RELIGIOUS DIVISIONS AND ETHNIC VOTING: THE CASE OF
SUNNI KURDS IN TURKEY

A Master's Thesis

by
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Ankara

June 2018

To my father…

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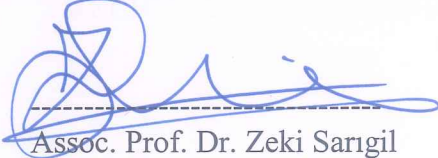
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LATİFE KINAY KILIÇ

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
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İHSAN DOĞRAMACI BİLKENT UNIVERSITY

ANKARA

June 2018

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Political Science and Public Administration.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zeki Sarıgil
Supervisor

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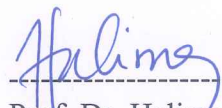
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ABSTRACT

RELIGIOUS DIVISIONS AND ETHNIC VOTING: THE CASE OF SUNNI KURDS IN TURKEY

Kınay Kılıç, Latife

M.A, Department of Political Science and Public Administration

Supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zeki Sarıgil

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This study investigates the impact of sectarian identities on ethnic voting behavior by focusing on Sunni Kurds in Turkey. The existing literature focuses on the political implications of the Alevi-Sunni cleavage among Kurds and so assumes Sunni Kurds to be a homogeneous group. However, some recent studies suggest that Hanefi-Shafi distinction among Sunni Kurds appears to generate major differences in terms of political orientations among Sunni Kurds. Thus, the following research questions direct this study: How does Hanefi-Shafi distinction among Sunni Kurds shape their political orientations? More specifically, what factors might explain their different voting preferences? The current study suggests that Hanefilik and Shafilik matter among Sunni Kurds in terms of political orientations: compared to Hanefi Kurds, Shafi Kurds are more likely to vote for anti-systemic pro-Kurdish parties. The study argues that the settlement of Hanefi Kurds in urban areas created an ideational path of pro-state attitude. Consequently, they have been less likely to vote for anti-systemic ethnic parties. Although the utilitarian perspective of path dependence provides that power, control, influence, cost of reversal, increasing returns are the mechanisms for path maintenance; ideational path dependence is better suited to this case and it offers that values, ideas, legitimacy, moral concerns are the causal mechanisms to explain the continuity of pro-state or pro-Kurdish voting behavior among Sunni Kurds. The study also touches upon the possibility of a habitual logic of path development. Finally, the

implications of this study are discussed in relation to path dependence, constructivism and voting behavior.

ÖZET

DİNSEL FARKLILIKLAR VE ETNİK OY VERME DAVRANIŞI: TÜRKİYE'DEKİ SÜNNİ KÜRTLER ÖRNEĞİ

Kınay Kılıç, Latife

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Bu çalışma, Türkiye'deki Sünni Kürtlere odaklanarak mezhepsel kimliklerin etnik oy verme davranışına etkisini araştırmaktadır. Mevcut literatür, Kürtler arasında Alevi-Sünni bölünmenin siyasi etkilerine odaklanmakta ve böylece Sünni Kürtleri homojen bir grup olarak görmektedir. Ancak, bazı yeni çalışmalar Sünni Kürtler arasındaki Hanefi-Şafi ayrımının Sünni Kürtler arasında siyasi yönelimler açısından büyük farklılıklar yarattığına işaret etmektedir. Dolayısıyla, şu araştırma soruları bu çalışmayı yönlendirmektedir: Sünni Kürtler arasındaki Hanefi-Şafi bölünmesi siyasi yönelimlerini nasıl şekillendirmektedir? Daha spesifik olarak, farklı oy verme tercihlerini hangi faktörler açıklayabilir? Mevcut çalışma, Sünni Kürtler arasındaki Hanefi ve Şafi ayrımının siyasi yönelimler açısından önemli olduğunu göstermektedir: Hanefi Kürtlere kıyasla Şafi Kürtlerin Kürt yanlısı partilere oy verme olasılığı daha yüksektir. Çalışmada, Hanefi Kürtlerinin kentsel alanlara yerleşmesinin, devlet yanlısı tutumlara dair bir düşünce yolu yarattığı öne sürülüyor. Sonuç olarak, Hanefi Kürtlerin anti-sistemik etnik partilere oy verme olasılıklarının tarihsel olarak daha az olmuştur. Yol bağımlılığının faydacı perspektifi, güç, kontrol, etki, fayda-yarar analizi gibi yol bağımlılığını açıklayıcı mekanizmalar kullanırken fikirsel yol bağımlılığı (normatif perspektif) bu çalışmada daha uygundur ve yol bağımlılığının devamını değerler,

fikirler, meşruiyet, doğru davranışa dair kaygılar oluşturmakta ve bu da Sünni Kürtler arasında devlet yanlısı ya da Kürt yanlısı oy kullanma davranışının sürekliliğini açıklayan nedensel mekanizma olarak belirtilmektedir. Çalışma ayrıca, yol bağımlılığına ilişkin rutine veya geleneğe dayalı bir yol bağımlılığı olasılığına da değinmektedir. Son olarak, bu çalışmanın sonuçları yol bağımlılığı, yapılandırmacı etnik milliyetçilik ve oy verme davranışı literatürleriyle ilgili olarak ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Din, Etnik Kimlik, Hanefi-Şafi ayrımı, Oy Verme Davranışı, Yol Bağımlılığı.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the impact of sectarian divisions within an ethnic group on the ethno-nationalist orientations of the members of that particular ethnic group. For that purpose, this study focuses on the Kurdish case and examines to what extent Shafi - Hanefi division within Sunni Kurds shape their voting behavior. The following research questions direct this study: Do we see any difference in terms of ethno-nationalist orientations among Shafi and Hanefi Kurds? Which group is more likely to vote for anti-systemic ethnic parties? In other words, within which sectarian group is ethnic voting behavior more likely? Why?

