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# ‘Nevruz’ or ‘Newroz’? Deconstructing the ‘Invention’ of a Contested Tradition in Contemporary Turkey

LERNA K. YANIK

The 1990s saw the addition of *Nevruz*<sup>1</sup> to the long list of public celebrations in Turkey. Traditionally, *Nevruz* is known as the Iranian or the Persian New Year marking the coming of the spring around 21 March, the time of the spring equinox.<sup>2</sup> In the late 1980s, with the rise of Kurdish nationalism and the terror that accompanied it, however, in Turkey, the concept of *Nevruz* as well as the celebration of it had come to be associated with Kurdish identity. Paradoxically, in 1991, with the ‘order’ issued by then Minister of Culture of Turkey, Namık Kemal Zeybek, the Turkish state began to celebrate *Nevruz*<sup>3</sup> – a tradition, which has come to be related with Kurdishness. So why and how did the Turkish state decide to adopt the *Nevruz* tradition, celebrate it at state level, and even for a while consider making it one of the public holidays?<sup>4</sup>

This article aims to analyze this paradox, the adoption of *Nevruz* by the Turkish state in the 1990s, within the context of the ‘invention of tradition’ argument. In *The Invention of Tradition*, edited by Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, the authors give various snapshots of traditions ‘invented’ in Scotland, Wales, the Victorian United Kingdom and India, Colonial Africa, and in Europe.<sup>5</sup> In each of the cases, the elite of these countries revived a ritual or tradition from the ‘depths’ of history to provide social cohesion at the national level especially when these countries were going through ‘socially turbulent periods’. In other words, traditions were ‘invented’ to act as a cement for these societies during times of turmoil.

This ‘invention of tradition’ argument partially explains the adoption or the ‘invention’ of the *Nevruz* tradition in Turkey in the 1990s. This period marked a decade of political, social and economic change for Turkey. Domestically, the Turkish state had to face the rise of Kurdish nationalism and the terror that came with it, both of which challenged the authority of the Turkish state. Thus it can be argued that *Nevruz* was ‘invented’ or adopted to cope with these two challenges, and mostly to balance and neutralize, at least culturally, rising Kurdish nationalism. Moreover, the adoption of *Nevruz* meant polishing the image of Turkey for which the Kurdish issue had been a constant source of tension and thus considered a big hurdle in the way of possible membership of the European Union.<sup>6</sup>

As the Turkish state decided to adopt *Nevruz* and began to celebrate it semi-officially in 1991, the collapse of the Soviet Union paved the way for the use of *Nevruz* for another cause: the possibility of fostering closer ties with the Turkic republics of the former Soviet Union. In these ex-Soviet countries, *Nevruz* had

deeper folkloric roots and after the collapse of the Soviet Union these countries had adopted *Nevruz* as a public holiday. As will be explained below, by highlighting the ‘Turkic origins’ of *Nevruz*, the adoption of *Nevruz* at state level, though possibly unintended, came to be regarded as one of the means to establish friendlier ties with the Turkic republics of the former Soviet Union. Given these intended and unintended reasons for the adoption of *Nevruz* semi-officially in Turkey, in this study, I take the ‘invention of tradition’ argument one step further and argue that there was an *attempt* by the Turkish state to use *Nevruz* as a tool of social cohesion not only at the domestic level but also at the international level with the Turkic republics. Put differently, I argue that traditions, invented or genuine, do not only have the possibility of being used at national level, but also *can be the subject of attempts to use them* at international level.

While developing this argument about the two-level use of traditions, I examine the adoption of the *Nevruz* tradition step by step by analyzing the newly ‘invented’ argument and rituals by Turkish officials. The goal, in this study, is not to decide who is the ‘real owner’ of the *Nevruz* tradition. Rather, the aim is to investigate and elaborate on the process of ‘invention’ of the *Nevruz* tradition. The aim, in other words, is to deconstruct the process of institutionalization of an ‘invention’ of a tradition in a country.

I analyze this ‘invention’ of *Nevruz* tradition in three sections. In the first, I briefly summarize the history of *Nevruz* in Turkey during the republican era. In the second, I examine statements from the Turkish elite on the adoption of *Nevruz* in Turkey in the 1990s. In the third section, I describe the ways in which this new argument about *Nevruz* was turned into a series of rituals and was made public. In the concluding section, I explain the reasons why the Turkish state felt the need to adopt *Nevruz* in the 1990s, and reiterate my argument.

In *The Invention of Tradition*, Eric Hobsbawm argues that it is important to study the ‘invention of tradition’ in order to be able to identify the ‘problems’ and ‘developments’ that are taking place within a state, and to show the relation human beings have with the past.<sup>7</sup> As this article will indicate, it is also important to study the ‘invention of tradition’ because it gives clues to what states consider a ‘threat’ and an ‘opportunity’, and furthermore how they react to each of these. The ‘invention’ of *Nevruz* in the 1990s, indicated that the Turkish state saw the resurgence of Kurdish identity as a ‘threat’ and the possibility of closer ties with the Turkic republics of the former Soviet Union on a more cultural basis as an ‘opportunity’. The ‘invention’ of *Nevruz* tradition by the state became a tool or a means used by the elite to meet this almost simultaneous arising ‘threat’ and ‘opportunity’. The uniqueness of the *Nevruz* celebrations in Turkey in the 1990s is not that the state adopted some tradition that has its roots in pagan times. Rather, the ‘invention’ of *Nevruz* tradition should be considered as an example of culture being used by a state for political and strategic empowerment to tackle two different issues. In other words, the adoption and the attempts to institutionalize, or in brief, the ‘invention’ of *Nevruz* in the 1990s is the perfect example of culture being used for political ends.

*Nevruz* was a public holiday during the Ottoman period.<sup>8</sup> However, from the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 until 1991, *Nevruz* was not an official

celebration in the Turkish state. A survey of mainstream newspapers in the early years of the Turkish republic, before the outbreak of the Second World War reveals occasional references to *Nevruz* around 20 March. Yet in these articles *Nevruz* is referred to as 'Iranian National Day', and details of the celebrations of the Iranians living in Istanbul are given.<sup>9</sup> Few of these articles touch on the folkloric importance of *Nevruz*, especially during Ottoman times.<sup>10</sup> However, the articles are silent on the fact that in the early republican era *Nevruz* as a tradition was neither considered among the major public holidays nor was it celebrated by the Turkish elite.

In the 1980s, with the rise of Kurdish nationalism, *Nevruz* made a comeback on newspaper pages in two different ways. First, *Nevruz* day and the rituals of the *Nevruz* tradition, such as people gathering and jumping over a bonfire, were used as a means to express Kurdish identity in Eastern Turkey where the population is overwhelmingly of Kurdish origin, and to some degree within some enclaves in Istanbul and Ankara where again the number of people of Kurdish origin is high. Secondly, the PKK (Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan) (Kurdistan Workers' Party) specifically chose the *Nevruz* day to stage various terrorist attacks in order to obtain maximum publicity for its cause.<sup>11</sup> This Kurdish association with *Nevruz* became increasingly pronounced after the 1950s when the Kurds in the Middle East and Europe slowly started to adopt *Nevruz* as a tradition.<sup>12</sup> Coupled with the suppression they suffered, the 'recovery'<sup>13</sup> of *Nevruz* became more intense and more 'politicized'.<sup>14</sup> In using *Nevruz* as their symbol of revival and resurrection the Kurds referred to an interesting legend in their mythology according to which, *Nevruz* marked the celebration of the uprising led by Kawa, a blacksmith, against Dehhak, a repressive ruler. Kawa, according to the legend, killed Dehhak and freed his people.<sup>15</sup> Despite its importance for most of the Alevi-Bektashi groups in the region in general,<sup>16</sup> *Nevruz* came to be associated by the end of the 1980s mainly with Kurdish identity as well as with the attempts to express and resurrect it.

