

BORDER BUILDING AND BREAKING PRACTICES
ON THE TURKISH-SYRIAN BORDER



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BORDER BUILDING AND BREAKING PRACTICES
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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

Border Building and Breaking Practices on the Turkish-Syrian Border

This study aims to analyze border building and breaking practices at the Turkish-Syrian border in the context of the Mürşitpınar-Kobanê border region. After the first chapter of this study, which explains the border theory and terminology in detail, the second chapter deals with border building practices –chronologically boundary stones, barbed wire, landmines, watch towers, border gates, and the wall with its most recent form- carried out by the state from the early Republican era to this day. Besides, in this chapter, I have benefited from the Separation Wall in Palestine as one of the similar cases around the world. The last chapter focuses on border breaking practices of people of the border region as opposed to border building practices of the state. After an analysis of cross-border economic, cultural, and political relations maintained by people of the border region despite the border, the chapter introduces the smuggling and political resistance in detail as border breaking practices. My main argument based on the field research in and observations from the region is that border building practices of the Turkish State aim to cut the communication between the Kurds in the region (Turkey and Syria). I raise this argument by concentrating on the wall the Turkish State has started to build after the Syrian civil war.

ÖZET

Türkiye-Suriye Sınırındaki Sınır İnşa ve Bozma Pratikleri

Bu çalışma temelinde, Mürşitpınar-Kobanê sınır bölgesi özelinde Türkiye-Suriye sınır hattındaki sınır inşa ve bozma pratiklerini ele almayı amaçlar. Sınır teorisinin ve sınır terminolojisinin detaylı olarak anlatıldığı çalışmanın ilk bölümünden sonra, ikinci bölümde cumhuriyetin ilk yıllarından bugüne değin devlet eliyle yapılan sınır inşa pratikleri, sırasıyla sınır taşı, dikenli tel, mayın, gözetleme kuleleri, sınır kapıları ve en güncel hali ile duvar ele alınmıştır. Bu bölümde ayrıca dünyadaki benzer örneklerinden biri olarak Filistin'deki Ayırma Duvarı'ndan yararlanılmıştır. Son bölümde ise devletin sınır inşa pratiklerine karşı sınır insanların sınır bozma pratiklerine odaklanılmaktadır. Burada, sınır insanların sınıra rağmen sınırın öteki tarafıyla sürdürdükleri ekonomik, kültürel ve politik ilişkiler incelendikten sonra, sınır bozma faaliyetleri olarak kaçakçılık ve politik direniş detaylıca ele alınmıştır. Bölgedeki saha çalışmasından ve gözlemlerden yola çıkarak bu çalışmada öne sürdüğüm temel iddia ise, Türk devletinin sınır inşa pratiklerinin bölgedeki (Suriye ile Türkiye) Kürtler arasındaki iletişimi koparmayı amaçladığıdır. Bu iddia, Suriye iç savaşından sonra Türk devletinin sınıra örmeye başladığı duvar merkeze alınarak dile getirilmiştir.

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To my Father...

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

My first experience of borders and people of borders was after the Roboski massacre that occurred on the Turkish-Iraqi border and resulted in the killing of 34 civilians by the bombs dropped by the Turkish jets. Until that day, I had been one of perhaps millions who had not bothered to think about the borders and people who live on them in Turkey. Hence, my visit to Roboski (Uludere, Şırnak) after the massacre was my first experience regarding the issue of borders and people who live near them. The discrimination and even fatality of borders had first occurred to me that day. As opposed to what we were taught at the school for years, I had first discovered that time that borders were not only protective and consolidative but also separationist and exclusionary.

In the classical geopolitical analysis framework, borders are considered as strategic locations or defense lines that venture their dominance or sovereignty within a global state-centered system. (Pratt & Brown, 2000) And according to Nick Vaughan-Williams, borders are considered as "not natural, neutral nor static but historically contingent, politically charged, dynamic phenomena that first and foremost involve people and their everyday lives." (Williams, 2009, p. 1)

As seen from all these definitions and explanations, borders which are useful to consolidate the sovereignty of the modern nation-states; and which create strategic defense areas against external threats began to take its place in the middle of sociological and anthropological studies. They also can have a direct impact on people's life in that region and their relations with the dominant power because powers ascribe symbols and rituals to borders. Moreover, the territorial boundaries have crucial functions in the construction and maintenance of a nation and national

culture. Almost all national borders impose a sense of culture and identity to its citizens. Therefore, boundaries are drawn on the minds of people as much as they are built on earth.

Since the early 1990s, the borders have begun to become dependent and mobile, while they were often seen as hard and invariant features of international life before 1990's. (Wilson & Donnan, 1999) After the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and of the Soviet Union, the new states emerging in Europe started to provide new perspectives to borders. Those were the precursors of a period of prioritization of economic and political relations as well. Borders that were more integrated rather than totalitarian ones started to be discussed. Hence, borders do not mean just points to drawn lines or imaginary boundaries anymore. Kolossov says, "...the increasing openness of political borders in recent decades, led mainly by trade, anticipates a move from these "totalitarian" closed borders towards more "differentiated" boundaries." (Kolossov, 1998, p. 261) Thus, depending on this change, the borders have attracted the attention of many academic disciplines. As Wilson and Donnan say that it is not surprising, then, that the sociology of borders has evolved in ways similar to geography, history and political science, to arrive in the 1990s at research interests in the relationship between territory, sovereignty, and identity.

On one level, our focus on the anthropology of international borders is a reflection of the many and unexpected changes which the world has undergone since 1989. A list of these world transformations is now something of a cliché but is nonetheless a compendium of such radical change in global politics, economics and social relations that it is worth repeating. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the most famous symbol of the border between two competing world system, heralded the end of the Cold War, the disintegration of the Soviet empire and state, and the reawakening the long quiescent nation-states, as well as the creation of some new ones in Europe and Asia. (Wilson & Donnan, 1999, p. 2)

In recent years, the concept of boundaries has been at the center of important research agendas in anthropology, history, political science, and sociology. (Lamont & Molnar, 2002) Especially, in recent years, sociology has started to focus on the border-based life experiences of communities in border regions, contributing to the socio-cultural aspects of these border communities. Therefore, border sociology focuses on the analysis and identification of phenomena that are characteristic of border communities. In this context, perhaps the most important feature of a sociological study that deals with the borders is the consideration of social, political, cultural and economic ties with the other side of the border.

Hence, border communities and their experiences with the borders and the other side of the borders that have recently become one of the main issues in sociology and anthropology will be the basis of my study as well. In this context, I will mainly try to find answers to these questions: Sociologically, what is the border? What is the concrete meaning of such borderlines for the nation-states that keep the power? What are the border experiences of border communities? How can the borderlines between Suruç and Kobane be evaluated about the production of 'geographies of terror'? How do communities, the majority of which is Kurds, living in Suruç- Kobane line destabilize the hegemony of power within these borderlines? Which common points existing between Kurdish communities inside (those who are in Suruç, Mürşitpınar) and across the border (those who are in Kobane) destabilize the borderlines? In the context of my work, what are the reasons for the wall being constructed between Suruç and Kobane? What are the possible consequences of it? What are the differences and similarities between this wall built along the Turkey-Syria border and Separation Wall built on Palestinian lands? What are the border

construction practices of state from the past to the present? In addition, in response to these practices, what are the practices of the border people to break these borders?

I chose Mürşitpınar district of Suruç, Şanlıurfa province, which is one of the most active residential areas in Turkey-Syria borderline as a work place. The main reason for choosing this settlement is that this area is one of the first places the wall built along the border. And the historical relationships of this settlement with the other side of the border, Kobane, were also decisive to choose this place as the site.

My thesis consists of four chapters. In the first chapter, I will focus on how to deal with the borders historically and anthropologically to take a broad approach to understanding the many different aspects of the human experiences on the borderlines. So, the anthropology of the border will be the main body of this chapter. Then, I will try to focus on how the borders are perceived in the modern period and what borders mean in the nation-state conjuncture. Again, in this section, I will be concerned with the concept of borderland, border theory, and border terminology. And I will try to find answers for the origin of the border theory, whether the borderlines are natural or artificial, and emphasize on borders as institutions and processes.

The second chapter will be mainly formed by border construction practices of Turkish state on the borderline between Syria and Turkey, particularly in the Mürşitpınar neighborhood that located at the zero point of the border between Suruç and Kobane. So, information about Mürşitpınar, where the work was done, will be given in this section firstly. Moreover, in this chapter, in the context of the wall, I will try to discuss this issue about other examples such as Separation Wall in Palestine.

In the third chapter, firstly I am going to focus on experiences of border communities with the border and the other side of the border despite the border measures. Here, strong tribal, ethnic and socio-cultural ties between people on both sides of the border have been taken into consideration. Moreover, especially the importance of tribalism in the political and social life in the Kurdish geography has been tried to be explained in detail. Then, I will try to focus on border breaking practices of border people against the border construction practices of the Turkish state.

My final chapter will consist of recommendations and conclusion.

Before discussing the research methods, it should be noted that the research is done in a qualitative framework. Qualitative data were collected via monitoring, listening and taking notes by communicating with the people of the region. I have started to do my fieldwork in April 2015 and went to the site two times in different time periods. I conducted face-to-face interviews with 37 people in Mürşitpınar and 11 people in Suruç. Although it was harder to talk, I had the chance to interview 14 female interviewers in total. In the interviews made in the field, detailed information about the interviewers was not given, only the geography they live in and professions they occupy were specified. So, many names mentioned in the study are made-up. Security is the main concern here. In addition, in this study I specifically tried to find families that have children or close relatives who trade on the border. Furthermore, I especially tried to benefit from the border experiences of older people who are respected in the region. On the other hand, I tried to interview with people from different age, gender and profession groups. And also, I tried to discuss with people from different political opinions in this study. Some of the techniques used in this study are mental maps, oral history, direct observation, and participant observation.

With mental maps, I tried to find out how border people perceive the border and the other side of the border. It helps me to determine what the border means for the border people. Oral history used to obtain data about economic, cultural and social relations with the other side from past to present. Especially life stories and experiences of border people with border and the other side of the border were so important to write this thesis. Direct observation used to identify the physical and social structure of the region. In addition, with direct observation, I could witness all measures, rituals, and symbols on the borderline between Mürşitpınar and Kobane. Participant observation has facilitated me to become familiar with the border studies through the dialogue with the people of the region and knowing the socio-cultural and economic structure of the region closely. Moreover, by this method, I had a chance to stay in the region at certain times during the research process.

1.1 The anthropology of border

Border studies have evolved into an interdisciplinary field of study developed by sociologists, ethnologists, and anthropologists. Wilson and Donnan say

[t]he anthropology of borders has a long but not very deep history which began in many ways with Barth's (1969) paradigmatic ideas on ethnic boundaries, but which owes just as much to work that, although not specifically focused on culture, nation and state at international borders, nevertheless showed the value of localized studies for the understanding of how cultural landscapes are superimposed across social and political divides. (Wilson & Donnan, 1998, p. 5)

Despite being recent, the first anthropological works on the border took their places in the literature with deep analyses. Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan's research on the border theory and border identities, Pablo Vila and Oscar Martinez's ethnographic studies on the American-Mexican border are the essential works

empowering this literature. Focusing on a particular area of the U.S-Mexico border, Ciudad Juarez-El Paso, Pablo Vila brings out the complexity of the border experience through the voices of the people who inhabit the region. Pablo Vila has successfully arranged a series of dynamic and engaging ethnographic case studies that, on empirical grounds, challenge some of the most circulated canons of border studies. Oscar Martinez who works on Mexico-U.S borders also focuses on the daily life of the border people on this borderline. He says that while the U.S-Mexico borderlands resemble border regions in other parts of the world, nowhere else do so many millions of people from two dissimilar nations live in such close proximity and interact with each other so intensely. In his book, based on firsthand interviews with individuals from all walks of life, border people presents case histories of transnational interaction and transculturation, ethnic confrontation and cultural fusion. So, border people's stories show how their lives have been shaped by the borderlands milieu and how they have responded to the situation they have faced.

The help of these studies and anthropological methods and theories, the ethnographers started to focus on the lives and border experiences of communities near international borders. That way, border communities and their experiences became the focal point of border studies. The main issues dwelt on in these studies are identities, cultures, border experiences and cross-border relations of border communities. Such studies that do not exclude the nation state phenomenon and that prioritize the relationships between territoriality and identity have inspired many of the following researches. You will witness those relations densely in this study. When these ethnographers study border people, they do so with the intention of narrating the experiences of people who often are comfortable with the notion that they are tied culturally and economically with many other people in neighboring

states. Despite all these efforts, border studies remained limited to certain regions and areas. There were not studies on the regions other than the American-Mexican and the EU borders until recently. Furthermore, studies on border communities could not find a place outside of sociology and anthropology. Therefore, this focus on everyday life, and on the cultural constructions which give meaning to the boundaries between communities and between nations, is often absent in the wider perspectives of the other social sciences. (Wilson & Donnan, 1998)

Anthropologists thus aim to study the social and economic forces that demand that a variety of political and cultural boundaries be constructed and crossed in the everyday lives of border people. In Turkey, there are few ethnographic studies on the borders and border regions. Although works on border and border regions in Turkey began in the 1990s, it has become more evident in the 2000s. In our geography, Nejat Abdulla's work, "İmparatorluk, Sınır ve Aşiret" focuses mainly on the Ottoman (Turkey) and Safavid (Iran) borders that divide the Kurdish geography from sixteenth century until early twentieth century. The main focus in this work is the tribes on the borders determined by Ottoman and Safavids. Abdulla says that the priorities of the tribes on this borderline were not taken into consideration when the border was drawn by these empires. (Abdulla, 2009) Thus, borders function here to separate the tribes from each other. Furthermore, borders here are treated as defense lines, unlike the modern nation-state concept of border. Hence, we cannot talk about sharp boundaries that determine the national territory of modern nation-state as we have today.

In his book "Ağa, Şeyh, Devlet", Martin van Bruinessen also focuses on the Kurdish tribes on the borderline between Iran and Turkey. As he says, at most times Kurdish society existed on the periphery of, and functioned as a buffer between, two

or more neighbouring states. From around sixteenth century until the First World War, the relevant states were the Ottoman and Safavids. In the aftermath of the World War, Kurdistan was divided among four of the modern world nation states succeeding these empires, becoming a peripheral and often mistrusted region in each of them. (Bruinessen, 2003) In his book, Bruinessen especially tries to say that all these states, whether empire or nation state have exercised various forms of indirect rule over Kurdistan, which have had a profound impact on the social and political organization of Kurdish society. The specific tribal formations that existed in Kurdish society in various historical periods were in the important respect the products of the interaction of these states with Kurdish society. So, in his book, the main focus is tribal structure in the Kurdish geography that divided by empires and nation states. He especially interested in the formation of tribes on Kurdish geography. The role of tribes and emirates, their relations with state and society are also taken into consideration in detail in this book.

Neşe Özgen's deep analyses of Turkey's borders are also valuable in this regard. In her works, "Sınır Ticareti ve Şırnak'taki Etkileri" and "Sınırın İktisadi Antropolojisi: Suriye ve Irak Sınırlarında İki Kasaba", she tries to focus primarily on the economic relations on these borderlines. In these articles, Neşe Özgen explains how settlements on the Syrian and Iraqi borderlines have changed due to the border and border trade. The border trade is the key point to understand her ideas on these border regions. That is because, according to Özgen, border trade, smuggling and other economic relations on borders have an important role to transform the nature of these settlements.

More recently, Ferhat Tekin's study focuses on tribal relationships on the border and tribes' border experiences in the context of Hakkari on Turkish-Iraqi

borderline. Tekin, who focuses on the effects of these borders on the lives of the tribes, sees the collapse of the Ottoman Empire as a turning point. He says that the collapse of the empire and the establishment of new nation states as a result directly affected the economic and socio-cultural relations of tribes on both sides of the border in the Kurdish geography. In other word, in his book “Sınırın Sosyolojisi: Ulus, Devlet ve Sınır İnsanları”, Tekin claims that the new nation-state borders have destroyed the stability in the region. And also, this situation also made it difficult for the tribes to maintain their socio-cultural relations with each other. (Tekin, 2014)

In his book, Ramazan Aras works on the effects of landmines –as a border building practice- in daily life of border people. Focusing on the border building practices on the border between Turkey and Syria, Aras studies what they mean for border people. In this context, he especially focuses on the effects of the landmines on the lives of border people. Deaths and injuries caused by mines are told through stories in his book. In addition, he seeks answers to the questions of what border means for border people and how border people continue to live on this borderline despite the border building practices such as landmines.

These all studies I mention above are conducted regarding the borders of the geography where we live. However, in these works, we cannot see sufficient details about ethnic continuities on the borderline and socio-political relations with the other side of the border that constitute the basis of my thesis. Hence, in my study, I will focus on identities of border communities and cross-border socio-political relations that are missing in the border studies conducted in this region. So, on the one hand the works of Oscar Martinez and Pablo Vila which focuses specifically on the identities and relations on both sides of the borderline between Mexico and U.S border will guide me in practice. On the other hand, Wilson and Donnan’s ideas on

border identities and cultures will form the basis for my thesis in theory. So, in my work, I will focus especially on identities and cultures on this borderline. And also, strong ethnic, tribal, socio-cultural and economic relations despite the rigid border building practices on this borderline will form the basis of my work.

Geographically, we live in a region where borders are impactful on human life. Especially when looking at the borders in the Middle East, we can see that the flexible border concept has been abandoned. The primary cause of thickening of borders in this region is the spread of nation-state ideology with the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, which made the flexibility of borders disappear. The newly emerged nation states put their borders under strict protection. (Tan, 2010; Tekin, 2014) Thus, in this geography, we started to see an understanding that evolves into modern fashion. This model seems to bring some problems with it. Because, in the formation of these new borders, the fact that the borders of the state and the ethnic borders do not overlap is a basic feature. These boundaries, which are mostly artificial, mean that ethnic continuities are ignored. The presence of extensions of some Kurdish tribes on the borders of Syria, Iraq, Turkey and Iran exemplifies the characteristic nation-state borders in the Middle East.

The borders of the Turkish and the Syrian state were determined by Ankara Treaty in 1921 just after First World War. In his book, Kadri Yıldırım says “with the Ankara Treaty signed between Turkey and France in 1921, Kurdistan once again partitioned: France took the control over Rojava part. In the first years of the mandate, among Syrian Kurdish settlements only the 'Kurd Mountain' was under the mandate rule of France. However, with the Ankara Agreement, some of the areas of North Kurdistan were divided into two, while some remained within the borders of Turkey and some were integrated into Syria (Yıldırım, 2015, p. 27). While the

boundaries were set in this agreement, no any demands of those living in the borderline have taken into account. After the World War I, the dominant states, England and France, apportioned among the newly founded nation states, Turkey and Syria, the lands of Kurds who were living autonomously without borders in this region before the war. In this apportioning, they did not consider any common grounds. As we know "In the history of colonial invasion, maps are always drawn by the victors, since maps are instrument of conquest; once projected, they are then implemented. Geography is, therefore, the art of war but can also be the art of resistance if there are a counter-map and a counter-strategy." (Said,1995, p. 416)

Therefore, from an anthropological point of view, it is aimed to show that how the common social, economic, political and cultural structures in this region are tried to be torn apart from each other. The borders arbitrarily ruled by the powers in the region caused the Kurds to live within the territories of four different nation states. In that sense, no other in the world resembles the situation the Kurds faced when we consider the population and effects. Thus, it should be emphasized that the question of how these partnerships that have been going on for centuries have been abolished by the strokes of the pen on the map. It is evident that centuries-long partnerships have been attempted to be destroyed by the nation-states without the consent of the communities on the border. This situation, which has led to traumas, directly affected the border peoples in many ways. Today also we are witnessing a similar intervention. The war in the region, especially in Syria, necessitates strict border measures and as a result of this, people who live on borderline are exposed to the consequences of these measures taken by nation-states due to war and conflicts in the region. Border people's lives are targeted directly by these precautions. However,

all measures that aim to separate the relative communities from each other completely deepens the problems that have been going on for centuries.

The words of retired teacher Mahmut Hoca, who spent his whole life in Suruç and Mürşitpınar, are treasured in this context:

The news was circulating, so the Wall would be built here. I did not take it seriously first. To build a wall at such a time... I said it must be a joke! Then one morning I saw trucks carrying concrete blocks to build a wall. When those trucks were passing by, I could not say anything. This is where the centuries-long Kurdish phobia came. They could not go a step further. But they forget something: Can Wall scare people who are not afraid of death and torture? (Mahmut Hoca, age 49)

These thoughts of Mahmut Hoca constitute the main theme of this thesis that I try to write. It's like a summary of the whole thesis. He continues “this wall should be seen as the last attempt of the assimilation and occupation movement which has been for centuries in Kurdish geography. I think, it is our destiny, but we will resist.” Seeing all the troubles they have experienced, as destiny has become a matter of general belief for the people of the region.

Therefore, this study arises from the need to explain the strong ethnic, socio-cultural and economic relations despite the rigid border building practices on the borderline between Kobanê and Mürşitpınar through the life stories, and testimonies of the border people. These stories and testimonies do give us not only information about the borderline but also valuable data about the memory, identity and everyday life of the local community living in the border region.

In summary, as an ethnographic work, this study is an attempt to understand the social, political, economic and cultural effects of the Wall built between Turkey and Syria on border people's lives, in the light of work that took place in the Mürşitpınar settlement, Suruç.

1.2 Border theory and its terminology

In this section, the border theory and terminology will be discussed in detail. In this frame, first of all, general information about the birth of border theory will be given, and then the terminology of border studies will be focused.

Borders are not natural, nor static but politically charged and dynamic phenomena. It does not suggest that borders and their functions remain static. Rather the rich interdisciplinary body of research that has emerged since the 1990s conceives of borders as social constructions possessing both material and symbolic aspects, rather than rigid lines marking the absolute limits of the state. (Diener & Hagen, 2010) In his article, Paasi says that an international community work on borders emerged in this period. This community, unlike the previous ones, attempted to theorize the political, economic, social, psychological and cultural meanings of the borders. Border studies witnessed a major revival in the 1990s. This was related to several international events and tendencies, such as the collapse of the ideological divide between the capitalist and communist blocks, the acceleration of the 'globalization', and the development of information and communication technologies. (Paasi, 2009) With such transformations, we started to witness the changing functions of borders and their close relations with the territory, sovereignty, culture, and identity. So, in their article, Baud and Schendel argue that studying borders should not be only a matter of politics or economics. It is also necessary to look into the social and cultural impact of borders.

If in this postmodern epoch so much attention is paid to the construction and deconstruction of historical concepts, the border should be one of the first issues begging our attention. We began by emphasizing the artificial character of borders. They are prime examples of how mental constructs can become social realities. (Baud & Schendel, 1997, p. 242).

In such a period when borders are seen as social realities despite their mostly artificial nature, we cannot ignore their functions. We can think of dozens of reasons that shape such functions. Government policies, different borderline identities and cultures, and the capitalist world order are the first among them.

Brunet-Jailly and Dupeyron argue

[t]he multiple activities of governments, the role of borderland cultures, the political clout of borderland communities, and the impact of market forces are thus the four strands that are now prominent in the social science literature that organizes debates among scholars on the nature of borders and borderlands. (Brunet Jailly & Dupeyron, 2007, p. 3)

Besides, they add that each strand of research can suggest an analytical dimension of border and borderlands that should be understood not as exclusively structural (broad) or exclusively agent-oriented (focusing on the individual action), but rather as providing a historically *variable expression of agent power*. (Brunet-Jailly & Dupeyron, 2007)

Cultural interactions near and government policies on borders and border people's lives with multiple identities play a significant role in the production of border studies and theories. Hence, borders started to be addressed as not only defense mechanisms but also elements that determine relations of border communities with and beyond, effects of states drawing, and hybrid cultures near the border. This situation should be considered as a natural consequence of the emergence of modern nation states. As a result, we see in border theories that the traditional approaches to borders are abandoned. On this issue, Baud and Schendel say that "traditionally, border studies have adopted a view from the center; we argue for a view from the periphery." (Baud & Schendel, 1997, p. 212) Thus, borders started to be considered as realities of life after a while. They began to be actors

shaping lives of many communities and influencing the central power. This is the original reason why the border theory is gaining more space in recent social science studies.