In Turkey, 73% of Kurds are Shafis and 22% of them are Hanefis while 5% of them are Alevis (Yeğen, et al., 2015). Some of the studies in the recent literature on Kurdish political behavior suggest that there exist some differences among the vote choices of Hanefi and Shafi Kurds (e.g. see Sarıgil & Fazlıoğlu, 2014; Yeğen, et al., 2015). According to a public opinion survey conducted in 2011, Sarıgil and Fazlıoğlu (2014) show that 55.2% of Hanefi Kurds vote for the AKP and 24.2% of them vote for the BDP whereas 59.3% of Shafi Kurds vote for the BDP and 23.8% of them support the AKP. This trend seems to continue later as well[1]. So, Hanefi Kurds are more likely to vote for pro-state parties like the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) while their Shafi counterparts are more likely to vote for pro-

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[1] The support for the AKP and the BDP/HDP among Sunni Kurds in relation to Hanefilik and Shafilik is shown in the literature review part in Figure 1 in Chapter 3 with a density plot including the years of 2011, 2013 and 2015.

Kurdish ethnic parties like the Peace and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*, BDP) or later the People's Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik P*artisi, HDP) in the southeast region in Turkey. How can we explain this variation among Sunni Kurdish electorate that has been regarded as homogeneous by previous literature? Does Hanefilik or Shafilik matter in terms of the political preferences within Sunni Kurdish population? Utilizing ideational path dependence as an overarching theoretical approach, this study examines varying ethno-nationalist orientations across Hanefi and Shafi Kurds in the Turkish setting.

The extant literature focuses on the role of religious leaders or chieftains, the impact of patronage, the existence of swing voters and religiosity in order to explain the pro-state or pro-Kurdish voting behavior of the Kurdish electorate. In terms of sectarian differences, the emphasis has been on the Alevi-Sunni cleavage, which neglects the divergent voting patterns within Sunni Kurds. In other words, since the existing literature largely deals with the division between Sunni and Alevi Kurds, Sunni Kurds are assumed to be monolithic or homogeneous. The current study contributes to our understanding of the political consequences of the possible divisions within Sunni-Kurds. This study follows that Kurdish identity should not be regarded as a monolithic one. To understand why election results in southeast Turkey does not overlap with the ethnic identity to a greater extent and to determine the reasons behind non-ethnic voting behavior by an ethnic minority individual, we should acknowledge the fact that the people comprising the ethnic group should not be treated as a homogeneous entity (Tezcür, 2009). Brubaker (2004) remarks that the tendency to demonstrate ethnic groups as a homogeneous entity is associated with groupism. He highlights that we need to rethink the meaning of ethnicity away from 'commonsense groupism' and highlight that ethnic groups should not be taken for granted as if they

are uniform (Brubaker, 2004, p. 7). Kurdish identity as well is "formed, articulated and lived in many ways" which makes it hard for drawing a clear picture when we say 'Kurd' (Tezcür, 2009, p. 7). For instance, many Zaza people do not want to be affiliated with the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkaren Kurdistan*, PKK) and they protest its activities. Some Kurds downplay their Kurdish identity due to the negative connotations, stereotypes it is associated with (Tezcür, 2009). Many Kurds who do not support the PKK, have also felt alienated by the PKK attacks (Manafy, 2005). Diverse outcomes in voting preferences of not only in Sunni and Alevi Kurdish votes but also within Sunni votes also prove that Kurdish identity is a complex one and it does not produce a unified picture in terms of the ethno-nationalist orientations of the Kurdish electorate (Sarıgil & Fazlıoğlu, 2014).

This study tries to understand the variation in ethno-nationalist orientations of Sunni Kurds by looking at their vote choice (i.e. whether they vote for ethno-nationalist pro-Kurdish political parties). Ethnic voting is defined as voting for ethnic parties that represents one's own group where there are other ethnic groups and their parties in order to gain more representation and secure their interests as well as for psychological bonds (Chandra, 2009; Horowitz and Long, 2016). Ethnic voting behavior constitutes one major indicator, which gives us clear signs of one's ethno-nationalist orientation. Voting for the ethnic party demonstrates the existence of ethnic bonds, solidarity and favoritism for one's own group (Madrid, 2011). Whether they vote for the ethnic party or not, informs us about the ethno-nationalist orientations. That's why, this research focuses on ethnic voting behavior to account for the ethno-nationalist orientation of an ethnic group by distinguishing between the voters of the ethnic and non-ethnic parties within the same ethnic group. We distinguish between Sunni Kurds who vote for pro-Kurdish parties and who vote for pro-state parties. We

focus on sectarian differences among Sunni Kurdish electorate which has found to be divergent on pro-state and pro-Kurdish dimensions to account for existence or non-existence of ethno-nationalist tendencies. Therefore, we use ethnic voting to differentiate the distinct perspectives of ethno-nationalism within Sunni Kurds.

The notion of path dependence can help us understand the resilience of ethno-nationalism in some groups as opposed to other groups within the same ethnicity by focusing on the "systemic feedback patterns" produced by "intersection of practical categories and power relations" according to Ruane and Todd (2003, p. 224; 2007). They suggest that the fluidity of ethnic category allows individuals to shift their identities and once an allegiance is formed and solidarities are created, they are inclined to reproduce themselves. They consider, feedback mechanism constrains the individuals to break the bonds of ethnic solidarity. In addition to material interests, moral grounds can affect ethno-nationalist orientations as well (Ruane & Todd, 2003). This is also applicable to Hanefi and Shafi Kurds when they diverge on support for pro-state and anti-state parties. Network effects and learning patterns (socialization) make elites to use old categorizations to maintain the inertia (as ethnic categorizations). Consequently, path dependency offers a way to comprehend differing ethno-nationalist orientations among the same ethnic group via the notion of *ideational lock-in*.