In the 1980s, however, neither the Turkish state nor the Turkish elite totally accepted the 'Kurdish reality'. Naturally, the negative stance of the Turkish state was not only to PKK terror, but also to any effort to resurrect Kurdish identity by whatever means – culture, tradition or language. During these years, mass *Nevruz* celebrations were illegal and every year Turkish state and security forces were on full alert around the time of *Nevruz*.<sup>17</sup>

In the early 1990s, however, the Turkish state's approach to the Kurdish issue and to *Nevruz* started to change slowly. This began when President Turgut Özal and Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel gave the first signals of a possible policy change towards the Kurds. 'If in the first years of the republic, during the single-party period, the state committed mistakes on this matter, it is necessary to recognize this', Özal argued before even becoming president.<sup>18</sup> Demirel also took a similar line in saying that

Turkey's borders, flag and official language cannot be debated but ethnic groups' demand to retain their own identity and culture should not be rejected. They are already using their own language. They have their own history, language and folklore. If they wish to develop them, let them do so.<sup>19</sup>

The metamorphosis regarding *Nevruz*, on the other hand, came when the then Minister of Culture, Namık Kemal Zeybek, issued a directive 'ordering' the

celebration of *Nevruz* around the country on 21 March 1991, expressing his hopes that *Nevruz* would bring 'love, brotherhood and tolerance to the Turkish [*sic*] world and to human kind'.<sup>20</sup> 'Since *Nevruz* was a tradition just like Hıdırellez rooted in the older Asian Turkish [*sic*] culture,' argued the Minister of Culture, '*Nevruz* as a tradition also deserved to be celebrated'.<sup>21</sup> Zeybek also suggested that in future the Ministry should work towards the celebration of *Nevruz* in a 'more comprehensive manner'.<sup>22</sup> In brief, the Turkish state through its Ministry of Culture gave a green light for the institutionalization of the *Nevruz* tradition around the country. This institutionalization worked in two ways. First, Turkish elites' approach towards *Nevruz* began to be transformed and this transformation was directly reflected in statements of these elites. Second, on a more practical level, 'state celebrations' and other rituals were initiated and made public.

Following the 1991 'directive' Turkish leaders spent much of the 1990s and early 2000s publicizing the legitimacy of *Nevruz* celebrations as well as justifying their adoption. The aim was to neutralize Kurdish nationalism that was on the rise and in a sense, to counterbalance it. This change in *Nevruz* discourse happened in three different ways. Firstly, the leaders continually highlighted the assumed socially cohesive nature of *Nevruz*. Moreover, by linking the supposed origin of *Nevruz* to Central Asia, there was an attempt to de-emphasize the Kurdish association with *Nevruz*.

The initial high-ranking approval for *Nevruz* came from Süleyman Demirel, the prime minister, in 1992 stating that 'whoever wanted to celebrate *Nevruz*, was free to do so as long as they did not violate the law'.<sup>23</sup> Demirel also said that '*Nevruz* is being celebrated in Turkey just as it is being celebrated in Central Asia and the Caucasus, helping people to get closer to each other'.<sup>24</sup> Despite this high level approval, however, that year *Nevruz* celebrations in Cizre and Şırnak, two small towns in eastern Turkey, turned out to be very bloody. During *Nevruz* celebrations in 1992, those seeking to celebrate *Nevruz* outside the areas reserved for the 'state organized public celebrations', eventually ended up clashing with the security forces, resulting in deaths and injuries.<sup>25</sup>

The most important change was when Turkish leaders highlighted the assumed unifying nature of *Nevruz* with words like 'fraternity', 'friendship', 'brotherhood', 'tolerance', 'love'. While some of these statements indicated 'fraternity' with the Turkic republics, without making any direct references to Kurds, they covertly alluded to the 'fraternity' between Turks and Kurds that Turkish leaders believed existed. In his 1996 *Nevruz* message, for example, Demirel, who by then had become President, said *Nevruz*

was a tradition that tied human beings to each other with love.... Like all traditions it has a cohesive nature that looks into the future rather than the past.<sup>26</sup>

Most of the communities that celebrate *Nevruz* in fact have Turkish [*sic*] origins. What makes a nation a nation and a person a person is culture.... If cultures of various peoples stem from the same root and share the same history this means

brotherhood and unity. Even if these people were separated in the past, this means little, because for these people what matters the most is the future.<sup>27</sup>

His statements in 1997 and 2000, respectively, also echoed this tone:

The fact that *Nevruz* is being celebrated in several different countries with a similar spirit is an indication of the historical and cultural ties between these countries. . . . All feasts bring people closer together, this applies to *Nevruz* as well. We, as a society, should celebrate *Nevruz* keeping this in mind as well as its harmonious and unifying characteristic . . . and should not tolerate those who want to destroy this harmony.<sup>28</sup>

As a common value reflecting harmony and peace, *Newroz*,<sup>29</sup> which is considered as the first day of new year and the beginning of spring, is a perfect ground to enrich universal values, such as peace, friendship and fraternity.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, when the then Minister of Culture, İsmail Kahraman, was asked during a press conference why the Turkish state had started to celebrate *Nevruz* in recent years, he replied: '*Nevruz* celebrations will erase hatred and animosity. *Nevruz* will bring the unity and harmony that we are longing for'.<sup>31</sup>

Almost all the top Turkish officials who had been in charge in the past decade emphasized this assumed unifying nature as well as the pedigree of the *Nevruz* tradition in some manner. Prime Minister Necmettin Erbakan, in 1997, argued that *Nevruz* is a tradition enriched by Turkish traditions and customs, which has roots in Turkish history that unites people disregarding racial, linguistic, religious differences.<sup>32</sup>

Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit's choice of words for his *Nevruz* statements in 2000 and 2001 highlighted the themes of 'fraternity', 'national unity', 'affection', 'friendship', and 'tolerance':

*Nevruz*, which symbolizes fraternity and consolidates [*sic*] national unity, has been celebrated for centuries in an atmosphere of feast. We consider [the] *Newroz*<sup>33</sup> festival, as a cultural affluence within the pluralist structure of society. We believe that the *Newroz*<sup>34</sup> would contribute to [the] development of affection, solidarity, and tolerance among Turkish people.<sup>35</sup>

*Nevruz* has been celebrated in the Turkish world for centuries in an atmosphere of peace, tolerance and friendship. . . . *Nevruz* made a valuable contribution to [the] development of national unity.<sup>36</sup>

The Deputy Prime Minister, Devlet Bahçeli, had a more elaborate choice of social cohesion words in his 2002 message: 'unity', 'harmony', 'peace', 'love', 'respect', 'solidarity':

Today, the *Nevruz* holiday is enthusiastically and happily conceived as an auspicious day which symbolizes unity, harmony and peace throughout the entire area inhabited by Turks. On this day, as [a] reflection of the awakening of nature, love, respect, and solidarity among people come to the foreground as well.<sup>37</sup>

A recent statement by President Ahmet Necdet Sezer sums up the position of all leading Turks by referring to the 'harmonious' nature of the *Nevruz*:

*Nevruz*, which is being celebrated in Anatolia, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Middle East, and the Balkans, is strengthening the historical ties between us and other kindred countries. Since *Nevruz* is being celebrated as a day of hope, tolerance, brotherhood and friendship, it is raising our expectations for a peaceful future.<sup>38</sup>

Although the newly emerging official view of the Turkish state on *Nevruz* covertly suggested the 'fraternity' of Turks and Kurds, it contained an inherent contradiction', the paradox being that one of the alterations that marked this new approach was the attempt to eliminate the Kurdish claims over the tradition. The 'complaint' that the Turkish elites had all along was that *Nevruz* was being portrayed as a tradition that belonged to one particular group – the Kurds. The elites at every level of the state hierarchy insisted that *Nevruz* did not belong to a particular 'group of people': it was just being celebrated in specific parts of the country.<sup>39</sup> Especially members of the nationalist National Action Party (MHP) were quite vociferous in their 'complaint' about *Nevruz* being regarded as the tradition of the Kurds, but like most of the Turkish elite they argued that it should be regarded as the tradition of the Turkish/Turkic world. Abdulhaluk Çay, an academic who was later elected as an MHP member of parliament and became minister in charge of relations with the Turkic republics, argued in his book *Türk Ergenekon Bayramı Nevruz* that

Some Marxist-Leninist and terrorist groups, benefiting from the ignorance of the Westerners, are abusing *Nevruz* and turning it into an occasion to stage their bloody actions.... Our goal [in this book] is to show the true owner of a national cultural element.<sup>40</sup>

The Deputy Prime Minister at the time, Devlet Bahçeli, who was also leader of the MHP, exemplified this kind of approach. In his 2001 *Nevruz* statement, he put forward the argument that *Nevruz* was already being celebrated in Anatolia and places where Turks lived for centuries, despite this, he argued, there were 'those' who wanted to turn this day into a 'day of violence'.<sup>41</sup> 'But, the common sense and the culture of our nation', he continued, 'have not permitted this intention to achieve its goal.'<sup>42</sup> His 2002 *Nevruz* statement reiterates the themes of its predecessor:

How unfortunate it is that, in recent years in particular, efforts have been made, under the influence of separatist elements, to debase *Nevruz*, which has been celebrated as a holiday for thousands of years both in our Anatolia and in the Turkic homelands, into a time in which separatist terrorist violence reaches a height.

This attempt to break the Kurdish monopoly over *Nevruz* appeared not only in statements by the elite, but also in their actions. In 2000, for example, when the

pro-Kurdish People's Democracy Party (HADEP) submitted an application to the Governor of Istanbul to celebrate *Nevruz* publicly, the application was rejected summarily on the grounds that the party had used the word '*Newroz*' rather than *Nevruz*. Since the letter 'w' was not in the Turkish alphabet, the Deputy Governor argued, '*Newroz*', as a concept, could not be considered Turkish, and since political parties in Turkey were not allowed to use any language other than Turkish, the application had to be resubmitted with *Nevruz* spelt in accordance with the rules of the Turkish language.<sup>43</sup>

In addition to the attempt of detaching Kurds from *Nevruz*, these celebrations in the 1990s were also marked by declarations from the Turkish leaders highlighting the 'Turkic' or 'Turkish' origins of this tradition trying to reserve it exclusively for the Turkish/Turkic world. Usually heard during the 'state celebrations' or in the '*Nevruz* messages' issued by the elite, the common point was that *Nevruz* was not only a tradition indicating the coming of the spring, but also one that celebrated the famous Ergenekon Epic.<sup>44</sup> According to this line of argument maintained by the Turkish elites, *Nevruz* was a tradition of the 'Turkic' world because, according to the Ergenekon Epic, this day represented the date when, the Turkic tribes were able to free themselves from their entrapment in legendary Ergenekon located in the mountains of Central Asia. The exodus from Ergenekon meant a new beginning for Turkic tribes, the argument went, just like the arrival of the spring denoted a new beginning. Given the legend of Kawa, in the 1990s, the emerging argument about *Nevruz* contained two competing legends resurrected by the Kurds and the Turks marking *Nevruz* as their own.

Yet while the Ergenekon Epic supported the revival analogy, it also emphasized the link with Central Asia and the Caucasus by highlighting the legendary common roots that Turkey had with the newly independent Turkic republics of the former Soviet Union. These common roots were emphasized in statements by Turkish leaders throughout the 1990s and the 2000s. During the official *Nevruz* celebrations in 1993 and 1994, for example, Süleyman Demirel highlighted the Turkic aspect of *Nevruz* that stretched to Central Asia.<sup>45</sup> In 1994, speaking as Prime Minister, he said:

The Turkish [*sic*] world is also celebrating *Nevruz*. This tradition celebrates the coming of the new year, and spring. It is the celebration of the Ergenekon Epic from generation to generation. My best wishes to the Turkish [*sic*] world.<sup>46</sup>

President Demirel also made a similar point regarding the Central Asian roots of the *Nevruz* Tradition in 2000:

The *Newroz*<sup>47</sup> festival, one of the most beautiful examples of harmony and peace between human beings and nature has been celebrated in Anatolia, Central Asia, Caucasus and Middle East for centuries in an atmosphere of great enthusiasm.<sup>48</sup>

President Demirel was not the only high ranking Turkish official to point out this link with Central Asia. Prime Minister Tansu Çiller also used the Ergenekon analogy in one



of her *Nevruz* speeches. 'The Ergenekon Epic is at the root of *Nevruz*. If today, 200 million in the Turkish [*sic*] world are celebrating this, then it is a second Ergenekon.' Many other Turkish officials argued that Turks had been celebrating *Nevruz* for thousands of years. Some even gave the exact date of its origin – 8 BC.<sup>49</sup> They also made the point that *Nevruz* was part of the Ottoman traditions, albeit celebrated under different names.<sup>50</sup> By linking the tradition to Ergenekon and to the Ottoman Empire, Turkish leaders not only emphasized the common roots with Central Asia and the Caucasus, but by embedding the tradition in history, they, in a sense, justified and legitimized the tradition as well as their reason for adopting it.

Interestingly enough, long before the Turkish state's decision to adopt *Nevruz* semi-officially, the members of the nationalist National Action Party (MHP) had long argued that the *Nevruz* was a Turkish tradition and celebrated it.<sup>51</sup> Abdulhaluk Çay had even written a book as early as 1988 outlining the argument in the nationalist circles regarding *Nevruz*.

In our research, we elaborated on one of the important customs of the Turks, namely the 'New Year'. This tradition, which marks the exodus of Turks from Ergenekon, today is being celebrated under the name of Sultan *Nevruz* in the Turkish world. Because the name '*Nevruz*' is Iranian and is being celebrated by the Iranians, it has cast doubts over Turkish New Year. This is a simple matter for those who hate Turks and thus can never associate any cultural element with Turkishness; they will easily find a new owner for that cultural element.<sup>52</sup>

Writing for *Ülkü Ocağı* in 1997, the semi-official publication of the MHP, Çay again argued that:

[The] *Nevruz* tradition is common to all Turkish people. Turks celebrate *Nevruz* as '*Nevruz-u Sultan-i*', '*Sultan Nevruz*' or as the Central Asian Turks celebrate as '*Sultan Nevruz*'. *Nevruz* is considered the day of independence. In this regard, it is celebrated as 'Ergenekon', or 'Bozkurt', holiday.<sup>53</sup>