We are also witnessing various discussions about terminology of 'border,' 'frontier' and 'boundary' in the social science.

Baud and Schendel say:

[a]cademic discussion on borders are often confused because of a lack of conceptual consensus. Moreover, within the Anglophone world we encounter confusion resulting from differences in the use of the terms *frontier*, *boundary*, and *border*. There appears to be a tendency for U.S scholars to use the first, and for British scholars to use the other two, but that is not all there is to it." (Baud & Schendel, 1997, p. 213)

On the other hand, terms of border, boundaries, and frontiers exist in all languages to signify the limits of social groups (Anderson & O'Dowd, 1999) and they refer to the legal lines separating different jurisdiction. But, contemporary frontiers are not simply lines on maps, the unproblematic givens of political life, where one jurisdiction or political authority ends, and another begins; they are central to understanding political life. (Anderson, 1996)

Of course, borders are not peculiar phenomena of this age. As Lattimore points out, it is a fact that borders are also known in ancient times in Chinese, Roman and Egyptian civilizations. The Great Wall built by the Chinese to prevent 'barbarian' attack and the Walls built by Roman Empire also against the 'barbarian' attack are the well-known examples. However, the borders have become more prevalent in modern times than ever before. The basis of the modern age borders comes from the Westphalia Treaty (1648). This treaty marks the beginning of the nation-state age too. (Lattimore, 1962)

On the other side, all these terms are often used synonymously. Prescott and Triggs focus on the specific meanings of these terms too. According to them, the concept of the boundary points to a line, but the frontier or the border point to different kinds of areas. In other words, the boundary as a line or the border / borderland as a region are places of contact between the States or legal territories. (Prescott & Triggs, 2008) So, these terms, boundary, border and borderland, are almost synonymous. In this work, I will also use these terms synonymously.

Ladis Kristof refers to the fact that the boundary and frontier are usually used in the same meaning, so these words are seen as mutually interchangeable. However, Kristof states that there is an important etymological difference between these two words. The Frontier word is derived from the front. On the other hand, the Boundary word comes from the bound, which specifies the boundaries of a given political unit. (Kristof, 1959) So, the frontier has an integrative feature, a transition region from one lifestyle to another. The boundary is a distinctive factor, on the one hand, it separates the political units from each other, on the other hand, it separates the movement of people, goods, and ideas.

1.3 The history of borders

Prescott and Triggs argue that the borderlines had a characteristic that distinguishes tribes, kingdoms or principals in pre-modern periods. (Prescott & Triggs, 2008)

Also, these borders and frontiers were not controlled by anyone. It has served as a shelter for local fugitives and outlaws. And also, the borders of the states were described as military garrison cities which were established to defend the boundaries against possible invaders. (Abdulla, 2009) Hence, the pre-modern understanding of the borders was not based on the principle of the sovereignty of the state, but it was

based on the protection from external attacks. Malcolm Anderson also states that pioneer (öncü) boundaries express a region, not a line or a boundary. Almost all borders of empires in the Middle Ages were superficial and linear lines of defense. In the Middle Ages, borders were rare things, because it was something that was not real to keep the boundaries constant. (Anderson, 1996) For example, the borders of the Ottoman Empire have the same characteristics. Until the end of the sixteenth century, The Ottoman borders were determined by the natural obstacles created such as the Arab and Northern African deserts, the Caucasian mountain ranges, the Mediterranean and the northern steppes. (Kasaba, 2004)

Along with the transition to the modern territorial system, significant transformations have taken place in both the meanings and functions of the borders.

As Malcolm Anderson states

Frontier -or boundary- making has been a constantly repeated activity in the course of human history, but the characteristics of frontiers have varied considerably over time. Frontiers between states in post-reformation Europe more and more resembled one another and became rooted, as institutions, in a common fund of ideas." (Anderson, 1996, p. 12)

So, the idea of sovereignty and the idea of the nation-state regulated by a voluntary acceptance of international law resulted in the spread of a common understanding of the frontiers of states especially after the seventeenth century in Europe.

According to Anthony Giddens (1985), in the traditional states, there was a frontier (hudut), not the border (sınır). He says the borders were formed by the emergence of the modern nation-state. So, after modern state system and its essential elements like the border, territoriality and sovereignty emerged in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the borders began to sharpen and harden.

In distinguishing the territoriality of traditional states from nation-states, it is essential to see that the 'frontiers' of the former are significantly different from the 'borders' that exist between the latter. It would be a mistake to

suppose, even where the boundaries of traditional states are physically clearly marked by such installations (something which is in any case rare), that these are something akin to borders in the modern sense. In non-modern states, walled boundaries remain frontiers, well outside the regularized control of the central authorities; the larger the state, the more this is the case. In neither Rome nor China did the walls correspond to the limits of 'national sovereignty' in the sense in which that term is applied today. (Giddens, 1985, p. 51)

For him, borders are nothing other than lines drawn to demarcate states' sovereignty.

As demarcation of sovereignty, they have to be agreed upon by each of the states whose borders they are.

Thus, the border or boundary has shifted from an ambiguous appearance surrounding property to a restrictive, rigid and military appearance. And also, the meaning and functions of these new boundaries of the nation-state are changed through the concepts of the 'enemy' and 'other' who live on the other side of the border. So, drawing borderlines and the creation of border regions is the result of the establishment of modern nation-states all over the world. At the same time, demanding clear and fixed boundaries was a result of the idea of territoriality and sovereignty. So, we know that most of the present international borders of the world have been drawn in the last three hundred years.

At the same time, M. Anderson states that borders have a mythical meaning in the process of building political identities and nations. For this reason, establishing a homogeneous cultural and national identity has been the primary responsibility of the territorial boundaries. (Anderson, 1996) So, new boundaries, particularly the boundaries of nation-states, differ very clearly from pre-modern boundaries by their meanings and functions. As Alvarez says modern borders are modern human-made things (Alvarez, 1995), and at the same time it is a phenomenon imposed on the social realm.

Borders take their importance by territoriality which is a principle that regulates social and political life. So, territoriality is shaped within the modern, sovereign and territorial nation-state and provides the basis for the state system. "Territoriality thus became one of the first conditions of the state's existence and the sine qua non of its border." (Wilson & Donnan, 1998, p.9) States establish borders to secure territories which are valuable to them because of their human or natural resources. And also, they establish these places for their strategic and symbolic importance. Wilson and Donnan also say that "these borders are signs of the eminent domain of that state, and are markers of the secure relations it has with its neighbors, or are reminders of the hostility that exist between states." (Wilson & Donnan, 1998, p. 9) Thus, borders are agents of state's security and sovereignty. They are also understood as signs or expressions of state territoriality.

According to Eric J Hobsbawm, the modern state was a phenomenon shaped by the age of French revolutions and new in many respects. He says that the modern state is defined as a piece of land that embraces all of the people it manages. And it is separated from other lands by distinct borderlines. (Hobsbawm, 1995) So the modern state, as a political institution, cannot be understood without its spatial and territorial definition. Therefore, it requires a defined territory.

By indicating that the Treaty of Westphalia marks the beginning of the era of nation-state and nationalism, the borders of many states have been re-examined with the Paris Treaty signed at the end of the First World War. (Brunet-Jailly, 2010) Thus, sovereignty, which defines a special right to use legitimate violence within a particular territory, has been mutually endorsed by the states, in particular by the great powers such as France, the USA, and Britain.

In his book, *Frontiers: Territory and State Formation in the Modern World*, M. Anderson points out that the main purpose of the modern state is the establishment of a "nation-state-territory" unity. The first thing needed to establish this unity is the boundaries. Because the boundaries of the nation-state are based on the assumption that the piece of land it surrounds is a homogenous whole. (Anderson, 1996)

On the other hand, Western conceptualization of the political organization of space is strongly biased by an ethnocentric image based upon the rigid territorial structure of the Western nation-state. (Soja, 2010) As a result of the Western definition of the modern state, Soja says that the ignorance of the kinship principle disturbs the continuous flow of life in many parts of the world, especially in the geography where we live. (Soja, 2010) The creation of new states in Africa and Asia often means that the borders divide the settlement and tribes into two. This is a cruel separation for tribal members and communities on borders.

One of the best examples of this situation is the Kurdish geography. The geography of the Kurds is separated by four states. In this occupation, no kinship relations of the Kurds have been considered. That is why many problems are experienced even today. Ramazan Aras says that the nation-state building projects that have subjected the region's peoples and religious communities that live in this cultural and physical geography that contains different religious, ethnic, linguistic, and economic structures inherited from the Ottoman Empire to significant traumas have brought policies that could cause big ruptures and disengagements in the history of the region. (Aras, 2015)

Especially, it is impossible to see the current conflicts in the region independent from such nation-state building projects with arbitrarily drawn borders. The partition of Iraq into three after the civil war, the federacy structure of the Kurdish region invaded before, and the predictions regarding a similar partition for Syria strengthen these theses.

On the other hand, nationalism is a special kind of human territoriality and a territorial form of ideology. The primary purpose of nationalism is to create a national identity supported by state borders. Thus, as Amaral says, with clearly defined territories and internalized cultural unity, a sense of nation may grow stronger. Indeed, this unity of group and land requires full political expression. The national-state this way becomes the political-territorial synthesis of the nation and the state. (Amaral, 2002) One of the most obvious examples of this situation can be seen in Zionism because Newman says that Zionism establishes a clear identity between national identity and the territorial homeland. (Newman, 2001)

The nation “is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion.” (Anderson, 1991, p. 6) What is to be emphasized here is that the nation is imagined within a certain coverage area. It is also the boundaries that determine this coverage area. “As absolute boundaries are necessary for the construction of the modern nation-state, so is nationalism. For a nationalism without borders and boundaries that can be defended and enlarged is impossible to imagine – as Benedict Anderson (1983) might say.” (Kearney, 1998, p. 119) Thus, it is impossible to view a particular territory separate from the nation living thereon. The two are what make a national territory for the most part.

To construct a national territory with controlled frontiers is the main goal of nation states. However, borders of many nation-states today are meeting points for different identities. Nation states should deal with this problem. That is why nation-states are eager to homogenize communities, especially on borderlines. Since differences are seen as a threat to the national unity; different language, religion and cultural assets are prohibited on behalf of national unity especially on border regions. So, the nation states try to assimilate and standardize people within the territory to create a homogenous nation or a homogenous socio-cultural and political unit. It is an effort to form a forced imagined community. This is where the totalitarian aspect of the nation-state manifests itself. But we often witness that this will not happen. As M. Anderson and Eberhard Bort say, national identities strengthened the frontiers between states both psychologically and politically. But nation states have seldom been culturally and ethnically homogenous, and the identity of state and nation has never been complete. Citizens of states have also been linked with other states for reasons of ethnic, cultural and linguistic affinity. (Anderson & Bort, 2001). I also witness this situation easily in the area where I do my field research. Thus, this situation that is mostly encountered in the border regions reveals that while the borders of the nation-state are inwardly unifying but in fact, they are outwardly divisive. In other words, borders consolidate their internal constituencies to the extent that they divide themselves from outside.

At the same time, border regions are areas of symbolic power for nation-states. As Donnan and Wilson say that borderlands are often the first or the last areas of the state that travelers see. Ever since the creation of modern nation-states, borders and their regions have been incredibly important symbolic territories of state image and control. (Wilson & Donnan, 2002) Nation states establish the notion of the 'we'

and 'others' through these territories. In this context, while 'we' as a nation are 'imagined' in the territorial boundaries, the 'others' are imagined at the outside of the boundaries. Therefore, the borders of the state are very meaningful and functional and also, both sides of it have sharp significances. While they are expressing permission and involvement from one side; on the other side, they mean power, control, and exclusion.

1.4 Borders: Natural or artificial?

Borders are divided into two categories: natural and artificial. Thomas Holdich, one of the first political geographers, has classified the borders also under two headings as 'natural' and 'artificial':

There are many sorts of frontiers and boundaries, but those which have through all the ages proved most effective are undoubtedly those which are best secured by strong natural geographical features. Frontiers, and the boundaries which define the frontiers, may be classed under two heads – natural and artificial. Natural frontiers possess many advantages over artificial ones. They are readily delimited and demarcated: they are inexpensive and immovable: they last well under all conditions of climate, and they are, as a rule, plain and unmistakable.” (Holdich, 1916, p. 147)

We can count borders of the regions separated by natural barriers such as mountains and rivers as examples of natural borders. The main determinants here are natural elements. Despite counter-examples, such natural borders interrupt the flow of life less than the artificial borders do. On the other hand, according to Holdich,

[a]rtificial frontiers based on no geographical data, dependent on no natural or topographical features which may render them plain and recognizable by those whom they are designed to separate, are the result of the ignorance of the local conditions of the country they pass through.” (Holdich, 1916, p. 162)

The Syria-Turkey border is a perfect example of this phenomenon. This entirely flat border region was shaped arbitrarily. Hence, the priorities of the border community living in this artificially drawn border region that does not contain any natural barriers were not taken into account.

Storey, in his book *Territory: The Claiming of Space*, rightly stresses that it is misleading to label borders as natural and artificial. Because while the state itself is man-made, of course, its boundaries will also be man-made. Therefore, natural phenomena such as rivers, mountains or deserts which are determined as natural boundaries, are also determined according to political decisions and interests (Storey, 2001, p. 30). In this context, Smith also draws attention to the ideological dimension of 'natural' boundaries discourse. And he emphasizes that this discourse is closely linked to the 'national borders' discourse. Just as Danton has put forward for France, Mazzini for Italy, national borders overlap 'natural borders.' However, it is fairly easy to show that the borders - even if they are very long and obviously exist - are in fact not natural at all. For example, South Tyrol is a disputed enclave between Italy and Austria. So, those who live in borderlands have a habit of rejecting the 'naturalness' of certain boundaries. (Smith, 2002, p. 169) In this case, we can conclude that natural, as well as artificial borders are independent of priorities of people. States' interests are the main determinants of both natural and artificial borders.

So, natural borders are also shaped by the desires of the states when necessary. Davis and Stoetzler say in their article

This central, but contested facet borders contrast with the naturalized images of homelands that assume complete congruence of (or identity between) people, state, and territory. Seas, mountain ranges, and rivers endemic to the space of homeland often signify the assumed borders. It is an open question whether the national and international legality of those 'natural' borders follows from, or rather causes, these naturalized border imaginings: as a case point, the River Jordan became a 'natural border' only after the demise of the Ottoman Empire." (Davis & Stoetzler, 2002, p. 332)

To present a region that was not within its borders before as its natural borders after taking it is closely related to a state's protection of its interests. Again, it is not independent of the state-territory relation to see such region as a part of a whole and natural continuation of its territories. The state priorities rather than ethnic continuities and priorities of border communities are the determinants in such regions.

In other words, generally 'natural' boundaries do not overlap with ethnic, national and cultural boundaries. So, it can be said that the discourse of 'natural' boundaries is mostly related to national and ideological interests. As Anderson and Bort already said, especially since the second half of the twentieth century, the discourse of natural boundaries has been largely abandoned because all of the boundaries are made by humans and thus are artificial. (Anderson & Bort, 2001) We can see this fact especially when we look at the today's Middle Eastern borders. Such artificial borders drawn completely per national interests interrupt the natural flow of life in border regions.

1.5 Borders as institutions and processes

Borders are both institutions and processes. As institutions, they mark and delimit state sovereignty and rights of individual citizenship. As processes, borders have a number of functions. (Anderson, 1996) They are the instrument of state policy, although the state's policies may be enhanced or improved by the degree to which it exercises actual control over the border and its people. Anderson also argues that borders are the marker of identity, and they have played a role in this century in making national identity the pre-eminent political identity of the modern state.

(Anderson, 1996) This has made borders indispensable elements in the construction of national cultures. So, the frontier or boundaries can be seen as the core political institutions.

No rule-bound economic, social or political life in complex societies could be organized without them. Since then the frontier has defined, in a legal sense, a sovereign authority; the identity of individuals (claims to nationality and exercise of rights of citizenship) are delimited by it. (Anderson, 1996, pp. 1-2)

Besides, the borders are also expressions of power relations. Like institutions, they also externalize the confidential rules, values, laws and moral codes. For this reason, they are the founders of social action. And they are both an obstacle and a source of motivation.

Boundaries are not phenomena that remain constant once they have been identified. They are tied to a historical process that emerges as man-made, continues for a period, and then disappears. Many states can change their borders depending on their meaning and their role. That is, states can change their location and functions in their interests. The separation of Kurds who were living together before the Syria-Turkey border was drawn until the Ankara Treaty of 1921 between Turkey and France is a good example to this. After the 1920s, Kurds who encountered the borders they had never seen before have become victims of new functions of these borders. The main function of these artificial borders drawn completely by humans has been the determination of zones of the sovereignty of the newly founded nation states in the region. Despite all of their artificialities, such borders have functioned as institutions. They have not remained merely on the paper, but they became social processes profoundly influencing the fate of the region. Thus, the boundaries are not just the lines on the ground, borders are first and foremost social phenomena. A border is a social process, contingent to continuous re-imagination and re-

interpretation. (Van Houtum, 2005) In this respect, boundaries must be understood not only as certain places or events but also as social processes.

The most obvious example of borders that work as both institution and process can be seen in nationalism. Because as Conversi says

[n]ationalism can be a process of border creation as well as of border maintenance. The two are difficult to distinguish. When identities slide into each other, borders 'must' be established, although this effort is often presented by nationalist elites as an attempt to maintain a pre-existing or primordial national boundary.” (Conversi, 1995, p.79)

In the context of Turkey too, borders are drawn against the cross-border 'other.' Hence, as institutions, the borders are utilized in active roles in maintaining the protection of the 'Turkish' territories within the borders and being barriers against the cross-border 'other' and in protecting the national identity.

CHAPTER 2

BORDER BUILDING PRACTICES OF THE TURKISH STATE

2.1 The historical background of the Turkey-Syria borderline

Borders in the Middle East region were drawn at the end of the First World War and as a result of imperialist imposition. The treaties signed after this war between the newly founded Turkish state and imperial powers such as France and Britain are the most explicit examples. Because of this, there is always a source of conflict. Most of the border problems in the region stem from the fact that the border, which is directly a European concept, does not match with the local political culture, tradition, and history of the region we live in. Ferhat Tekin says on this the conflict between the traditional abode of Islam (*dar-al-Islam*) and the modern nation-state-based world system visions had important theoretical and practical consequences. The Abode of Islam was a political model outside of the nation-state system and was containing co-existing various political authorities and autonomous dhimmi groups. (Tekin, 2014) In the last century, with the enforced nation-state borders, this alternative ideal of political order ceased to exist.

According to David Fromkin, in the period between 1914 and 1922, only Europeans and Americans sit around the tables where decisions were made. The borders of the countries of the Middle East were drawn in Europe in this period. For example, Iraq and Jordan are British inventions, and their borders were drawn by British politicians in an empty map after the First World War. The borders of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and Iraq were also determined by a British government official in 1922. Similarly, the borders between Muslims and Christians in Syria and Lebanon

by France; the borders of Armenia and Azerbaijan were drawn by the USSR.

(Fromklin, 2013)

Britain and France have played a major role in defining the borders in the Middle East especially in Iraq and Syria. After the First World War, the British became a dominant power in the region. Many agreements that set new state borders in the Middle East were under British control. So much so that, the concept of the agreement was equivalent to taking the interest of the British Empire into account.

(Yerasimos, 2015)

Syria-Turkey border is completely a flat area. Therefore, there is no geographical feature forming the boundary. The boundary line was drawn with sharp geometric lines by France and Britain at that time. So, it is possible to classify this boundary as an entirely artificial boundary, since it ignores ethnic characteristics and continuities. The greatest evidence for an artificial boundary is the Ankara Agreement signed between France and Turkey.

Ankara Treaty was signed between Franklin Bouillon and Yusuf Kemal Bey on October 20, 1921. The 8th article of this treaty is as follows:

The line that will determine the border between Turkey and Syria "will start from a point to be chosen in the very south of the Payas location over the Iskenderun Gulf and will approximately pass to the Ekbez Square (The train station and this location will be left to Syria). From there, this borderline will incline towards the southeast by leaving the Marsuva location to Syria and the Karnaba location and Kilis city to Turkey. From there, it will merge to the railway at the Çobanbey station. It will then follow the Baghdad railway and the railway platform down to Nusaybin will be Turkish territory. From there, it will reach the Tigris River through Cezirei Ibn Ömer following the old road between Nusaybin and Cezirei Ibn Ömer. The Nusaybin and Cezirei Ibn Ömer locations and the road will remain in Turkey. Both countries will have the same rights regarding the use of that road. The stations and destinations of the railway between Çobanbey and Nusaybin will be considered as parts of the rail platform and left to Turkey. (Umar, 2003, p. 280, own translation. For the original text, see Appendix, 1)

As mentioned above, with the Ankara Treaty, the border between Turkey and Syria was based on the line stretching along the Baghdad railway. But before the Ankara Treaty was signed, there was a lot of debate on this issue in the Grand National Assembly of Turkey. At the congress where Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, founder of Turkish Republic, explained the terms of the treaty, the deputies of the Kurdish region raised many criticisms against the treaty to be signed. The Urfa deputy Hayali Efendi was one of them. Especially, what Urfa deputy Hayali Efendi says at that time about this issue is remarkable.

Hayali Efendi said that after the enemy had invaded Urfa contrary to the provisions of the truce, the people resisted and kicked the French out of Suruç, and nevertheless today, some places in this area were abandoned to the French. So, he opposed this situation:

If the line follows from Çobanbey, it partitions the Ayıntab province and the land in Birecik, then passes to Suruç. It leaves half of Suruç and two kilometers from Silopi to the south. However, the Suruç and Turuk lands are very fertile. If the line is drawn as such, a large segment of the people of the region will remain in the south, and the French will exploit them for their purposes as the British did. (Umar, 2003, p. 278, own translation. For the original text, see Appendix, 2)

As the Figure 1 indicates, many settlement areas that are currently within the borders of Turkey were parts of Syria's Aleppo before the Ankara Treaty of 1921. However, that Aleppo remained on the Syrian side after the Ankara Treaty had affected the lives of people who were sharing the same geography not long ago in many ways.



Figure 1: The map of Turkey envisioned before the Ankara Treaty (1921). Source: [Kurtuluş Savaşı, 2013]¹

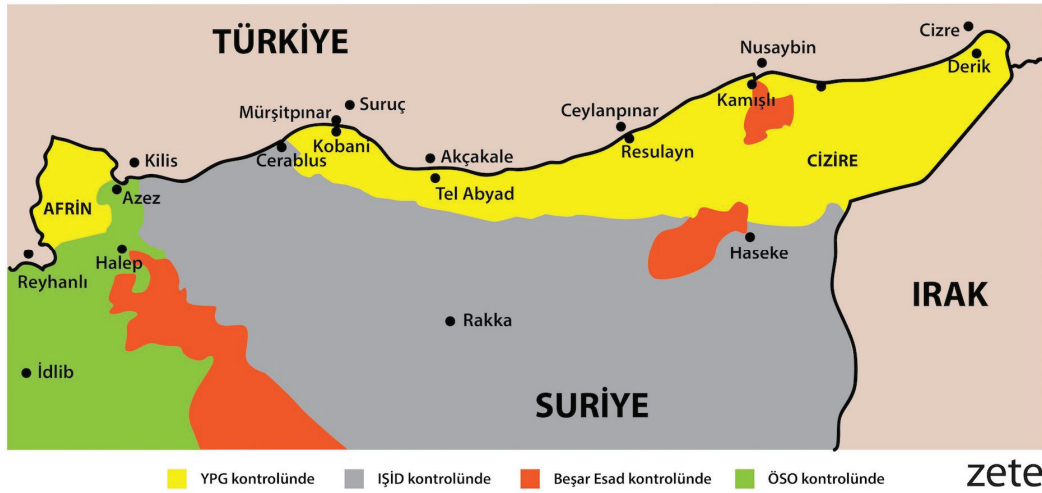


Figure 2: The map determining the current Turkish-Syrian borderline. Source: [Zete, 2015]²

The objections of Hayali Efendi mainly on the Syrian border and in particular on Suruç are critical. This quotation reveals that when the border is drawn, the

¹ <http://www.kurtulussavasi.gen.tr/misaki-milli-nedir.html>

² <https://zete.com/5-maddede-ankaranin-suriye-yol-haritasi/>

settlements are divided in two by that artificial borders and the priorities of the people there are not taken into consideration. Hayali Efendi mentions much more important topics in his speech:

[t]hat, since the land would be divided into two some problems, would arise in traveling and right pursuing and the people who resisted to the French before the peace could be subjected to the French wrath now that they remained on the Syrian side.” (Umar, 2003, p. 278, own translation. For the original text, see Appendix, 3)

In this speech, Hayali Efendi summarizes the dilemma that people have experienced since the borderline was established. Today, most of the people in Suruç and Mürşitpınar confirm Hayali Efendi's statements. The shared history that is not taken into consideration in determining the Suruç border is also the basis of today's problems. So, many borders drawn by the intervention of Western states have ignored ethnic and cultural realities and caused border problems. However, in spite of the 'definite' boundaries imposed by Western countries and regional nation-states, there is an ethnic continuity in these regions which is divided into pieces in particular between Kurds.