By reading more about what Hanefilik and Shafilik constitute and how they differ from each other, this study also relies on the information provided by elite-interviews. Elite interview refers to "the discussions with people who are chosen because of who they are" and the interviewees are not chosen randomly but for a specific reason that serves the purpose of the research (Hochschild, 2009). Elite interviews are quite suitable for researches concerning the historical factors and

developments, continuities and changes of the social and political phenomenon through time (Hochschild, 2009). Additionally, they are useful for researchers to "triangulate among respondents", leading the interview in the desired direction more and finding out new perspectives with open questions when making the interviews (Hochschild, 2009). The questions in the interviews, in this study, are semi-structured and they aim to explore the important factors in determining the Kurdish electorate's political preferences with a more emphasis on religion and ethnicity, the historical trajectory of their voting behavior with reference to continuing patterns and changes, the Islam's role in their ethno-nationalist orientations, how their religiosity interact with their ethnicity and nationalist perspectives and lastly how they can comment on the diverse electoral outcomes among especially Sunni Kurds with specific sub-questions about the regional differences, sectarian distinctions in relation to their urban-rural settlement.

This study utilizes data derived from three public opinion surveys, conducted as part of a broader research on Turkey's Kurdish conflict, by the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (*Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları Araştırma Vakfı*, TEPAV) which is a professional public-opinion research company, based in Istanbul. TEPAV funded three separate nationwide public opinion surveys (in 2011, 2013 and 2015). The first survey (November 2011) was carried out through face-to-face interviews with 6,516 respondents, aged 18 and above, from seven regions, 48 provinces and 369 districts and villages. In April 2013, the same survey with slight modifications was repeated. The second survey involved face-to-face interviews with 7,103 participants from seven regions, 50 provinces and 398 districts and villages. In April 2015, a slightly modified version of the 2013 survey was administered with a representative sample of 7,100 participants. In all the surveys, a multi-stage stratified,

cluster-sampling procedure was used to select households. Once households were selected randomly, age and gender quotas were applied in choosing one respondent from each household. The survey questionnaires also included items about sectarian origins and political party preferences of the respondents.

In addition to this quantitative data, showing the variation in voting behavior of Hanefi and Shafi Kurds, seven elite interviews were conducted. The interviewees include three theologists from Ankara Divinity Faculty, who are especially knowledgeable about the history of Islamic schools. In addition to the theologists, four other elite-interviews have been conducted. These contain ethnically Kurdish people who are knowledgeable about the Kurdish issue and the party politics concerning the region. Having knowledge about the Kurdish politics and Sunni jurisprudences for the case of theologists were the main criteria for choosing the people to be interviewed other than the availability concerns. The interviews mostly were conducted in the offices of the interviewees and they lasted about an hour mostly and two of them took two hours. One of the interviews was made via e-mail with Cihan Öztunç, the vice-provincial head of İstanbul of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) and another one was through telephone call because the former interviewee was in İstanbul and the latter was in Diyarbakır with Assoc. Prof. Vahap Coşkun who was among *Akil İnsanlar Heyeti* during the Peace Process. The interview with a member of the HDP, Yusuf Altaş, was made in Malatya and the remaining four interviews were made in Ankara. These include the dean of Ankara Divinity Faculty, Prof. Dr. Hasan Onat, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mehmet Kalaycı, general vice president of Hür Dava Partisi, (HÜDAPAR), Mehmet Yavuz, and another theologist who did not want to share his name. In four of these interviews, I took notes or recorded the conversations depending on the participant's permission. Other than the pre-

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determined questions, I could be able to make other inquiries relying on the route of the conversation and the knowledge of the participant. The interviews were conducted in January, February and March in 2018.[2]

The current study suggests that the existing literature explains the pro-state voting behavior among Kurds by the role of religious or tribal leaders, patronage and religiosity but the existing studies are limited to understand why there are differences among Sunni Kurds in terms of their voting behavior. Furthermore, some authors treat Shafilik as an ethnic marker for Kurds even though there are Hanefi Kurds as well.[3] This study first shows that Shafi Kurds have lived in rural areas in general as opposed to their Hanefi co-ethnics who usually have resided in urban places. This rural-urban distinction has also generated major differences in their ethno-political orientations. The peripheral status of Shafi Kurds both politically and especially geographically has probably brought about isolation and the preservation of their distinct identity (Ciment, 1994). Conversely, the urban space might have facilitated the integration of Hanefi Kurds into the socio-political system. Even though Hanefilik and Shafilik do not correspond to a religious divide, the differences in voting patterns reflect an ideational distinction between Hanefi and Shafi Kurds due their settlement in respectively urban and rural places where in the former the state authority has been felt more and modern city life, as Houston (2008) proposes, limits the expression of Kurdish identity and eventually provides with integration for the Kurds living in urban spaces; the latter enables an environment more conducive to anti-state attitude due to not only

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[2] Especially one limitation that I have come across during this research is about finding the relevant people who would like to be interviewed. Even though we could be able to reach some political elites, some did not have enough knowledge on the grounds that they were not Kurdish or have not been acquainted with the Kurdish politics. We needed people who know about the voting behavior of Kurds in the past and today and the influential dynamics determining the Kurdish vote. We managed to make seven interviews.

[3] For example, see, Bruinessen (2000) and Kreyenbroek (1996) for the relation between Shafilik and Kurdishness.

remoteness but also because of grievances induced both by the state and the PKK. Ideational forces as self-reinforcing mechanisms and historical factors play an important role for the process of cognitive lock-in of pro-state and pro-ethnic voting behavior among Sunni Kurds who have been deemed to be homogeneous by the extant literature but in fact, are found to have distinct voting preferences. While utilitarian perspective of path dependence provides that power, control, influence, cost of reversal, incentives or positive feedbacks are the mechanisms for path maintenance for pro-state voting behavior; ideational path dependence offers that values, ideas, legitimacy, moral concerns are the causal mechanism to explain the continuity of pro-state and pro-Kurdish voting behavior. The study also touches upon the possibility of a habitual logic of path dependence in the sense of an emotional attachment to a party that is supported as a tradition or a custom through time.