Given the stance of the nationalists, it can be argued that the 'invention' took place by adopting pieces from the argument that the nationalists had so long maintained. An unsigned editorial which appeared in *Ülkü Ocağı* in 1996, on the other hand, described the argument of the nationalist circles and especially the MHP in the adoption of *Nevruz*. The editorial argued that the Turkish state had finally 'decided to listen to the nationalists' who for a long time had supported the argument about the 'Turkishness' of *Nevruz* and thus were at last making use of the 'peaceful' and reconciliatory character of this tradition.<sup>54</sup>

The change of attitude towards *Nevruz* was not confined to the civilian elite. The military also held official celebrations at their headquarters,<sup>55</sup> and the army and navy chiefs of staff issued statements, or 'messages of goodwill' on *Nevruz* days. In 1996, for example, the army chief of staff's message touched upon the 'Turkic/Turkish' origins of the tradition again by alluding to the Ergenekon Epic.<sup>56</sup> Furthermore, the state religious elite – heads of the Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı (Directorate of Religious Affairs), on several occasions in the past decade, not only pointed out the Central Asia link and the 'Turkishness' of *Nevruz*, but warned against the presence of 'conspirators who wanted

to plot mischief' by using *Nevruz*.<sup>57</sup> In a statement issued in 2002, the head of the Directorate of the Religious Affairs, Mehmet Nuri Yılmaz stated that

Nobody has the right to monopolize this common tradition and manipulate it for political goals. *Nevruz* is one of the most important festivals, which keeps vivid and strong the relations between the Turkish [*sic*] republics.<sup>58</sup>

Even, in 2000, the local law enforcement offices of the city of Ankara, Ankara Security Directorate, published a booklet named 'The *Nevruz* Holiday – Our 2000 Year Old Tradition'. This booklet, in a nutshell, summed up the arguments that the Turkish elites put forward in the 1990s by stating that the tradition had long been a Turkish one, even before Turkic tribes adopted Islam, and that

the circles that want to create a rift within the Turkish nation are trying to break these traditions away from the Turkish culture. . . . In recent years efforts have been made to turn *Nevruz* into the symbol of a certain ideology; in order to undermine our unity and solidarity, the separatists terrorist organization tried to create fights and clashes on *Nevruz* holidays. . . . These and similar efforts aim at undermining *Nevruz* which should be celebrated as a day of unity and solidarity.<sup>59</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the insistence of majority of Turkish elites that *Nevruz* was deeply rooted in Turkish history, some of the Turkish elites were sufficiently candid to acknowledge this 'invention of tradition' took place in the 1990s with the adoption of *Nevruz*. In his 2001 *Nevruz* statement, the Minister of Culture İstemihan Talay was admitting that *Nevruz* was a tradition that had unofficially been celebrated by people, and came to be 'recognized officially by the state as a holiday in 1991'.<sup>60</sup> Lütfullah Kayalar, who also was a Minister of Culture during the 1990s, made a similar remark about the 'invented' nature of the *Nevruz* tradition:

Our state first forbids our people to celebrate its own cultural values, and then after some time, is kind enough to allow celebrations.<sup>61</sup>

Parallel arguments appeared in journals published by state institutions such as the Turkish International Agency for Cooperation (TIKA/TICA) which facilitated cooperation on various issues with the newly independent states in Eurasia. In two different issues of its flagship publication *Avrasya Dosyası* the 'invention' of *Nevruz* was mentioned openly:

As a consequence of the rapprochement between Turkey and the Turkish World [*sic*], one of the slowly disappearing cultural values, *Nevruz*, has started to be celebrated in Turkey again and more joyously than ever.<sup>62</sup>

The tradition [*Nevruz*], which until recently had started to disappear especially among the Turks in Turkey is being revived. . . . Turks look differently at *Nevruz*, or New Day or *Ergenekon Bayramı*. This tradition symbolizes the revival of the Turkish people and their reconquering of the world.<sup>63</sup>

However, there were those who did not find this 'invention of tradition' or the reversal of attitude either sincere or convincing. As the statements by the elite on the 'Turkishness' of the tradition started to appear alongside attempts to institutionalize *Nevruz* as a tradition, editorials in various newspapers also started to question the genuineness of *Nevruz* as a 'Turkish' tradition. Some columnists were curious to learn the reasons for this 'invention' and the sincerity of the state in its attitude reversal.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, two Welfare Party MPs from Bitlis and Diyarbakır, towns in Eastern Turkey, also accused both the PKK and the state of 'politicizing *Nevruz* for their own benefit'.<sup>65</sup> However, when answering in person questions about the adoption of *Nevruz*, Turkish officials rejected the idea that there had been any kind of 'imposition by the state'.<sup>66</sup>

The Kurdish response to the 'invention of *Nevruz*', on the other hand, was quite mixed. In the early 1990s the PKK refused to acknowledge the recognition of *Nevruz* by the Turkish state.<sup>67</sup> In 1997, Ahmet Türk, head of HADEP, stated his wish to celebrate *Nevruz* 'as the feast of peace that will be celebrated by the state, the Turkish nation and everybody else'.<sup>68</sup> Then, in 2000, PKK leaders declared that permission to celebrate *Nevruz* was 'a small but very important development'.<sup>69</sup> But four years later, in 2004, the PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan, sent a 'message' from prison stating that *Nevruz* meant 'resistance against internal and external destructive forces aimed at the Kurdish people's existence'.<sup>70</sup> The pro-Kurdish, People's Democracy Party (HADEP), in contrast, despite limitations imposed on their celebrations from time to time, thanked the authorities indicating that the celebrations paved the way for 'democratization and social peace'.<sup>71</sup>

*Nevruz* celebrations after 1992 were relatively peaceful but not without incident. The fact that *Nevruz* celebrations could easily be turned into demonstrations in support of the PKK forced the Turkish state to take a number of precautionary measures when it came to institutionalize *Nevruz*. Throughout the 1990s, there were mainly two types of celebration. The first was 'state ceremonies' that usually took place in Ankara when the high ranking officials of the Turkish state, the president and the prime minister received, local and foreign delegations usually from the Turkic republics and other neighbouring Turkic groups especially from the Balkans and the former Soviet Union in celebration of *Nevruz*. The second was public celebrations, or celebrations for the ordinary people. People interested in celebrating *Nevruz* by performing the rituals such as lighting a bonfire, dancing, singing etc., had either to get first the approval of the local civilian and security apparatus, or had to celebrate *Nevruz* at one of the 'state organized celebrations'.<sup>72</sup> In other words, public celebrations could take place only with the permission of the state.

