



LUND UNIVERSITY

Newroz

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an anthropology of
the rituals of belonging

Devran Sahin

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Supervisor: Tiago Duarte Dias
SANK03, Spring Semester
Department of Sociology,
Division of Social Anthropology
2024 – Lund University

Abstract

This thesis examines identity maintenance in the Kurdish diaspora, focusing on the ritual aspects of identity maintenance. While previous research has focused on processes of Kurdish diaspora formation and ethnic identity, this thesis will address existing discourses and consider the Newroz celebration as an important factor in the maintenance of Kurdish identity within the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden. Incorporating evidence from several ethnographic interviews and a participatory observation, the research argues that, firstly, due to political and historical struggles in the Kurdish homeland, resistance has become a central aspect of Kurdish identity formation. Secondly, as a site of ritual significance, Newroz contributes to the embodiment of Kurdish ethnicity by enabling performative acts and creating community.

Keywords: Social Anthropology, Newroz, Identity, Ethnicity, Diaspora, Rituals, Kurds

Dedicated to all who resist oppression and fight for a peaceful tomorrow.

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1. Introduction

The morning sun shines brightly through the clouds on the neatly lined up students in the schoolyard. Facing a bust of Atatürk and the Turkish flag soon they would proclaim how glad they should be, calling themselves Turks and proceed to sing the national anthem of Turkey. However, something is off. It is blatant that the students who had only just begun to learn Turkish were of Kurdish ethnicity. Brought up speaking Kurdish, observing Kurdish traditions, at the least what they could in the rapid assimilatory environment they were a part of. I can vividly recall these memories and only in retrospect have I fully realized the shaping impact it has had on me. My ethnic self-understanding has been shaped by my inability to access it.

The aim of this study has been in the making long before I had a clue about what anthropology is and how it would change my perspective of the world. I was born in Turkey into a Kurdish family and since day one of my being - the case of belonging, specifically belonging to a nation has manifested itself in different ways in life. As if it was not enough, moving to Sweden made a further contribution to the challenges of belonging. After all we humans are communal with a desire to belong somewhere. In this quest to belong, I have always been aware of my Kurdish identity, sometimes demonstrating pride, sometimes anger, and sometimes happiness.

My Kurdishness did not come without its difficulties. The episodic memories from my juvenile years are all composed of a Kurdish population who has been subjected to harassment of different sorts. The blurred recollections of wars, murder, imprisonment, and persecution have led to me having an increased interest in the Kurds. I therefore endeavor to see Kurdish life not as one of struggle and resistance, although this is inevitable, as will be explored in this study but also portray a perspective on Kurds as a thriving population. Living despite all that is happening and has happened to them. In this venture, I have seen the Kurdish diaspora and being a member of it myself, engage itself in complex experiments of multifaceted belonging. The questions that arise from these situations are many. Why bother trying to belong? Why bother to maintain an identity? - Why not?

The research question took many weeks to finalize and it has made me reflect. What does the research mean to me? My thoughts culminated unsurprisingly in the conception of belonging and that I will identify myself as Kurdish, that the Kurds will continue to exist through the coming generations, all perceived in the hardships that the Kurds have to undertake just to be

able to identify themselves as Kurds without repercussions. It is in this political reality that this particular thesis is produced. Not only to be a contribution to academia but also to the Kurdish people. We can, we are, and we will be. To be able to amplify unheard voices, voices of a people trapped in minority position which is particularly important in anthropology. I don't want to write a story but tell the stories and learn from it, expand our knowledge on it. This research moves in a personal realm and is finalized in a conjunction of anthropology and migration studies. Therefore, my interest in, to put it egotistically, in myself and my ethnicity has paved a path toward the purpose and research questions that I will present in this paper.

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to elevate the understanding of diaspora identities and ethnicity maintenance. Particularly, understanding the process of ethnic identification of the Kurdish migrant population in Sweden. The focus is shifted towards the cultural celebration of Newroz aiming to identify the acts of maintenance relating to ethnic identity. Doing so, this thesis is aspiring at improving the understanding of the Kurdish diaspora and contribute to the discourse on ethnic identification. The main research question of this bachelor thesis is:

- *How does participation in the Newroz celebration impact the maintenance and creation of a Kurdish identity among the Kurdish diaspora in Sweden?*

2. Who are the Kurds? – a short academic overview

In order to contextualize the research questions further and guide the reader through the academic entanglement of ethnicities and the Kurds it is crucial to firstly understand who the Kurds are and secondly gain an understanding of ethnicity as a field of research. I will in this chapter briefly write about Kurdish history generally and then specifically about Kurds in Sweden to finally present ethnicity and rituals as a concept.

A Brief History of the Kurds

The Kurds are an ethno-linguistic or cultural group residing in the Middle East with a population estimate of 30 million people divided into the countries of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria (Park 2016: 313)¹. The Kurds are known as the largest ethnic group without a nation-state. The Kurds are still a heterogeneous group with a significant linguistic variation between its members. The two main spoken dialects are Kurmanji and Sorani (ibid.: 314), both non-conforming to the present nation-state borders of the Kurdish inhabited areas. Although the Kurds are large at number their history has typically been neglected, suppressed and marginalized as a nation without a nation-state (Klein 2019), despite the long but undocumented presence in the Middle East and the Zagros mountains. The ancestors of the Kurds have been residing in Kurdistan since 2nd millennium BCE consisting of a compound of Indo-European and other indigenous tribes with settlements at the periphery of a troublesome ancient region (McDowall 2021: 9f.).

After the Muslim conquest of the region, Kurds became a more prominent player in the area - mainly as dissidents, obeying a central government but with a preference for independence and liberty (McDowall 2021: 23). During this period Kurds had relatively free polities, ruling themselves in principalities within the Ottoman empire (ibid.: 31). After the dissolution of the Empire, the creation of a Kurdish state, Kurdistan, was never realized partly because of the imperial-colonial political structure of the region and partly because of the lack of a defined national identity among the Kurdish population (Park 2016: 313). Later, similar to the prevalent nationalistic ideologies of the 19th century, the Kurds developed an ethnic self-awareness in

¹ Note that a definitive number is difficult to conceive due to the fragmented disposition of the Kurdish homeland and the limited statistical information (see Park 2016).

which they increasingly perceived themselves as Kurds in relation to the Ottoman Turks and Armenians and sought self-determination (Klein 2019).

Kurds have to this day not gained significant sovereignty. Thus, the life of the Kurds has been a politicized life amounting of struggle and fight. In the national epic of *Mem û Zîn*², Ehmede Khani writes during his active years of the 17th century:

I leave it to God's wisdom

The Kurds in this world's state

Why are they deprived of their rights?