The perspective on ethno-nationalism that this study adopts, treats the phenomenon as a modern one. Ethnicity as a category can contain many other elements such as culture, religion, language, interests, customs to provide with boundaries for different groups. Cultural lineage and shared trauma rather than biological descent is more applicable to ethno-nationalism since "beliefs in shared descent or feelings of putative kinship do not always generate a sense of solidarity (ethnic or not) or even a positive feeling" (Ruane & Todd, 2003, p. 221). This also applies to the Kurdish case. The absence of support from Alevi Kurds to the Sunni Kurds' uprisings in the early Republic and vice versa is an example to the alienation of some in the same ethnic category (Bruinessen, 2000). The focus of this study also implores us to have a cultural approach to ethnicity since, in ethnic voting, we see some division among Kurds, too. Not only Alevi and Sunni Kurds vote differently, but also Hanefi and Shafi Kurds.

As for the sectarian formations (mazhab), this study regards them as complex identities and institutions which are not isolated to their cultural and religious components and that they reproduce themselves again and again as a longstanding and continuing process (Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kalaycı, 2018, personal communication). Sectarian differences bring about socio-political connotations depending on their environments and could have different meanings in different times and places. Their relationship with each other can have a peaceful or a conflictual one in different contexts, carrying political meanings rather than only being confined to religious attachments.

The implications of this study lead us to make a friendly criticism to constructivism on the grounds that it tends to ignore the role of persisting historical legacies. By providing a historicist approach to diverging voting patterns among Hanefi and Shafi Kurds in Turkey, this study suggests that we cannot neglect some fixed variables shaped by *ideas* which have created an ideational path dependence affecting the political preferences of Kurdish electorate. Within Kurds, not all of them vote for the ethnic parties. Hanefilik and Shafilik seem to be leading to different outcomes when we look at the voting preferences of Sunni Kurds. Therefore, a historical account of voting patterns of an ethnic group influenced by sectarian identities implores us to take historical factors more seriously in our explanations of ethno-nationalist orientations. Sectarian identities, in this case, reproduce themselves over time and bound people to favor some preferences more than the others even though the preferred choice might not benefit the ethnic group. This sectarian distinction among Sunni Kurds does not reflect a religious division when they show their political preferences. The mechanism that leads to different political preferences in Sunni Kurds' case, is the ideational path that is formed in the past along their

sectarian lines which became *taken for granted.* The formation of this ideational lock-in of certain political preferences in the past and its continuity in the form of pro-state and pro-ethnic group affiliation, informs us about the historical contingencies and their long-lasting effects on the voting behavior among Sunni Kurds. Thus, the current study suggests that constructivist approach to ethnicity and nationalism should have greater room for historical factors (i.e. persisting historical legacies).

This study consists of five chapters. The second chapter is called as voting behavior where I analyze the extant literature on voting behavior in relation to religion and ethnicity separately in two sections. In the third chapter, I analyze the literature on Kurdish voting behavior in the first section. In the second section, I look at the relationship between religion, ethnicity and the Kurdish vote and how they are regarded by the previous literature with the contribution of the interviews I conducted. A sub-section is included under the second section to explain the influence of Islam on Kurdish ethno-nationalism in relation to its potential to diminish nationalist demands of Kurds. Here, I analyze the Islamic brotherhood thesis and how Turkish and Kurdish nationalists react to the idea of 'ummah'. Later, the fourth chapter attempts to explain the variation in vote choices of Sunni Kurds with the notion of path dependence by relying on mostly *ideas* in terms of pro-state and anti-state voting behavior. First, I explain that this variation in political preferences has nothing to do with a sectarian divide in the sense of a religious-doctrinal difference. Secondly, I introduce path dependence as the theoretical framework, and I explain why path dependence is useful to understand the divergence in the political orientations of Shafi and Hanefi Kurds. Then, I apply the path dependence approach to explain why Hanefi Kurds are more likely to vote for pro-state parties compared to their Shafi counterparts who are more likely to vote for anti-systemic ethnic parties. Finally, I discuss the

relevance of this study in relation to the broader theoretical implications in the fifth chapter.

CHAPTER II

VOTING BEHAVIOR

2.1 Religion and Voting Behavior

For Lipset and Rokkan (as cited in Raymond, 2011), one of the social cleavages that shape voting behavior is the religious-secular cleavage. The frozenness of the social cleavages has been questioned later due to the volatility rise in the elections of the 1960s and 1970s by many scholars such as Pederson, Daalder and Mair, Dalton, and Franklin (as cited in Raymond, 2011). However, later scholars have found that the religious cleavage still persists and "religious-secular differences remain the best predictor of vote choice among the traditional social cleavages" (Raymond, 2011, p. 127). The reason why religious-secular cleavage is a crucial determinant of voting behavior can be related to the socialization of religious communities on political matters or the profound attachment to "moral traditionalism and general conservatism" by the religious voters (Raymond, 2011).

Gill (2001) believes that with the rise of religious fundamentalism, religion became relevant again unlike the secularization theory suggested (that with modernization, the role of religion in the socio-political world would decline). Several authors adopting a novel approach towards religion have tried to explain the relationship between politics and religion by religious interests. Gill (2001) proposes that this interest-based analysis could be quite useful for testing religious political behavior in a more empirical fashion. Several other authors investigated the religious

political behavior such as Kalyvas, Warner, Norris, Inglehart, Fetzer and Soper (as cited in Bellin, 2008).