Usually what happened was that the state apparatus initiated the public celebrations, and from time to time, these public celebrations were attended by high ranking officials of the Turkish state,<sup>73</sup> who even fulfilled the rituals of *Nevruz* by jumping over the *Nevruz* bonfire and cracking eggs with other participants.<sup>74</sup> These state organized public celebrations, be they organized or pre-approved by the state, actually amounted to state control. The state felt the need to exercise caution and control, because the expectation was that without state control, these celebrations might be taken over by PKK sympathizers and could turn nasty.<sup>75</sup> This state control

or deciding which public celebrations would take place was usually accompanied by increased security especially in Eastern parts of Turkey where the Kurdish population is large.<sup>76</sup> Yet state caution and control from time to time showed itself in interesting details as well. In 1999, in order to prevent celebrations not sanctioned by the state from taking place the law enforcement officers in Diyarbakır, confiscated hundreds of tires that would otherwise be used to light the *Nevruz* bonfires.<sup>77</sup>

Despite the various kinds of caution and control it exercised, the Turkish state was still quite selective over which public celebrations it would allow to take place. For example, in 1997, while HADEP was given the permission to organize a public celebration in Istanbul, similar requests from various civil society organizations and political parties for a public celebration in several eastern towns were denied.<sup>78</sup> Then two years later in 1999, several Eastern Turkey towns were not even allowed to have 'state organized public celebrations' due to minor incidents that took place during the 'state organized public celebrations' in the previous years.<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, in 2004, almost every major city in Eastern Turkey as well as major cities of Istanbul, Izmir and Ankara had their 'public celebrations' either initiated or approved by the state or the local security of officials of the Turkish state.<sup>80</sup> In 2004, even Şırnak, the site of the 1992 celebrations that ended in bloodshed, was finally given permission to celebrate *Nevruz* publicly, a full 12 years later.<sup>81</sup> Since the lifting of the Emergency Rule (Olağanüstü Hal) (OHAL) in 2002, it seems that the state has become more willing to organize and also to give permission to other non-state groups to organize mass *Nevruz* celebrations. However, in several cities, in 2004, when people were given the alternative to the state organized celebrations, they preferred to participate in celebrations organized by various other non-state groups rather than the state ones.<sup>82</sup>

The efforts of the Turkish state to take *Nevruz* to the masses were limited from other aspects as well. From time to time, the locals in some Eastern Turkey towns protested against this heavy state interference by refusing to participate in these 'state organized public celebrations'.<sup>83</sup> Likewise, spontaneous demonstrations often emerged not sanctioned by the Turkish state around Turkey,<sup>84</sup> some of which ended up with celebrants/demonstrators clashing with the law enforcement officials.<sup>85</sup> There were also occasions when during 'public celebrations' approved by the state, slogans praising jailed PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan were chanted or PKK flags or portraits of Abdullah Öcalan were carried by a group of people within the crowd.<sup>86</sup>

Apart from organizing or approving 'public celebrations', Turkish officials also carefully planned public relations aspect of the *Nevruz* ceremonies. Part of the 2004 *Nevruz* celebrations in Diyarbakır, for example, was a pre-recorded phone message that relayed Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's best wishes for *Nevruz* to Diyarbakır residents.<sup>87</sup> Other times, the police and the security forces gave out candies and Turkish flags to the local children, and for those who wanted to light a *Nevruz* bonfire tires to burn.<sup>88</sup> The Turkish state tried many different ways to institutionalize *Nevruz* and to assure the involvement of the masses. *Nevruz* celebrations in Ankara, in 1997 included a *Nevruz* parade, a *Nevruz* bonfire, a 'public celebration' in the city stadium, and a reception by the minister of culture – all organized by the state – and finally another demonstration by leftist parties and civil society organizations.<sup>89</sup> In 1998, the Turkish postal service issued special *Nevruz* envelopes commemorating the tradition.<sup>90</sup> That year even several Turkish embassies and consulates in Europe celebrated *Nevruz* as well.<sup>91</sup>

The Ministry of Culture had and still has a very instrumental role in the 'invention' of the *Nevruz* tradition. One of the methods that the ministry employed was to organize various symposia that brought scholars from around the globe. As the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Fikret Uçcan and the head of the Public Culture Research and Development Section stated during one such symposium in 2000, the symposium participants were 'to carry out scientific research about the origins of *Nevruz*' which later on would be turned into a book 'after *Nevruz* was scientifically discussed during this symposium'.<sup>92</sup> Later on the proceedings of these 'symposia' were published by the Ministry and Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, the vanguard institution of the official Turkish history, culture and language, and have so far produced several volumes of such *Nevruz* discussions.<sup>93</sup> Furthermore, in 1999, the Ministry issued a special *Nevruz* edition of *Anayurttan Atayurda, Türk Dünyası Dergisi* (From Motherland to Fatherland, The Turkish World) where customs and the rituals of *Nevruz* tradition in Turkey and various other countries in the Turkic world were explained in detail.<sup>94</sup>

The Turkish Ministry of Culture was also quite crucial in providing the public involvement in the 'invention' of *Nevruz* tradition in the 1990s. Apart from organizing various symposia and preparing publications about *Nevruz* the Ministry also organized various poetry, essay and painting competitions with *Nevruz* theme among school children.<sup>95</sup>

Despite these measures, however, the officials themselves were well aware that the *Nevruz* feast or tradition was far from enjoying mass observance. 'The goal', said Mustafa İsen, Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism 'is to turn *Nevruz* into a celebration not only attended by the state officials but also by the masses.'<sup>96</sup> For this reason he argued, there were plans to turn *Nevruz* into a 'festival of nature and environment'.<sup>97</sup>

When it came to institutionalizing certain rituals, the efforts of the Turkish state worked at the international level as well. While 'making the Turkic link' to Central Asia, the elites not only modified the argument, but also the rituals in their effort to stretch *Nevruz* to Central Asia in order to make full use of the assumed socially cohesive character of *Nevruz*. As illustrated above, at the argument level, this was done by making references to the Central Asian origins of *Nevruz* as well as to Ergenekon Epic. At the practical level this was done by ensuring the presence of officials from various Turkic countries or groups at the *Nevruz* celebrations organized specifically for the attendance of the high-ranking officials in Turkey. For this reason, after 1993, almost every *Nevruz* celebration included officials from the Turkic Republics to emphasize the 'Turkish/Turkic' character of the tradition.<sup>98</sup> In the 1990s, several of the Türk Kurultayı (Assembly of Friendship, Brotherhood and Cooperation of Turkish States and Peoples), a semi-formal forum that brought Turkey, Turkic Republics and other Turkic peoples together coincided, (or were planned to coincide) with several *Nevruz* celebrations.<sup>99</sup> One such assembly in 1998, which was attended by officials from the Turkic republics, opened by President Demirel and various other high-ranking officials taking part in an 'Iron Beating Ceremony,' which symbolized the exodus of the Turkic tribes from Ergenekon by melting the mountains made of iron.<sup>100</sup> In 1995, there was even a *Nevruz* parade strolling down Atatürk Bulvarı, Ankara's central thoroughfare, which included the Ministers of Culture of Turkey, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tataristan and Azerbaijan.<sup>101</sup> In 2002, Devlet Bahçeli, as the deputy prime minister

and the head of the MHP, paid a visit to Kazakhstan to celebrate *Nevruz* and the establishment of diplomatic relations between Turkey and this country.<sup>102</sup>

Given all these, why then has the Turkish state decided to declare *Nevruz* a 'Turkish tradition' and celebrate it? In the closing essay of *The Invention of Tradition* Eric Hobsbawm argues that 'inventions of traditions' take place during times of upheaval or great political and social change in which for states issues of 'obedience, loyalty and cooperation' are at stake.<sup>103</sup> In the same volume, contributor David Cannadine illustrates this by showing how during the years preceding the First World War, a period in which Britain faced sweeping forces of modernization and change, Victorian monarchy used the past to justify the creation of various rituals, symbols and ceremonies.<sup>104</sup>

Similarly, the late 1980s and early 1990s was a period of great upheaval for Turkey, both nationally and internationally, which eventually contributed to the 'invention' of *Nevruz* tradition. At the domestic level the Turkish state had to confront the Kurdish nationalism coupled with the PKK terror, both of which constituted a challenge to the all-powerful image of the Turkish state. So, the adoption and the attempt to institutionalize *Nevruz*, at the rhetorical and practical level, would be presenting an image of Turkey as 'a unified nation and a country'. The goal of creating a socially cohesive nation or even just the image of it was, both directly and indirectly, as exemplified above, was reflected in the statements and the actions of the Turkish elites. This creation, though full of contradictions and paradoxes, was not only for the national audience but also for the West, especially for Europe, where the suppression of the Kurds in Turkey had led to an intense criticism against Turkey for years. The 'invention' of *Nevruz* in the 1990s, in Turkey, was a strategy developed against the challenge and threat of the rising Kurdish nationalism as well as against the European criticism of Turkey that accompanied this rise. In a sense, it empowered the Turkish state against its challengers.