Why are they all doomed? (translation by Nezan 1996:10)

In the time of the empires Kurds experienced an autonomy in the border regions. But this quickly changed at the turn of the 20th century with the world war and altered political dynamics in the region. The treaties signed post-war divided Kurdistan firstly into European rule, secondly to the current nation-states of Turkey, Iraq, Iran and Syria. Today two regions have gained-partial Kurdish sovereignty. Kurdistan region in Iraq, made a reality after the wars of Saddam and finally constitutionally recognized 2005 uniting the PUK and KDP³ administered regions and the Rojava administration in Syria created after the IS invasion. Kurds in Turkey and Iran have no self-governing bodies and is to this day subject to discrimination although political parties representing the Kurds exists and provide representation (Mcdowall 2024).

As Kurdish people have been reduced to political subjects they have been in search of places where their politics and human rights could be respected. It is in relation to the transnational dynamics of the Kurds as a group that inquiries of identity become interesting. How homogenous can such a heterogenous diaspora convey imaginaries of identity and what can we learn from it?

² Mem and Zîn are the equivalent of Romeo and Juliet, two unfortunate lovers who are prevented from marrying each other. Ultimately resulting in death. The tradition is both orally and literally composed, especially popular in northern Kurdistan (Leezenberg 2022).

³ Political Parties in Kurdistan region. KDP (Kurdistan Democratic Party) and PUK (Patriotic Union of Kurdistan).

A Brief History of the Kurds in Sweden

Much of the research conducted on Kurds in Sweden is produced in the fields of migration studies, political science, and sociology. All of these are adjacent to anthropology and from a holistic perspective, important contributors to the general understanding of Kurds as a group. Migration, although not directly responding to the question of this paper, is related to identification through contextualizing the existence of the Kurdish population in Sweden. Understanding the history of Kurds in Sweden partially underlines the prominence of the identification processes as generational and gradual.

The Kurds in Sweden are a transnational group consisting of Kurds from different cultural and political backgrounds from all over Kurdistan. The migration towards the west and Sweden happened successively over decades (Alinia & Eliassi 2014). Starting in the 1960s an insurgence of the Kurdish population in Europe began to take shape with the guest worker migration to post-war societies. Commencing as an unassuming group without a sense of national sentiment the Kurdish diaspora gained political and national awareness and became increasingly organized with the extensive migration from exiled intellectuals and political individuals (van Bruinessen 1999, 2000: 6)

Transnationalism and diaspora are both terms extensively used for immigrant communities. In this thesis I do not make large descriptions nor any particular use of the terms for research purposes as it is not a point of interest. Thus, I have chosen to use diaspora, which I deemed to describe the Kurdish migrants in Sweden to a better extent. Diaspora is to be understood as an ethnic and cultural community residing outside and yet having an identifiable attachment to the homeland (Khayati & Dahlstedt 2013: 84). The Kurdish diaspora has a population numbering between 60,000 and 70,000 spread all over Sweden and functions well as a smaller version of Kurdistan (Khayati & Dahlstedt 2014: 59). This sizable community has engaged drastically with both the former home and the new home.

In their new home of Sweden, the Kurdish diaspora has made many important contributions to the upholding and expansion of Kurdish culture and identity through media production such as the publication of books, journals, radio and television. The diaspora organization of the Kurds in Sweden and Europe at large has strengthened Kurdish culture which has been repressed in their countries of origin. It can be said that the Kurdish Kurmanji literature has experienced a

renaissance abroad (van Bruinessen 2000: 23; Khayati & Dahlstedt 2014: 59). Sweden and its diaspora being one of the major contributors to the publicity produced abroad the Kurdish culture in Kurdistan has and is flourishing. As an example, the football club Dalkurd is to be mentioned. Dalkurd started in the small Swedish town of Borlänge by Kurdish immigrants. Gradually rising in the leagues, Dalkurd intricately plays a game of Swedishness and Kurdishness by profiling itself as Kurdish, while playing within a Swedish structure. Dalkurd similarly plays with symbols incorporating the traditional and regional Dala-horse with Kurdish colors and having an ethnic direction, the club is not local but Kurdish (Dias 2023a; 2023b).

Many other organizations exist. In Sweden the Kurdish immigrant associations that opened made engagement in both the origin and host society easier. These associations were a part of the larger ideological environment of Sweden at the time with prominent social and popular movements which could be considered tools of integration in a milieu of political freedom and democratic values (Khayati & Dahlstedt 2014: 59). Thus, Kurdish migrants could in the relatively liberal integration laws of Sweden develop and expand their Kurdish identity as well as become a part of the Swedish society.

As the Kurdish history in Sweden has been long, so have the issues. Barzoo Eliassi discusses the efforts of belonging to a society, as young Kurdish citizens in the diaspora, through a postcolonial theoretical perspective. Eliassi conceptualizes the Kurds as a people trapped in between dominant power structures of the West and Middle East. The inferiorized position of the Kurds in their locality in the Middle East and Europe has greatly impacted their understanding of themselves. As a racialized group the exclusion and marginalization create senses of belonging in the forms of different subjects, such as an immigrant, a minority, a Muslim and a stateless person. As is concluded in the book, a belonging through naturalization, a citizenship is not enough for ethnic belonging because Swedish ethnicity holds certain aspects the young Kurds lack or are imagined to be devoid of. Therefore, belonging is being constructed on an everyday basis. The culturally stigmatized position of middle eastern youth in Sweden and the West showcases an asymmetric eligibility for social positions and elucidates the social, economic and political inequalities that are experienced (Eliassi 2013: 39, 176) and in this domain the practices of belonging are applied to maintain identities through methods of modification, ignorance and making of differences (Eliassi 2013). Eliassi shows in his book that not only the origins but also the host society is responsible for the creation and maintenance of identities.

Ethnic discrimination appears to often mark the distinction between migrants and the majority population. As to why Kurds in Sweden maintain both their migrant status and Kurdish ethnicity is because the experience as migrants have significant applications in everyday life - in school, at work and in the housing market. Experiences of discrimination propels a need for identity, that is not aligned with the majority. Simultaneous the democratic culture in the society is enjoyed. Therefore, Kurdish migrants maintain a Swedish identity, as citizens, but also perceive themselves to not be real swedes (Eliassi 2015).

In the diaspora where proximity to communication technologies is close and political oppression is distant, a new language of identification can form. Eliassi further explains the effectiveness of Kurdish youth in Sweden in shaping new ideas and adhering to new ways of identification as Kurds. He highlights the importance of understanding of territorial attachment and how youth abroad organize through the internet to impose the new terminology of Kurdistan in the imagination of the Kurds and impact the nation-state maps (Eliassi 2015). The homeland and its imaginaries are in the diaspora both enabled and compelled to a symbiotic relationship between the multiple identities (ibid.). Not only is the subjective identification important but also the idea of a certain locus, a traceable homeland for the maintenance of identity.

Distinctions in identification processes can also be made of generational aspects. The long Kurdish history of dispersion and diaspora organization has generated different narratives of belonging and notions of homeland. While diaspora life is more central to identity formation among the younger generations - the older generation which has concrete bonds to the homeland shapes identities in correlation to the origin society. The younger generation, which faces otherness and discrimination in daily social life, also has an essentialized notion of Kurdish identity. An identity that is more flexible and ambivalent than that of older generations (Alinia & Eliassi 2014).