With the rediscovery of the role of religion by political scientists after some time of neglect in the literature, some authors have investigated the religiously motivated political groups to understand their background and interest in politics (Wald, Silverman, & Fridy, 2005). They analyze the religious groups from the perspective of social movement theory in relation to their identity and political opportunity structures and resource mobilization. They suggest that these three sources are required for religious groups in order to perform a political action (Wald, Silverman & Fridy, 2005). There have been authors who acknowledged the importance of religion's impact on political life such as Huntington, Verba, Brady, Schlozman and etc. and they analyzed the role of religion in voting behavior especially in the American politics (as cited in Wald and Wilcox, 2006; Wald, Silverman & Fridy, 2005). As an example, Layman (1997), examines the American voters and finds that there is a new cleavage line among the religious people as liberal versus conservative religious people, similar to the cleavage between Catholics and Protestants. Another illustrative study belongs to Jones-Correa and Leal (2001) in which they disagree with Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995, as cited in Jones-Correa and Leal, 2001) on the effects of denominational differences among Hispanic people in the US on political participation. They suggest the relation is the opposite way of what Verba, Schlozman and Brady claim, and that religion is quite important in terms of associational membership, as an alternative explanation to resource-based models of mobilization (Jones-Correa and Leal, 2001). Some authors have also analyzed the influence of the African American churches and their role in the recruitment of individuals for civil rights movement in the US (Harris, 1994; Djupe & Grant, 2001).

Religion has a considerable impact on voting behavior in terms of mobilization of the masses as well. Grzymala-Busse (2012) finds that churches can almost act as a party or a lobbyist to affect the policies or make alliances for political purposes. This indicates that religion can shape political behavior by affecting attitudes of people and political institutions (Grzymala-Busse, 2012). She also explains why the religious identity is a unique one due to religions' transnational demands, their influence and demands on the adherents and its resilience compared to other identities. Due to this uniqueness, Chandra, Posner and Bellin (as cited in Grzymala-Busse, 2012) consider religion as one of the elements that distinguish different ethnicities.

The effect of religion on party preference and in general on political participation is studied in the literature with reference to cleavage lines in Western Europe by many scholars (Langsaether, 2017). For instance, James Tilley (2014) tries to understand the mechanisms that enable religion to affect the party preferences by agreeing on the framework put forward earlier by Lipset and Rokkan. He asserts the party preferences are influenced greatly by the values which relate to religion. Additionally, he presents that the social cleavages continue to exist between different religious denominations via "parental transmission of party affiliation" (Tilly, 2014, p. 45). He agrees with Kotler-Berkowitz (2001) who argues that contrary to the belief, religion influences vote preferences in Britain however, he criticizes Kotler-Berkowitz for not distinguishing between Scotland and England for their different political customs with regards to religion's impact on voting behavior (Tilly, 2014).

A recent study concerning the relationship between the polarization of political parties and religious voting behavior, highlights that if the polarization of parties increases along a sensitive issue that is value-laden (e.g. abortion), religious voting might increase as well (Langsaether, 2017). Langsaether (2017) further investigates

which conditions directly or indirectly affect voting behavior in relation to religion. He points out that each party has a potential to influence the voters with regards to their support on the basis of either common values they adhere to or traditional support for the party dating back in the history without any reference to the values. He exemplifies this by saying that the Labor party in the UK has been supported by the Catholics traditionally more than any other religious group. However, this support from the Catholics does not depend on religious or any value-oriented promises that the party makes, rather it is more related to the historical bonds. He maintains that if the Labor Party decides on introducing some policies supporting abortion or same-sex marriage, then the Catholics might abandon their support for the Labor Party and as time passes the Catholics would withdraw their overall support for the party. As a result, Langsaether (2017) explains the conditions under which religion is influential in voting behavior by the historical group affiliation with a party as a direct effect and by the common values shared with a party as an indirect effect.

There is also research with regards to the interaction of religion and voting behavior in Europe and Western democracies. In general, these studies demonstrate that denominational differences form a cleavage line that influences the voting behavior (Knutsen, 2004; Van Der Brug, Hobolt, & De Vreese, 2009; Minkenberg, 2010). To illustrate, Knutsen (2004) analyzes eight countries in Western Europe in the years between 1970 and 1997. He finds that the denominational cleavage is important especially in Catholic and religiously diverse countries compared to the Protestant countries like Britain. The denominational cleavage affects voting behavior along the left-right dimension (Knutsen, 2004). Van Der Brug, Hobolt and De Vreese (2009) also investigate the impact of religion on the elections of the European Parliament in the years between 1989 and 2004. They claim, when people vote for Cristian

Democratic parties and Conservative parties, religion has a great deal of impact, depending on the religious context. Similar to Knutsen (2004), they argue religious fragmentation stimulates an increase in the role of religion in the elections (Van Der Brug, Hobolt & De Vreese, 2009). On the other hand, the generational replacement as an underlying reason for electoral change, has decreased the role of religion in the elections over time even though the influence of religion on voting behavior, in general, has escalated among each generation since the 2000s (Van Der Brug, Hobolt & De Vreese, 2009).

On the other hand, Minkenberg (2010) presents a rather more interesting case in his study where he points out that the religious cleavage has changed while it maintains its influential position in voting behavior. He differentiates between "the levels of (individual) church integration and involvement" and "belonging to a religious or church culture" (Minkenberg, 2010, p. 391). While the former is associated with the active attendance to religious gatherings and the level of trust in religious institutions; the latter is related to the "socialization into a distinct set of values" that is different from the individual engagement in values (Minkenberg, 2010, p. 391). Also, these "distinct set of values" does not have to represent a particular confession (Minkenberg, 2010, p. 391). After identifying this distinction between denominational cleavage and religious cleavage, Minkenberg (2010) argues that religiosity could be a better indication of voting behavior than the denominational culture (e.g. Catholic or Protestant) since the religiosity necessitates the active involvement of individuals to religious institutions. Nevertheless, the denominational culture reflects just an intangible link between religion and the individual according to Minkenberg (2010). He believes that religiosity establishes clear links between individuals and religious institutions, shaping voting behavior in a more concrete sense. He indicates that the

denominational voting, in general, has shown a decreasing tendency in Western democracies whereas the impact of the religious cleavage is on the rise in those countries (Minkenberg, 2010). Additionally, he accentuates the role of immigration in decreasing denominational voting in Western countries due to the diverse cultures, and the influence of non-Christian communities on the emergence of a "public religion" among Christians. This public religion deemphasizes the denominational differences (Minkenberg, 2010, p. 408).