This empowerment strategy had another additional yet unintended benefit at the international level. The Turkic republics that emerged following the collapse of the Soviet Union started to celebrate *Nevruz* as a public holiday. Turkish state celebrating *Nevruz* and linking its origins to Central Asia was a crucial step in forging healthy relations with these 'long-lost siblings', territories and people banished from the Turkish political argument (though not from the cultural argument) since the 1920s, when they became part of the Soviet Union. *Nevruz*, in this respect, was an important tool for the Turkish state to emphasize the 'common roots' with these nations. In other words, assumed cohesive nature of *Nevruz* was employed as part of Ankara's foreign policy towards the Turkic republics of the former Soviet Union.

To sum up, culture is a resource that attempts to instil the idea of sharedness as well as cohesion among the groups that are separated from each other.<sup>105</sup> In the 1990s, Turkey was dealing with two different 'separation' issues: with the Kurds this separation was ethnic and with the Turkic republics the 'separation' was both historical and geographic. As this article lays out, *Nevruz*, was adopted semi-officially at the state level. Though it was never made a public holiday, it started to be celebrated at the state level by the Turkish state, *Nevruz* was 'invented' by the Turkish

elite to deal with these double ‘separations’, one of which was a ‘threat’ and the other an ‘opportunity’. This adoption or the ‘invention’ took place by modifying the argument as well as the practice regarding *Nevruz* celebrations. The Turkish elite, as explained above, attempted to alter the argument by highlighting the assumed socially cohesive nature of *Nevruz* both at the domestic and international levels, as well as by breaking the Kurdish association and linking the origins of the tradition to Central Asia—the legendary land of Turks. This modified argument was also reflected into the rituals when the Turkish state started to adopt new rituals regarding *Nevruz*, most of which were once forbidden, by the very same state that now allowed it.

The goal in this article, as stated at the beginning was to chronicle an ‘invention of tradition’ attempted by one state during 1990s. Yet there are several other issues to this chronicle, which might be quite interesting to follow in the future. One big question is whether or not this ‘invention of tradition’ will succeed, fully become institutionalized at state and public levels. Secondly, given that the Turkish state is more accepting of the ‘Kurdish reality’ and that the ‘euphoria’ in the relations between Turkey and the Turkic republics has ended, can a change of emphasis in argument and practice take place? The answer to these questions will emerge with the passage of time.

## Notes

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1. Since this article describes the attitudes of the Turkish elite, I choose to use the commonly and officially used spelling of *Nevruz* in Turkey.
2. For an explanation of *Nevruz* see Mary Boyce, ‘On the Calendar of Zoroastrian Feasts’, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, Vol.33, No.3 (1970), pp.513–39; E. J. Brill’s *First Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1913–1936*, 1982 edn, s.v. ‘*Nawruz*’, p.888.
3. *Milliyet*, 21 March 1991.
4. *Milliyet*, 20 March 1994.
5. E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
6. One of the reasons that the European Community put forward when rejecting Turkey’s application to the European Community in 1987 was the ‘denial of existence of the Kurdish question’. Quoted in M.M. Gunter, *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), pp.101–102. Today, among the medium term priorities of Turkey, the European Union still lists ‘ensuring cultural diversity and guarantee cultural rights for all citizens’. See ‘Enlargement Turkey’ accessed at <http://europa.eu.int/scadplus/printversion/en/lvb/e4011g.htm> accessed on 20 August 2004.
7. E. Hobsbawm, ‘Introduction: Inventing Traditions’, in E. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger (eds.), *The Invention of Tradition*, p.12.
8. *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 1964 ed., s.v. ‘*Nevruz*’, p.234; E.J. Brill’s *First Encyclopaedia of Islam, 1913–1936*, 1982 ed., s.v. ‘*Nawruz*’, p.888.
9. See for example *Cumhuriyet*, 20 March 1930; *Cumhuriyet*, 22 March 1930; *Cumhuriyet*, 24 March 1931; *Cumhuriyet*, 22 March 1933; *Cumhuriyet*, 21 March 1936; *Cumhuriyet*, 21 March 1937; *Cumhuriyet*, 21 March 1940; *Cumhuriyet*, 22 March 1940; *Cumhuriyet*, 23 March 1940; *Cumhuriyet*, 22 March 1945; *Cumhuriyet*, 21 March 1946; *Cumhuriyet*, 18 March 1947, *Akşam* 21 March 1933, *Akşam* 20 March 1934.
10. *Cumhuriyet*, 21 March 1936; *Cumhuriyet*, 22 March 1937.