Peoples' Democratic Party Deputy (HDP) and academician Kadri Yıldırım says that Kobane where is on the side of Syria today, was a part of Suruç, Urfa before the Ankara Treaty signed in 1921. Kobane, Syria's smallest Kurdish region, is considered an extension of Suruç Plain. Administratively, it was bound to Urfa before, but after the border between Turkey and Syria was determined in 1921 and then bounded to Aleppo.³

³ <http://www.roportajgazetesi.com/kadri-yildirim-aynel-arap-ismi-kobaninin-tarihsel-gercegi-ile-bagdasmiyor-c89.html>

He also says in his book *Kürt Tarihi ve Coğrafyası-1: Rojava* that Kobane took its name from the German company *Kompanie/Company*, which built the train line here in 1912. Kobane was formed by two villages before 1910, and 'Kaniya Mürşid' (Mürşitpınar in Turkish) was one of them. It can be seen in Ottoman record too. (Yıldırım, 2015) To divide such a deeply intertwined geography without considering any partnership in this geography is the strongest proof of the artificiality of these boundaries and maps imposed by dominant powers.

As we have seen above, railways have become the main criteria for determining borders. The terms *serxet* ("upside") and *binxet* ("underside"), which are used by almost everybody in interviews in Suruç, also reinforce this claim. As a local information, the *serxet* term is used to indicate the upside of the railway, and it refers Turkish side of the border. On the other hand, *binxet* means the underside of the railway, in other words, it shows the Syrian side of the border. In local, these terms still carry on their existence.

As a result, we can say that the concept of the "modern" boundary, which was shaped with the emergence of nation-states, does not match the system of states in the Middle East. Therefore, even today, the borderlines in the Middle East are not fully recognized by many ethnic minorities like Kurds on the frontiers. Many borders, especially those imposed by the intervention of Western states, have led to the endangering of ethnic and cultural partnerships in between many states borderlines. Therefore, this situation causes many border problems in the Middle East region even today.

2.2 Field of research: Suruç, Mürşitpınar

Today, Suruç that has been a topic in debates on the border is at the center of the discussions in the context of border building practices again. Before passing to the border building practices, it will be helpful to introduce Suruç. Suruç is located in southeastern Anatolia region, 46 km southern west of Şanlıurfa province. It is 10 kilometers away from the Mürşitpınar neighborhood through which the railway that forms the border with Syria's Kobane passes. The total population of Suruç was around 100 thousand before the Syrian war. However, after the dense migration of people escaping the war, the population is not known exactly today. But it is estimated that after the war in Syria, the population is doubled. Suruç has received too much immigration from Kobane and other settlements close to Kobane. The vast majority of those who flee the war are settled near their relatives in Suruç, Şanlıurfa and other nearby Kurdish cities like Mardin, Batman, and Diyarbakır.

I did a large part of my fieldwork in Mürşitpınar settlement of Suruç (see Figure 3). It is a small settlement with about 1500 population. One of the most interesting things I encountered in fieldwork was that none of the people in Suruç or Mürşitpınar used the name of Mürşitpınar. All of them including people who live in Mürşitpınar call Mürşitpınar as Kobane. However, I will use the name of Mürşitpınar to avoid any confusion in this study.



Figure 3: The field of the research: Mürşitpınar, Suruç. Source: [Aljazeera, 2014]⁴

Introducing herself as an activist, Zilan says the following about the naming of the region. “Nobody calls here Mürşitpınar. Its name is Kobane. For us, areas both over and below the railway are Kobane. Only foreigners call here Mürşitpınar. You will not hear from anyone else.” (Zilan, age 35)

Therefore, we can say that despite all barriers built and imposed by the state; the local people see the settlements of Kobane and Mürşitpınar as a single piece. It was one of the important reasons why I try to do my fieldwork in this region. Besides, Mürşitpınar and Kobane economically need each other. In the region where the economy is centered on the border trade because of agricultural problems, these two settlements share a common ground that makes them inseparable. Hence, it does not seem possible to separate the two settlements that share the same language, culture, and economic practices.

⁴ <http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/canli-blog-kobani>

Agriculture has developed because of the smooth and productive land in Suruç. So, the economy in Suruç and Mürşitpınar is based on agriculture and sheep and goat farming. The main agricultural products grown are wheat, barley, and cotton. And of course, smuggling is also one of the important economic activities. However, we will discuss smuggling as an economic activity on borderland in detail under the heading of border breaking practices.

Kurds mainly constitute the ethnic structure of Suruç. Almost all of the population in Suruç is Kurd. And the language spoken here is Kurmanci, a Kurdish dialect predominantly spoken in the southeast of Turkey. The situation is also the same in Kobane. But I have to admit that, although my native language is Kurmanci, I had experienced some difficulties in interviews, especially when I was talking to older people. I had difficulty recognizing some words because of geographical differences. However, I was able to overcome this problem with the help of younger ones. On the other hand, the vast majority of the population in this region are Muslim and Sunni religiously. Even if the numbers are so small, there are people who do not believe in any religion.

As I said before, I did a large part of my fieldwork in the Mürşitpınar settlement. In addition to that, I did a few interviews with people who moved from Mürşitpınar to the center of Suruç because of the war in Syria. I tried to take advantage of these people's border experiences in Mürşitpınar and Kobane. Since Mürşitpınar is a small settlement with about 1500 population, I did not have trouble to contact with the local people there. I found the opportunity to develop relationships based on trust. However, because of the circumstances of the period, most of the interviewees did not want to give their names. The biggest reasons for this situation is the war in Syria and the ongoing conflicts between Turkish state and

PKK in the region. Because of these conflicts and war, the political solution process in Turkey is abandoned and the period of repression against the Kurds has begun again. Therefore, these new developments in the Kurdish geography constitute the firm reason for locals to hide their names in interviews. As an interviewer who does not want to give a name says: "I would also like to speak freely to you. But is this possible at such a time? When thousands of people are in jail because of their ideas, is it possible to talk freely?"

Therefore, due to the conditions of the present period, the people of the region gave more cautious answers to questions that are especially about smuggling and state policies in the region. So, I chose to begin the interview with softer questions about the kinship relations, tribalism and the other general characteristics of the region at first. And then, by establishing relationships based on trust, I tried to ask questions especially about the Wall, identity, border experiences and other border breaking practices. And of course, interviewees who did not want to give their name talked more openly and fearlessly about these important issues than others. I did not prefer to keep track of respondents' information. I only noted the ages and names of those who wanted to give their names.

Furthermore, being a people of the region and knowing the language and the culture of the people were important factors that made the fieldwork easier for me. That's why I did not have too much trouble communicating with people there. I did my interviews in Kurdish and Turkish. As I said before, due to regional language differences, I had some trouble when I was speaking Kurdish with the elderly. Nevertheless, I was able to overcome this problem with the help of the young people in the region.

On the other hand, I have had the opportunity to talk to individuals who have very different political thoughts when working on the field. I interviewed people from many different profiles and different age groups. Here, especially two points caught my attention. The first was the presence of a group opposing this wall, which the government used as a border building practice, despite supporting the internal and foreign policies the Turkish government follows. Second, while women who migrated from Kobane to Suruç were not afraid to engage in everyday politics and political processes, Suruç women were left out of this process. Of course, we understand that Suruç women are forcefully excluded from this process because of the prevailing socio-political conditions in the region. Therefore, I have had great difficulties in interviewing especially with Suruç women. However, I overcame such hardship with the courage of women who migrated from Kobane.

Havin who lost her brother in Kobane resistance and came to Mürşitpınar with her family after the war in Syria says:

My sister is married to a man from the Dinan tribe. She has been living in Suruç for years. She supports my thoughts. But she cannot talk to you. If either one of the tribesmen or her family hear that she is talking to you, both she and her husband will suffer. (Havin, age 23)

Especially the tribal structure and patriarchal order in the region affects the public visibility of women in the region. Because of the conditions in the region, women refrain from talking to a foreign man from outside the household. In her book, *Tribe and Kinship among the Kurds* Lale Yalçın-Heckmann states

[w]hat determines, for example, whether a young woman would sit together with the guests or not is her status within the household and her relation to the guests and other contextual conditions. Women may receive male guests when the men of the house are away, yet a young woman would not sit long with a young stranger man but instead ask a neighbor or kinsman to come and keep him company. (Yalçın-Heckmann, 1991, p. 227)

I have faced this problem many times in the interviews. Therefore, the vast majority of the women I interviewed were older women and women who migrated from Rojava. While women from Suruç prefer to remain silent towards the developments in the region, women who have experienced civil war in Syria and emigrated to Suruç show more courageous resistance against the wall constructed as a separation mechanism. What is the reason for the courage of women who migrate from Syria? Are the conditions in Syria different? As I understand from interviews, the fact that the women from Rojava had not hesitated to talk is the result of the extraordinary difficulties and conflicts they had to experience. The ones they lost and the things they lived led them to cross the walls and borders imposed by society. Those women who have suffered the greatest anguish in the civil war have left little things to fear. Of course, this situation cannot be understood just with fear or courage. The influence of the political life in Rojava is an undeniable fact in this transformation. Especially, the visibility of women in political life and on the battle field in Rojava is also remarkable in this context.

The words of Xezal who settled in Mursitpinar after the war in Syria were particularly important in this context.

Women here are afraid to talk. I acknowledge their point because there is an enormous pressure. We have already lost everything. We experienced the greatest fears. That is why we are not afraid to talk and express our thoughts. Whatever it may cost, I want to speak. Otherwise, I will have cancer because of constant repressing. (Xezal, age 42)

On the other hand, second tension in the society is the presence of a group opposing this wall, which the government used as a border building practice, despite supporting the internal and foreign policies the Turkish government follows. Although this group of people stands against the wall as a border building practice, they continue to support the government policies in the region. However, the group

mentioned here refrains from expressing its reaction and explicitly opposing the wall. Moreover, despite their opposition to the wall, those people continue to support the policies of the Turkish state in the Syria and Kurdish geography. What are the reasons for this situation? As we can see from the interviews, the main cause of this situation is, of course, economic concerns. Ideological and political differences remain in the background when the economy is concerned in the region. Another reason is kinship relations with the other side of the border. So, despite the different political fronts, the economic concerns and kinship ties with the other side of the border push the pro-state people also to oppose the construction of this wall.

İbrahim Yıldırım (age 41), who is a tradesman in Suruç and a supporter of the AK Party (ruling party in Turkey), says:

I find the state policies about Syria justified. The state is not an enemy of the Kurds. The state knows what it is doing, but in my opinion, it is not right to build this wall. In the end, this wall separates people from their relatives. Economically, it is keeping people a rough situation. There could be an alternative measure. I think the AK Party will solve this problem. We should expect the war to end.

Therefore, the wall as the state's new practice in the construction of the border also causes tensions in society. For example, although some people in the region do not support actions or marches against the wall, there is still a disturbance due to their relatives who are injured in those actions. Because, despite the different political considerations, the emotional ties between the people in the region are unyielding.

Another person who wants his or her name be covered and defends the policies of the Turkish state although his son is fighting in Kobane on the side of Kurdish forces says:

I love my government and my flag, but I do not think these are necessary. I do not find it right to take action, but I respect those who do it, if it does not involve violence, of course. All nonviolent actions are legitimate. There is no need for the state to react so harshly. The state should allow people show their reactions. They will calm down after a while.

So, despite the different ideological ideas, a vast majority of the border people stand against this wall. In my work, I tried to talk to people from many different profiles and different age groups in the region. In this context, the courage of the border people and especially the women of Kobane who were not afraid to interview me despite all the pressures of the state and society was precious for me to put forth a good work.

2.3 Border construction practices of Turkish state

Turkish-Syria boundary, like other political boundaries, divides the communities who live in a geographical area that has historical, social, cultural and economic relations that have been based on centuries. The political boundaries of the newly established Turkish nation-state are also defined as the social, ethnic and cultural boundaries of the new nation to be created. Thus, in state discourse, borders are seen as sacred things. And this new perception has been expressed in the words of the founder of the state Mustafa Kemal as 'border is honor' (hudut namustur).

In his article, M. Anderson defines political boundaries as the "frontiers" of the state and defines borders as institutions and processes. (Anderson, 1996) They, as institutions, represent the sovereignty of the state and the rights of individual citizenship and, as processes, perform various functions. Anderson also recognizes that borders are markers of identity, and have played a role in this century in making national identity the preeminent political identity of the modern state. (Anderson, 1996) On this topic, Wilson and Donnan say that this has made borders, and their narratives of frontiers, essential elements in the construction of national cultures. This important role of the border, in the creation and the maintenance of the nation

and the state, is one reason why borders have also become a term of discourse in narratives of nationalism and identity. (Wilson & Donnan, 1999)

Especially, in geographies like Turkey, more attention is paid to border practices and the protection of these borders to build a homogenous nation-state and identity. Therefore, the question of how these practices affect the daily lives of the inhabitants of the border regions constitutes one of the main frameworks of this work. Hence, the border building practices pursued by the Turkish state from the determination date of the Syrian border until today will constitute the base of this chapter. However, before discussing border-building practices, it is necessary to mention the points that play important roles in procuring the acceptance of such practices. In this context, it will be beneficial to introduce symbols, rituals, and metaphors of the borderline before getting into the main issue. Likewise, the status the perception of the border supported by powerful metaphors occupies in the state discourse is necessary to discuss.

2.3.1 Border in state discourse

The political borders that emerged after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey constitute an important place in the state discourse. They have been considered to define the territory of the newly established Republic and the boundaries of the nation to be created. Also, these borders are thought of as a mechanism not only separate the country from the outside but also unite what's within the border because political borders do not only serve as a protection from outside threats but facilitate an interior growth. (Özgen, 2010)

In the nation-state building process, territorial integrity and national unity were most important aims that states want to dominate. So, one of the most crucial decisions in the process of creating a new nation was to unify all people living within the national boundaries under Turkish identity. In his book, Ferhat Tekin says that after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, it became the primary duty of the state to protect the newly drawn nation-state borders. The borders of the nation tried to be created under the Turkish national identity had to be protected against external threats no matter what the cost might be. (Tekin, 2014) Moreover, of course, all the historical, cultural and economic ties with people on the other side of the border need to be broken to consolidate the nation within the borders. That way, by controlling the borders, socio-economic relations with the other side of the border could be constrained, and the border communities could be taken under control (Tekin, 2014). The state had to follow certain processes to put this social engineering project into practice. It was the first step to making a law that banned border crossings. So, the law was enacted in December 1927 by Ankara and put into practice immediately. (Aras, 2015) This law has terminated the social, cultural and economic relations that have been going on for centuries on this borderline. After the new rules and measures on borders, economic relations in different forms that have been going on in this geography for centuries are now being defined as 'smuggling.' As we know, small-scale trade and smuggling are part of everyday life at many borders. Although they have seen the same in society, "in theory, smuggling and small-scale trade differ following their legal status. Traditionally, 'trade' is the legal and 'smuggling' is the illegal means of moving items from one side or border to the other." (Thuen, 1999, p. 741)

The new borders after the Treaty of Ankara are quite permeable because there were no physical measures to reduce border permeability. The main boundary acceptances in this period were stream beds, river trenches, mountain passes and similar natural formations. (Özgen, 2005) Hence, it was hard to make the control mechanisms in those regions work because a human-made border to dominate was absent there. As Wilson and Donnan say, where there is no state control, the practical and even the symbolic importance of the borders is reduced likewise. (Wilson & Donnan, 2002) In this context, the following interview with Ape Ahmet who lost his leg because of the mine on the borderline between Mürşitpınar and Kobane is meaningful to show this situation.

In the past when there were no landmines and barbed wires, everywhere was open. We were going and returning whenever we wanted. We were easily trading between Aleppo and Suruç. There were even times we would stay for 15 days. We were doing our business and returning. However, after the landmines, visits declined. Our relatives in Aleppo started not to come as well. Of course, there were people who would go despite the danger. (Ape Ahmed, age 89)

However, the 1950s would be the barbed wire, mine, and ambush period where the boundaries begin to be felt between the two sides, Kobane and Mürşitpınar. In 1956, Prime Minister Adnan Menderes and his ministers signed a law to mine the Syrian border. (Aras, 2015) With this decision, the areas where mines will be located are determined in detail. The main justification for this decision taken in the 1950s was the inability to stop the border passing and smuggling despite the boundary stones and barbed wires. According to Ramazan Aras, border violations before the execution of the law were presented in the newspapers of the time as the following. Especially the recent smugglings of animals and animal products in abundant quantities from our southern borders (Hatay, Gaziantep, Urfa, and Mardin Provinces)

to the countries we share borders have led the government in general and the Ministry of Trade and Economy in particular to take such actions. (Aras, 2015)

In the following years, all governments have started to thicken more this borderline. On May 27, 1960, the minefield was expanded. On March 12, 1972, another barbed wire was taken to reinforce the border. On September 12, 1980, the border was thickened by extra two rows of barbed wire parallel to each other. (Aras, 2015; Özgen, 2010) The most fundamental element that distinguishes the 1980s from other periods is that the Kurdish movement has started to threaten the national unity and national borders of Turkey and it has become a serious problem for Turkey. In 1984, together with the PKK's activities, border security was found to be inadequate, and the border is illuminated and reinforced by watchtowers and patrols. (Aras, 2015) Then, the area is fenced by an electric steel wire known as 'Italian wire' in the region. (Özgen, 2010) Therefore, these restrictions on border started to effect everyday life on the border region. And by these physical border obstacles, Turkish state started to aim to cut cultural and economic relations with the other side of the border. (Tekin, 2014)

Therefore, to protect and strengthen borderlines, boundary stones were put in 1927-1928 as the first concrete indicators of state power. (Özgen, 2010) Then from the 1950s onwards, we see mines and stronger barbed wires as more radical measures on the borderline between Syria and Turkey. In this period, we also start to see soldiers, patrols, watchtowers and border gate to protect these boundaries. Today, we are witnessing the technologically most advanced and strongest one within these measures: Wall. The basis of periodization is the permeability of the border. The authorities of the time who thought that the boundary stones and barbed wires were unable to prevent border crossings and smuggling until the 1950s have laid mines to

the borders starting from 1950s. However, due to the eventual border breaking practices of the border people, patrols and watchtowers were added on the borderline beside the mined zone. In the 1980s when economic reforms increased, it was intended to take border gates and economic activities on the borders under control. In addition to these economic factors, another crucial reason behind the implementation of new border building practices at that time was political mobilities particularly on the Syrian and Iraqi borders with the foundation of the PKK, Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan – The Workers Party of Kurdistan. (Özgen, 2010; Aras, 2015).

2.3.2 The symbols and rituals on borders

Border anthropology is also the anthropology of state power and its practice. Anthropology, therefore, contributes to how the power is embodied, coded and represented in the life of the people affected by the border practices of their states. So, this section will try to show how symbols and rituals of national and ethnic identities encode boundaries between states. Almost all social and political identities are shaped by the states today. (Wilson & Donnan, 2002) Borders are the places where people living on the border and the states constantly face each other. Therefore, border people and borders have multiple and temporary/transient identities.

One of the most important tools used by anthropologists to examine national and ethnic identities on the boundaries is works on symbols and rituals. All of a culture is based on shared symbols and rituals. All social and political systems are therefore expressed by the complex relationships of symbols and rituals. (Wilson & Donnan 2002) Moreover, to understand the political process, then, it is necessary to understand how the symbolic enters into politics, how political actors consciously

and unconsciously manipulate symbols, and how this symbolic dimension relates to the material bases of political power. (Kertzer, 1988) On the other hand, Kertzer defines rituals as symbolic behavior that is socially standardized and repetitive. This is the way in which many anthropologists now use the concept. He defines ritual as "action wrapped in a web of symbolism" too. For him, standardized, repetitive action lacking such symbolization is an example of habit or custom and not ritual. So, he means that symbolization gives the action much more important meaning. Through ritual, beliefs about the universe come to be acquired, reinforced, and eventually changed. (Kertzer, 1988) So, rituals help give meaning to our world.

Although many rituals are defined by using religious metaphors, it is clear that rituals cannot be reduced to religious or holy phenomena. The states also benefit from rituals to connect their citizen under their hegemony and to strengthen their national unity on borders. The Turkish state utilizes various metaphors and rituals to stress the importance and indispensability of the border.

2.3.2.1 The metaphor of honor

National lands are imagined as a female whose honor must be protected. The approach that perceives the motherland as a woman and the borders as its body is a reflection of the modern nation-state version of patriarchy. "The perception of honor, especially in the Middle East, "as a value under the protection of the men" (Bağlı & Özensel 2011, p. 38) charges the duty of protecting the honor (that is, the borders) of the state of the men. This conception that perceives the country as a woman and its border as her body and charges the man with the duty of protecting the borders is the reproduction of patriarchy within the modern nation-state." (Akyüz, 2017, p. 94)

Because honor is always seen as a phenomenon that must be protected by man. So, it is the duty of a soldier to protect the honor of the state.

Such understanding that unveils the state's consciousness is a paramount point to understand the relation between honor and borders. As Wendy Brown says the desire for walling may emanate in part from a wish to be relieved of a feminized national subject condition and emasculated state power and also from identification with sovereign political power. (Brown, 2010) Thus, as we think in the context of Turkey, protecting the feminized borders has the same meaning as protecting the male-dominant state sovereignty. Therefore, protecting sovereignty is possible only by protecting the feminized borders.

The feminization of the border is a situation seen in almost all the nation-state rhetoric. For example, in her article, *Sevgili ve Ana Olarak Erotik Vatan: Sevmek, Sahiplenmek, Korumak*, Afsaneh Najmabadi also focuses on the feminization of the border in the context of the Iran's borders. According to Najmabadi

The concept of honor that binds the masculinity of the nation and the femininity of the homeland has, in fact, Islamic roots but the concept, ripped from its religious meaning (the honor of Islam), has gained a national tone (the honor of Iran) with the transformation of the nation from being a religious community to being national one.” (Najmabadi, 2010, p. 120)

This situation is a result of the paranoia of the states that are afraid of partition. Particularly in the context of Turkey, these symbolic expressions attributed to the borders are frequently used. From the establishment of the republic until today, the symbols of flag, death or honor have consistently been employed by the state to protect its borders. In the context of the honor, border regions are considered to be either ‘occupied’ or protected areas as woman body. Delaney says, “Turkey as land is symbolically female. Given the particular of femaleness, it must be protected from the influx of corrupting influences from outside.” (Delaney, 2001, p. 278) So, she

states that this understanding of honor related to borders was based on the actions of the peasants against the occupation in the War of Independence in Turkey. In particular, Mustafa Kemal used this sentence very effectively in many border regions to encourage people in their land to fight and to protect their borders.