This study does not take into account the macro perspectives of identity and belonging with an unavoidable discourse of nationalism. Instead, it centralizes the findings on a micro perspective. On the personal level of perceiving the self. Thus, the thesis is limited in its scope and will not present generalized outcomes on diasporan Kurdish identity in Sweden but a glimpse of the bigger picture. An initial account of further exploration.

Theoretical Framework

Ethnic identity is highly variable and therefore exists a plethora of definitions in academic use. One of the benefits of the social anthropological perspective on ethnicity is the understanding of social life as an everyday phenomenon through interactions with the people one is trying to understand (Eriksen 2002:1). This firsthand perspective creates intimate imageries of life with a certain amount of authenticity. The analytical framework that this study will apply to theorize its findings will have its focus on the dynamics of ethnic identity as an active response to the surrounding world and its primary focal point on the aspects of *us* and *them* as a form of ethnic classification and how it functions as an enabler of identification.

Ethnicities are social categorizations that are constantly produced on the grand scale of social organization. The cultural aspect of an ethnicity lies not in the expression of it but beyond it. It is the interactions, the history, and the prevalent dynamics within a given society that maintain the boundaries of ethnic division. Thus, ethnicities are not a material of primordial cognition but products of social situations (Barth 2000: 12). Identities in this study are viewed from a micro perspective. It is primarily the experiences and processes of identity formation that are examined. What I am concerned about is how the rugged terrain of interpersonal and personal interactions is navigated in this complex net of relations, values, and ideas. This level contextualizes the boundaries of the ethnic experiences that are affected by macro levels of politics (ibid.: 21).

Ethnicity is standalone, not enough to outlast. It is best understood in conjunction with inter-group relations. In such a case, ethnic identity requires a counterpart that has a function as the creator of the difference. This counter group (*them*) amplifies the selfhood in *us* which shapes a demarcated identity (Eriksen 2002: 21f.). Similarly, stereotyping, the act of ascribing a group with particular characteristics is also meant to advise differences that are understood to be the cause of ethnic specifications (ibid.: 23-25). Further, stereotypes form at a median level of interaction. Collectivities take form through processes of group activities. On this level, people can express and partake in the reproduction of ethnic identity by imposing the typical boundaries and dichotomies of the collectivity (Barth 2000: 21). I see the Newroz celebration as an activity on the median level that creates the emblematic imagery of Kurdish identity and attains certain aspects of identity enforcement on its celebrators.

In this thesis, difference is perceived as the main construct on which identity is created. Although the differences make an essential part of identity it is the interplay or interdependence of similarity and difference that forms identities because “[d]ifference on its own is simply not enough to establish ‘who’s who’.” (Jenkins 2014: 23). In the context of the Kurds the perception of similarities and differences have constructions both within the selfhood in the heterogeneous group and the others, the group identifies against. Maintaining this ethnic boundary produces and reproduces differences creating an internal similarity, an image of shared culture (Jenkins 2008: 13).

I argue there should be some degree of resistance in order to persist in identity. As Eriksen and Jenkins argue, the need for difference and similarity are important contributors to identity. For the stateless ethnicities with a strong national sense, a certain understanding of resistance should be available to assert the “us” in the community. Therefore, although stereotyping and differencing create a sense of belonging it is through the lens of *us as a resisting body*, I will try to understand the opposition to *them*, the outsider and external identities.

To expand our understanding of subjective belonging my interest is shaped by the site of ritual. Instead of solely interpreting the ritualistic surroundings of Newroz, I endeavor to approach the ritualistic value of Newroz as a site of identification practices. I primarily contemplate my understanding of it in the embodiment practices available at the Newroz locale. Therefore, my theoretical approach is more considered of Newroz as a site than Newroz as a ritual.

Rituals are not only extraordinary occasions but a part of everyday phenomena. Drinking your morning coffee or participating in Newroz can equally be understood as ritualistic making. In my definition of ritual, I see it as an activity with both instrumental and expressive aspects. Meaning, that rituals are both distinctive with a set of activities bound for it, in a routinized and symbolic play and express pragmatic attitudes (Bell 1992: 70) as is such in the identity production. With rituals you become a performer. Performing yourself and the ritual simultaneously. Distinctiveness within ritual properties is not constructed through communication and symbolic value forging but simply because it “*does things*” (Bell 1992: 111; italics in original). I will therefore argue that one of the things rituals produce, maintain, or do is ethnic identity.

Liminality is a term coined by Arnold van Gennep, in his *Rites de Passage* (1909). With Victor Turners contribution it has been an important theoretical concept in understanding rituals. Liminality is a phasal hypothesis of three distinct parts. Firstly, one is separated from a place or a social hierarchy. Secondly, disrupted, one moves to a liminal phase from Latin limen, for threshold. Characterized by an in-betweenness, this stage neither represents the before nor the after. Thirdly, one is after the passage, aggregated or incorporated into the new stabilized social dynamic, with a newly attained position (Turner 1995: 94f.).

Humans are social beings who shape their identities through performance. We are influenced by the performances of others and construct our own performances based on the options available to us. Performative acts shape us, and our own acts shape our social realities. Even when we resist societal expectations, we still draw upon existing scripts. Repeated enactments of these scripts lead to culturally specific embodied dispositions. Performance allows individuals to explore and express their identities to others in a meaningful way (Miller & Syring 2023: 7). This study applies Goffman's descriptions of performances to understand the stage of Newroz. Briefly, a performance is an act, as if played on a stage, performing an identity to an audience. Meaning is created by communicating certain information to others and thus confirming one's own identity, as such one can be "convinced that the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality." (Goffman 1990: 28).

This basic account provides a simple overview and a more detailed description of theories and other academic perspectives will be presented in Chapter 4. continuously alongside the empirical material to give the study an academic depth.

3. Working the Field

Me, myself and I

Before I venture out to describe my methodological considerations I have to clarify and outline my place within this study as I have become a subject of information myself. It is well important to establish my function in the analytical toolbox aimed to examine the data.

Within the field of anthropology, the task of a researcher can appear daunting. Somehow, they ought to embody both the objective outsider and gain sufficient understanding of the emic perspective of an insider. My study of Kurdish culture and me, being Kurdish myself, I would suggest, does not make the inquiry harder but actually, provides a perspective that might have gone unnoticed otherwise. As Rosaldo clarifies; “Through “interpretation,” cultural meanings are transformed. And through “embodiment,” collective symbols acquire the power, tension, relevance, and sense emerging from individuated histories.” (Rosaldo 1984: 141). As an insider, which I shall further elaborate on, I embody a distinct Kurdishness and although familiar with the culture in itself, I interpret it through a new set of eyes, made available by the methodological approach. Thus, the discussion moves from being one of Kurdish culture as assumed, to an amalgamation of thought and senses in co-creation with my interlocutors.

