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The sung home : narrative, morality, and the Kurdish nation

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Cover Page



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Propositions accompanying the dissertation
The Sung Home. Narrative, morality, and the Kurdish nation.
By Wendelmoet Hamelink

1. The narrative approach (Somers 1994) with its focus on the connection between personal and social narratives helps to avoid the generalizations of Orientalism and othering by offering in-depth insight into the ideas and motives of individual people.
2. The focus on small-scale political structures in the recital songs of the *dengbêjs*, without much reference to a larger Kurdish national identity, should not be understood as primordialist or primitive (for example White 2000). Rather, it should be seen as an alternative interpretation of politics and political identity that contrasts with nationalism but is not therefore a 'less advanced' political model.
3. Being a morally good person (Zigon 2009) is ambivalent for many Kurds who were educated in Turkey's schooling system. Being a good Kurd means that one first needs to unlearn to be a good Turk. The process of 'empersonment of Kurdishness' in Turkey is therefore fundamentally different from the 'empersonment of Turkishness' (Bryant 2005).
4. As Malkki (1995) has argued, individuals build meaning by understanding their personal life stories in relation to social narratives. However, the interviews with *dengbêjs* show how individuals mobilize such narratives in ways that support their own interests. The power of social narratives is thus far from absolute (Suny 2001).
5. The harsh oppression of Kurdish language and culture in Turkey turned any display of Kurdishness into a political act. In recent years, this has had the opposite effect from the one intended as political activists could increase their influence in Turkey's politics by drawing on cultural symbols such as the *dengbêj* art. Cultural activism (Ginsburg 2002) is an important means through which counter movements can reclaim certain spaces and practices.
6. The combined study of oral history and musical memory leads to a better understanding of the role of embodied practices in how individuals and groups of people relate to their histories.
7. The continuing imaginary of Holland as a morally advanced society prevents Dutch citizens from acknowledging inequality in their society. The Dutch controversy around the figure Zwarte Piet (a blackface character in the annual Sinterklaas celebration) is a good example of the unacknowledged presence of everyday racism.
8. The exclusion of people with a (mental) disability from daily life, and the imagination of them as fundamentally different from 'normal' people, contributes to a distorted self-image in which we measure ourselves according to narrow definitions of intelligence, beauty and perfection.
9. Obtaining a doctoral degree on the basis of articles instead of a dissertation would ensure faster results and publication experience as well as increase the life expectancy of PhD students.
10. The longer one works towards a goal, the more longlasting is the pleasure of having reached that goal.