During my childhood trips to the border regions, I frequently encountered the phrase of ‘hudut namustur.’ (Border is honor). These words are written in the mountains with huge white colored stones. I did not know exactly what that time meant. But I knew what honor is. The honor was taught to be something to die for. You can find this phrase in many border regions even today.

Therefore, while doing border anthropology in Turkey, you need to be aware of these nationalist, dominant symbols and rituals to understand the importance of borders in the state discourse. Because, these symbolic expressions attributed to the borders are frequently used by the state.

2.3.2.2 The metaphor of flag and death

“Bayrakları bayrak yapan üstündeki kandır

Toprak eğer uğruna ölen varsa vatandır.” (Mithat Cemal Kuntay, On Beş Yılı Karşılarken)

(Meaning: The blood on it is what makes a flag a flag, and the territory is homeland when it has people dying for it.)

“Arkadaş, yurduma alçakları uğratma sakın!

Siper et gövdeni, dursun bu hayasızca akın.” (Mehmet Akif Ersoy, İstiklal Marşı)

(Meaning: My friend never let the wicked in my homeland! Shield your body to stop this immoral raid.)

“Bastığın yerleri ‘toprak’ diyerek geçme, tanı!

Düşün altındaki binlerce kefensiz yatanı.” (Mehmet Akif Ersoy, İstiklal Marşı)

(Meaning: Do not call where you walk on a ‘territory,’ know it! Think of those shroudless thousands lying beneath it.)

The above verses are taken from the poems known by almost everyone in Turkey.

The feeling of nationalism is so dominant in these lines. The land (homeland), the flag and the death in these poems are concepts that complement each other. In other words, these three concepts are so close together that they cannot be separated from each other. National land and the national flag are worth dying for. Thousands of people have died for these values in the past as we can see in these lines.

The concept of the border can be evaluated together with these three concepts because the border is the place where your land begins and ends. In addition, the border is the first and last territory where you wave the flag. Hence, boundaries or frontiers are the symbols of the sovereignty and honor of the nation-state. A destructive activity against the state borders harms its sovereignty and honor. So, the borders must be protected at the highest level whatever the cost is. It is also worth dying for. Likewise, the flag which is the most important symbol of the nation state also refers to sovereignty on borderlands. Moreover, the flag waving on the frontiers means that the borders are safe. In the state discourse, those who struggle to keep flag there and risk death are martyrs. They are the ones who give their lives for the sake of the state's sovereignty and for the sake of the borders that protect the country from external attacks. dir. The words of the Turkish president after the Russian jet

downed because of violating the Turkish airspace on November 24, 2015, are worthy of considering. President Erdoğan said, after the downed jet, “We have to protect our borders regardless of any costs. We will not allow such violations anywhere our flag flaps. Our security officers there have to take the necessary action at the cost of their lives.”⁵ This statement makes it the duty of a security officer to die for the borders because to defend the national borders of the country necessitates sacrificing one’s life.

In this context, such nationalist symbols and discourses about the borders are also asserting that the borders of the state are its ‘natural’ boundaries. And it marks the historical space of the nation's homeland.

In this way, the territorial borders of a state become associated with an ‘imaginary process’ of linking present with the past and an ‘active process’ of drawing lines of inclusion and exclusion. The territorial borders and the cultural, historical, economic and political boundaries of the state thus become analogous. (Katy, 2004, p.5).

Even today, the things that are experienced on the Turkey and Syria border are the continuation of this idea that has lasted for centuries. So, to ensure border security, fight against 'terrorists' who try to infiltrate into country continues to be praised.

2.4 First indicator: Boundary stone

“Kêlikê sipê weke yê tirba hebun u bi wan hudud nîşankiribun...” (Aras, 2015)

(Meaning: They were white stones such as gravestones, and the boundary was marked by them.)

⁵ <http://netinternethaber.com/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-sinirlarimizi-korumak-zorundayiz/105397/>

Boundary stones can be defined as the first concrete elements of the process of partition of post-Ottoman geography. It cannot be said that geographical separation was done with such good intentions that it was done to prevent ethnic and social conflicts in the region.

A political separation has been considered as an objective description. A previously unified territory is divided into two or more parts, and each part is demarcated, perhaps with fences, walls, paint or barbed wire, and official posts, where passes may be demanded; but reactions to a political partition are also subjective. One sees a homeland sadly broken up; another denies it as ever a shared homeland. (O'Leary, 2012, p. 29)

The political partitions in India-Pakistan, Northern Ireland, Basque (Pais Vasco) and Palestine can be given as the most striking examples of this situation. This process of partition, which is also seen as the partition of man's house or homeland, is supported by many ethnic, religious and economic interests. In other words, these attempts by the ruling powers to divide geographies are due to the reasons for establishing and maintaining power in these geographies. Kurdish geography is also divided and shared by new emerging nation-states like Turkey after the collapse of the Ottoman State. However, the function of the border drawn in the context of Turkey is different from the Indian, Irish, Palestinian, and Basque cases. While the border in the Turkish context functions as a barrier put between the Kurds who are the majority at the both sides of the border, in other cases, it separates two different nations/peoples from each other. Their similarity is the inconsideration of the priorities of the border communities in border building processes. The commonalities of the millions of people who share the same territories were disregarded in these border regions.

So, new nation-states which emergent on the divided geography after the Ottomans have left behind great pains and traumas especially in the border regions between Syria-Turkey and Iraq-Turkey. Nevertheless, the Kurds, a people of this

geography, have tried to continue their relations with the other sides of the borders despite all obstacles. Because, there has always been a memory among the Kurds keeping the alliance of ethnic structure, language, history and faith. (Aras, 2015) Retired teacher Mahmut Hoca who has spent his all life in Mürşitpınar and Suruç explains this situation as follows:

I was a teacher. When I tell the history of this region to my students, I am having a hard time. I do not know what to say when my children ask a question about the other side of the border. But I am telling them they are also our brothers and sisters. And also, I am trying to explain to them how the people living here have carried their cultural and ethnic values to this day and how they have struggled. (Mahmut Hoca, age 49)

The boundary stones, which are the first symbolic and political elements dividing the borders, are also the first representatives of the state authority in the border region. By boundary stones placed on the borderline, authorities aim to show us that one side of the border belongs to 'us', and the other side belongs to 'others'. James Scott says that if modern states want to establish a sophisticated control mechanism over the society, it must first have knowledge of society and geography the society lives on. However, when the modern state fails to do so, it faces serious conflicts and problems. (Scott, 1998) Like the modern states that fail, ignoring all the common features of the geography, Turkish state also thought that relative communities living on both sides of the border could be separated from each other by these border stones. So, they responded to the resistance mechanisms like 'smuggling' and 'illegal crossings' developed by border people with military border measures and they decided to place boundary stones and fences on borderlines between Syria-Turkey in 1927 and 1928. By these methods which involve different forms of violence, Turkish state aimed to finish border crossings. However, it caused serious problems in the border region.

Neşe Özgen, who has been conducting on border studies for a long time and has also been working on Iraq-Syria border states that territorial boundaries between Syria and Turkey were determined in 1928. After being drawn on maps in 1923, it is understood that boundary stones were settled in 1928. According to her, the most important feature that distinguishes this period from later periods is that the boundary is undetermined ('belli belirsiz'). In this period, kinship relations and border trade continue in the usual way. On the boundary determined by the stones, border people would get daily official permission called as 'pasavan' to go to the fields on the other side of the border until 1936. (Özgen, 2010) However, as we have learned from the border narratives, the majority of the border people did not need to use 'pasavan' to go and back. Halil Yavuz, who lives off farming states the following concerning pasavan:

I had heard from my father. Obtaining a card was necessary for crossing the border. However, receiving that card was troublesome. Nobody wanted to strive for it. In any event, none thought that crossing to the other side was prohibited. Hence, people were crossing the border as if they were entering from their houses to their gardens. However, when the landmines were laid after the 1950s, the situation had changed. People would visit even their relatives in fear. (Halil Yavuz, age 77)

The transformation there is remarkable. The borderline, which is indeterminate before mines, has become an object of fear after mines. In other words, people who do not even need to get the 'pasavan' to cross the border before mines, talk about the difficulty of border crossings after 1950's. As Neşe Özgen said, the border perception of that time was indeterminate (Özgen, 2010). Experiences of border people confirm that statement. However, after the mine laying starting from 1954 (Özgen, 2010; Aras, 2015), the border started to become more determined and preventive.

The Border Assignment Guidelines for Local Authorities prepared by the Ministry of Interior Research Center about the boundary stones placed by a certain system after 1926 states:

The boundary stones on the Syrian border are numbered in 1926 as following: between Çobanbey Akdeniz as 1-480 and Çobanbey and Cizre 481-1620. Due to the integration of Hatay in 1939 the boundary stones between Taşköprü (Meydan-ı Ekbez)-Payas-Akdeniz (313-480) are canceled. Instead, new boundary stones numbered 1-462 were added from Tahtaköprü to Akdeniz through Hatay province. (Kurt & Çoğğun, 2007, p. 34, own translation. For the original text, see Appendix, 4)

The border people perceived these first interventions of the state on borders very differently because local people did not care about these sanctions of the state for many years. Hundreds of stories have been told about it. Retired teacher Mahmut Hoca tells:

As far as I know from my dad and my grandfather, there was nothing more than a few white stones on this borderline before the 1950s. Those stones were not the things that make life difficult. Since the only border needs to be identified, those stones are placed for the sake of formality. (Mahmut Hoca, age 49)

Thus, we can say that the first physical intervention of the state in this border region, as far as we understood by fieldwork in Mürşitpınar and nearby settlements, has been these stones.

2.5 Barbed wires and mines

Piştî ku mayîn danîn, tirbê xelkên jî danîn. (Aras,2015, p. 125)

(By putting mines, they also dig people's graves.)

Turkish state laid mines on Turkey-Syria border to prevent 'smuggling' and to protect its national economy in 1954. (Özgen, 2010) Moreover, it laid mines to

protect its political borders that are the symbol of the territorial independence.

(Tekin, 2014) The primary reasons of mine-layings in this region are that those borders were causing conflicts among the states of the region after the World War I and smuggling activities were easy to do because of the geographic characteristics of the region. (Aras, 2015) When we consider the borders with Iraq and Iran, we see that geographic barriers of those regions are absent from the Syrian border. The suitability of the geography is what makes smuggling and crossing easy. Again, as Ramazan Aras mentions, the inability to prevent border crossing and smuggling in that region motivated the authorities to strengthen the border building practices. (Aras, 2015)

Besides, the issue is not simple as seen. The mined security line created at the border can be defined as an area where law and individual human rights are suspended. It is necessary to explain the properties/features of the mines and also it is a need to answer how these mines are defined. More precisely, what mechanisms do anti-personnel and anti-tank mines mentioned by smugglers and local people have?

When we looked at the situation before the wall was built, the mined area started immediately after the barbed wire on the borderline. Moreover, there is a second barbed wire after this mined area, where the width varies from region to region. After this second barbed wire area, there is a buffer zone where border guard troops patrol with military vehicles. In this area, there are also watchtowers raised at certain intervals along the border, which we will discuss later in detail. The measures did not end with this, and there is a third barbed wire after this buffer zone. And finally, after these all barriers we reach the other side of border, the lands of Syria. Official sources reply to what kind of mines are used in this mined field between barbed wires:

According to the booklet Mine Clearing Standards for the Syrian Border (SSMTS)⁶ prepared by the Ministry of Defense on January 31, 2012, an anti-personnel landmine is “a mine designed to explode with the presence, approach or touch of a person and manufactured to debilitate, injure or kill one person or more when exploded” (SSMTS, 2012). An anti-tank landmine, on the other hand, is “a mine designed to explode with the presence, approach or touch of a tank or another vehicle and manufactured to destroy and immobilize such vehicle.” (SSMTS, 2012)

These mines, which are still in existence today, continue to be a great danger for border people in these regions. When we look at the data published by Turkish Medical Associations (Türk Tabipler Birliği) on July 7, 2009, it appears that the government violates international treaties signed in the context of mine destruction and clearance like Ottawa Convention. According to the Ottawa Convention, the Turkish state had to clean up all mines in its territory by 2014 and make the necessary aid to those affected by them. (Aras, 2015)

In this period, the most active agents on the borderlines were smugglers. They introduce themselves as guides (rêber or rêzan in Kurdish). Because they know the region very well. So, they naturally know locations of the mines planted. This situation has led to the guides to specialize in the smuggling business at the same time. They were also successful at communicating with the soldiers and authorities at the same time. So, they were seen as respected people in the society. Smuggling practiced by men to a large extent, functions as an experience of gaining a status in society. Aunt Halime who lives in Mürşitpınar and has 11 children describes these guys who have good communication with the authorities as follows:

⁶ http://www.mineactionstandards.org/fileadmin/MAS/documents/nmas-national-standards/turkey/Turkey_mine_action_standards.pdf.

My little one, at that time, we could not even close to the border. Most of them who are going to the other part of the border were rich men. They were giving money and gifts to the soldiers. My auntie children stayed on the other side of the border. They were allowing us just 1 or 2 times in a year to go and see them. But those rich people were not like us. They would go every week. (Aunt Halime, age 87)

On the other side, there were also porters (hammal) in the smuggling business. Their mission is to pass the goods safely across the border. They were also in charge of dismantling the mines in the event of danger. How could they do that? How can they dare to do something like this at the expense of their death? As locals say, most of the information on demining comes from the military. Those who received training on demining in the military were more successful in surviving. On the other hand, some say that they receive training on demining from soldiers around borders. Those who have good connections with the soldiers are more fortunate than those who do not have. They generally try to establish good relations with the state authorities and soldiers. In order to do their work, they give soldiers food, beverages and money. Here, particularly squaddies (er) are chosen to deal.

Mines, one of the most rigid mechanisms in the state's border construction practices, have also caused significant distinctions in the perception of time and history in the borderlands. For instance, in individual and social memory and many stories, we see periodization as 'before mines' (berî mayînan in Kurdish) and 'after mines' (piştî mayînan in Kurdish). (Aras, 2015) Therefore, mines will remain traumatic in the chronology of the region's history due to the thousands of injuries and deaths they cause. Aunt Halime (age 87) says that “before the mines (berî mayinan), life was good. We were not scared much. Our children were walking around comfortably. However, after the mines (piştî mayinan), it was not the same anymore. We started to live with fear. Life became difficult.” You can witness

periodization like this in many stories told in the region. So, we can say that as a border building practice, mines work as a strong tool to determine periodization.

On the other hand, despite all violent and brutal barriers, border people continued to communicate and trade with the other side of the border. Besides, cultural, social and ethnic ties with the other side of the border continued to be preserved. As one of the most brutal border building practice, mine laying could not prevent people from deeming the borders null although hundreds were disabled.

2.6 Watchtowers, soldiers, patrols and the border gate

2.6.1 Watchtowers

The architectural structure designed towards the end of the eighteenth century and used as a prison was called by The British theorist Bentham as 'panopticon.' This circular structure that has a central tower in the middle used by the guardians to watch prisoners in their cells for 24 hours. However, prisoners constantly monitored by the guardians are unaware that they are being watched. It was thought that these surveillance tactics of the prison authorities would affect and change the behavior of prisoners. It was thought that the subjects who thought they were being watched by an unknown person would be able to obey the rules better and make the discipline easier. (Bentham & Bozoviç, 1995)

This architectural thought of Bentham was a source of inspiration for the construction of many modern prisons in later periods. Foucault, however, claims that this thought is not limited to prisons, but is practiced in almost all areas of life, pointing to the existence of a mechanism that is beginning to take control of all areas of human life. (Foucault, 2000) Foucault's debate on power in the 1970s was

reinterpreted by Giorgio Agamben in this last period when modern state power became more dominant over different new forms. Agamben says that the panopticon concept is no longer an architectural building, but rather a 'paradigm' that regulates the relationship between power and the daily lives of people. (Agamben, 2002)

We also find the discussions on the concept of the panopticon in the studies on the border of Mexico-USA. Using the concept of 'panopticon border,' Tony Payan analyzes how the political borders are militarized over time by the use of different technological elements through the example of Mexico-USA border. (Payan, 2006) So, the concept of panopticon will help to understand the security practices that state authorities put into practice along the Turkish-Syrian border. Measures initiated with boundary stones and barbed wire have been brought to a much stricter level with the laying of mines. Then, security has been brought to a more systematic level with soldiers, patrols, watchtowers and border gates. What led the state to do so was its desire to control the increasing capital and human mobility and the Kurdish movement that started to grow in the region with the 1980s. (Özgen, 2010) The state, aiming to prevent the illegal border trade and border crossing, thought that it would succeed utilizing personnel, border gates, and watchtowers.

Military border watchtowers constructed at certain intervals along the borderline in the 1970s are important structures that the state has established to provide border security and to prevent any 'illegal' border crossings. Increasing political activities in the region and on the borderline in the late 1970s and early 80s, especially the emergence of the PKK and its conflict with other Kurdish political movements, and the illegal arm and drug trafficking by political movements created the need for increasing the security measures on the borderline. (Aras, 2015) So, the border is getting thicker with the new security measures says that new mines were

laid by the military authorities at the locations of demining areas during this period and watchtowers were constructed where a soldier was guarding every 50 meters. (Özgen, 2010) Therefore, these watchtowers have made the crossings between the borders more difficult and they have led to the spread of the idea that the state always controls the border. However, border people have also developed new practices against these practices. For example, as we understand from the border narratives, after these precautions, border people have begun to cross the border, not the days, but the nights as dark as pitch. So, military watchtowers that do not have a serious lighting system could have been more deterrent for daylight hours. On the other hand, when we take the Mexico-US border into consideration as a criterion, it will be seen that the level of security technologies of Turkey-Syria border was very low at that time. That is because high-intensity lighting systems and sensors are used to block 'illegal' crossings on the US-Mexico border by US authorities. However, although these measures taken by the state along the border with Syria have reduced the border crossings for daytime to some extent, they could not prevent border crossings. At that times, the US and Turkey strengthen the borderlines for similar reasons. Authorities of both states told that they fortified their borders against the cross-border arm and drug smuggling. (Vila, 2003; Aras, 2015). In addition, increasing nationalism and state security policies are now legitimizing such steps. The steps taken by European countries and Turkey to prevent the flow of refugees from Syria, and the new border building measures taken by the United States for Mexicans, should be assessed in this context. The election of Trump as president in America and the increasing refugee opposition in Europe have played an influential role in these steps. So, this concern, especially after the Syrian civil war and Trump's presidency, was primarily intended to reinforce the borders to prevent the flow of

refugees. However, beyond the flow of refugees and economic reasons stated by Turkey, political reasons of the time played a more active role in border fortifications. Especially, the PKK threat that emerged with the late 1970s should be considered in this regard. (Aras, 2015; Özgen, 2010)

2.6.2 Soldiers and patrols

In the border regions, after the mine fields, the patrols (karakol, devriye) are described as the most feared border measures. Patrol and soldier are elements that complete each other according to border people. And these measures are seen as agents that produce fear. Due to the fear of being exposed to different forms of torture and the fear of arrest, patrols and soldiers are seen as a fear mechanism by all border people. You can feel this fear in almost all the stories and experiences the local people tell on the border. Because in Turkey, there is a law that permits soldiers to arrest, torture and, when necessary kill people who are crossing the border 'illegally.'

Aras (2015) says that for the first time, the Law numbered 1126 on Prevention and Pursuance of Smuggling was announced on December 10, 1927, and revised twice in 1929 and 1932. The second article of the Law numbered 3497 on Protection of Land Borders and Security passed on July 16, 1956, revised on March 10, 1983, and finalized in 1988 reads:

The responsibility to protect and police the land borders appertains to the Land Forces Command and it was specified for the border units as: (1) to protect the border and provide security within its jurisdiction, (2) to prevent criminal acts and catch criminals in the first degree prohibited military zone established throughout the entry-exit smuggling line in the customs region and to pursue and catch perpetrators of witnessed crimes committed in this zone in the second degree prohibited military zone, to perform necessary legal proceeding about the perpetrators, and to deliver the caught person and evidences of the crime to the local security forces. Members of border units have all rights and authorities given to security forces by other laws including

the power to use arms. (Aras, 2015, p. 59, own translation. For original text, see Appendix, 5)

This law is applicable in all border regions. However, according to border people, the border regions where the batting order is easily practiced are the regions where the Kurdish geography was partitioned by artificial borders. With this law, the military has the authority to use guns and kill anyone who is crossing the border 'illegally' in the country. This law is one of the main reasons for fear of being tortured and arrested, especially for people living in frontier villages. So, the basic factor why patrols and watchtowers are seen as such violent mechanisms is the active role of the soldiers in these two mechanisms.

These violent security mechanisms have left permanent marks in people's memory. The persecutions that people are exposed to at the borderline have an important place in this memory. In many stories to be told later, you can witness those pains.

Halil Yakut (age 34), a teacher in Suruç says the following:

My father was telling. He hears sounds of two bullets. He goes outside to understand what is going on. He is told the sound came from the border. He wants to go towards the border. Everyone tells him "what are you doing Hacı, what is your business there" to turn him. However, Hacı is stubborn. He goes and sees a dead person near the wires. He first calls the soldier, then goes to the military cottage. Nobody answers him. Hacı takes the body to the mosque. He then learns that it was a shepherd's body from one of the neighboring villages. The shepherd follows his sheep to the border and gets shot by a soldier.

Besides, there were some ways to cross the border despite the patrols and soldiers. One of them was bribery. When we look at the interviews with the border people, we see that there are negotiations and bargaining between the soldiers who come to the downtown on Sundays and the locals. According to stories, there were military

officials who made direct contact with locals and guides to accept a bribe. In return, soldiers and officials on border turned a blind eye to border crossings. Mahmut Hoca explains the situation as the following:

When we look at the stories, people were afraid of patrols more than barbed wires and landmines. That is because the patrolling soldiers were using their guns immediately because of fear. However, there was a way to make a deal with them: bribery. Of course, one had to be rich to bribe. The notables of the region were negotiating. They were the smugglers, after all. (Mahmut Hoca, age 49)

After the deadly landmines, neither watchtowers nor patrols could stop border crossings. Like the other border building practices, these measures could not deter people. Hence, the cross-border economic and cultural ties maintained their effects in this period as well.

2.6.3 The border gate

The late 1970s and early 1980s were the years when Turkey took measures by more than one border building practices due to economic and political reasons. The foundation and activation of the PKK and Turgut Özal's economic steps necessitated the prioritization of the border security as well. (Özgen, 2010) Hence, an additional border building practice was implemented to prevent illegal economic activities and provide border security: border gates. What was aimed with border gates was to control economic activities with neighboring countries and passage of people through borders.

Therefore, it appears that the security measures on the borderlines, especially the practice of establishing border gates, are not independent of the central government's relations with the neighboring states and the political and economic developments in the region. As we know, border practices are inevitably affected by

the political movements in the center. Mürşitpınar border gate, which was closed on February 18, 2016, due to the war in Syria, is the best example of this situation. The events that occur on the other side of the border define the precautions you need to take in your borderline. The border gate that was already inactive from the beginning has been closed due to the war in the neighboring country. The reasons stated by the state were again the 'terrorism' threat and refugee flows. However, the same state did not deem it appropriate to close the gates through which the largest numbers of terrorists and refugees had been passing. Karkamış and Öncüpınar are two of them. Hence, it is obvious that the aim here was to prevent a possible Kurdish corridor and cut the ties between the inside and outside rather than terrorism.