The mental processes are as much a product of the culture as the senses formed by it. Therefore, the dichotomy although understandable, at least in a Western context is not to be rendered necessarily as a universal approach. I have in this study enabled myself to intertwine my selfhood and person with my ethnic experience. I have let them, delicately put, confer with each other. Accordingly, the ethnocentric view I encapsulate, essentially accentuates my comprehension of the informants. Therefore, some of the misunderstandings that may appear are removed from the start (Rosaldo 1984). Subsequently, this becomes a tool to verify the authenticity of the information. Although the information the informants share is personal and variable, they convey similar ideas and attitudes which the study will endeavor to elaborate on. I do not make any claim on impartiality with regard to my place in this study. One can certainly philosophize extensively on being a native anthropologist. I would argue, although I have a general grasp on my native-ness in this context. I cannot certainly propose that I, in the heterogeneous Kurdish culture, can pose as an omniscient researcher. The native point of view is as hard to grasp even if you are one. Therefore, being in the position of both an insider and

outsider simultaneously (Narayan 1993: 676-678) I have concluded, is a strength in the aim of this study. After all, the role of an anthropologist is to examine the actual conditions of life with simple tools. Engaging in spatial and bodily activities to describe the complexities of life that cannot be reduced to abstractions (McGranahan 2018: 4f.).

The beginnings of this study were demanding. I naively thought being Kurdish myself would make things easier for me, but the opposite has been true. My genuine interest in my own culture and what I can describe as a lack of comprehensive understanding of it, together with the establishment of the field made at times for hopelessness and at times encouragement. As I have noted in my field notes: “...*all I do is to feel hopeless, aimless and overwhelmed with the task at hand.*”. These are feelings intermittent with any type of fieldwork and as an immature anthropologist, trying to understand the workings of good ethnography has carved humble senses into the rough shape of this paper.

Enclosing the Field

Although there was a general thought process behind the research it was only after the journey through the field was taken, the questions and the aim reached clarity. The diffuse approach rendered flexibility and made it possible for me to understand the field and explore it in order to ask the correct question that would be fruitful for the research conducted. This eased the process of analysis of the empirical material as it matured during the gathering of the data.

The major single problem I encountered during the process was finding people who would have an interest in being interviewed. I started as the times would suggest making an appearance in the online world. This proved to be much more difficult than my imagination would let. The initial post I made on the Facebook page “Kurder i Sverige - kurds in Sweden”, with over three thousand members, did not reward any participants. A change in plan was necessary and I therefore, looked closer and tried to find people through acquaintances and friends. This method was more beneficial as it resulted in some informants.

This type of flexibility can both make or break the conceptual phase. I had initially anticipated organizing a group of people that would function as a representation of the heterogeneous Kurdish diaspora in Sweden. Although I wished for a more varied sample to represent the Kurds, the difficulties regarding the demarcations of the field challenged the continuation of

the research. As variation was not possible in this study, the only criteria, and arguably the most important one was the identification as a Kurd. Therefore, although my informants are of different gender, age and background they are similarly Kurdish. In this aspect, our common denomination of ethnic background leveled out the possible unequal power structures and brought the experiences into focus. In this aspect I have endeavored to accommodate my informants while planning the interviews, regarding time and place. While this was beneficial for my scheduling it has also provided my informants with a clear structure and period in which they can act, therefore creating a sense of self-determination and influence.

The research, therefore, often resulted in reflexivity. Being of Kurdish origin myself and more importantly, identifying myself as one has shifted the field of work to a field of sympathy as has been previously discussed. I was no longer in search of answers but also becoming an answer myself, together with my interlocutors and our sense of shared-ness in which we took parts of each other. The relatedness has also elevated the sincerity of the information as the lack of misunderstanding faded and the creation of acquaintanceship has been accelerated.

Furthermore, fieldwork is essential for anthropological research, but the distinction between home and field is complex. Field sites are carefully chosen to differentiate a home from the field, which is traditionally far from home and houses different cultures and peoples (Gupta & Ferguson 1996: 12-14). With that said my positionality within the field was never fully uncomplicated as the boundaries of the field, especially the cognitive field playing in the mind were solidified. Therefore, sometimes I could not entirely distinguish between when my experiences and my recent exposure to the field caused diversion or conversion. This problem was relented with the use of a field diary in which my thoughts could be translated into words on paper which I then could read and detangle.

See, listen and hear

I of course would wish to, in the footsteps of the greater names in anthropology, have made an extensive participation observation lasting weeks and months, alas it was not a possibility for me. At least when Newroz itself was a concern. As a spring and new year celebration on spring equinox (Khalid 2020) the annual event lasting a day, has the availability of observable instances highly reduced thus affecting the research. Although this would be a problem for an outsider anthropologist, I as an insider, as aforementioned have a preexisting knowledge of the

field and experiences which I can draw conclusions from. This is though not enough for a rigorous academic advancement. Therefore, looking beyond and expanding the field through interviewing is an essential part of data collection bringing the conclusion closer.

Interviewing within an ethnographic field is not a science. The application of this method is unstructured and often a bit loose with an underlying natural approach resembling the chaos of social life (Davies 2008). Prior to my engagement with the field, I made a vague and thematic interview guide that motivated the discussions I had with my informants. Two of the interviews were online. The shortcoming of online methodologies is, that certain aspects of human life or the humanness of the subjects are lacking in nuances because they are not tangible. Emotions, behavior, and acting are shielded by a screen and therefore have possibly valuable information unrevealed. Fortunately, my experience was positive, and the interviews conducted produced an image of identification that was feasible.

The Ethics

The covertness of the observation could impose possible ethical questioning. This ought to cause no problems as the occasion of Newroz is public and therefore open to observation by any passerby. Furthermore, the research question is not deemed to be of sensitive type, therefore enabling a covert participation in the event. The use of a interviews could also cause potential ethical ambiguity. All informants have been informed about the research and its purpose. Ensuring their participation is voluntary according to the guidelines of the academic discipline (Göransson 2019: 46-54). I have in order to reduce recognizability and avert the possibility of embedding my informants in a precarious situation, refrain from using any pseudonyms or characteristics that may determine the person. This is because of my familiarity with some of the subjects of the study.

Furthermore, the interviews were conducted in Swedish with some Kurdish and Turkish dispersed among. I have translated the extracted parts of the interviews into English. This could have been a major problem as translation is hard to master and capturing nuances is arduous. Posing difficulties to correctly reflect my informants. I am fluent in the above-mentioned languages and have therefore made translations that sufficiently express the interviews.

4. Ritualizing Identity

To understand how Newroz can impact the maintenance and creation of Kurdish identity one has to apprehend how the diaspora recognizes Kurdish identity habitually. Therefore, the first part of this chapter will present how identity is conceptualized while the second part will chiefly outline identity in relation to the Newroz celebration.