As for the immigrant political behavior and the role of religion in this vein, Just, Sandovici and Listhaug (2014) demonstrate that religion could be a source of political mobilization for immigrants as well. Their research draws attention to the importance of the immigrant generation and religiosity. Furthermore, the type of the religion also matters because it determines the potential for mobilization (Just, Sandovici and Listhaug (2014). While the second-generation Muslim immigrants seem to be more religious, their participation level could be as same as the secular immigrants. Similarly, Christian migrants differ less in their participation in elections with regards to their religiosity levels (Just, Sandovici and Listhaug, 2014).

Overall, the existing literature regards religion as a resource for mobilization, acknowledges its crucial role, for instance, in forming cleavages. It also points out religion's potential for encouraging political engagement and recruitment via religious networks, gatherings and acting almost like a political party (Just, 2014). Religious institutions might encourage people to participate more in politics via increasing group consciousness and the resources, necessary for mobilization and activities. This also applies to minorities as in the case of Black churches which provided African Americans with opportunities and inspiration for their purpose (Just, 2017). By and large, religion, religiosity, religious denominations and other religious factors that are

value-laden affect voting behavior of individuals. The literature acknowledges the role of religion in voting preferences and focuses on the mechanisms by which religion shapes political attitudes in general and party choices in particular. These suggestions in the literature have a major implication for our study in the sense that religion, religious identities and religious values are found to be quite resilient in influencing the political world. Religion, religious identities and values have been used as cognitive frames by which individuals shape their political orientations, position themselves towards political parties and form their voting preferences and these cognitive frames even might consolidate these preferences over time.

2.2. Ethnicity and Voting Behavior

Ethnicity is defined as "a subjectively felt belonging to a group that is distinguished by a shared culture and by common ancestry" (Wimmer, 2013, p. 7). The perception of a shared culture and common ancestry come from, according to Wimmer (2013) "cultural practices perceived as "typical" for the community, or on myths of a common historical origin, or on phenotypical similarities indicating common descent" (p. 7). Ethnicity shapes political attitudes and behavior according to the social identity theory which explains that groups characterize themselves in relation to other groups by creating in-group and out-group categorizations, according to Tajfel and Turner (1986). They believe, in-group members discriminate against out-group members (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Furthermore, Just (2017) finds that groups that define themselves along the lines of ethnicity will reflect their ethnic identity to their political behavior. Ethnicity provides with information shortcuts when people form political attitudes and behavior (Just, 2017). Additionally, ethnicity could be understood as "not an aim itself, but a perceptual lens through which individuals identify reliable alliance partners as well as the organizational means through which

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they struggle to gain access to state power and its public good." (Wimmer, 2013, p. 172). In general, ethnicity surpasses other identities in terms of voting behavior especially when voters are less knowledgeable about all the relevant information in the election times (Chandra, 2004).

Ethnic voting could be identified as the "sincere act" of voting for the ethnic parties in a multiethnic setting because the electorate is concerned about their own group's interests and representation even when the ethnic party, the group votes for, has a small chance to win the elections or affect the political atmosphere, according to Horowitz (as cited in Chandra, 2009, p. 21). Horowitz and Long (2016) say that ethnic groups vote for the ethnic party no matter what, either because of the psychological attachment to their group or because of the material interests they can gain by securing the votes for the ethnic party. The assimilation theory of Dahl and the mobilization theory of Wolfinger to explain ethnic voting, link ethnic consciousness with socioeconomic status (Gabriel, 1972). Assimilation theory suggests that once ethnic minority groups climb up the ladder of social status, ethnic voting is more likely to decrease due to heterogeneity. On the other hand, mobilization theory asserts that when ethnic minority communities reach the middle-class level, their ethnic consciousness would increase, and they engage in ethnic voting more than before (Wolfinger, 1965; Gabriel, 1972). Other than these theories, the previous literature associates the ethnic voting with the "affective ties of group membership, fear or prejudice towards ethnic outsiders, and expectations about the distribution of patronage and goods from politicians" (Long, n.d., p. 21).

Some suggest that strategic voting is less likely to happen among the voters of the ethnic parties due to these voters' unquestionable support and allegiance for the ethnic parties however, Chandra (2009) opposes that strategic voting is possible for an

ethnic group especially in patronage democracies. Chandra (2004) also has shown that ethnic groups vote for their party in the elections in order to gain resources, only when they think the party is more likely to win. Later, Horowitz and Long (2016) argue that ethnicity does not necessarily bound people to vote for an ethnic party and they think that the perception of viability is important in deciding whether to vote for the ethnic party or not. This demonstrates that not only ethnic groups can vote strategically but also the perceptions of voters about the viability of an ethnic party in the elections, are crucial when they vote. Strategic or not, ethnic voting behavior is a sign of ethno-nationalist tendency concerning ethnic communities. Psychological attachment or material gains for the benefit of an ethnic community affect how ethnic groups vote. Ethnic voting behavior can be associated with ethnic solidarity or favoritism since ethnic parties usually defend their group's interests in politics (Madrid, 2011).

With regards to how ethno-nationalist behavior varies within an ethnic group, Just (2017) finds that usually individuals among minorities with higher socioeconomic status are less likely to form ethno-political behavior. Nevertheless, if the ethnic minorities live through discrimination, complain about the unequal opportunities in a state and expose to social pressure by their ethnic groups, then, they are more likely to develop ethno-political behavior (Just, 2017). Just (2017) says, in general, ethnic minorities favor the political parties which provide them with representation and support their group interests regardless of the party's ethnic credentials. In addition, she provides that unlike majorities, ethnic minorities generally vote for left-wing parties which are more likely to promise for their sake and they adopt more of disputatious political activities.