Besides, when we look at the life stories of the border people, we see that Mürşitpınar Border Gate which was built between Syria's Kobane and Turkey's Suruç is not mentioned much because the border gate of Mürşitpınar has been neglected by the state authorities and has therefore officially provided service very briefly. According to locals, it provides service just three years officially. Then, because of the war in Syria, authorities decided to close it again. And also, the vast majority of crossings to the other side of the border have been practiced by 'illegal' routes. Rigid restrictions on properties at the border gate have led border people to prefer other routes. Tradesman Faruk Yavuz says:

The existence of the border gate did not affect our lives and our relations with the other side, Kobane. We all knew the mined areas. And according to it, everyone had found a way to cross the border. Nobody was using the border gate to bring goods from the other side. (Faruk Yavuz, age 45)

After the 1950's, when mines and barbed wires turned the border into a difficult structure to overcome, smuggling became the most important social and economic opportunity for the border region. Border gates have not been preferred due to both

economic and security reasons. So, traditional economic relations, despite the traumatic consequences, have continued to be preferred. At the end of the 1970s, the first passports began to be issued, and gate and custom began to be identified as border categories. (Özgen, 2010) It seems that the strategies of state authorities to control border movements through the border gate mechanism have not been successful until the early 1980s. With the 1980 coup d'état and the emergence of the PKK in 1984, situations in border regions will begin to change radically because state authorities are beginning to take tough measures to ensure border security. Despite such precautions, the people did not prefer the border gate. It is said that the gate is used only for visiting relatives. Apart from that, instead of the border gate, informal methods continued to be utilized for economic transactions.

2.7 The wall

In her *Walled States, Waning Sovereignty*, Wendy Brown says

[w]hat we have come to call a globalized world harbors fundamental tensions between the opening and barricading, fusion and partition, erasure and re-inscription. These tensions materialize as increasingly liberalized borders, on the one hand, and the devotion of unprecedented funds, energies, and technologies to border fortification, on the other. (Brown, 2010, pp. 7-8)

One of the places where these tensions are nested is the walls. The best known of these walls are the wall that the US built on its southern border and the wall that Israel constructed on the West Bank. There are many other examples that remind these walls around the world. After Apartheid, the electrical security barriers built by South Africa on the Zimbabwe border is also one of them. Another example is the 3-meter wall built by Saudi Arabia along the Yemen border. Still more walls are coming. The Saudis have similar plan for the Iraqi border. Turkey continues to

construct the world's third longest wall along the border of Syria. And, despite all reactions over a proposed Baghdad wall, the United States military hopes to wall the territory marked by Green Line. With the walls they built, those countries are aiming to secure their borders. However, what states aim with such security barriers is not the same. While South Africa and India want to prevent refugee flows from poorer countries by such walls, the US claims to construct the wall to cut the flow of drugs and illegal immigrants from the south. (Brown, 2010) Israel and Turkey claim to aim with such barriers to protect their borders against potential terrorist threats and stop illegal border crossing. Hence, the legitimization arguments of both states for construction of walls as a border building practice. However, according to Weizmann, the walls constructed by Israel on the Palestinian territories should be considered as an invasion and assimilation practice. (Weizmann, 2007) Likewise, the border people deem the wall constructed by the Turkish state on the Syrian borderline as an invasion practice. On this, Wendy Brown says that "the refugee influx," "terrorism" and "smuggling" constitute the basic arguments of those states for constructing walls and other physical barriers.

If these walls vary in what they aim to deter -poor people, workers, or asylum seekers; drugs, weapons, or other contraband; smuggled taxable goods; kidnapped or enslaved youth; terror; ethnic or religious mixing; peace and other political futures- there are surely common dimensions to their proliferation at this moment in world history. Let us start with a series of paradoxes. First, even as those across a wide political spectrum -neoliberals, cosmopolitans, humanitarians, and left activists- fantasize a world without borders (whether consequent to global entrepreneurship, global markets, global citizenship, or global governance), nation-states, rich and poor, exhibit a passion for wall building. (Brown, 2010, p. 20)

The basic goal of modern nation-states is to secure their territorial boundaries with these walls. By these walls built to prevent danger from outside, they also want to strengthen their sovereignty on the boundaries. However, I think these walls reveal

another truth: fear. As we said before, in the classical geopolitical analysis framework, borders are considered as “strategic locations or defense lines which venture their dominance or sovereignty within a global state-centered system.” (Pratt & Brown, 2000) And according to Nick Vaughan-Williams, borders consider as “not natural, neutral nor static but historically contingent, politically charged, dynamic phenomena that first and foremost involve people and their everyday lives.” (Williams. 2009, p. 1) So, to protect these strategic locations, the security of border regions where contain many varieties is crucial for nation-states. Because as dynamic phenomena, border regions are the areas of encounters for people in different identities. Therefore, they always deny any homogeneity imposed by nation-states. As Horsman and Marshall say that “if the principal fiction of the nation-state is ethnic, racial, linguistic and cultural homogeneity, then borders always give the lie to this construct.” (Horsman & Marshall, 1995, p. 45) In the same way, homogeneous ethnicity, nationality and culture basis of nation-states are controverted along their borders. This situation is the main reason that makes it difficult for the powers which are unable to get "others" to adopt to the ethnic and cultural values to have control on borderlines and frontiers. So, at first sight, what appears to be the symbol of state sovereignty, in fact, reveals the weakness of state sovereignty over differences.

Counterintuitively, perhaps, it is the weakening of state sovereignty, and more precisely, the detachment of sovereignty from the nation-state, that is generating much of the frenzy of nation-state wall building today. Rather than resurgent expressions of nation-state sovereignty, the new walls are icons of its erosion. While they may appear as hyperbolic tokens of such sovereignty, like all hyperbole, they reveal a tremulousness, vulnerability, dubiousness, or instability at the core of what they aim to express qualities that are themselves antithetical to sovereignty and thus elements of its undoing. (Brown, 2010, p. 24)

I believe that the wall that the Turkish state continued to build on the Syrian border was constructed for similar reasons. The wall, which is said to have been built

on the threat of 'terrorism,' can also be read as a sign that sovereignty is in danger. Well, is there a terrorist threat in the region as the state claims? As far as Kurdish defense forces in Kobane, YPG (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel – People's Protection Units), have not attacked the territory of Turkey so far, it is unlikely to support this claim.⁷ So as all people in the region agree, the real issue here is that as a nation, Kurds are seen as a threat to sovereignty by the Turkish state. In other words, for Turkish state, the establishment of a possible Kurdish state or Kurdish federation in Syria means the weakening of sovereignty on both sides of the border. Almost all interviews with border people directly support this idea. Before that, I think it would be useful to look at the Syrian civil war and its consequences to strengthen this idea.

2.7.1 Syrian civil war

The Syrian Civil War, also known as the Syrian Uprising or the Syrian Crisis is an ongoing armed conflict in Syria between forces loyal to the Assad's government and those seeking to oust it. The unrest began on 15 March 2011 with the popular protest that grew nationwide by April 2011. These protests were part of the wider Middle Eastern protest movement known as Arab Spring. The reference point of street protests in Tunisia where the Arab spring started was the economic crisis in the country. In his book titled *The Arab Uprising*, James L. Gelvin says "The first Arab uprising, which broke out in Tunisia, took place a little over two years after the onset of the economic crisis of 2008." (Gelvin, 2012, p. 23) However, the protests that eventually spread to a vast geography started to target the governments and presidents in respective countries. The influence of opposition groups such

⁷ <http://bianet.org/english/world/179860-pyd-co-chair-muslim-ypg-never-attacked-turkey-turkey-would-never-fight-isis>

demonstrations, which started to lead the masses should not be ignored. The Syrian case was a part of such process. (Yıldırım, 2015) So, protesters demanded the resignation of President Bashar al-Assad, whose family has held the presidency in Syria since 1971, as well as the end of Ba'ath Party rule, which began in 1963.

In April 2011, the Syrian Army was deployed to quell the uprising and soldiers fired on demonstrators across the country. After months of military sieges, the protests evolved into an armed rebellion. Opposition forces, mainly composed of defected soldiers and civilian volunteers, resisted without central leadership. The Syrian government is further upheld by military support from Russia and Iran, while USA, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey support the rebels. In such an environment, Kurds whose existence was denied under the influence of Pan-Arabism as a political rhetoric and popular ideology starting from the mid-1950s started to uprising in their region. (Yıldırım, 2015) The main reason of such situation was the deprivation of Kurds in the region from cultural, linguistic, and political rights for years. In this regard, Nurettin Zaza articulates that "The coup of the Colonel Hariri on March 9, 1963, brought the Baath Party to power. The party that had very few members could remain in power merely with military and police oppression. In this context, the Baathists prepared black lists containing people known for their allegiance to democracy. Those on the lists were being expatriated and subjected to imprisonment and torture. Especially Kurds had been the real victims of such practices for years. (Zaza, 2001) Kurds who started to take the streets together with the opposition groups at the beginning of the Syrian civil war that broke out after such a period of denial and oppression have left the opposition elements and started to form their organizations due to the pressures by Turkey. (Yıldırım, 2015)

So, Kurds in Rojava that are an ethnic minority making up approximately 10% of the population in Syria have been angered by ethnic discrimination and the denial of their cultural and linguistic rights, as well as the frequent denial of their citizenship. The Rojava revolution is a political revolution and military conflict taking place in Northern Syria. During the Syrian Civil War, a coalition of Arab, Kurdish and some Turkmen groups have sought to establish the constitution of Rojava inside the de facto autonomous region, while military wings and allied militias have fought to maintain control of the region. The revolution has been characterized by the prominent role played by women both on the battlefield and within the newly formed political system, as well as the implementation of democratic confederation, a form of grassroots democracy based on the local assemblies.

On August 1, 2012, Assad forces on the periphery of the country were pulled into the intensifying conflict that was taking place in Aleppo. During this large withdrawal from the north, the People Protection Units (YPG), a pro-Kurdish militia that formed after the 2004 al-Qamishlo riots took control of at least parts of Qamishlo, Efrin, Amude and Kobane with very little conflict or casualties. On 2 August 2012, the National Coordination Committee for Democratic Change announced that most Kurdish-majority cities in Syria except Qamishlo and Hasaka were no longer controlled by government forces and were now being controlled by Kurdish political parties. Kadri Yıldırım's writings confirm these developments.

When the Assad regime decided to retreat its soldiers from Rojava in the second year of the civil war and put it into practice, the PYD forces took control of main cities of the region in July 2012. In this context, Kurds gained the administration of Kobane on July 19. On July 20 Efrin and on July 23 the towns of Dirbesiye and Haseke followed. Kurds took possession of many locations except for Qamishlo before the end of the summer. (Yıldırım, 2015, p. 117, own translation. For the original text, see Appendix, 6)

After declaring autonomy, grassroots organizers, politicians, and other community members have radically changed the social and political make-up of the area. The extreme laws restricting independent political organizing, women's freedom, religious and cultural expression and the discriminatory policies carried out by the Assad government have been abandoned. But after these all conflicts and struggles, the Kurds had to fight to fundamentalist groups in the region.

The siege of Kobane was launched by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (also known as ISIS or Daesh) militants on 13 September 2014 to capture the Kobane Canton and its main city of Kobane in northern Syria, in the de facto autonomous region of Rojava. By 2 October 2014, ISIS succeeded in capturing 350 Kurdish villages and towns within the vicinity of Kobane, “generating a wave of some 300.000 displaced Kurds, who fled across the border into Turkey’s Şanlıurfa province. By January 2015, this had risen to about 400.000”⁸ In return, the Kurdish Protection Units (YPG) backed by heavily armed Peshmergas of the Kurdistan Regional Government, and US-allied Arab militaries’ airstrikes began to recapture Kobane. Then, the city of Kobane was fully recaptured on 27 January 2015. As a consequence of this, more than 300.000 Syrian refugees flowed into Turkey to escape from the ISIS advance into the Kobane.

After the Kobane victory, to block the possibility of ‘Kurdish Corridor’ trying to be created by PYD in the north of Syria, Turkey has begun to take new measures. So, Turkish state launched an operation named as Operation Euphrates Shield (Turkish: Fırat Kalkanı Harekatı) to prevent possible Kurdish corridor in Northern Syria. Operations took place in the region between the Euphrates River to the east

⁸ <http://m.motherjones.com/politics/2015/01/airstrikes-syria-kobani-statistics-operation-inherent-resolve>

and rebel-held area around Azaz to the west. By this operation, the Turkish military and Turkey-backed Syrian rebel groups tried to stop the advance of Syrian Democratic Forces mostly formed by YPG. The main purpose of all these operations is to divide the corridor that the Kurds want to create.

Therefore, there is a very close relation between the wall built on the Syrian border and these all operations launched by the Turkish army and its allies. Synchronously with the operations, the border wall continues to be built on Syrian border which is controlled almost entirely by Kurdish forces.

2.7.2 Wall on the Turkish and Syrian border

According to many pro-government authorities, Turkey begins to build a wall along its border with Syria in a bid to halt ‘terrorists’ crossing illegally to join ISIS or PKK. For them, it hopes to put a stop to the tide of ‘terrorists’ flooding in from Syria. So, the Turkish government announced a plan in July 2015 after suicide attack left 32 dead in Suruç, Şanlıurfa and decided to construct the third longest wall in the world along its border with Syria to keep out ‘terrorists.’ The plan for the high-security border fence was announced in July; just three days after a suicide attack in the border town of Suruç left 32 people dead. As well as 900 kilometers concrete wall also announced to build along the Syrian border. The plan includes barbed wire, a dedicated patrol road, and a reinforced fence. There will also be 24-hour surveillance with drones, mobile surveillance vehicles and an integrated command and control center. Former Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç announced a ‘renewed effort’ to avoid the entry of ‘terrorists and foreign fighters and to ease humanitarian passages’ after a cabinet meeting in Ankara in July. “The critical issue

here is preventing the entry of terrorists (into Turkey) and taking physical measures along the border against the terrorist threat”⁹ he continued.

Almost 270 kilometers of the wall (see Figure 4) separating Turkey and Syria has already been built, Anadolu Agency reported on 3 November 2016 citing Turkish Defense Minister Fikri Işık.

The construction of the wall will be completed in the first half of 2017, Işık said when visiting the Hatay province on the border with Syria. Around 520 kilometers is left, he added noting that construction of the second part of the wall – 200 kilometers – has already been launched.¹⁰



Figure 4: The wall on the borderline between Mürşitpınar and Kobane. (January 2017)

On the other hand, Turkey’s new border wall angers Kurds on both sides of the border because Kurds believe that the Turkish authorities have started building a wall on the frontiers with Syria to divide the Kurdish majority populations into both

⁹ <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3274756/Shutting-door-horse-bolted-Turkey-begins-build-wall-border-Syria-bid-halt-jihadis-crossing-illegally-join-ISIS.html>

¹⁰ <https://www.almasdarnews.com/article/turkey-complete-syrian-border-wall-2017/>

sides of the border. Without informing the local governments and people in the cities in southeastern Turkey, the authorities sent in construction crews to start building a three-meter-high wall on the borderline with Syria. So many Kurds have spent several days on 'death fasts' on the both sides of the border to protest the wall called as a 'wall of shame' by border people. As we said before, the Turkish interior ministry and other authorities say that the wall was being built 'for security reasons' to stop terrorism and to curb smuggling and illegal crossings. On terrorism, Elden says "it is important to note that 'terror' first emerges as a tactic used by states, with Robespierre suggesting that the difference between the operations of liberty and those of tyranny is simply the purpose, not the means." (Elden, 2009, p. 17) It is hard for states to take such actions without utilizing the terrorism discourse. Using the terrorism discourse is a necessity for states to escape from international sanctions. Parallel to this issue, an interviewee who wants his or her name be covered states the following:

They will imprison me for saying this, but the source of terrorism is the state. If they do not terrorize, there will be no problem here. Why do they construct a wall between Kobane and us? Has any bullet shot from Kobane to here? No. Has the YPG perpetrated a single attack against Turkey? No. The state wants to escalate terrorism by constructing these walls since states benefit from terrorism the most. Otherwise, how could they erect this wall? Is that not true?

Nevertheless, in response to these all reasons, as said above interview, almost all of Kurdish authorities say that there have never been firefights from Kurds across this border. "The terrain is completely flat and can be easily monitored. There are landmines. So, this place is probably the safest place on the borderline between Turkey and Syria."¹¹ says Ayşe Gökkan from the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP). Also, Kurds claim that while Qamishlo, Kobane and their surroundings

¹¹ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/08/turkey-new-border-wall-kurds-syria>

are currently controlled by the Democratic Union Party (PYD), the Turkish state started to build a wall along the Syrian border. Ayşe Gökkan also asks “Why do they not build walls further west, where rebel fighters and al-Qaida fighters are allowed to cross the border freely?”¹² Most of the locals in Mürşitpınar also asks similar questions. One of them is Halil Yakut who is a teacher in Suruç.

If the critical issue here is preventing the entry of terrorists into Turkey, why do not they build a wall between Jarablus and Karkamış? I have not heard that even a single YPG member crossed the border illegally here. In Suruç, there have never been firefights from YPG or Kobane. But we can see easily that ISIS and al-Qaida fighters can cross the border between Jarablus and Karkamış. If the problem is related to security, Turkish state should go to put a wall between Jarablus and Karkamış. (Halil Yakut, age 34)

Kurds also believe that the wall is a declaration of war against Kurds by the Turkish government. Many people on both sides of the borderline see the wall as the latest evidence of Turkish government to support terrorist groups such as Jabhat al-Nusra and ISIS who have been attacking Kurdish villages in Syria, killing and displacing thousands. Besides, many Syrian Kurds who have fled to Turkey are angry too.

Xezal, who settled near her relatives in Mürşitpınar just before the Kobane resistance says;

We do not want this wall. Our many relatives are living on the other side of the border, in Kobane. Via this wall, Turkish state aims to cut our communication off completely from our relatives. Our children are fighting against barbarians there. I a wall now goes up between them and me, I would always worry at every gunshot that I hear without being able to see Kobane. We cannot accept it. (Xezal, age 42)

The wall that the Turkish state continues to construct on the border of Syria will be the third longest wall in the world after the ‘Great Wall’ of China and the wall between US and Mexico. The concrete blocks, which are 2 meters wide, 3

¹² <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/nov/08/turkey-new-border-wall-kurds-syria>

meters high and weigh 7 tons, are being installed on the border including Suruç-Kobane boundary. The wall is being built behind minefields, deep ditches and it is reinforced with barbed wire and steel fences. On watchtowers along the border wall, soldiers monitor the security while armored military vehicles patrol around the clock.

Although different reasons are proposed, what is intended with this wall as a border construction process is to protect the boundaries of the state of Turkey against the danger of a possible unity between Kurds in the Kurdish geography. Therefore, it is directly aimed to cut cultural, economic and political relations and communication between Kurds who live on the both sides of the border. Moreover, by this wall, Turkish state hopes to bring ‘its own Kurds’ living within its borders under control. In other words, Turkish authorities aim to block any inspiration that can effect ‘its own Kurds’ about the possible Kurdish unity which is envisaged to be established shortly. However, we know from the historical examples that such precautions do not work in these situations. The Berlin Wall is the simplest one. After all, such measures are seen as consequences of states’ weaknesses and inability to rule.

Wendy Brown says on this “rather than resurgent expressions of nation-state sovereignty, the new walls are icons of its erosion.” (Brown, 2010, p. 24) Again, what an interviewee who wants his or her name remain confident says is worthy of consideration.

Do you know why they put this wall here? They're afraid. They are afraid of that the Kurds will be united. But they are beating a dead horse because whatever they do, the Kurds will not surrender to them. Could the wall block this union?

Therefore, building a wall has become one of the most popular events of the day.

Turkey was also one of the countries that keep up with the times. However, this wall,

which is wanted to be built, was not perceived as the state wanted by the people of the region. The people who suffer from border building practices of states for decades take a stand against this new border practice.

Besides, as a border building practice, it is clear that the purpose of this wall is no different from previous measures like mine, barbed wire, and watchtowers on the borderline between Suruç and Kobane. The Kurdish threat, which has become more visible since the 1980s with the establishment of PKK, played a crucial role in defense of the national borders especially in this region. In today's conditions, this threat has reached the highest level because of the war in Syria and achievements of Kurdish YPG on the field because the federation in which the Kurds are supposed to establish in Syria is perceived by the Turkish state as a great threat. Hence, the reasons such as smuggling or 'terrorism' that the state has suggested for walling the border have not been seen by the people in Suruç and Mürşitpınar as an adequate reason.

To sum up, the words of one of the activists protesting the wall built on the border is remarkable to understand the situation. He says "We hereby tell them you may build a barrier wall that may reach the sky, but you'll never be able to separate our people"¹³

2.7.3 Separation Wall in Palestine

In many parts of the world, we see that states are building walls around their borders. As I have already mentioned, for this, states are using refugee flows, human trafficking, drugs, weapons and terrorist threats as a justification. India, for example, has wrecked walls on the borders of Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Burma to stop asylum

¹³ <http://aranews.net/2016/08/turkey-building-barrier-wall-border-kobane-syrian-kurds-protest/>

seekers from the poorer neighbors, to protect their lands in the event of a possible territorial dispute, and to stop Islamic guerrillas entering from the Pakistani border and prevent weapons smuggling. (Brown, 2010) On the other hand, to stop the refugee flows coming from the poor neighbors, South Africa built walls on the border of Zimbabwe and Saudi Arabia on the border of Yemen. The United States has also walled the entire Mexican border to prevent possible human trafficking and drugs and arms trade at the border. This wall is an astoundingly big and costly attempt. Consisting of 18-meter-high 3-times reinforced steel-concrete alloy barriers (see Figure 5), this wall is reinforced with sensors, security cameras, and other detection technologies. (Brown 2010) Another wall built by the subcontractor who built the US wall is the Separation Wall that divides the Palestinian lands. This wall with similar technologies is one of the most secure walls in the world. (Brown, 2010). However, the main reasons for the construction of this wall are different from the wall built on the US-Mexico border. The basic reason expressed by the Israeli state for the construction of the wall is the threat of terrorism. (Weizmann, 2011) In this context, the reasons for the construction of the Separation Wall and the reasons for the construction of the wall that Turkey began to build on its Syrian border show great similarities. The two states are putting terrorism at the top of the list to legitimize the border wall.

The Israeli West Bank Wall is a separation barrier in the West Bank along the Green Line. Most of Israeli consider it as a security barrier against 'terrorism,' while Palestinians call it as an apartheid wall. For Palestinians, the separation wall is the latest attempt by the occupying power to unilaterally seize more of their homeland. Israel's separation wall is expected to reach 650 kilometers long, stretching from the

northern West Bank to its southern tip. The current height of Israel's wall is around 8 meters. It is also supported by a multi-layered fence system.¹⁴

The wall was built during the Second Intifada that began in September 2000 and was defined by the Israelis as necessary to stop the wave of violence inside Israel. But, Palestinian says that the wall remains a symbol of Israeli military occupation of Palestine land. As Brown says that “the wall is simultaneously an architectural instrument of separation, of occupation, and of territorial expansion mandated by the twinning of state-sponsored and outlaw extensions of settler colonialism.” (Brown, 2010, p. 29)

When I worked at al-Jazeera in 2014, we had an interactive documentary¹⁵ about the Palestinian issue and the Separation Wall with Ayed Nabaa, film director, and Zilan Karakurt, cameraman. As we said in the presentation of that documentary, the land between the Wall and Green Line is some of the most fertile in the occupied West Bank. According to United Nations, it is home to nearly 50.000 Palestinians living in 38 villages and towns. The separation wall has a devastating effect on the Palestinian villages that lie directly in its path, where construction destroys homes and olive groves. Despite Israel's ongoing construction of the separation wall, several Palestinian villages have mounted a fierce resistance against these attempts. Brown says on this

[b]ut does not the purpose and trajectory of the Israeli wall remain singular? The wall veers from the 1967 Green Line to wrap around settlements deep in the West Bank interior and includes a series of ‘depth barriers’ accompanied by ‘sterile security zones’ penetrating even further into Palestinian lands. These are among the features that make it not a mere border Wall or security fence, but a technology of separation and domination in a complex of settler colonialism and occupation. (Brown, 2010, p. 30)

¹⁴ <https://electronicintifada.net/content/it-fence-it-wall-no-its-separation-barrier/4715>

¹⁵ <http://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/PalestineRemix/against-the-wall.html#/1>

Recently, states have benefited from technology especially in border construction practices. The wall building practices of USA, Israel, and Turkey should also be considered in this context. Together with the wall, the borders are strengthened with technological watchtowers and drones, and possible violations can be detected immediately.



