://sendika63.org/2015/11/kazim-oz-sinemada-dogal-hale-gelmis-dolayli-bir-sansur-var-308761/>
- Kocaaslan, N. B. (2015, March 21). Öcalan’ın işaret ettiği ‘hakikat komisyonu’: Toplumda geçmişle yüzleşmenin yapıtaşı. *Diken*. Retrieved from <http://www.diken.com.tr/ocalanin-isaret-ettileri-hakikat-komisyonu-toplumda-gecmisle-yuzlesmenin-yapitasi/>
- Kurban, D. (2013a). *Not a Roadmap for Peace*. German Institute for International and Security Affairs, SWP Comments. Retrieved from <https://www.swp-berlin.org/en/publication/turkey-democratisation-package-no-roadmap-for-peace/>
- Kurban, D. (2013b). *To Europe and back: The three decades of Kurdish struggle in Turkey*. Global Europe Series, Policy Brief. Retrieved from http://iaitestnew.asw.bz/sites/default/files/GTE_PB_07.pdf

- Kürt siyasetçiler yargı kışkırtıcılığı (2010, March 24). *Evrensel*. Retrieved from <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/190275/kurt-siyasetciler-yargi-kiskacinda>
- Mavioğlu, E. (2015, April 15). Bakur'un hikâyesi: Dağlarda nasıl çekildi, nasıl sansüre uğradı?. *T24*. Retrieved from <https://t24.com.tr/yazarlar/hasan-cemal/bakurun-hikayesi-daglarda-nasil-cekildi-nasil-sansure-ugradi,11688>
- OHCHR (2017). *Report on the human rights situation in South-East Turkey: July 2015 to december 2016*. Retrieved from https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/OHCHR_South-East_TurkeyReport_10March2017.pdf
- Oğuz, A. & Atılğan, Y. (2020, February 26). *Çayan Demirel'in dostları anlatıyor: Küçük adımlar ve gerçeğin şiddeti*. Retrieved from <https://www.birartibir.org/kultur-sanat/600-kucuk-adimlar-ve-gercegin-siddeti>
- Reis Çelik'ten 'inat hikayeleri' (2004, January 31). *Evrensel*. Retrieved from <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/147605/reis-celik-ten-inat-hikayeleri>
- Sansüre karşı özgür sinema yürüyüşü: Bu daha fragman, film yeni başlıyor! (2015, April 18). *Evrensel*. Retrieved from <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/110647/sansure-karsi-ozgur-sinema-yuruyusu-bu-daha-fragman-film-yeni-basliyor>
- Siyah Bant (2013). *Kültür politikası alanındaki gelişmeler ve sanatsal ifade özgürlüğüne etkisi*. Retrieved from http://www.siyahbant.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/SiyahBant_Arastirma_Raporlari.pdf
- Sönmez, N. (2015, March 15). Belgesel korkusu: Documentaphobia. *Bianet*. Retrieved from <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/163813-belgesel-korkusu-documentaphobia>
- Şeyben, Ö. (2009, September 17). Min Dit'in Altın Portakal'da öğrettikleri. *Bianet*. Retrieved from <https://m.bianet.org/biamag/ifade-ozgurlugu/117689-min-dit-in-altin-portakal-da-ogrettikleri>
- Yeğen, M. (2015). *The Kurdish peace process in Turkey: Genesis, evolution and prospects*. Global Europe Series, Policy Brief. Retrieved from https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/191379/gte_wp_11.pdf