Identity as Resistance

The story begins on a cloudy spring day. I walk hastily with a calm manner and an agitated mind, thinking of the worst. Finally, I sit down on green sofa and shut my senses. Poking her head out my informant greets me and off we go - treading along the corridors of the university building trying to find a calm spot where we could sit. After the small walk, back and forth and opening every other door, we find a place. My informant sits in front of me in this rather shaded room almost as somber as part of our upcoming discussion. It never takes long before my questions on identity lead into a discussion of the mournful reality of the Kurds. My first interviewee presented me with the daunting reality of identification and the sadness and struggle it encapsulates. It would not be the last time I hear it and the reiterations would all elaborate themselves in the mouths of my informants.

All of my informants when presented with a question on how they would identify themselves would suggest that they do in fact identify as Kurds but also as Swedes. This dichotomy is not always easy to understand. Hybrid-identities prosper in the diaspora. Hybridity is a concept that explains how cultural authority is formed in situations of political antagonism or inequality. The strategy of hybridization challenges the dominant cultural norms by creating a space for negotiation where power is unequal but can be expressed ambiguously. This negotiation creates an agency that goes against binary representations of social conflict. Hybrid agencies use their unique cultural background to shape community visions and historical narratives that represent their minority positions. This process allows them to exist both inside and outside the social structure (Bhabha 2011). I suggest that for my informants their Swedishness is a necessary part of daily life. It is an identification which has a daily use as a part of the society. Therefore, my informants make a part of the *we* in Swedish society and not distinct Kurds. My interlocuter who came to Sweden at five years age describes her ethnic belonging as torn:

Ethnically, I would identify as a Kurd. I feel a sense of belonging, a closeness to my Swedish identity too [...] But I would identify myself as a Kurd. I have been brought up more in Kurdish culture. At home we speak Kurdish, listen to Kurdish music, and dress in Kurdish dresses. But I'm Swedish too. I'm torn. My identity is torn.

One of the informants, who has come to Sweden at an adult age reduces this explanation and feelings arising from it to a linguistic aspect. Suggesting that the feeling of Swedishness comes from speaking Swedish and having to do so in the Swedish society. Her feeling of being a part of “we the swedes” is that she can communicate with ethnic swedes as a Swedish speaker:

I am Kurdish. Swedish Kurd. At home I use Kurdish, teach my children Kurdish. The family speaks Kurdish. At home I feel Kurdish. Outside, I feel Swedish. They [the swedes] speak Swedish [...] It is important to me to be able to answer that I am Kurdish when I get the question “where are you from”.

Language is an important aspect of diaspora life as it is closely related to integration which may influence feelings of belonging. Language proficiency facilitates labor-market integration and it can in turn make feelings of belonging stronger as an active member of the host society. Despite this, de Rouen concludes in her research with Kurds in the USA that Kurdish identity is still strong and younger generations grow up with Kurdish culture and a sense of Kurdishness (de Rouen 2015). Having the same sentiments for future generations my interlocutor who is a mother, continues:

I'm not Turkish, I can speak Turkish too. I can't write or read Kurdish but I'm a Kurd. I don't want to change my language. I want my children to learn it. I have not been allowed to learn Kurdish. It has always been forbidden. ‘Speak Turkish, you must not speak Kurdish’ the teacher used to say.

Other informants revoked alternative descriptions. As has been illustrated by Eriksen (2002), stereotypes produce commonalities upon which ethnic categories can be sustained. Distinctiveness is upheld by the notions that are avidly produced by members of a group both for themselves and for others. Stereotypes can be grouped as positive or negative. Some stereotypes help the individual create order in a disorganized social reality. A such case is recognized by my informant who proposes that her Swedishness comes forth in public spaces:

I have this Swedish way of thinking. I don't like sitting next to someone on the bus [laugh]. I put my headphones on, and I am on my phone. By myself. I'm more used to thinking like this.

My interlocutor has therefore identified that Swedish culture is renowned for personal space and utilizes the stereotype to create a sense of belonging with Swedish society (Eriksen 2002: 25). But it is also this type of sensemaking that formulates differences with Kurdish culture. Differences are essential to create a sense of belonging (Barth 1969:12, 18). Understanding the boundaries of Swedishness and Kurdishness or the attributes of the concurrent identities marks the experiences of the said identities and helps to unravel the notions of selfhood. My interlocutors' laugh mid-sentence points to the stereotype being neither positive nor negative and therefore feels somewhat silly. Stereotypes are not meant to provide a moral understanding of the world, rather they provide definitions of inter-ethnic relations. Something you can take part in without giving much in return and through that, position yourself within the social life (Eriksen 2002: 25).

The avid tries of being Swedish can also or rather should be viewed in relation to the racial structures within the society. Racial stereotypes exist in the Swedish society and affect the Kurdish migrants as they are seen as a culturally distant group unaligned with Western social structures (Alinia & Eliassi 2014; Eliassi 2015). Contextually, structural inequality acts as a formative aspect of identity-creation. Kurdish people, especially the younger generation who are born and raised in Sweden, have a heightened awareness of their Kurdish background. Starting an ethnic experience in Sweden at a young age, which is often positive, then motivates exclusionary suffering in adult maturity (Eliassi 2015: 76). Although my interlocutor positions herself within a typical Swedish scenario in the bus, she mentions; "But I look the way I look, you know! Not Swedish.". Thus, pointing to an awareness of being different while not acting differently from the stereotypical majority. Further in the discussion, she notes:

When I attended a class with a majority of Swedes, I felt the need to be more Swedish. It was peculiar to be Kurdish. And you don't want to be that. [...] I experienced a Swedishness that differs from what an ethnically Swedish person would do. Or so I believe. I have learned it, they [swedes] just do it.

"We" is most clearly expressed when Kurdish statelessness is mentioned. Hopelessness and feelings of community are captured in this context. Feelings of loneliness are subjugated when shared with others in the same position. Since I have partaken in the conversation with my interlocutors as a fellow from the same background as them, the reciprocity became a pity that could be distinguished among other feelings, and thus the unwilling concessive nod when they say: "We don't have a country". In essence, Kurdish culture is preserved in an attempt to demarcate us and them (Eriksen 2002). We Kurds against those who divide Kurdistan into pieces. It is important to note that Sweden does not constitute *them*. The primary them-subject in the Kurdish imagination is the countries of origin or the nation-states with oppressive politics towards the Kurds. When differentiation is composed, it is done to demonstrate Kurdish ethnic peculiarity to the Turkish, Arab, and Persian polities.