Figure 5: El Halil (Hebron), West Bank, Palestine. (February 2017.)

Palestinians are not alone in their opposition to the separation wall. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague declared it illegal in a 2004 advisory opinion, while Israel's own Supreme Court has said its path must be changed in a few specific locations. The Israeli authorities, meanwhile, have completely ignored the ICJ opinion and partly implemented domestic court

decisions. The Separation Wall, eight meters high in places and made of a combination of concrete, layers of electrified barbed wire and sand tracks, has become an international symbol of Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people.

According to Weizmann

The logic of 'separation' (or, to use the more familiar Afrikaans word, 'apartheid') between Israelis and Palestinians within the Occupied Territories has been extended, on the larger national scales, to that of 'partition.' During the second Intifada, the Oslo lines of partition further hardened into mechanisms of control. The military checkpoints and the Wall, slipping seamlessly into this geography, have become not only brutal means of segregation but active sensors within Israel's network of surveillance, registering all the Palestinians passing through them. (Weizman, 2007, pp. 9-10)

With the desire to dominate the whole geography and control all human passages, the walls continue to be utilized as the most effective weapons. Through a similar attempt at the Rojava border, Turkey aims to take borders and border communities under control.

For many Palestinian villagers, protest is the only means they have to resist the wall. In Budrus a Palestinian village in the West Bank, the separation wall would have resulted in Palestinians losing hundreds of hectares of land and thousands of precious olive trees. When the bulldozers first arrived in Budrus in 2003, Israeli soldiers told residents they could appeal for the wall's path. But residents knew the appeals process would take at least two weeks. By that time, their homes, schools, and farmlands would have been destroyed. Their only option, residents decided, was to resist the wall through protests. Protests practiced as civil disobedience, climbing on top of a bulldozer or placing themselves in their path. Israeli soldiers cracked down with brutal force. They use tear gas, rubber bullets and live ammunition against protesters. Protesters were beaten, arrested, injured, and many were killed.

Qais Abu Layla is a Palestinian activist who joined the protest in the West Bank village of Bil'in. In one of those protests, she was struck in the head by a tear gas canister fired by an Israeli soldier. She says soldiers have repeatedly targeted them for their activism to save their homeland. However, she is happy because Palestinian protesters in Budrus won partial victory after these protests. They succeeded in diverting the separation wall from its original path, saving their olive trees and almost all of the land that would have been annexed by Israel. She adds

Our protests inspire Palestinians in other cities. Our resistances encourage them to save their villages, trees, and schools. (Abu Layla, age 37)

Like its predecessors on the Israeli and Egyptian borders of Gaza, the wall is part of a specific development within the forty-year-old occupation of Palestine, a development broadly identifiable as a shift from colonial domination through administration and control of Palestinians to domination achieved through the separation and deprivation of this population. "The barrier is one element in an arsenal of technologies and strategies for physically disentangling and spatially dividing two intimately entwined populations to create a future of what Prime Minister Ehud Barak defined pithily as "us here, them there." (Brown, 2010, pp. 28-9)

The logic of Turkey to separate the Kurds in its territories from the Kurds beyond the border can be associated with the logic of Ehud Barak. The function of these walls constructed to finish the relationships and cut the ties between the Kurds within the borders of Turkey and the Kurds from the other side of the border resembles the aim of Israel in its border building practice.

As we mention some of them before, there are many similarities between the Separation Wall and the Wall being tried to be built in Kurdish geography. First of all, the rhetoric of border-building and the reasons that the Turkish and Israeli states put forward are like replicas of each other. What exactly the two countries are trying to do is legitimize the occupation by claiming the 'terrorist threat.' The only struggle of the people that these states call terrorists is to resist against these walls built on their land and other border building practices. Those people want to protect their lands that are trying to be torn by walls. They are trying to resist to occupation and assimilation. So, it can be said that the Turkish and Israeli states try to break Kurds and Palestinians from their historical and cultural background by the walls they try to build among related communities.

CHAPTER 3

BORDER BREAKING PRACTICES

3.1 Despite the border: Tribal, ethnic, socio-cultural and economic relations with the other side

3.1.1 Tribalism in the Kurdish Society

Tribes have a very important role in the socio-cultural structure of Suruç and general of all Kurdish geography. In his book “*İmparatorluk Sınır ve Aşiret*” Nejat Abdulla argues that the Kurdish tribe is a socio-political community that is introverted like a small world of solidarity. The aim of this community is to protect the vital interests of its members against external attacks. (Abdulla, 2010) The formation of Kurdish tribes is different from the formation of tribes in other regions. For example, unlike the Arab tribes, the formation of Kurdish tribes is not based on blood but land. It is therefore difficult to find a tribe entirely based on blood in Kurdistan. (Abdulla, 2010) This finding is confirmed by the fact that almost all Kurdish tribes are known by the name of the village and the region where they are located. Barzan tribe is the best example of this situation in Iraq and also in Syria. (Abdulla, 2010 Bruinessen, on the contrary of Abdulla, expresses that the Kurdish tribes are mostly based on blood ties. (Bruinessen, 2003). However, the examples he has mostly belong to the Hakkari region on the Turkish-Iraq borderline.

Bruinessen used terms like 'hoz', 'bavik' or 'babik' and 'mal' to describe tribal units in his researches on Kurdish tribes. 'Mal' refers to the family and constitutes the smallest part of the tribe. 'Bavik' or 'babik' refers to a structure, formed by more than one family (sülale in Turkish). Bavik is represented by a person. This individual is seen as the head of the lineage (bavik). 'Hoz' or tribe is the most crowded

structures where more than one 'bavik' comes together. And all heads of baviks are at the command of the tribe leader. (Bruinessen, 2003)

Despite local differences in terminology, the structure of Kurdish tribes is similar. In her book, Lale Yalçın-Heckmann says "the local denotations for tribal membership, taken together with the ideology of common descent and residence, also imply a history, a cultural significance derived the past." (Yalçın-Heckmann, 1991, p. 102) She says there are some real or fictional stories about the origins of tribal groups. These stories attributed historical importance to tribes. So "non-tribal cannot claim superiority or nobility like the tribal groups, as they have no roots, no traditional lands, no glorious ancestors and no heroic fights or tragic defeats." (Yalçın-Heckmann, 1991, p. 103) Being a member of a tribe is viewed as a superiority as well as a matter of class distinction. It, especially, turns into a beneficial advantage in power relations. We see that individuals without a tribe membership remain in the background.

Depending on the tribal system, there are also social classes in Kurdish society. In their book, Bois, Minorsky and Mac Kenzie say that social classed can be found in Kurdish society. The basic distinction between these classes is to be a tribal member or not. Tribal members call themselves as 'Eşir' (a member of the tribe), and the others called as Goran, Miskin or Kurmanc (today this word is used to describe people who speak Kurdish dialect of Kurmanji) according to their region and dialects. Kurmanc, Goran and Miskins are obliged to serve tribal leaders under their statutes. (Bois, Minorsky & Mac Kenzie, 2004). However, there are also differences regarding duties and rights among the members of the tribe, as it is said in the same book. On one side, there are noble families called as 'torn,' on the other side, there are 'xulams' forming a military caste, 'piştmas' as private guards of tribal chiefs, and

finally, the class of peasants serves for noble families. Peasants are also members of the tribe. (Bois, Minorsky & Mac Kenzie, 2004).

As Nejat Abdulla says, the tribal structure in this region is based on land, not on blood. (Abdulla, 2010) We witness such situation in the unification of many unrelated *mals* and *baviks* who live in the same region. Thus, people who come from different families and ancestry see themselves as members of the tribe. However, we can speak of a certain class structure in tribal constructions as Bois, Minorsky and Mc Kenzie (2004) claim. Based on the knowledge of fieldwork, although we cannot speak of a very rigid system as in the past, we can see that tribes still have class differences within themselves. In this context, according to locals, 'Begzade' (family member who lead the tribe) represents the highest layer of the Kurdish tribal society. Besides, Begzades keep all the power of the tribe in their hands. And also, there is a mention of a class of peasants (*köylüler*) who are obliged to serve Begzades and their families. These people do not have their land; they work in the lands belonging to the tribal chiefs, begzades. Even if it is minuscule today, the existence of such a group can be mentioned. This group, whose sole task is to serve the begzades, has equal status as other villagers. They even have better economic conditions than some villagers. Because they are also obliged to do smuggling and other 'illegal activities' of tribal leaders. Therefore, they also have an effective role in smuggling and other economic activities.

Dade Xanim (age 85), who lives in Mürşitpınar says that her husband served tribal chiefs for years, explains the situation as follows:

My husband has served to tribal leaders for years. Of course, he did that business because of economic conditions. He was interned many times and subjected to violence. Nevertheless, he earned money. We have built the house we live in today with the money he made out of smuggling.

As we have said before, the socio-cultural structure of Suruç is based on the tribal system. The majority of the population belongs to the tribes. Those tribes try to maintain their economic and cultural coexistence despite the border. Kinship ties, weddings, and festivals have an important role in the continuation of cultural ties on this border region for tribes and communities. The biggest tribes in Suruç are Pîjan, Dinan, Oxîyan (Okhan), Şedadan (Şedad). Especially concerning population and impact, the presence of Pîjan and Dinan tribes is felt intensely in society in the region. According to the Pijan tribe members, there are more than 30,000 people belonging to their tribes in this region. More than forty 'bavik's and thousands of 'mal's are mentioned. Dinan tribe members also mention very close numbers.

A member of Pijan tribe Ape Ahmed (age 89), who lost his leg because of the mine while trying to cross to the Syrian side says:

My son, tribe means honor, it means dignity. I am a member of the Pijan tribe. There are 70 villages belonging to our tribe; it means tens of thousands of people. We also have so many members on the other side of the border. Look, my brother's children live in Kobane. One of us is here; the other one is on the other side of the border. We are as like as two peas in a pod.

Tribes and tribal leaders are still in a respectable position in the eyes of the local people because they are very effective in solving problems in the region. In the problems between the families, the tribal leaders are seen as first authorities because of their historic roles. Twenty years ago, there was a significant disagreement between the two prominent families in Kobane. This disagreement has caused great fights and even deaths. The tribes in Suruç that intervened in the situation brought these families together and reconciled them. Ape Ahmet (age 89) remembers those days as follows:

We heard there was a big fight in Kobane. There was a fight between the little tribes under the Berazi tribe. Two people were killed. The relatives of those who were killed were uprooted in Suruç. Of course, the people here are also starting to be afraid. All tribal leaders were gathered. Some chieftains

from Kobane came here on the run. The religious opinion leaders and tribal chiefs in the village gathered all the villages and ended the fight by swearing on the Koran.

So, the influence of the tribal chiefs, begzades continue in the region even today.

They are in a respectable position in society. They have the right to say the final word not only in conflicts or disagreements but also in weddings and other cultural ceremonies. Especially they help the young men who are not in good financial condition, and they ask for the girl in marriage for them. Begzades also pay for the wedding costs of their peasants. Therefore, they are seen as 'father' in a sense.

Particularly in cross-border marriages, the influence of the tribal chieftains cannot be denied. By using their active role in society, they have a say in transnational marriages. So, the possible danger that may be experienced on the border is also reduced. Especially the men who elope with a girl by the other side of the border, are receiving much help from the tribal leaders in this regard.

Halil Yakut (age 34), a teacher at Suruç, describes this situation as follows:

The eloping rates are high in the region and so is the level of danger. Therefore, the village men who elope with a girl resort to the tribal leaders. They ask for their assistance. Otherwise, they will be in deep trouble. Some leaders help them and reconcile the families. They even afford the wedding and Mawlid ceremonies.

On the other hand, the activity of the tribes in the region is one of the biggest obstacles to political resistance as well as the strict security measures in the recent period. The repression of the state over the tribes prevents the tribal members from participating in resistance against the wall and other practices. Fear of exposure to any sanction by family or tribe keeps people away from the protest against the wall. Especially the elites and leaders of the tribe who do not want to be the targets of any sanctions are applying pressure on the families under their roof in this respect. Here, of course, there are exceptions. Despite the decisions of the tribes, there are

protesters, but this is a small percentage. One of them is Umut. Umut is a high school graduate and unemployed. He has lived in Suruç since he was born. Umut says he participated in the demonstrations and marches despite all the sanctions of his father and his grandfather.

My father and my grandfather do not talk to me because I joined the protests. They know I am right. However, they do not want to get into trouble because of the party the tribe supports. I mean, because of the pressure of the people. Otherwise, what I do is not illegal. I only use my right to protest. I do not succumb to impositions. If they have walls, we have the resistance. (Umut, age 23)

The tribes continue to hold a significant political power and an important vote potential in the region. Although they are not as rigid as they have been in the past, tribal leaders still have a strong say in their communities. It gives them a significant power in the political arena. On the other hand, as I said this situation could be seen as one of the principal obstacles to political resistance against the wall as a border breaking practice.

Ahmet Yavuz (age 52), who is a member of HDP (Peoples' Democratic Party) in Suruç says

Tribal leaders are still active in the region. They still have influence even though not as much as they did in the past. Many of my friends do not join the resistance against this wall to prevent any harm to their tribes. In fact, although they are against the wall, they cannot raise their voices because of their fears. Otherwise, they can be punished by the tribe or by their families.

As it is known, from the first years of the Republic of Turkey, the state authorities have tried to control the tribes in the region. (Özgen, 2010; Tan, 2011) Because keeping a large mass over tribal leaders is an easier option for the state. So, although today's effects are less than in the past, the influence of tribes in socio-political life cannot be denied. In his study on the Gerdi tribe on the Hakkari border, Ferhat Tekin focuses on the relations of this tribe with the border and the other side thereof. In the study, he tells that the Gerdis who are a branch of the Barzani tribe in Hakkari faces

much fewer obstacles in border crossing and border trade. He specifies the full support of the Gerdi tribesmen to the state as the main reason for that. Their voting behaviors and provision of village guards in operations in the region are among the primary aspects of such support. On the other hand, Tekin argues that tribes that are not on the state's side politically face preclusions and limitations in their cross-border relations. (Tekin, 2014) That way, the state follows a strategy of gaining the support of border tribes through threats of blocking economic and social relations.

Particularly the members of the Dinan and Pijan tribes that are demographically the biggest tribes of the region claim that the state put pressure on the tribal leaders and offers large amounts of money to gain their support. However, despite all pressures and offers, we can observe that the influence of tribal leaders on their communities has started to diminish because of the political atmosphere of the region. We should view many tribe members' uprising against the state's building practices and participation in demonstrations in this context.

Besides, despite their close relations with the state, the cross-border socio-economic and ethnic ties of the tribes is another factor that prevents the state to establish full control over tribes. Even though they are the most effective entities providing votes and village guards to the state domestically, their strong cross-border relations can make tribes actors facilitating border crossing since all of the tribes I mentioned before have members on the other side of the border as well. As Kadri Yıldırım says, the most recognized and powerful tribe in Kobane is the Berazî tribe. Dîdan, Şêxan, Mîran that have an important population in Suruç and Mürşitpınar also constitute the branches of the Berazî tribe in Kobane. As a result, The Berazi tribe forms alliances with the Şêxan, Dinan and other tribes in Suruç plain. (Yıldırım, 2015). Hence, this situation creates consequences that the state that puts pressures on

and promises financial support to tribes to maintain security on the border will struggle to overcome. That is because while tribes cooperate with the state inside, they also keep their relations with cross-border communities. Therefore, the influence of the tribes cannot be denied when these socio-cultural and economic relations at the borderline continue in such a strong way.

3.1.2 Ethnic relations

The Kurdish regions were divided into two parts by the Ottoman Empire and the Safavids in the sixteenth century, and this situation continued until the early years of the twentieth century. The Kurdish region in Syria and Turkey that constitutes the research area of this study were remotely administered by the Ottomans after sixteenth century. According to Nejat Abdulla, The Ottomans had to accept the existence of semi-independent Kurdish emirates and principals in this region. Therefore, the power in the region is shared between the tribes and the state. The most important thing in the Ottoman-Kurdish relations was that the Ottomans did not have the purpose of "Turkification" in the region. This policy allowed the Kurds to see themselves as members of the Muslim community under the Ottoman administration until the end of the First World War. (Abdulla, 2010). And also as Altan Tan stresses in his book

Ottoman Sultan Yavuz Sultan Selim met with Kurdish Beys (leaders) who supported him in Çaldıran war in 1515 in Amasya. Here, the Kurdish-Ottoman autonomy agreement was concluded. According to this agreement, the castles and provinces under the control of the Kurdish commanders will not be touched, and their administration will continue to be under the control of the Kurdish Beys. After Yavuz Sultan Selim, his son Kanuni continued this law in the same way. (Tan, 2010, p. 78, own translation. For the original text, see Appendix, 7)

However, after World War I, conditions change completely. In the transition from the empire to the nation-state on the political level, the relations between Kurdish

society and the state has deteriorated. Kemalist ideology, which aims to unite all the ethnic groups of the newly established Turkish State around the identity of "Turkishness," was the architect of this transformation. According to Altan Tan, there were over seventy Kurdish deputies in the first Turkish Grand National Assembly. However, on October 29, 1923, after the Republic was proclaimed, it became apparent that 'something' had begun to change and it would no longer be like the old thing. Uneasiness was growing. (Tan, 2010)

Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century, after these politics changed after the first years of the republic, a Kurdish movement is organized around Kurdish history and literature. Some researchers show that Kurdish nationalism has developed in parallel with these changes and developments. Bruinessen summarizes the situation as:

Kurdish nationalism has developed primarily in response to the cultural oppression and assimilation initiatives of the Turks, Arabs, and Persians. Before the 20th century, a slight proportion of the Kurdish intellectuals and tribal elites thought and wrote that Kurds are a community that has a mutual interest. Nevertheless, Kurds mostly have not been the center of their solidarity as a nation, and they have been devoted to Islam or, more commonly, to a religious leader. (Bruinessen, 1995, p. 2)

But after the 1920s the situation began to change. And the Kurds have started to stand against this new, exclusive system politically.

One of the things that started to change after the proclamation of the Republic was the practice of the border. The boundaries to be woven among the Kurds have begun to become apparent in this period for the first time. These borders, which are placed among the Kurds in the context of border security, are one of the first sanctions of nation-states against the Kurds in the region.

As a result, it is not exaggerated to suggest that the thickening of the border between Syria and Turkey is related to the new nation-states sanctions and ethnic continuities between the borders. Since the new borders began to be drawn, the Kurds have been seen as a threat to national unity for the new nation-states in this geography. In the following periods also, the most important criterion considered within the scope of border security is the Kurdish movement in the region. Therefore, Kurdish rebellions in Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey and the Kurdish movements that emerged in later periods are the most important factors in the thickening of the borders between these nation-states. As the armed Kurdish movement became active, the needs and practices of strengthening the security of national boundaries also increased. In other words, the reasons that thicken the borders are the existence of the Kurdish movement and especially the presence of the PKK. (Özgen, 2005) In addition to these reasons, and also rising nationalism and national consciousness among Kurds after recent developments can be seen as the main causes of the previous border building practices and the Wall built on the Syria-Turkey borderline.

As we have mentioned before, community living on the borders of a state may have ethnic and cultural commonalities with cross-border communities. The southern borders of Turkey are an excellent example in this context. Because, ethnically, most of the southern border of Turkey constituted by Kurds, not Turks. In other words, ethnic borders here function in contrast to what the nation-state imagined. And, the ethnic majority here represents an ethnic continuity between groups on the both sides of the border. However,

[t]o say that the modern world is a 'world of nations' is to describe both a reality and an aspiration. The legitimating principle of politics and state making today is nationalism: no other principle command humankind's

allegiance. Even federations are always federation of nations. At the same time, few states today are full 'nation-states,' in the sense of being congruent and co-extensive. Not only are the ethnic populations of most states 'mixed' for most states have significant ethnic minorities, and many are deeply divided, but the boundaries of these states do not often coincide with the extent of a single ethnic population. Within these states, moreover, there are both *ethnies* and nations. (Smith, 1986, p. 129)

Therefore, those new boundaries, which are mostly artificial, mean that ethnic and identity continuities are ignored. In this context, the presence of extensions of Kurdish tribes and communities on the both side of the Syria and Turkey border exemplifies the characteristic nation-state borders and its dilemma in the region.

Regarding their ethnic identities, Wilson and Donnan say at least three main types of border population can be identified:

- 1- Those who share ethnic ties across the border *as well as* with those residing at their own state's geographical core
- 2- Those who are *differentiated* by cross-border ethnic bonds from other residents of their states
- 3- Those who are members of the national majority in their states, and have no ethnic ties across the state's borders. (Wilson & Donnan, 1998, p. 14)

One of the best examples of the first type are the Kurds who share ethnic ties both across and within the states' boundaries. In the course of ethnicity Kurds, on the one hand, are citizens of Turkish and the Syrian states with legal and political rights, on the other hand, they are an inseparable part of the Kurdish community which they share a common history, culture and national consciousness on the borderline between these two nation-states. The majority of communities living in this region deny the Turkish and Arab ethnic identities the governments forced them to adopt, and they put their Kurdish ethnic identity forward. It would easily understand from the fieldwork that the "ethnic pool" created in this region is very effective in the destabilization of power and domination. Since these borderline communities could

not correlate themselves to the identity forced upon them, they constitute the outside of the system.

Havin who came to Mürşitpınar with her family after the war in Kobane says in this regard:

According to Turkish Constitution, we are Turk. On the other hand, Kurds in Syria are Arabs according to the Syrian Constitution. But we are neither Arab nor Turk. We are Kurd. Our descendants were also Kurds. Do they think this situation will change because of these boundaries, which they have built without our consent? How can we deny our identity? (Havin, age 23)

Therefore, although they try to do, nation-states could not create a common history, nationality, identity, language or a common culture pool on this borderland. Horsman and Marshall say: "If the principal fiction of the nation-state is ethnic, racial, linguistic and cultural homogeneity, then borders always give the lie to this construct." (Horsman & Marshall, 1995, p. 45) In the same way, homogeneous ethnicity, nationality and culture bases of Turkish State are controverted along these borders. This situation is the main reason that makes it difficult for the power that is unable to get "others" to adopt to the ethnic and cultural values to have control over borderlines. We are not alone in recognizing that borders have characteristics that differentiate them from other areas in states, and that border people are part of social and political system unlike most others in their related countries. As Adeyoyin says that border regions as the socio-cultural system are living realities. They are characterized by an inner coherence and unity that is essential to their nature. (Adeyoyin, 1996) Communities with a different ethnicity than what power adopted, reconstruct the border according to their own cultural and identity values despite the symbols of power and power's imposition. Wilson and Donnan also say it is something of a truism to claim that borders unite as well as divide and that their existence as barriers to movement can simultaneously create reasons to cross them.

(Wilson & Donnan, 1999, p. 87) Kurdish communities living in the region creates an ethnic pool for themselves along especially Suruç- Kobane borderline and they also construct a union unique to their nature at borders which are a reality as cultural and social systems. According to the result of my research, in the settlements, naming the people across the border to be "brothers" should be read from connectivity of ethnicity regardless of borders. In this context, Mihemed Şervan (age 27) who escaped from the war in Syria and settled in Suruç says “How can one be separated from one’s siblings who is only a kilometer away? Will we cease to be brothers just because someone put a border between us? Is it humane? Is it conscientious? We are brothers.”

Mihemed Şervan's words are important to understand the situation. For this reason, despite the hegemonic symbols, rituals and violence attempts of the power, Kurdish communities on borders ignore these imposed borders and the wall. In addition, to be able to reach the cognates across the wall, they try to undermine and destabilize the wall and all other impositions by power.