11. See for example, *Cumhuriyet*, 20 March 1980; *Cumhuriyet*, 18 March 1986; *Cumhuriyet*, 20 March 1986; *Cumhuriyet*, 24 March 1986; *Cumhuriyet*, 21 March 1987; *Cumhuriyet*, 22 March 1989; *Hürriyet*, 20 March 1989; M. van Bruinessen, 'Between Guerrilla War and Political Murder: The Workers Party of Kurdistan', *Middle East Report*, No.153 (Jul–Aug 1988), p.40; M.M. Gunter, *The Kurds in Turkey: A Political Dilemma* (Boulder, San Francisco, Oxford: Westview Press, 1990), p.67.
12. M. van Bruinessen, 'Transnational Aspects of the Kurdish Question', Working Paper prepared for Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies, European University Institute, 2000 accessed at [http://www.let.uu.nl/~martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications/transnational\\_Kurds.htm](http://www.let.uu.nl/~martin.vanbruinessen/personal/publications/transnational_Kurds.htm) on 21 August 2004.
13. C. Dahlman, 'Diaspora', in J.S. Duncan et al. (eds.), *A Companion to Cultural Geography* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2004), p.493.
14. van Bruinessen, 'Transnational Aspects of the Kurdish Question'.
15. See for example, M. Liverani, 'The Fall of the Assyrian Empire: Ancient and Modern Interpretations', in S.E. Alcock et al., (eds.), *Empires: Perspective from Archaeology and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp.375–76 P. Robbins, 'The Overlord State: Turkish Policy and the Kurdish Issue', *International Affairs*, Vol.69, No.4 (Oct. 1993), p.667, f.44; *Turkish Daily News*, 21 March 1999.
16. *Dünden Bugüne İstanbul Ansiklopedisi*, 1994 ed., s.v. 'Nevruz Adetleri', p.69; *İslam Ansiklopedisi*, 1964 edn., s.v. 'Nevruz', p.234. Alevis and Bektashis celebrate *Nevruz* as the birthday of Ali as well as his marriage to Fatma. See also D. Zeidan, 'The Alevi of Anatolia', *MERIA*, Vol.3, No.4 (December 1999) accessed at [www.cianoet.org/olj/meria99\\_zed02.html#txt54](http://www.cianoet.org/olj/meria99_zed02.html#txt54) on 21 August 2004.
17. See for example, *Cumhuriyet*, 20 March 1980; *Cumhuriyet*, 20 March 1986; *Hürriyet*, 20. March 1988; *Hürriyet*, 21 March 1989.
18. 'Özal Puts up Brave Performance in Strasbourg– But Brussels Still Says No', *Briefing*, Oct. 2, (1989), p.4 quoted in Gunter, *The Kurds and the Future of Turkey*. p.61.
19. FBIS–WEU, Dec 3, 1991, quoted in *ibid.*, p.66.
20. *Milliyet*, 21 March 1991.
21. *Ibid.*
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Cumhuriyet*, 21 March 1992; *Hürriyet*, 21 March 1992.
24. *Milliyet*, 22 March 1992.
25. *Cumhuriyet*, 22 March 1992. The death toll in 1992 celebrations was put somewhere between 70 and 92. While a Turkish Human Rights Foundations Report cited in *The Turkish Daily News* on 9 July 1992 said there were 92 people killed, in the subsequent years various newspaper reports stated that the death toll was 82, see for example *Milliyet*, 20 March 2000, and 70, respectively. See for example *Turkish Probe* (a supplement to the *The Turkish Daily News*), 21 March 1997.
26. *Milliyet*, 21 March 1996.
27. *Milliyet*, 21 March 1996.
28. *Sabah*, 21 March 1997.
29. As spelt by BBC Monitoring.
30. 'Turkish Leaders Call for "Friendship and Fraternity" for Kurdish New Year', *BBC Monitoring*, 21 March 2000.
31. *Sabah*, 21 March 1997.
32. *Sabah*, 22 March 1997.
33. As spelt by BBC Monitoring.
34. As spelt by BBC Monitoring.
35. 'Turkish Leaders Call for "Friendship and Fraternity" for Kurdish New Year', *BBC Monitoring*, 21 March 2000.
36. 'Ecevit, Bahçeli, Yılmaz, Talay Issue *Nevruz* Messages', *FBIS-WEU-2001-0321*, 20 March 2001.
37. 'MHP's Bahçeli on "Degeneration" of *Nevruz* Holiday by "Separatists"', *FBIS-WEU-2002-0320*, 20 March 2002.
38. *Radikal*, 21 March 2004. Sezer's 2001 *Nevruz* message is almost identical. See *Sabah*, 20 March 2001.
39. *Milliyet*, 21 March 1996. See the statements of Ahmet Kayhan and Kemal Yazıcıoğlu; *Hürriyet*, 22 March 1992, see the statements of Lutfullah Kayalar. Ayvaz Gökdemir in *Türk Dünyasında Nevruz: İkinci Bilgi Şöleni Bildirileri (Ankara 19–21 Mart 1996)*, p.3; A. Çay, 'Ergenekon Bayramı ve Kava Gerçeği', *Ülkü Ocağı*, June–July 1997, p.13



40. A. Çay, *Türk Ergenekon Bayramı Nevruz* (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1988), p.14–15. This book was reprinted throughout the 1990s several times.
41. ‘Ecevit, Bahçeli, Yılmaz, Talay, Issue *Nevruz Messages*’, *FBIS-WEU-2001-0320*, 20 March 2001.
42. *Ibid.*
43. *Milliyet*, 20 March 2000; G. Göktürk, “‘W’ Krizi”, *Zaman*, 20 March 2000. Several members of the Motherland Party (ANAP) criticized this on the grounds that ‘one should consider it natural to find posters written in Kurdish in a country where the citizens speak Kurdish’. ‘Turkish Ruling Party Official Criticize Banning of Newroz Posters in Kurdish’, *BBC Monitoring*, 22 March 2000. The letters ‘x’, ‘w’, ‘q’ that are part of the Kurdish alphabet but that do not exist in the Turkish alphabet continued to be a problem as late as November 2003. Two people who wanted to change their Turkish first names with the Kurdish ones were given the initial approval, but later the issue was taken to the court when the Turkish Language Institution and Hakkari Registration Office objected the issue on the grounds that these new Kurdish names contained letters that did not exist in the Turkish alphabet. *Milliyet*, 25 Nov. 2003.
44. The Ergenekon Epic is about the resurgence of the Turks after being defeated by the Chinese. According to this epic, those who survived this defeat follow a wolf. This wolf takes the survivors to a valley called Ergenekon surrounded and protected by the mountains. After living in Ergenekon for 400 years, the descendants of the survivors decide to leave Ergenekon, but cannot find an exit. With the help of an ironmonger they melt a part of the mountain that is made of iron and leave Ergenekon. Because of this iron mongering is seen as the traditional profession of the Turks. To see the various names under which *Nevruz* is celebrated at [www.Nevruz.gen.tr/isimler.htm](http://www.Nevruz.gen.tr/isimler.htm) accessed on 10 July 2004.
45. *Milliyet*, 20 March 1994.
46. *Milliyet*, 22 March 1993.
47. As spelt by BBC Monitoring.
48. ‘Turkish Leaders Call for “Friendship and Fraternity” for Kurdish New Year’, *BBC Monitoring*, 21 March 2000.
49. R. Genç in *Türk Dünyasında Nevruz: İkinci Bilgi Şöleni Bildirileri (Ankara 19–21 Mart 1996)* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Yayını, 1996), pp.9–10.
50. A. Gökdemir in *Türk Dünyasında Nevruz: İkinci Bilgi Şöleni Bildirileri*, p.4; *Avrasya Dosyası*, April 1996; R. Yüzbaşıoğlu, *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Tutanakları*, 21 March 1995, Session: 88/1, accessed at <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr> on April 21, 2001, A.O. Güner, *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Tutanakları*, 21 March 2001, Session: 72 /1, accessed via internet at <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr> on April 21, 2001; ‘*Nevruz* in Turkish Culture’, *Turkish Review Quarterly Digest*, Vol.6, No.30 (Winter 1992), pp.51–52.
51. *Cumhuriyet*, 22 March 1987.
52. Çay, *Türk Ergenekon Bayramı Nevruz*, p.14–15.
53. Çay, ‘Ergenekon Bayramı ve Kava Gerçeği’, *Ülkü Ocağı*, June–July 1997, p.13.
54. ‘Yurttan–Dünyadan’, *Ülkü Ocağı*, April 1996, p.3
55. *Milliyet*, 21 March 1996; *Milliyet*, 21 March 2004.
56. *Milliyet*, 22 March 1996
57. *Sabah*, 20 Mart 1997; *Sabah*, 21 March 1998; ‘Turkish Religious Official Issues New Year Message’, *BBC Monitoring*, 20 March 2000; ‘Turkish Religious Official Warns Against “Political” Use of Kurdish New Year’, *BBC Monitoring*, 20 March 2002.
58. ‘Turkish Religious Official Warns Against “Political” Use of Kurdish New Year’, *BBC Monitoring*, 20 March 2002.
59. ‘Security Directorate Booklet Says *Nevruz* Turkish Holiday’, *FBIS-WEU-2000-1319*, 19 March 2000; ‘Turkey: Security Body Says Kurdish New Year Ancient Turkish Holiday’, *BBC Monitoring*, 19 March 2000.
60. ‘Ecevit, Bahçeli, Yılmaz, Talay, Issue *Nevruz Messages*’, *FBIS-WEU-2001-0320*, 20 March 2001.
61. *Milliyet*, 22 March 1996.
62. *Avrasya Dosyası*, Feb. 1996. Emphasis is mine.
63. *Avrasya Dosyası*, March 2001. Emphasis is mine.
64. G. Civaoglu, ‘*Nevruz*’, *Milliyet*, 21 March 1996, p.17; Y. Doğan, ‘*Nevruz*... Sağlar’ın “Bayram” Genelgesi’, *Milliyet*, 22 March 1994, p.15; N. Mete, ‘*Nevruz* Kimin Bayramı’, *Milliyet*, 22 March 1995, p.4; E. Çölağan, ‘*Nevruz* Bayramı’, *Hürriyet*, 22 March 1991, p.22.