The heterogeneous composition of the Kurdish nation (Khayati & Dahlstedt 2014; Bruinessen 1999, 2000) is not a matter of differentiation within the Kurdish diaspora. The Kurdish ethnic identity is therefore not a conception of primordial exception. Therefore, the constructivist approach to identity is substantially more beneficial in the Kurdish case. The linguistic distance and the distance endorsed by the nation-state mapmaking of the last century do not endure in Kurdish identity-making because, despite the heterogeneity of the Kurdish community in terms of language, religion, and region, my informants experience an affinity with all Kurds and thus have a thought of homogeneity. Through this persistent way of thinking, a Kurdish identity is produced which has the function of being resistant to external influences on ethnic identity through assimilation campaigns that are imposed. When I asked my informants about their feelings regarding the heterogeneity of the Kurdish community, I received answers with a striking resemblance in the matter:

Yes. Absolutely. I do feel an affinity with the Kurds in Sweden. Mostly to those who come from where I come. Speaking the same dialect and expressions. [...] I feel mixed! I feel belonging to all Kurds [...] It's in the culture, the food, the language. [...] It's harder to define what is Kurdish. So, there is one Swedishness but plenty of Kurdishness. It's religion, language, country of origin, etc.

Yes. When you meet them [other Kurds], you get the feeling "you are also a Kurd". You sense community as long as you're Kurdish and one should not let go of it [Kurdish identity].

Yes. I feel an affinity with everyone, I do! [...] We seek to each other. We feel the same anger and sadness. I think this is precisely why I feel a sense of affinity with all the Kurds I have met in Sweden, which are many.

Ethnicity is conceptualized in two main perspectives. Primordial perspective sees it as a permanent part of human nature, durable and unchangeable. Whereas the other perspective that of constructivist, approaches it as something that can be shaped and changed depending on the situation and context, produced strategically to apprehend social ties (Jenkins 2008: 46). For state ideologies it has been important to prescribe a primordial origin. However, nations are as Benedict Anderson suggests imagined, being a product of modernity. Nations are limited, as boundaries mark the place in which it exists and those who populate it imagine an affinity with every member although they never meet each other and thus nations convey an idea of horizontal comradeship (Anderson 2006: 6-7). Therefore, ethnicities stream in fluidity (Jenkins 2008: 48). They are rather shapeless and fluctuant. I have, as outlined above, showcased that although with a prevalent heterogeneity an imaginary of ethnicity can be maintained as long as the subjective belonging is conceptualized as a unit. The Kurdish identity is for my informants not primordial but a primary identity, individually acquired through early socialization with strong emotional, psychological, and cognitive resonance constituting a selfhood making it resilient to change (ibid.: 49).

It can be argued that the Kurdish national sentiment does not lie in ethnic homogeneity but rather in similar experiences of oppression and discrimination which are consolidated in a common Kurdishness or ethnonym. It is not so much cultural and linguistic proximity but subjective identification as a Kurd, and the right to utilize it which determines the national struggle. Kurdish identity is special not concerning all other ethnicities around the world but concerning where Kurdishness makes sense and has implications. People's sense of who they are is closely tied to the historical and political struggle of being able to identify themselves as Kurds. I do not wish to suggest that identities, and in particular ethnic identities are solely based on differentiation. Identities in themselves are not rigid and stagnant, they are susceptible to change and evolving. They can change for both positive and negative reasons. Ethnicities are socially constructed and determined by social boundaries. Cultural features may guide behavior in some contexts but not others. What is more important, people may identify as an ethnicity and be loyal to said ethnicity regardless of differences with the other members (Barth 1969:

14f.). The malleable and changeable position of ethnic identity results in an attractable ethnic attitude. Thus, why young Kurds in Sweden engage in the maintenance of a Kurdish identity despite being born or raised in Sweden, such as four of my informants, is contemplated in the connotations the Kurdish identity has in the historical context it enfolds in.

As the short historical background, I have provided may clarify, the Kurds have in modern history never had the chance to fully be themselves in the established global structure. By juggling between a predominant Swedish identity and an additional Kurdish one, the Kurdish diaspora can maintain an ethnic identity which is in political jeopardy in the nation-state borders in which Kurdish identity exists. As aforementioned, Kurdish history with its bittersweet conception is a source of a selfhood in which the victimized position reproduces an identity of Kurdishness. There is an idealized victim position in the Kurdish diaspora. The victimized position with feelings of non-recognition, discrimination, and oppression makes up a portion of diasporan feelings towards the mythologized or the idealized homeland (Khayati & Dahlstedt 2013: 87). The diasporan Kurds form primarily their identity on the memories of past. The shaping agents are war, oppression, traumas, and genocides (ibid.: 105).

Kurdish life in the diaspora is therefore characterized by a tacit resistance to the nation-states from which they originate. It is clearly expressed from my informants that one maintains a Kurdishness as an attempt to preserve it for future generations. Ethnic identities are kept not because they are beneficial identifiers but because, as I suggest in the context of my research, are tools of identification that reveal personal information and historical belonging. Importantly a continuity from the past into the future; a solid fundament for identification in which coming generations can expand on. While in dialog with my informants, remarks on similar attitudes spurred. In Kurdish identity-making, one has to first acknowledge history and second the present. In doing so a pattern of resistance is revealed.

It was taboo to speak Kurdish when we vacationed there [in Turkey]. I have been influenced by it. I think it's unfair. [...] Because we do not have a free country. A definite place we can return to. It gives me the feeling of holding on to my Kurdish identity so that it does not disappear. I have to cling to it. [...] Pass on to my children.

A longing. [...] The identity I've inherited. That we have a country and we should not forget that. We shall strive to return to our country. [...] It's a struggle. It is a symbol. A symbol of all struggle around the world. It is a fight for human rights.

Struggle, resistance, and unfairness are emotive words used to describe the feeling toward the maintenance of an identity and function as an opposition to oppressive and exclusionary discourses through embodied or imaginative resistance. Hence, I conclude Kurds embark on identity processes through an embodiment of struggle and resistance. The Kurdish diaspora functions as a unit - expanding historical identity formation on current flows of transnational ties and geographically placing identity in the conflictual Middle East.

Newroz as a Locus of Identity

I had parked the car at a daycare near the park. As we were approaching the park grounds a muffled sound of Kurdish music was traveling with the wind up the small hill in the middle of the field. Soon an unusual sight appears. Kids and adults alike, holding Kurdish flags passing them around, and posing with them in front of the bonfire. At that moment I feel a sense of belonging - for the first time spectating an abundance of Kurdish elements. Here, in Beijers Park, a park in the eastern suburbs of Malmö the Swedish reality has been warped by the presence of Kurds. Dogwalkers and Swedish seniors on their afternoon walk, in what is a generally quiet neighborhood green, stumbled upon by the looks of it, a Kurdish nationalistic site, at least to judge from the abundant flags and the volume of the music. All this is momentarily and the few hours this will last will become a refuge.

Newroz is an ancient Iranic festivity celebrated annually at the Spring equinox as the beginning of the new year. Renowned in an area ranging from West to Central Asia the geographical and national amplitude of the celebration is vast. The two main celebrators of Newroz are the Kurds and Persians. Though similarities are prevalent the notions and perspectives surrounding the celebration differ (Khalid 2020; Khayati & Dahlstedt 2014). The differences are made more distinct by the political approach the Kurdish Newroz celebration has taken. The Kurdish Newroz dates back to the 7th century BC Median Empire. The myth paints a history of hope and optimism. Kawa, a blacksmith makes a legendary battle against the tyrant king Zahak.