3.1.3 Socio-cultural relations

Like former physical interventions on political boundaries that constitute an important pillar of the nation-state project, the Wall also aims to alienate border people from their language, culture and all other shared values that they share with another side of the border. As Oscar Martinez says in his article,

[c]ondition in borderlands worldwide vary considerably because of profound differences in the size of nation-states, their political relationships, their levels of development, and their ethnic, cultural, and linguistic configurations. Despite this heterogeneity, however, it is possible to generalize about features common to all and to posit a classification scheme based on cross-border contact. (Martinez, 1994b, p. 5)

Martinez also says that “as the world has evolved geopolitically, more and more borderlands have tended towards convergence rather than divergence, but unfavorable conditions in many areas still keep neighboring border region residents in a state of limited interaction.” (Martinez, 1994a, p.1) Thus, in categorizing borderlands, it is essential to assess cross-border movement and the forces that produce it. With such consideration in mind, four paradigms of borderlands interaction are proposed by Martinez: Alienated borderlands, co-existent borderlands, interdepend borderlands and integrated borderlands. Alienated borderlands refer to

[b]orderland where day-to-day, routine cross-boundary interchange is practically non-existent owing to extremely unfavorable conditions. Warfare, political disputes, intense nationalism, ideological animosity, religious enmity and ethnic rivalry constitute major causes of such alienation. International strife leads to militarization and the establishment of rigid controls over cross-border traffic. (Martinez, 1994b, p. 6)

In this context, as a rigid control mechanism and militarization, the goal of border building practices on the borderland between Suruç and Kobane is to prevent transboundary social, cultural and economic activities. And therefore, these measures aim to alienate people from each other socio-culturally. So, the territorial boundaries have paramount functions in the construction and maintenance of a nation and national culture. Although the effect in this region is not felt like this, almost all national borders impose a sense of culture and identity to its citizens.

As well as ethnicity, another important factor that we can consider in this context is socio-cultural relations among people living on both sides of the border. The same language, similar lifestyles, similar clothes, similar ceremonies, and similar values attributed to kinship and tribes are strong socio-cultural partnerships that hold people together in Mürşitpınar and Kobane. Especially similar dress up that makes border people on both sides a union is one of visible association in

Mürşitpınar. Common language across the border and relationships are other significant factors that connect the people to each other. Besides, cross-border marriages also reinforce the cultural links between relatives separated by borders and Wall. Since it is known that "Borders are also meaning-making and meaning-carrying entities, parts of cultural landscapes which often transcend the physical limits of the state and defy the power of state institutions" (Wilson & Donnan, 1999, p. 4), it is hard to provide stability for power that cannot form an ethnic or cultural togetherness with those communities in that region.

At this point, despite ideological state apparatuses such as formal education and the media which nation-states force to build a national identity and national culture, political borders could not divide ethnic and cultural boundaries on the borderland between Suruç and Kobane. That is because border people continue to resist to these ideological devices and insist on preserving their common social and cultural values. In a wedding ceremony I participated in Mürşitpınar during my fieldwork, I witnessed that the common cultural values with the other side of the border are still alive. It is a region where transboundary marriages are very intense because of the strong kinship ties. In other words, 'woman' is one of the means for maintaining kinship and other social relation with the other side of the border. Hence marriages in this region are often endogamic. Rezvan, who came from Kobane two years ago, married his uncle's daughter, Rojin, in Mürşitpınar. Rezvan's wedding was also celebrated by his relatives on the other side of the border in Kobane. It was a beautiful and tragic day for Rezvan. He says that he came here for Rojin 2 years ago and he never comes back.

It is a bit funny, but that is our reality. Children of my uncle are in Kobane side. They joined the wedding with fireworks and guns. This is a both funny and tragic story. I crossed the border for Rojin two years ago and could not

return to Kobane ever since due to security reasons. I do not know what will we do, but we will return to Kobane in one way or another. (Rezvan, age 29)

As Rezvan said, the people in Kobane who could not come to the wedding in Mürşitpınar accompanied this wedding by fire and halay behind the wall. Despite being far away, you can see them from Mürşitpınar. So, like other border building practices, they do not see this wall practice as an obstacle, and they continue to maintain cultural ties and share their joys and pains with the other side of the border. However, although it appears as a rebellion against the border building practices of the state, it is not as fun as it seems. On the other hand, it is seen as a tragic event for families.

Father of 3 children Ahmet Yavuz says:

Before the wall was built, those living in Kobane could come to attend weddings and funerals here. Now the authorities do not allow them to come. To prevent them from coming here, they are building a wall to cut all communication between us. However, we will not accept it anyway. We will continue to share our joys and pains with our brothers and sisters, despite these all obstacles. (Ahmet Yavuz, age 52)

Despite all the security measures, transboundary marriages are still widespread in this region. Kinship and tribal ties have an important influence on this situation. So, cross-border marriages are seen as a way for border people to continue relations with their relatives on the other side of the border.

Apart from marriages, there are different ceremonies that keep the socio-cultural ties alive in the region. Bairams (see Figure 6) and funerals are a few of them. In particular, bairam ceremonies that took place before Syrian civil war are frequently mentioned in the region. During the bairam days, thousands of people met their relatives on the borderline between Kobane and Mürşitpınar. To allow people to exchange bairam greetings, border security was reduced to a minimum in those days.

In his book Istvan Egresi says that the 1921 Ankara Agreement traces the border between Turkey and Syria, separating many families. Family members on the two sides of the border were forced to exchange bairam greetings from some distance and throw gifts across the fence. In 2000, the governors of the provinces along the border decided to allow relatives from the two countries to meet in the official border-crossing areas during the bairam. Later on, “another agreement allowed family members to visit each other for 48 h instead. During the bairam, about 80 thousand people moved between the two countries using the official border gates in Kilis, Gaziantep, Hatay, Şanlıurfa, and Mardin.” (Egresi, 2016, p. 134) Unfortunately, the practice had to be discontinued in 2011 due to the civil war in Syria.



Figure 6: A bairam day on the borderline between Turkey and Syria in Ceylanpınar.

Source: [Şanlıurfa Güncel, 2014]¹⁶

As Istvan Egresi also mention that, because of the war conditions in Syria, such ceremonies can no longer be done. (Egresi, 2016) In the same way, funeral ceremonies also cannot be done properly.

¹⁶ <http://www.sanlıurfaguncel.com/ceylanpinar-haberleri-sinirda-yasanan-kucaklasmalar-tarih-oldu-82681.html>

Havin came to Mürşitpınar with her family after the war in Kobane. But her brother Musa chose to fight in Kobane. Musa was killed by ISIS in May 2016 in the Kobane resistance. She could not visit the grave of his brother.

In the past, when we had a wedding or funeral in Mürşitpınar or Suruç, we could take a leave to attend these ceremonies. However, after Kobane resistance and the wall, we are not allowed even to go to funeral ceremonies on the other side of the border. We cannot accept that. We have to overcome these all obstacles. It is very painful. There is no feeling to describe this pain. (Havin, age 23)

3.1.4 Economic Relations

The economies of Suruç and Kobane on the border between Turkey and Syria have significant similarities. The economy in the region is mainly based on agriculture and husbandry. In fact, the border region along the Turkey-Syria line has the most fertile land of Turkey. However, the lack of irrigation facilities and the insecure political environment in this region make it difficult to obtain adequate yields from these lands. On the other side, the discrimination that the Syrian state implements in the economy have prevented the Kurds from providing economic control in Kobane. This situation has caused a significant number of people to migrate from Kobane to other Syria and Turkish cities. On this, Anderson and O'Dowd say:

[b]orders and border regions display many dimensions of difference, inequality, and asymmetry - economic, political, cultural, and social. They vary widely concerning their history, geography, symbolism and permeability. Likewise, border regions come in all shapes and sizes, some highly populated, other virtually empty, some stagnating in economic and social peripherality, others turning their geographical peripherality to political and economic advantage. So, rather than concentrating only on internal characteristics, it is generally more fruitful to study a border region regarding its comparisons and relations with other regions and institutions. (Anderson & O'Dowd, 1999, p. 596)

Retired teacher Mahmut Hoca describes the socio-economic conditions in Suruç and Kobane as follows:

The economy of people in Mürşitpınar based on smuggling. Because of the problems in agriculture and security reasons, smuggling is the only source of income for all of us. Geography is directing people here. It does not provide any other means than border smuggling. If irrigated farming is suitable, the land of Suruç and Kobane is very fertile. Since there is no irrigated farming, people cannot get the product as much as they want. For example, although we have about 1000 decare (dönüm in Turkish) land, we are indebted. If there is irrigated farming, that 1000 decares were enough at least for 100 families, but today it is not enough even for one family. There is also no industry in this region. No one invests here because of the instability in the region. That's why smuggling continues even today. It is the only means of livelihood. We have no other choice. (Mahmut Hoca, age 49)

On the other hand, despite these problems, economic relations between the communities and tribes on both sides of the border are also as intense as socio-economic relations. The kinship or tribal bonds underlying these economic relations with the other side of the border constitute a sound basis for economic relations. In other words, the socio-cultural capital that exists on both sides of the border plays a major role in the formation of economic capital. The main reason for this situation is that the settlement areas in the region are very close to each other. As already mentioned, the distance between Suruç and Kobane is rather short (about 1 km). Until the 1950s, local people had frequently crossed those borders to trade each other without any official documents. According to Özgen, when the boundary determined by the stones, border people would get daily official permission called as 'pasavan' to go to the fields on the other side of the border until 1936. (Özgen, 2010) However, as we have learned from the border narratives, the majority of the border people did not need to use 'pasavan' to go and back. So, they do not need to get any official document to cross the other side. And also, until Syrian civil war, there were very intense border crossings between the two countries with the abolishing visa requirement in 2009. That situation also has facilitated the trade and other forms of exchange between border people.

Halil Yakut (age 34) who is a teacher in the region explains the situation as the following:

To be honest, we were trading on the border anyway despite all the measures. Indeed, the complete lift of visa requirement in 2009 facilitated our business even more. However, a stagnation began due to the Syrian civil war and strict security policies implemented afterward. This situation started to affect deeply the people of the region who have no other source of living.

To sum up, the inadequacy of livelihoods leads people in the region to smuggle. In the interviews conducted in the field, the general belief is that compelling socio-economic factors such as poverty and unemployment are leading reasons for smuggling. By the way, smuggling will be dealt with in detail later as the most common economic activity and also as a border breaking practice against the border construction practice of state.

3.1.5 Local knowledge

Local knowledge about the border and border region is relevant data concerning both communicating with the people of the border as well as forming the outside of the power boundaries. Local knowledge and definitions used by local people on the borderline constitute the outside of the official definitions and knowledge. Moreover, it works as a resistance mechanism against the imposed language by states. Therefore, the definitions and knowledge that used to designate both sides of the borderline by border people are remarkable regarding forming an example for this situation.

In the interviews I made, the people of the region do not mention the names of the states to identify the border sides. For example, when border people talk about the Syrian side, they call it *binxet* and when they speak of the Turkey side, they call it *serxet*. *Binxet* means the underside of the line and *serxet* means the upper side of

the line. These codes or definitions form an example of the local knowledge created by the people of the region among themselves. Having this local knowledge facilitates communication with the people in the region too.

The social, cultural, economic, and political relations of communities on border regions ruins the plans and processes of the nation-states. Despite these forced and artificial borders, the communities on the both sides of the border try to maintain their linguistic, religious, ethnic and historical coexistence. As Baud and Schendel say:

No matter how borders are drawn on official maps, how many customs officials are appointed, or how many watchtowers are built, people will ignore borders whenever it suits them. In doing so, they challenge the political status quo of which borders are ultimate symbol. (Baud & Schendel, 1997, pp. 211-2)

The local community develops different resistance practices against these political boundaries in Suruç. In this context, this local knowledge can be seen as one of them. Furthermore, it works as a border breaking practice against the of border construction practices of the state. Not accepting the borders determined by the state in one's language and naming it differently is a resistance against the imposed language and borders. Particularly in the memory of seniors, we encounter a very different geography and border sense. The maps in the minds of these people are determined by their kinship, tribal relations. While they are talking about the other side of the border, they do not call it as Syria. They call the other side of the border as *binxet* or *komşu köy* ("neighbor village"). For example, Ape Ahmet calls Kobane as a neighboring village (*komşu köy*) and calls the other side as 'binxet'. "In our time, there are neither Syria nor Turkey. There were *serxet* and *binxet*. The smugglers would say "wan serxet derbas bike" when they brought goods from Syria. It means, 'get them (goods) across the border'" (Ape Ahmed, age 89)

Not only Ape Ahmet, almost all people in the region call the Syrian (Sûrî) side as *binxet* and the Turkish side (Tirkî) as *serxet* even today.

So, it is clear that the state ideology that is imposed politically and linguistically is not effective as we thought. In response to this situation, the people of the region have created their world with their words. So, local knowledge used by border people can be seen as a border breaking practices against the imposed language by states. Because it is an alternative way to name the borderline or region they live.

On the other hand, according to Anthony Cohen, the intersection points of the frontiers represent different things to different people. He says:

A boundary-crossing stimulates the awareness of a person *as an individual*, as someone who can step back and reflect on his or her position in society. If we recognize boundaries as matters of consciousness rather than of institutional dictation, we see them as much more amorphous, much more ambiguous than we otherwise have done. It may be this very ambiguity which inclines societies to invest their various boundaries so heavily with symbolism." (Cohen, 1998, p. 28)

We can give an example of this situation from the Turkey-Syria border. Accordingly, what strikes us at the Turkey and Syria borders is the use of many different descriptive and competitive symbols. However, crossing the border is not a situation that requires a lot of awareness for the Kurds; or rather, they do not want to be aware of it. Especially the local definitions of *serxet* (Mürşitpınar) and *binxet* (Kobane) strengthen this situation. For example, crossing the border means passing underside of the line (*xet* in Kurdish), not passing to the side of Syria territory. Therefore, crossing the border in such situation will not require much awareness.

3.2 Border breaking practices of the border people

We see the emergence of different resistance mechanisms in the local societies against the political boundaries that emerged as an exclusivist and separatist mechanism by the nation-states. The political borders that have turned into concrete signs of the state's sovereignty have been experienced by the border people in different ways. Because these political boundaries which the states strengthen with border stones, barbed wires, mines, patrols, and walls, are becoming integral parts of the everyday life of the border people.

In his book, Ferhat Tekin says that almost all national borders try to impose a sense of culture and identity to its citizens. (Tekin, 2014) We can witness this situation on the borderline between Suruç and Kobane. The people of that region, who have always resisted border construction practices that are trying to be imposed close to a hundred years, have rendered these borders ineffective by many forms of resistance because these political boundaries have been seen by local people as a violent intervention in their lives and the geography they live.

However, today despite this entire struggle and resistance, the Turkish state is trying to test the people with another border practice, on Syria borderline. In this part, based on the life stories and narratives of the people living on the Suruç-Kobane borderline, the border breaking practices of the border people against the state's border construction practices will be discussed.

3.2.1 Smuggling

Trans-border small-scale trade and smuggling are everyday border phenomena that are part of the routine at many borders. So, what is smuggling for border people? When is an action or a business defined as illegal? Who is the smuggler? Despite the

risk of disability, arrest, and death, why do people continue to do it? According to Thuen, "in theory, smuggling and small-scale trade differ in accordance to their legal status. Traditionally, 'trade' is the legal and 'smuggling' is the illegal means of moving items from one side or border to the other." (Thuen 1999, p. 741). So, while smuggling is defined in this framework, state authorities also define actions that take place on borders as legitimate or illegitimate by making law. Therefore, official authorities respond to the above questions according to the laws they have made.

The Border Assignment Guidelines for Local Authorities prepared by the Ministry of Interior for border authorities defines smuggling as "The act of letting in and out, purchasing and selling objects buying and selling of which are prohibited by the laws and earning money from that act using a scheme without paying any taxes." (Kurt & ođgün, 2007, p, 89)

From this point of view, when we look at the events on the borderland between Suruç and Kobane, it will be seen that state authorities have defined all economic relations in the region according to its rules since the early days of the republic. So, without permission of the state, all economic mobilizations on this borderline have been seen as 'illegal' and defined as 'smuggling' in the official discourse. When we look at the history of smuggling on the line between Suruç and Kobane, it seems that it starts with the construction of buffer zone consisting of mines and barbed wire. Therefore, smuggling has also caused many sufferings and deaths because of those security measures. One of those victims is Ape Ahmet, a former smuggler of the region.

On smuggling, Ape Ahmet who lost his leg because of the mine says:

We had no choice; we were poor. I was on my way to get smuggled tea that day. I talked to my uncle, and I got out. Of course, there were too many mines and security measures at the border. But we could still cross the border because we have learned where mines are laid, and we have created a path for us. But I do not know how it happened that morning; I do not remember anything. What I saw when I woke up was that I did not have a leg anymore. (Ape Ahmed, age 89)

You can hear dozens of similar stories in the region. You can see tens of people who lost their legs and have permanent damages in their bodies. People have to take such risks to feed their families despite all obstacles. Even today, there are people resisting the wall and continuing smuggling. You can hear stories of people who try to smuggle tea by digging holes under the walls. Indeed, it is challenging to make interviews on this issue. In the event of exposure, people may face harsh sanctions. Nevertheless, even today, smuggling maintains its presence as a border breaking practice against border building practices. However, we should note something here. People of the region say that those who make smuggling done are influential people in the region who are wealthy and have good relations with the government officials.

In previous sections, we talked about the tribal system and class structure in the region. According to the people of the region, smuggling is mostly done by the sub-class people. But they are not the ones who decide it. The ones who are responsible for smuggling are mostly elites of the tribes. Tribes have networks on both sides of the border. They also have good relations with state authorities. Thanks to these networks, they make a pile of money from smuggling. However, elites (begzades) do not smuggle. Instead of them, smuggling is carried out by peasants to whom the elites are obliged to look. As I said, the notables of the tribe do not smuggle because of its deadly consequences. Therefore, the deaths at the borderline often fall into the share of the poor, the subordinate. In this context, class differences

behind the smuggling have been remarkably expressed. Because unemployment and other financial difficulties in this region where smuggling is common have made smuggling as a source of income for people who do not have good economic conditions. So, border people and tribes see smuggling in the region as a line of work.

Besides, as we have already mentioned, the kinship and tribal relations existing on both sides of the border are important factors that facilitate this trade. Therefore, seeing smuggling as a purely economic activity may cause us to ignore the cultural, social and ethnic partnerships on the border. In this context, kinship ties are often used to overcome border security measures. So, permissions for visiting relatives are a win-win for people on both sides of the border. Particularly those who go to Aleppo to buy precious stones through their relatives in Kobane can make good money by selling them in Turkey. The father of eight children Halil Yavuz who used to do this job before, says that this is the best method of making good money.

It was easier to cross the border here in the past. Especially if you had relatives or acquaintances from your tribe on the other side, it was much easier. I have been in Aleppo many times thanks to my relatives in Kobane. I brought gemstones, golden and silver objects from Aleppo. I sold them here at good prices. It was not a dangerous business. A little bag was enough. We could cross the bag with a small amount of bribery. Indeed, it is today much harder to conduct this business because of the war and wall. (Halil Yavuz, age 77)

The people in the region say that smuggling is diminishing after the wall and intensive security measures built on the border of Syria. However, despite this decline in smuggling, we find that diesel and tea smuggling continues in parts of the border that have not yet been built. Retired teacher Mahmut Hoca said that smuggling continues even today in this difficult time. He says that no one wants to talk about it. However, a neighbor, whom he spoke without giving his name, says he still carries tea from Syria to Turkey.

Because of the conditions of the period, smugglers who think they can be exposed to very severe punishment do not want to talk much about these issues. But smuggling is taking place where the wall is not built yet. If you ask me, it will also continue after the construction of the wall. There is, of course, a way to do this. We have to find another way to overcome these all precautions. Our life depends on this trade. (Mahmut Hoca, age 49)

As we know from interviews, smuggling which has been carried out as a border breaking activity from past to present by locals continue after the wall that built by the state as a rigid mechanism on the border. So, the people of the region say that this wall which built by the state to cut all economic and socio-cultural relations between communities on the border will not be able to prevent them but will make their business and relations more difficult. So, this wall is seen as a threat to the relations between the two sides by border people.

Despite all practices of border construction from the past to the present, the people of the region who keep their economic ties strong with the other side of the border, are deliberate about the wall, but still appear determined to maintain their all socio-economic relations despite all measures taken by Turkish State.

3.2.1.1 Smuggling as a ritual of masculinity

There is another reason why smuggling is widespread in the region besides economic relations: Masculinity. The interviews show that there is a very close relationship between smuggling and masculinity. Smuggling practiced by men to a large extend, functions as an experience of gaining a status in society. The people I interviewed during the field work stated that almost all of the men living in the border area do this work at their young age. As we will remember from the Roboskî massacre, in this region also average to start smuggling is 13-14. Ape Ahmet, who says that he was one of the best smugglers of the region, mention that before the 1980s

smuggling was a way of life for all men in this region, and also it was a sign of masculinity at the same time.

When I decided to get married, everyone in the region wanted to give me their daughters because they call me the 'father of smugglers' (bavê qaçaxçıyan). They used to call me as the father of smugglers until I lose my leg. It was the same thing to be a smuggler and to be brave. There are still good smugglers today. But, it was very different in our time. At that time, people in the region did not want to give their daughters to those who are afraid of smuggling. (Ape Ahmet, age 89)

However, today we are witnessing that this perception in society changes slowly because the risk of smuggling in the past was much more. For smuggling, smugglers should have a risk of death. The people of the region are saying that smuggling was done by armed Cavaliers at that time. They are known in society as charismatic and courageous personalities. So, their status in the society was also high. But today, smuggling is done more professionally by smugglers. And it is mostly done by the peasants who are under the command of the tribal elites, begzades. Therefore, we are witnessing the loss of the influence of charisma and bravery attributed to smuggling before. When we look at the stories told in the village, we see that the origin of such charisma was the recklessness of the old smugglers. They were disobedient people without fear of death. However, it is different now. Changing life conditions and technology started to provide the smugglers with easier options since today opportunities to smuggle in less dangerous ways without needing to be heroes are available. Digging tunnels under the wall is one of them. As a result, we do not encounter legendary stories of smuggling. Hence, the characters such as 'great smuggler' and 'father of smugglers' (bavê qaçaxçıyan) told in old stories remained in the past.

Besides, the increasing political and social influence of women in society have also played an important role in the weakening of this analogy between

masculinity and smuggling. In other words, this perception is especially weakened by the fact that women become visible in society and begin to make their decisions. In particular, the expectations of the younger generation of women are one of the decisive factors in this issue. For example, the possibility of death or disability is one of the reasons that frightens women and keeps them from marriage with smugglers. However, despite all this, the smuggler in the society continues to maintain its influence and charisma to some extent. This admiration manifests its influence mainly in the elderly population. Fatma Yavuz (age 74) whose two sons are smugglers says:

Today girls want to marry educated boys. They say that smuggling is a dangerous job with uncertain future. Therefore, our girls do not want smugglers. They want men with decent occupations but, in my opinion, smugglers are good men. They make their living the hard way. God forbid them from troubles and calamities.

To sum up, smuggling can be seen not only as a job of earning money but also as a job of having a status in the society. Even though it starts to lose its influence, smuggling still exists as a sign of masculinity on border regions.

3.2.1.2 Body politics

Ramazan Aras says, in his book '*Mayın ve Kaçakçı*,' that by putting mines, authorities also dig local people's graves on border regions. (Aras, 2015) So, since mines were placed in 1950's, deaths continue at the borderline. You can hear the stories of hundreds of people who lost their arms and legs due to the mines, in Mürşitpınar. In almost every house, somebody tells you a story about it. Ape Ahmet (age 89) as a victim of mines says:

Son, you can hear similar stories not only in my house but also at homes of all villagers. At every home an armless and a legless. Hundreds of people have the same problem. Nonetheless, thank God we still live. Mines are terrible, son, so terrible.