As for the ethnic minorities in the US, studies show that since, African Americans usually do not have enough time, money and skills, their political

participation is more limited than others in the USA. This is reflected in voting turnout as well and African American votes are lower than the majority group. Thus, socioeconomic status affects political participation level of ethnic minorities positively (Just, 2016, pp. 6). In addition to the socioeconomic status, psychological and organizational group resources matter for political participation as well by increasing group consciousness and facilitating voluntary activities (Just, 2016, pp. 6-7). However, in general, the level of political participation is relatively lower for ethnic minorities as it is demonstrated by cross-national studies of Norris (2004, as cited in Sandovici & Listhaug, 2010). Different from Norris, Sandovici and Listhaug (2010) defend that ethnicity can have both negative and positive effects on the political participation of ethnic minorities.

Some studies suggest that the size of ethnic minorities also matter for greater voting turnout as opposed to other studies claiming that the descriptive representation increases ethnic minorities' participation. Descriptive representation refers to the existence of minority candidates in the elections and their representatives in the government (Just, 2017). However, for the view that the descriptive representation stimulates participation, there seems to be mixed outcomes and less empirical support. Whereas, the size of ethnic minority is found to be important in an electoral district for the political participation even though the candidates ethnically do not belong to the minority group that voters belong to (Fraga, 2015). Likewise, there are cross-national studies indicate that the geographical concentration of ethnic minority groups increases their political participation (Just, 2017).

Another factor that can affect the participation of ethnic minorities is the electoral systems. In theory, single member district electoral system (SMD) could negatively affect the minority groups unless the ethnic minority group is

geographically concentrated in the electoral district (Just, 2017). Contrary to SMD systems, proportional system (PR) is expected to positively influence the participation of minority groups by giving them higher chances for representation which increase their trust in the system and their political efficacy (Banducci, Donovan, & Karp, 1999). However, there is not enough empirical evidence to support these statements because some case studies find a positive relation between PR and the minority participation whereas some studies either find otherwise or no relation at all (Just, 2017). Similarly, it is not certain whether ethnic quotas introduced in legislatives actually enhance the participation levels of ethnic minorities as it is presumed (Just, 2017).

The form of the political participation is found to be dependent on the representation of the ethnic minorities in the government. If ethnic minority groups are not represented in the public office, unconventional forms of participation like protests and violent activities could emerge, replacing the electoral politics (Just, 2017). The representation of the ethnic minorities could be provided by ethnic, multi-ethnic or non-ethnic parties but the level of competition in a given minority area determines whether a non-ethnic party would cooperate with the ethnic minority group for cooptation or coalition (Just, 2017).

Overall, ethnic voting behavior could be influenced by patronage or clientelism, strategic voting, experience of discrimination, emotional attachments and material benefit, resources for mobilization, socioeconomic status, the size of ethnic minorities, existing political systems, structural factors (e.g. electoral system) and the representation of the immigrants within the political system, according to the existing literature. On the other hand, there is limited research on the impact of religion or religious factors on ethnic voting. The existing ones focus on the role of different

religions on the participation of immigrants and whether they are more influenced by ethnicity or religious factors (Just, Sandovici and Listhaug, 2014). For instance, Lockerbie (2013) shows that African-American evangelicals differ from white evangelicals in terms of voting behavior, indicating the importance of race for the divergence in evangelicals' votes for the Republicans in the US. The literature concerning religion and ethnicity have remained largely on the role and influence of the religion on ethnic conflict, civil war and religious nationalism by providing legitimacy for the ethno-religious movements and religious institutions for mobilization (Fox, 2000).

CHAPTER III

RELIGION AND ETHNICITY IN KURDISH VOTE

3.1 Kurdish Voting Preferences in Turkey

Çarkoğlu and Hinich (2006) analyze the voting behavior in Turkey by adopting a spatial model of voting. They try to understand how voters situate themselves with their attitudes towards and evaluations of political parties by a survey conducted among the urban population. According to their study, apart from the secular vs. pro-Islamist cleavage, the second dimension is ethnic based voting preferences, shaped by Turkish and Kurdish nationalists. In another study, Çarkoğlu (2005) finds that the secular and pro-Islamist cleavage coincides with the Sunni-Alevi cleavage. That is, religion being a highly salient determinant of voting behavior in Turkey, reflects a sectarian divide between people and while Sunnis are more likely to vote for conservative parties, Alevis are more likely to vote for center or dominantly leftist parties (Çarkoğlu, 2005).

As for the role of civil war on voting behavior, Tezcür (2015) says that armed conflicts give rise to polarization and popularity of ethnic parties due to the growing emphasis on ethnic identity. He suggests that in Turkish case, due to the policy of internal displacement of people of Kurdish origin from the southeast part of the country to the western parts, many Kurdish people could not participate in voting during the 1990s (Tezcür, 2015). Another study by Kıbrıs finds that the occurrences of terrorist attacks lead voters to support more right-wing parties which are not likely

to negotiate with the terrorists in terms of giving concessions or initiating dialogues (Kıbrıs, 2011).

Tezcür (2009) also analyzes the electoral competition and conclude that ethnic identity does not reveal an overlapping picture in the voting behavior. He says that centrist and multiethnic parties can have a potential to appeal to Kurdish voters. In fact, in many elections, Kurdish elites have been co-opted. Those elites were local, tribal, religious and landed capitalists (Tezcür, 2009). Tezcür (2009) also indicates that the rising popularity of the AKP in Kurdish populated regions led the PKK to return to armed struggle in 2004 after a period of withdrawal. The results of 2004 local elections and later 2007 general elections demonstrated this increasing trend for the support of AKP among Kurdish population (Tezcür, 2009). In his words, "A large number of pious Kurds found the AKP's Islamic identity as an appealing force ameliorating the exclusionary aspects of the hegemonic Turkish nationalism." (Tezcür, 2014, p. 177). To explain this outcome, Tezcür talks about the competition between religious and secular Kurds especially after the 1990s with the rise of Islam as an identity and the fall of communism. He indicates that there are influential Islamist Kurdish people who mobilized a significant mass supporting the AKP since they perceived the AKP as a challenge for secular Kurdish nationalists and they thought the AKP would decrease the military's power in politics in addition to other freedoms related to religion (Tezcür, 2009). By the way, Kurdish Islamists are by no means less nationalist than their secular counterparts. Tezcür (2009) illustrates this with a Kurdish magazine published by Kurdish Islamists, *Mizgin*, in which there are references to federalism, confederalism and independence with a great Kurdistan map.