Zahak who had two snakes on his shoulders fed them daily with two children⁴. This brutality ends when Kawa kills Zahak and frees the people. As a result, bonfires were lit on mountaintops to inform the public. Thus, arrived the spring and a new beginning. After the collapse of Zahak the Median Empire, an empire believed to be the ancestors of the Kurds emerged with Deioeces ascending to the throne (Khalid 2020).

Newroz has for the Kurds replaced its mythological grounds with a celebration of identity. The main focus has become to celebrate a Kurdish identity that is under attack. It might be suggested that for the Kurds, as a stateless nation, Newroz has become the bearing element of national identity and therefore is in a way a national day (Wahlbeck 1999: 159; Khalid 2020). This is seen at any Newroz celebration. The abundance of Kurdish flags, bodies embellished in Kurdish clothes, and dances forming a vibrant unity epitomize the national celebration. Although it may not seem like a national celebration at first glance - upon further investigation the mythological background would reveal itself to hold reason to be a festivity of national identity. The resistance of Kawa is present in today's Newroz.

My early memories of Newroz consist of uncertainty or better, the fear hanging in the fresh spring air. After all, the cheerful celebration for the arrival of the spring season and the new year could in the hands of the Turkish authorities turn into a nightmare of oppression. These connotations were challenged by the Newroz I attended in Malmö which despite the cold weather embraced a warmth. Although far from the Kurdish homeland, in any sense of the word, here in Malmö the celebrations were cheerful, and the gaze of the authorities seemed to be absent and oppression surrendered to expression. The police whom I saw at the park, calmly observed the celebration rather than interrupting. My idea of Newroz, which was extensively affected by media only comprehended police brutality. With everything Kurdish comes cruelty. But in Malmö, an expression of Kurdishness, through dance, language, and politics was the sole experience. The dichotomy of thought and sense had no clear definition on site. What I could perceive as fact was in further consideration also prevalent as sensing. Not only does Newroz provide belonging with its focus on the Kurdish struggle and identity but it also elaborates on feelings of communality and belonging.

⁴ According to the myth, Zahak, the tyrant king had to feed the two snakes growing from his shoulders with the brains of two children. Kawa the blacksmith, who had lost his children to this brutality, assembled the children and made an army. The evil of Zahak caused an eternal winter. Kawa revolts and kills Zahak with his hammer. To circulate the news fires were lit on mountains which brought the spring back (Murphy 2004).

Newroz is a demarcated site and within the borders of this site, certain performances exist. This is what I identify as ritualizing identity. Identity is in this confined realm not ordinary but a tool for the ritualistic conception of the celebration. Newroz makes with its spatial awareness an expression of identity otherwise unconventional. Because the ritual is inexplicit about its narratives it relents to performative acts (Bell 1992: 111). Performances of dance, clothing and speech do Newroz and Kurdishness. The theorization of resistance in identity maintenance I propose - related to the performative ritual aspects of Newroz makes the identities not so much about being resistant but doing resistance. Here, within the performances of resistance, the similes with a national day celebration become comprehensible.

Performances, as described by Goffman are any act performed for an audience (Goffman 1990:28-29). Two audiences are targeted at Newroz. One group, being present, are the Kurds. The Kurdish performers perform Kurdishness to impress fellow ethnic members. By doing so, the group is convinced “the impression of reality which he stages is the real reality” (Goffman 1990: 28). The other audience is mostly implicit. It is namely, the occupiers of Kurdistan. As has been suggested earlier the Kurdish identity making is highly concerned with the origin geography and therefore it is impactful even in diaspora. On my observation of the Newroz site, everything was orbiting around the sensibilities of identity. The opposition becomes explicit when the political struggle is put forward. Later in the day, the stage turns into a reading of a poem. This lengthy poem, written by the performer had identity as the main motive. The starkest part of this poem is recited in a dichotomy of us and them:

I am not a Turk; I am no Persian;
I am not Iraqi, nor am I Syrian.
I am a Kurd. (my translation).

This performance both in the literal and imaginative sense makes the identity a part of the ritual complex of Newroz and provokes a sense of belonging within the site. On stage, Kurdishness is opposed to the nations in the geography of Kurdistan. The dichotomy of us and them prevails and is understood by the clear subject of the poem. A unified Kurdish nation is proposed to a heterogeneous crowd of the Kurdish diaspora. Cheering for the same sentiment, just below the stage a gathering of Kurds from different backgrounds and dialects collected in a resisting voice. The resisting body, the group of celebrators form through this group activity, a collectivity (Barth 2000: 21). The collectivity consisting of Newroz attendees, partakes in turn,

in the reproduction or the maintenance of ethnic identity. The collectivity of the struggle is essential in upholding an identity because more than the personal identification - the collective struggle is the formative aspect in the making of a Kurd.

An informant whom I spoke to long after Newroz had an idea of the celebration which was shaped by oppression. Although she herself has not participated in a celebration for a long time reminisce Newroz as event of great importance for Kurds. “It is the biggest celebration we can keep”. She does so evoking ideas of performing Kurdishness. In her imagination Newroz functions as an evidential of Kurdistan and the Kurdish people. “We cannot forget, we won’t be forgotten”, she adds. The political dimension of the Kurdish Newroz is, alluding to the history, a sensitive subject of political subordination. How, what and when the Kurds could celebrate Newroz was and is closely tied to the superior polity and the decisions it makes. Therefore, the imposed prohibition on Newroz celebration has made the event to a display of resistance (Khalid 2020). A struggle of not forgetting nor being forgotten.

The music plays loud and the irregular lines of people dancing together makes the locus a dance floor. The dances, of which there are many variations is a traditional line dance. Holding hands, shoulder to shoulder with steps swinging forward and backward. Dancing is the main performance of identity within the demarcations of Newroz. When I attempted to enter the dance from the end of the line I was quickly endorsed and holding hands with strangers. What bonded us, besides our preference for dancing was our Kurdish identity. Rhythm, repetition and music are central to ritual making. The sensory experience and bodily engagement in rituals, and as with the case of Newroz with dancing being a central activity makes the ritual an embodied practice (Shore 2023). The bodily involvement in the dance – more than being fun is a performance of identity. As a knowledge in dances is expected, being able to dance, materializes or does Kurdish identity and makes you “one of us”. Thus, being able to dance communicates Kurdishness to fellow participators. The spatial and temporal proximity creates a sort of collective effervescence. As an altered state of intersubjectivity, the incited feelings unite people, creating a powerful sense of community through shared experiences and intense connection by momentarily departing from daily life (Tutenges 2023: 6). Bodies are for ritual spaces an immense tool that can be used in multiple ways. The body itself becomes a tool of resistance. The body represents both the personal and the collective imagination. “Ritual, by focusing on the making and remaking of the body, reproduces the sociopolitical context in which it takes place while also attempting to transform it.” (Bell 1992: 209).