65. *Sabah*, 21 March 1997.
66. See for example, A. Gökdemir in *Türk Dünyasında Nevruz: ikinci Bilgi Şöleni Bildirileri* (Ankara 19–21 Mart 1996), p.4; İsmail Kahraman in *Sabah*, 21 March 1997.
67. *Milliyet*, 22 March 1994.
68. *Sabah*, 20 March 1997.
69. 'Kurdish Official Hails State's Permission for *Nevruz* Celebrations', *BBC Monitoring*, 21 March 2000.
70. 'Jailed Turkish Rebel Kurd Leader Says Prepared to Die for Cause', *BBC Monitoring*, 21 March 2004.
71. 'HADEP Thanks Authorities for *Nevruz* Celebrations', *FBIS-WEU-2000-0323*, 23 March 2000; 'Kurdish Party Leader Gives Thanks New Year Events', *BBC Monitoring*, 19 March 2002.
72. 'HADEP Allowed to Mark *Nevruz* in Diyarbakir, Batman', *FBIS-WEU-0320*, 20 March 2000; 'Kurdish Groups Celebrate New Year in Turkey', *BBC Monitoring*, 21 March 2004.
73. *Milliyet*, 22 March 1995; *Sabah*, 21 March 1997; *Sabah*, 22 March 2000; *Milliyet*, 21 March 2000.
74. *Sabah*, 22 March 1997; *Hürriyet*, 21 March 2004; *Milliyet*, 21 March 2004.
75. 'Kurds Allowed to Celebrate New Year in Some Cities of Southeastern Turkey', *BBC Monitoring*, 20 March 2000. The Malatya governorship stated that it 'would not allow celebrations upon the probability that propaganda of the terrorist organizations would be made'; 'Turkey: Rebel Group Reported Preparing for "Action" on Kurdish New Year', *BBC Monitoring*, 17 March 2003.
76. *Milliyet*, 20 March 2000; *Sabah*, 21 March 1997; 'Turkey: "Tight Security Measures" Introduced for Kurdish New Year', *BBC Monitoring*, 19 March 2000; 'Kurds Allowed to Celebrate New Year in Some Cities of Southeastern Turkey', *BBC Monitoring*, 20 March 2000; 'Tires Set on Fire in Southeastern Turkey to Mark Kurdish New Year', *BBC Monitoring*, 20 March 2000.
77. *Sabah*, 21 March 1999; *Milliyet*, 21 March 2000.
78. *Sabah*, 20 March 1997.
79. *Sabah*, 20 March 1999.
80. *Radikal*, 21 March 2004; *Hürriyet*, 21 March 2004; *Milliyet*, 21 March 2004.
81. *Milliyet*, 21 March 2004.
82. *Radikal*, 21 March 2004.
83. *Sabah*, 22 March 1997.
84. *Sabah*, 21 March 1999; *Sabah*, 22 March 1999; *Hürriyet*, 21 March 2004; 'Almost 150 Detained in Istanbul *Nevruz* Celebrations', *BBC Monitoring*, 21 March 2000.
85. 'Police Open Fire on Demonstrators in Istanbul', *BBC Monitoring*, 21 March 1999; 'Turkey: 200 People Detained in Konya, Diyarbakır During Festival Incidents', *BBC Monitoring*, 21 March 2004.
86. 'Few Incidents Reported as Kurds in Turkey Celebrate New Year', *BBC Monitoring*, 21 March 2004; *Radikal*, 21 March 2004; *Sabah*, 22 March 2000; *Sabah*, 22 March 1999; *Sabah*, 22 March 1997; *Milliyet*, 22 March 1995; 'Turkey: Twelve Arrested for Engaging in "Terrorist" Propaganda During *Nevruz*', *BBC Monitoring*, 23 March 2002. In the 1990s, number of times semi-official Anatolia News Agency reported that there were foreigners among the crowds chanting pro-Kurdish slogans. See for example, 'Turkey Deports Italian Charged with 'Provoking Hatred' in *Nevruz* Protests', *BBC Monitoring*, 4 Apr. 2000; 'Turkish Police Arrest Italian, Expel 43 Foreigners from Diyarbakır', *BBC Monitoring*, 24 March 1998.
87. *Hürriyet*, 21 March 2004.
88. *Milliyet*, 21 March 1996; *Milliyet*, 22 March 1994.
89. *Sabah*, 20 Mart 1997.
90. *Sabah*, 21 March 1998.
91. Ibid.
92. 'AA Reports *Nevruz* Festivities, Demir Statement', *FBIS-WEU-2000-0321*, 21 March 2000; 'Turkish Culture Ministry Planning *Nevruz* Celebrations', *FBIS-WEU-2000-0315*, 15 March 2000.
93. See for example, *Uluslararası Nevruz Sempozyumu Bildirileri: 21–23 Mart 2000, Ankara*. (Ankara: T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 2000; *Nevruz / Yenigün* (21 Mart) Ankara : T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı, 1999; *Fotografarla Halk Kültürü ve Nevruz Ankara* : T.C. Kültür Bakanlığı 2000.; Elmas Kılıç (ed.) *Türk Dünyasında Nevruz Üçüncü Uluslararası Bilgi Şöleni Bildirileri*, 18–20 Mart 1999, Elazığ (Ankara : Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı, 2000); Şebnem Ercebeci (ed.) *Türk Dünyasında Nevruz Dördüncü Uluslararası Bilgi Şöleni Bildirileri*, 21–23 Mart 2001, Sivas (Ankara : Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı, 2001); Sadık Tural, *Türk Kültüründe Nevruz Uluslararası Bilgi Şöleni (Sempozyumu) Bildirileri* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, 1995); Sadık Tural, *Türk*

- Dünyasında Nevruz İkinci Bilgi Şöleni Bildirileri (Ankara, 19–21 Mart)* (Ankara: Atatürk Kültür, Dil ve Tarih Yüksek Kurumu, 1996).
94. *Anayurttan Atayurda, Türk Dünyası Dergisi*, No.17, 1999.
95. There were many instances of these. See for example, ‘AA Reports Nevruz Festivities, Demir Statement’, *FBIS-WEU-2000-0321*, 21 March 2000; *Sabah*, 20 March 1999. The works of the winners of these competitions organised by the Ministry of Culture can be viewed at its website.
96. *Milliyet*, 21 March 2004.
97. *Radikal*, 21 March 2004.
98. See for example, *Milliyet*, 20 March 1994; *Milliyet*, 22 March 1995; *Milliyet*, 21 March 1996; *Sabah*, 21 March 1998; *Milliyet*, 22 March 2001.
99. *Milliyet*, 22 March 1993.
100. *Sabah*, 21 March 1998.
101. *Milliyet*, 22 March 1995.
102. ‘Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bahçeli Leaves for Kazakhstan’ *FBIS-WEU-2002-0318*, 18 March 2002.
103. E. Hobsbawm, ‘Mass Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870–1914’, in *The Invention of Tradition*, p.263.
104. D. Cannadine, ‘The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the Invention of Tradition’, in *ibid.*, pp.101–164.
105. D.D. Laitin, *Hegemony and Culture: Politics and Religious Change Among the Yoruba* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986), p.15.