Even today, people who develop different political resistance mechanisms against border construction practices are becoming the target of the state. During the war in Kobane and after the building of the wall, many people were exposed to police bullets, tear gas, rubber bullets due to their resistance against war and wall in Mürşitpınar. One of them was Mustafa Jehat. Jehat says he has been in the hospital for five days because of the bullet that hit his back during the march against the wall that built between Kobane and Suruç. Even today, the bullet wound on his back can be seen.

Violence was not our purpose. We only wanted to protest. We know well the goal of this wall. It has only one aim: to separate us from our brothers. We do not consent this. We will never do, even if they kill us. (Mustafa Jehat, age 21)

Therefore, from the past to the present, the human body continues to become the target of the state on borderlines. Therefore, people who have become the target of powers and their policies have built up their resistance and uprising culture somehow. Most of the people I have interviewed in Suruç and Mürşitpınar remind Roboskî and say that Turkish state enforces people to obey its rules vigorously. Mihemed Şervan (age 27) who came to Mürşitpınar from Kobane after the war in Syria is one of them.

The state is always here, sometimes with mines, sometimes with flags and soldiers and now with this wall. In other words, violence has always been here. However, it became more visible with the latest attempt at the Kobane resistance. Nothing has been changed. They firstly occupied our territory, then kept brothers apart and tried to cut our cultural and economic ties. Moreover, they sought to turn our land they occupied into a prison. When they failed, they bombed us as in Roboskî.

Those words constitute a valuable example to show how the dominant power and borders are ignored.

Thus, in this context, I want to commemorate the 34 border people of Roboskî who were murdered on 28 December 2011 by Turkish jets, because they trade with

their relatives on the other side of the border in Iraq. After the massacre, I went to Roboskî, and Ferhat Encü (HDP Deputy, now in Prison) who lost their relatives in Roboskî told me that:

The government does not provide any economic opportunities. The region is hilly, and we do not have the opportunity to farm. What will we do? We need to trade with our relatives living on the other side of the border. Do we have any other chance? We know that they may bomb again, but we will go on to trade because we do not have any other chance to survive.

Especially after the Roboskî Massacre, this situation is consistent with the awareness arising toward the relation between violence and power, and perception of borders as a mean of violence among Kurdish communities. Similarly, within my interviews with residents in the Mürşitpınar, people reminds the fact that the pains left behind Roboskî have made them disregard the border and to create solidarity with other victims of violence. The increase of the awareness calls masses to unite against power and to act collectively. This circumstance weakens the authority of power that has not already been able to set its borderland hegemony completely so far. As expressed by Bülent Küçük after the Roboskî Massacre, “we observe these borders grieving the Kurdish Geography do not only separate the Kurds but also function as a political scene uniting the Kurds.”¹⁷ This connotation supports how the violence that the power use becomes effective in uniting the crowds to destabilize the borders in this region.

Consequently, although they target bodies and have taken many lives, people continue to use their bodies as shields against border building practices from the past to today.

¹⁷ <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/143029-postmodern-iyimserlik-ve-roboski-sonrasi-gerceklik>

3.2.2 Political resistance as a border breaking practice

Border regions as socio-cultural systems are a living reality. They are characterized by an inner coherence and unity that are essential to their nature. The border region between Suruç and Kobane is one of the best examples of this situation. Despite the resistance breaking effects of tribes in the region, strong ethnic, economic and socio-cultural commonalities overcome them. That is because the tribes as obstacles for resistance are not immune to the effects of the multi-cultural structure of the border because tribes that have cross-border continuities and relations have to maintain such commonalities despite their cooperation with the state.

On this issue, Mahmut Hoca says:

Yes, the tribal leaders have to cooperate with the state. Otherwise, they will face enormous pressures. However, they have to maintain their cross-border relations in spite of all these pressures. It does not suffice them to receive financial support from the state. They have to be demographically strong as well. Hence, they cannot cut their cross-border ties. (Mahmut Hoca, age 49)

Therefore, these two-sided relations of tribes enable us to view them as both obstacle and chance. On the one hand, they are obstacles for resistance and on the other; they are opportunities for maintenance of cross-border relations. Furthermore, strong ethnic ties felt on the both sides of the border are the main reasons undermining the power of the tribes as a barrier against the political resistance. Because, contrary to state's imagination, this border region can be seen as culturally and ethnically Kurdish region because almost all parts of this region are dominated by Kurdish ethnic and cultural identity. Besides, the majority of communities living in this region deny the Turkish and Arab ethnic identities that the powers in the region force them to adopt and they put their Kurdish ethnic identity forward as we mentioned before. It would easily be understood from the fieldwork that the "ethnic pool" created in this region is very effective in the destabilization of power and

domination. Because these borderline communities could not correlate themselves to the identity forced upon them, they constitute the outside of the system. So, thickening of the border between Suruç and Kobane is related to the ethnic continuities between the borders - in particular to the Kurds.

Anderson says that borders are a marker of identity, and have played a significant role in this century in making national identity the pre-eminent political identity of the modern state. (Anderson, 1996) It has made borders, and their related narratives of frontiers, indispensable elements in the construction of national cultures. This important role of the border, in the creation and maintenance of the nation and that state, is one reason why borders have also become a term of discourse in narratives of nationalism and identity for Kurds. Therefore, identity and status claims of Kurds living on that borderline should be considered in this context.

So today, we can talk about a political resistance developed by Kurds and Kurdish politics in recent years. That resistance mechanism, which is embodied in the regions where the Kurds live intensively and against the nation-states in the region, are also effective at the borders of Kurdish geography. Mass reactions, hunger strikes and marches against the wall being built today on the border between Turkey and Syria can be considered in this context. Today, these borders are seen as a marker of unity and they play a major role in making a national identity for Kurds.

With the Roboskî massacre in 2011, the Kurds in Turkey have begun to rethink and criticize the border phenomenon. However, since this criticism did not cause a sufficient mass reaction, an effective resistance mechanism against the state could not be developed by the Kurds in the region. Of course, the mountainous structure and other severe conditions of the Roboskî, Şırnak, were one of the reasons that weakened this reaction. However, the resistance mechanism, which could not be

developed after the Roboskî massacre because it could not reach the sufficient mass, became an active practice in the interventions on the Syrian border during the Kobane resistance.

The achievements of the Kurds, especially in Iraq and Syria in recent times, and their success on the field have influenced the massification of these reactions. Another reason that increased this reaction was that the Kurds in Syria, especially in Kobane, were brutally murdered by ISIS and other 'jihadist' groups. Against this brutal attack, the Kurds in Turkey organized mass marches, especially in the Kurdish region and on border regions. These reactions were suppressed very hard by the Turkish state, and dozens of people were killed.¹⁸ After these actions, the political climate in Turkey has become very hard against the Kurdish. The biggest reason for this political change against Kurds is the gains of the Kurds in Syria, as mentioned before. So, The Turkish state has begun to take extra precautions on the Syrian border, as these gains of the Kurds are incompatible with Turkey's Syrian policy. Wall construction on Syria borderline is the most important of these measures. In other words, this wall is the most important sign of the new politics that the Turkish state has developed against the Kurds in the region.

Despite the pressures by the tribes in the region and threats by the state, many Kurds have responded to the wall project by the mechanism of political resistance on borders. The hunger strikes, marches and other nonviolent resistances that the Kurds do at the border¹⁹, especially after the Kobane resistance, should be evaluated within these resistance mechanisms. On the other hand, the age-long assimilation and occupation policies of the nation-states in the Kurdish geography have also forced the Kurds to find another solution and resist these border-building practices. And

¹⁸ https://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/2014_T%C3%BCrkiye_Kobani_eylemleri

¹⁹ <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/turkey/11152640/Kurds-detained-by-Turkey-go-on-hunger-strike.html>

also, the developments/gainings in Syria and Iraq were seen as factors encouraging the Kurds to resist. Mihemed Şervan who came from Kobane to Mürşitpınar after war says:

We are a nation. What is it that they have, but we lack? Why do Turks and Arabs have states but we do not? Yes, I demand a state and thus, resist to all state policies. I will resist to this wall because I will not let this wall be a barrier between my brother and me. (Mihemed Şervan, age 27)

So, we can say that the recent developments in Turkey and Syria affect the border people in the direction of nationalism and political unity. This situation has also begun to affect the regional states that are implementing assimilation and occupation politics in the Kurdish geography. Thus, we have to deal with the reactions and resistance mechanisms against the wall that Turkey is trying to build on the Syrian border in this respect. On this topic, retired teacher Mahmut Hoca says:

Our children are not like before. They are angry. Hence, they do not want a wall to be constructed between their brothers and themselves. I may not have power for this, but they will resist. They will resist even more as long as the state oppress because Kurds now know what that wall means. They see this border a barrier for their unity. No matter what the state do, our children will not recognize this border. It is inescapable. (Mahmut Hoca, age 49)

The political consciousness of the people in the region is not independent of the conditions of the period. In an era where new forms of governmentality are often spoken, tradesman Faruk Yavuz says:

Today, there are 30 million Kurds in the region. These Kurds will demand unification one way or another. This is the law of nature. A Kurdish state is not necessary. They should recognize Kurdistan as a federacy. We will remain bound to Turkey, no problem. However, they should not construct a wall between us. It will not have an effect even if they ascend the wall to the sky. Our children will resist even more as long as they keep building walls. (Faruk Yavuz, age 45)

Consequently, the increasing reinforcement of the border due to the developments in the region have affected the lives of the people of the region directly and forced them to stand out against the border reinforcement activities. This

political resistance movement raised by the border people against such reinforcement activities that started to influence their lives directly has a direct relationship with the developments in the region. Among such events are the Roboski massacre, civil wars in Syria and Iraq, achievements in Kobane and Rojava, and the increasing national consciousness among the Kurds in the region.



CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The historical region populated mostly by Kurds faced borders and partition twice. The first one happened when the region was divided between the Safavid and Ottoman Empires in the sixteenth century after the Battle of Chaldiran between the two. The second was the partition that followed the apportion of the Ottoman lands through invasion during and after the World War I. The first division was referring to margins influence zone of which could change in time rather than a border. We can see this function of pre-modern borders today as well. That was a split widening or narrowing according to the loyalties of the tribes and the power of the warring states. The second partition, on the other hand, was structurally different and materialized with the emergence of nation-states that emphasized the borders more explicitly. As in the first one, ethnic continuities were disregarded again. However, this time, the borders permeability of which was limited by physical border barriers as much as possible were referring to the end of one sovereign base area and the beginning of another. Furthermore, the geography that was divided into two before would be referred to as four pieces located in different polities with the newly found nation-states.

New borders drawn irrespective of ethnic continuities have shaped two different understandings of borders. On the one hand, there is the nation-state perception that makes a geography homeland by stressing on the territorial integrity and attributes physical, social, political, and economic functions to borders accordingly. On the other hand, there are perceptions of borders (namely, tribal, relational, ethnic, cultural, and historical commonalities and ties) of, especially,

communities living in the border region and divided by the borders. These two perceptions, for the most part, determine the relations between the Turkish state and the Kurds living in the border region. Therefore, the borders emerge as constant conflict zones between these two imaginations.

In this study, I tried to make use of some anthropological methods in order to strengthen my work in Suruç-Mürşitpınar region located on Syrian-Turkey borderline. In doing so, I tried to remain as faithful to the dynamics and realities of the region as possible. In this context, the main point of my work was the wall constructed by the Turkish state on the border between Turkey and Syria. In addition, based on field findings, I have tried to say that the essential function of this wall is to create a barrier between the Kurds in the region. The most significant evidence that I have come to this conclusion is the interviews I made with the border people and observations in the border region. In almost all interviews, the border people indicated that border-building practices serve to the interests of the Turkish state that carries the intention to separate the Kurdish communities in the region. Therefore, it is evident that the most fundamental objective of these building practices is to prevent the economic, politic and ethnic relations between the Kurds in the region.

Besides the economic and political relations, particularly the cultural activities carried out through tribal ties, religious festivals, and cross-border marriages always surpass the borders the nation-state continues to thicken. As Wilson and Donnan say, local border cultures usually transcend the limits of the state, calling into question yet again the lack of fit between national culture and state sovereignty and domain. (Wilson & Donnan, 1999) Cultural activities on the Syrian borderline also should be considered in this context. There are experiences beyond

the state imagination in those regions. Beyond the national culture, local cultures constructed by the people of the region with their cross-border relatives and other communities are viewed as activities surmounting the borders of the state. Hence, these ethnic, cultural and economic pools the border people form contradict with what the Turkish state imagines as a nation-state. That is to say, despite all border-building practices, the unities created by the people of the region go beyond the border. Based on this, it is clear that the residents of the region will not accept any barrier built and to be built on the border. That is because the border people claim that the taken measures and implemented border-building practices intend to cut the existing ties and relationships in the region rather than provide security. That is why the people of the region who keep their shared values ahead of the nation-state policies continue to maintain their relations with the other side of the border. The most fundamental reasons for this situation are the strong ethnic, economic and cultural relations between the people of the region and the Kurds' recent political and military gains on the field especially in Syria and Iraq. The thoughts expressed by the Kurds living on both sides of the borderline about border construction practices and their identities strengthen this thesis. Additionally, the policies of the states of the region to isolate the Kurds and separate them from each other constitute the other reasons why the Kurds in the border regions resist for staying together. Kurds whose lands were divided into four pieces particularly after the World War I met more harshly with the exclusionary and dividing nature of borders and faced the sanctions of the nation-states in the region after that date.

To sum up, I aimed to complete my study I started with the border phenomenon and theory with the field research I conducted in Suruç, Mürşitpınar. In this regard, after elaborating on the theory and concept of the border in the first

chapter, I have focused particularly on the border-building practices maintained by the state from the past until today in the second chapter. In that chapter, I have tried to address border-building practices implemented after the 1920s: chronologically boundary stones, barbed wires, landmines, watchtowers, border gates, and finally the wall. Further, in that chapter, as an example of building a wall on the border, I have attempted to benefit from the Separation Wall constructed by Israel in Palestine as an invasion practice and compare it to the wall construction in Turkey. In the third chapter, I have concentrated on the border-breaking practices of the border people against the border-building practices of the state by mentioning the cross-border economic, cultural and political relations carried out by the border people despite the border. Starting from this and considering the findings of the field research, I have tried to understand the aim behind the construction of the wall on the Mürşitpınar-Kobanê borderline by the state as the latest and technologically most advanced border building practice. My conclusion in this regard is that the main aim of the construction of the wall was to establish a thickened buffer zone between the Kurds of the region. Hence, it is attempted by his practice to thicken the borders put between kin peoples and alienate the peoples living here from each other.

In other words, one of the definite conclusions I have derived from the findings of the field research is that the wall that is tried to be reinforced with ‘terrorism’ and ‘security’ discourses has, in fact, a ‘divisionary’ function. Hence, I have attempted, throughout my study, to show that this wall was built to separate the related peoples on both sides of the border that shared cultural, linguistic and ethnic values and developed a common economy. My main reference points here have been policies of the nation-states in the region maintained from the past until today in the Kurdish geography, border-building practices, the achievements of the Kurdish

movement after the Syrian war, and live testimony of the people of the region. Again, the position of the Turkish state in the Syrian war has been evaluated in detail in this context. Additionally, the fear of the foundation of a Kurdish state in the geography occupied by the nation-states of the region has forced the sovereign states to apply these practices. Tens of statements of the President of the Republic of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and other leading bureaucrats such as “no matter what it may cost, no Kurdish formation in the northern Syria will be allowed”²⁰ are explicit expressions of such fear. Hence, the wall constructed on the border should be seen as one of the most effective consequences of such fear. Moreover, as it was the case in the practice of wall construction, other border-building practices attempted by the states of the region in the Kurdish geography from the past to today also should be considered in this context. Boundary stones, barbed wires fenced on the borderline and landmines that caused hundreds of deaths and injuries should be viewed as previous instruments of the occupation practice.

In conclusion, it is a fact that border-building practices maintained by nation-states for decades have not taken the priorities of border communities into account. The real aim here, as we have mentioned before, is to put a barrier between the Kurds in the region. Otherwise, we would not be speaking of border-breaking practices developed by border people against border-building practices. We should consider all other border-building practices on the borderline since the drawing of the Turkey-Syria borderline in the Ankara Treaty until today in this context. Besides, it is understood from the regional dynamics that border-breaking practices kept against these border-building practices from the past to today will continue after the construction of the wall as well. We can comprehend the clues about how the

²⁰ <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/254614/erdogan-suriyenin-kuzeyinde-bir-devlet-kurulmasina-asla-musaade-etmeyecegiz>

struggle for this cause will look like in the future from the current political resistance.

Besides, while I was trying to analyze the border experiences of border people and their cross-border relationships in my study, I have realized that the borders in our geography were not sociologically and anthropologically evaluated enough and the cross-border relations were not sufficiently studied. I could not find any comprehensive work or source on the issue while I was conducting research about the border communities in the region. On the other hand, Wilson and Donnan's writings on the border theory and border identities in the 1990s and studies of ethnographers such as Pablo Vila and Oscar Martinez about the border communities on the US-Mexico border are good sources for analyzing border communities and their cross-border ethnic and cultural relations. However, a vast majority of studies on the border in our region are concerning the tribal structure and smuggling. Neşe Özgen may be the first person to come to our minds about the border studies in Turkey. Özgen has conducted many studies on the border regions of Turkey near Iran and Iraq. If we leave her writings after the Roboski massacre, Özgen focuses on economic activities on borderlines in general and smuggling in particular in these studies. Economic dynamics constitute the basis of her studies. Nejat Abdulla, Martin van Bruinessen, and Ferhat Tekin study on Turkey's borders with Iran and Iraq concentrate mostly on the Kurdish tribal structure and influences of those tribes in the border regions. And, Ramazan Aras works on the effects of landmines –as a border building practice- in daily life of border people. Focusing on the border building practices on the border between Turkey and Syria, Aras studies what they mean for border people. In this context, he especially focuses on the effects of the landmines on the lives of border people. Deaths and injuries caused by mines are told

through stories in his book. In short, the main issues elaborated in these studies are economic mobility on the borders and tribes. However, the strong ethnic and cultural ties between the border communities on both sides of the border are mostly neglected. Thus, border identities and cultures that transcend the borders constitute the primary issues to study on in detail.

Undoubtedly, all those studies have contributions to the border literature. However, they are not sufficient in understanding the border identities in the region under today's conditions. Studies that will elaborate especially on the mobility on the border and border-breaking practices despite the border are necessary. The recent developments have a determining effect on this issue. Some of such developments are the Roboski massacre, the wars in Iraq and Syria, and the nationalization process of the Kurds living in the border regions due to such events. The writings of Wilson and Donnan on border identities and cultures are valuable to benefit from in this regard as they present the necessary information. That is because the unique identities and cultures formed by border communities are crucial in understanding the mobility and practices on the borders but are not considered enough in the studies on the borders of Turkey.

Moreover, what problems the wall that is under construction today but started to threaten the economic and social relations of communities will cause in the future is a matter of curiosity. When we look at the ongoing effects of the American-Mexican border and the Separation Wall in Palestine, it is obvious that this wall will be a source for many studies.

APPENDIX

QUOTES IN TURKISH

1. “Türkiye ile Suriye sınır hattını belirleyecek olan “sınır çizgisi, İskenderun körfesi üzerinden Payas mevkiinin hemen güneyinde olmak üzere seçilecek bir noktadan başlayacak ve takriben meydan-ı Ekbez’e doğru gidecektir. (Şimendifer istasyonu ve bu mevki Suriye’de kalacaktır). Oradan bu sınır çizgisi Marsuva mevkiini Suriye’ye ve Karnaba mevki ile Kili şehrini Türkiye’ye bırakmak üzere güneydoğu’ya doğru meyledecektir. Oradan Çobanbey istasyonunda demiryoluyla birleşecektir. Daha sonra Bağdat demiryolunu takip edecek ve demiryolunun platform Nusaybin’e kadar Türk toprakları üzerinde kalacaktır. Oradan Nusaybin ile Cezirei İbni Ömer arasındaki eski yolu takip ederek, Cezirei İbni Ömer’den Dicle’ye ulaşacaktır. Nusaybin ve Cezirei İbni Ömer mevkiileriyle yol Türkiye’de kalacaktır. Bu yoldan istifade hususunda her iki ülke aynı haklara sahip olacaklardır. Çobanbey ve Nusaybin arasındaki demiryolunun istasyon ve durakları demiryolu platformunun parçalarından sayılarak Türkiye’ye kalacaktır.” (Umar, 2003, p. 280)

2. “Çobanbey’den itibaren hat ilerlediği zaman Ayıntab livasını ayırır, Birecik’teki araziye de ayırarak oradan Suruç’a geçer. Suruç’un yarısını ve Silopi’yi iki km hattın güneyine bırakır. Halbuki Suruç ve Turuk arazisi çok verimli bir arazidir. Hat böyle çizildiği zaman bu yöre halkının büyük bir kesimi hattın güneyinde kalacak ve Fransızlar da İngilizler gibi bunları kendi emellerine alet edecektir.” (Umar, 2003, p. 278)

3. “Arazinin de ikiye bölüneceğinden dolayı gidip gelmeler ile hak aramada bazı sorunların ortaya çıkacağını, barıştan önce Fransızlara direnen ahalinin barış ile birlikte Suriye tarafından kalmaları nedeniyle Fransızların gazabına uğrayabileceğini dile getirmiştir.” (Umar, 2003, p. 278)

4. “Suriye sınırındaki sınır taşları; 1926 yılında Çobanbey-Akdeniz arası 1-480, Çobanbey-Cizre arası ise 481-1620 olarak numaralandırılmıştır. 1939 yılında Hatay’ın katılması nedeniyle, Tahtaköprü (Meydan’ı Ekbez)-Payas-Akdeniz arasında kalan sınır taşları (313-480) iptal olmuş, bunun yerine Tahtaköprü’den Hatay ili boyunca Akdeniz’e kadar 1-462 olarak yeni hudut taşları ilave edilmiştir.” (Kurt & Coğğün 2007, p. 34)

5. “Kara sınırlarını korumak ve güvenliğini sağlamak görevi Kara Kuvvetleri Komutanlığına ait olup bu görev sınır birliklerince: (1) Kendi sorumluluğunda olan bölgede sınırı korumak ve güvenliğini sağlamak (2) Gümrük hattındaki giriş ve çıkış kaçakçılığı boyunca tesis edilen birinci derecede askeri yasak bölge i.erisinde suç teşkil eden eylemleri önlemek, suçluları yakalamak, bu bölgede işlenen meşhut suç faillerini ikinci derece askeri yasak bölgede takip etmek ve yakalamak, failler hakkında zorunlu yasal işlemleri yapmak, yakalanan kişi ve suç delillerini ilgisine

göre mahalli güvenlik kuvvetlerine teslim etmek şeklinde belirlenmiştir.” (Aras, 2015, p. 59)

6. “Beşşar Esed rejimi iç savaşın ikinci yılında askerlerini Rojava’dan çekme kararı alıp bunu uygulamaya koyunca PYD güçleri Temmuz 2012’de bölgenin belli başlı şehirlerinin kontrolünü ele geçirdiler. Bu bağlamda, 19 Temmuz’da Kobane’nin yönetimi Kürtlere geçti. Bunu 20 Temmuz’da Efrin, 23 Temmuz’da da Dirbesiye ve Haseke’ye bağlı bazı kasabalar izledi. Yaz bitmeden Qamislo kenti hariç Birçok yer Kürtlerin eline geçti.” (Yıldırım, 2015, p. 117)

7. “Yavuz Sultan Selim kendisini Çaldıran Savaşı’nda destekleyen Kürt beyleri ile bir araya geldi. Kürt-Osmanlı Özerklik antlaşması burada karara bağladılar. Bu antlaşmaya göre, Kürt Beyleri’nin denetimi altındaki yerleşimler ve kalelere dokunulmayacak ve buraların yönetimi Kürt Beyleri’nin denetimi altında olmaya devam edecektir. Yavuz Sultan Selim’den sonra, oğlu Kanuni de bu anlaşma hükmünü aynı şekilde devam ettirmiştir.” (Tan, 2010, p. 78)

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