In an amalgamation of ethnic and ritual theorization, the Newroz grounds make a *we ritual* because the celebration of Newroz is not only a celebration of a past rite in the present but an act of, similarly to the maintenance of Kurdish identity, showing resistance and using ritual values in the production of a national identity. That can also be seen in the shift Newroz has had in Kurdish culture as opposed to the Persian version of the celebration. Which despite the similarities is more of a cultural celebration and has an absence of nationalistic virtues (Khalid 2020). Thus, the notion of Newroz has shifted in the Kurdish mind and is observable through the active identity differentiation on site.

Newroz as a celebration is a place of becoming. I suggest the spatial boundary of Newroz maintains an ethnic identity through a liminal process. Liminality is a concept closely related to ritual theory. It is conceptualized as a process consisting of three phases: separation, liminality, and aggregation. During the separation phase, the object is detached from a position within the socio-cultural structure. The separation is noteworthy because it signifies a change from the ordinary - a state - the concept of a “stable or recurrent condition that is culturally recognized” (Turner 1995: 94). This leads to an intermediary liminal phase where the ritual participant experiences ambiguity and uncertainty. Finally, the subject, in a complete manner is integrated into a new stable context with clear norms, expectations, rights, and obligations in the new social structure. The participant evolves and is thus expected to behave accordingly (ibid.: 94-95).

I have preferred to interpret Newroz as a liminal state. The celebration, in this case a public one, constructs within the demarcated locus of the event - a threshold between the ordinary, that which has been the everyday and the extraordinary, that which will come. The Newroz site, unlike the arguments of heterogeneity that are made with Kurdish identity actually produces a homogeneity. In the liminal intermediate, the celebrators developed a unified social understanding while simultaneously developing a solidarity and parity (Turner 1995: 95f.). With the focus Newroz has on identity, all Kurds, comparably to what I experienced on the field, with Kurds of different backgrounds, an idea of a unified fragment is forged. Through dancing and seeing each other as a community within the defined space, the feeling of a unified diaspora and solidarity prevailed. It is the in-betweenness of Newroz, the liminal qualities of the site, together with the struggle for identity that creates a sense of community - which has a unique impact on the maintenance of Kurdish identity.

Turner argues that transitional beings, those who partake in a rite and is experiencing the liminal phase are powerless. They do not have any status, property or position outside the non-liminal (Turner 1967: 99f.). This argument is of course relevant, but the liminal quality of Newroz is not comparable to that of a rite of passage. On the contrary, at Newroz power is produced and disproportional power relations are put forward. "It is not illegal" my informant tells me about celebrating Newroz in Sweden. Therefore, Newroz demonstrates a place of power struggle in which Kurds have the power and decision-making abilities. The diasporan Newroz is unforgivingly Kurdish and therefore creates a sense of belonging facilitating solidarity and equality with those present at site. Actively creating a sense of community and ethnic identity.

My informant, whom I had with me during Newroz recalled the happenings of the day when we were moving away from the crowd into the nightshade of the trees and she told me what affected her that day. At the celebration, she had an unobstructed experience of being the ethnic self. She tells me with affection:

It was forbidden to celebrate Newroz. So, we never did. I remember when the young boys of the village would make bonfires when it was Newroz, but they would be afraid of the police. They would patrol that day. Here, it is not like that.

Her resistance is similar to all the other stories that I have heard. I listened attentively and let her know my feelings and experiences were similar. Continuing onwards, the gravel path came to an end. We gazed towards the flickering street lights on the other side of the trees, confirming to each other: "*I enjoyed today*"

5. Conclusion

I began my research in a personal space. Wondering about identification processes I defined a question aimed to answer not only process of ethnic identification but the importance of spatial demarcations and ritual identity making. Thus, I have formulated a purpose for the study that has been to showcase the processes of ethnic identification of the Kurdish migrant population in Sweden and provide the discourse with an anthropological perspective. To reach a conclusion, it has been essential to understand the ethnic self-understanding of Kurds in Sweden and to provide a further understanding by observing a site of ritual importance. Two important concluding remarks can be made.

Firstly, identity is actively made. Therefore, they are changeable and dynamic. The dynamism arises from a place of struggle and resistance. The historical context and the diasporan movement enable Kurdish identity to a population broader than the Kurdish-Swedish diaspora. The process of identification is elaborated through a tacit discourse of resistance. As the inability to access identity has been irrepressible in the origin states of Kurdish immigrants the unrestricted access to ethnic identification flourishes. It does so against the occupying forces in Kurdistan. Although the importance of resistance is concluded it is not to say that every Kurd is interested in the socio-political cause of the Kurds or its history. Therefore, although this study concludes a story of longing and becoming. The lack of universal application as suggested by the subjective narratives of ethnic identification I have presented should attest to a cautioned interpretation of the conclusion of this thesis. Resistance is a must but not exclusive.

Secondly, the interpretation of Newroz as a ritual site has concluded that demarcation of a space is closely connected and contributes to a maintenance and self-awareness of ethnic identity. The space facilitates ethnicity as it is in-between the Swedish and the Kurdish. It is between being and becoming. Newroz recreates and reanimates the performativity of identity. As a place of ethnic significance, the site turns into a stage and the participants' actors playing into the instrumental belonging. Prominently, ethnic identities are in need of ritual sites, to if not permanently at least temporarily create belonging by assisting liminality and acting as a communal space. Identity is although very subjective also a product of collective imagination. Gathering to celebrate a festivity makes ethnic identities to a question of collective mind. As in Newroz, creating an identity together, because we resist together.

It has to be reiterated that the study is restricted to the interviews and the one observation occasion. As such, this study, in the form of a bachelor thesis, is limited in its scope - further research may be of interest. The field of ritual studies is broad, and the definition of rituals is alike. Therefore, the study can expand into other social institutions and contexts, such as weddings - with an intrinsically ritualistic value. Similarly, symbols of ethnic and ritual value can be analyzed and interpreted. Thus, increase the ethnographic knowledge of the field and observe and experience Kurdish rituals and their correlation with identity-making.

Further, this study has not taken religious identity into account. As identities are layered, the significance of religious attachment and belief structures are important factors in need of identification - to further complicate and thus clarify the structures of individual identification. It is preferable to expand studies beyond some simple points for us to understand the reality of human life. I have extensively reiterated the heterogeneous structure of the Kurdish social organization which is a major inquisitive object of study. All layers contributing to a Kurdish self-understanding are relevant and important to analyze in depth which this study could not.

In conclusion, the Kurdish diaspora maintains and processes identity through elaborate social and personal mechanisms in which ritual sites makes the performer and the performer the ethnic identity. It is important for the Kurdish population in both the diaspora condition and stateless imagination to gain agency by performing an identity deemed as disparaged in the prevailing socio-political context. Therefore, Newroz will continue to be celebrated and consequently interesting for research.

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