Liaras (2009) in an attempt to understand the political behavior of Kurds and Alevis with reference to their demands and their party preferences. He thinks that the

reason why Alevis could not form a political party is that they territorially are not concentrated in a particular place with a majoritarian electoral system in the 1950s. Alevis before the 1960 coup, joined the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) and the Democrat Party (*Demokrat Parti*, DP) as members of the parties. With the 1961 constitution promising more tolerance with a proportional electoral system in Turkey, small parties could be formed easily with an increase in the awareness about Alevi and Kurdish identities. An Alevi affiliated party called TBP (Turkish Unity Party) was formed in 1966 but was not supported enough by the Alevi community. Later, in the 1970s, Alevis started to support the CHP due to the rising Islamists and nationalists whereas Kurdish people were fragmented and controlled by the tribal elites who formed a party of their own The New Turkey Party (*Yeni Türkiye Partisi*, YTP) but taken over by the center-right later (Liaras, 2009).

Grigoriadis (2006) also looks at the political participation of Kurds in Turkey. He indicates that Islam and tribalism were the main reasons why Kurdish nationalists were late to engage in party politics. He suggests that the tribal identity of Kurds and their peripheralization are the most important factors shaping the political participation of Kurds. The parochial lifestyle due to tribalism and the social and political exclusion of Kurds has brought about a hostile attitude against the state authority among Kurds (Grigoriadis, 2006). According to Çınar (2015), the political exclusion of Kurds could be associated with the organicist understanding of history in Turkey where the emphasis has been on the Turkish identity and the exclusion of others. Building the nation-state by an exclusionary nationalist view and a historical narrative, the Turkish state alienated the Kurdish demands and left them peripheral to the system. In this sense, the center-periphery cleavage affected the political participation of the Kurdish electorate. Grigoriadis also discusses that a considerable portion of Kurds have been

coopted while others have remained in the opposition. As for the determinants of Kurdish political behavior, he identifies them as religion, economic development and urbanization (Grigoriadis, 2006).

Liaras (2009) also talks about the Worker's Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi*, TİP) and that Kurdish population supported it in the 1960s. As for the 1970s, there were independent radical leftist Kurdish candidates who later in the 1980s were challenged by the political environment induced by the 1980 coup. Liaras suggests that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Kurds started to support the Social Democrat Populist Party (*Sosyal Demokrat Halkçı Parti*, SHP) (later joining the CHP and was also supported by Alevis), a center-left party enabling some Kurdish politicians to enter the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, TBMM) in 1987 (2009). Those people later formed the first Kurdish political party named as the People's Labor Party (*Halkın Emek Partisi*, HEP) in 1990. The HEP formed an electoral alliance with the SHP in the 1991 elections and won 18 seats in the parliament (Watts, 1999; Liaras, 2009). Although Kurdish nationalists attained a considerable amount of success in the elections, their parties were closed by the Constitutional Court and the immunities of the deputies were revoked due to being affiliated with the PKK (Tezcür, 2015). HEP, the People's Democracy Party (*Halkın Demokrasi Partisi*, HADEP), the Democratic People's Party (*Demokratik Halk Partisi*, DEHAP), the Democratic Society Party (*Demokratik Toplum Partisi*, DTP) were all Kurdish nationalist parties formed after the former was closed, and they all included some elements of Marxism and leftist orientations (Romano, 2006; Watts, 2006). The CHP later decided that their inclusion of Kurdish nationalists is costly and therefore, they employed a more nationalist discourse by abandoning the Kurdish candidates which in return decreased its popularity in Kurdish provinces (Liaras, 2009). Furthermore,

Liaras (2009) provides that since the 1970s, Alevis have started to vote for secular center-left parties while Sunni Kurds have supported Islamist right-wing parties with an increasing trend. Later, the AKP has also attracted so many Kurdish voters while Alevis remained reluctant towards the AKP due to the party's Sunni-Islamic credentials (Liaras, 2009). In Tunceli, for instance, AKP has not really attained major electoral popularity since the city is predominantly composed of Alevis.[4]

Overall, Liaras (2009) too, identifies two general dimensions among Kurdish population in Turkey, namely the left wing, secular, separatist vs. the right wing, religious, assimilated cleavage. However, I think he conjectures on that religious Kurdish population is a homogeneous entity, which can be disputed. Although there would be religious Kurdish people who might be considered as integrated or assimilated, we should not regard all of religious Kurds as such since the majority of Shafi Kurds are ethno-nationalists as opposed to the majority of Hanefi Kurds (Sarıgil and Fazlıoğlu, 2013, 2014). By the same token, Tezcür talks about a magazine called as *Mizgin* and its religious Kurdish publishers and their support for secession (2009). Therefore, I think, the idea that religious Kurds are assimilated, implied by Liaras (2009), neglects that there are also religious Kurds who could be ethno-nationalists as well.

Liaras (2009) has valuable contributions in terms of pointing out that Kurdish population could be attracted by a party like the AKP as opposed to Alevis. Alevis are considered as 'inaccessible' as voters by the AKP because they have been traditionally at odds with the right-wing parties, especially with the pro-Islamist ones. The author thinks that this is an irony because Alevi demands are a lot easier to be fulfilled

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[4] For the election results, see SEÇSİS: Sandık Sonuçları Paylaşım Sistemi
https://sonuc.ysk.gov.tr/module/GirisEkrani.jsf

whereas Kurdish demands are harder to be met (Liaras, 2009). Moreover, Liaras also overlooks the distinction between Turkish and Kurdish Alevis who might differ in their political orientations.

Correspondingly, Güneş-Ayata and Ayata (2002) state that identities concerning religion, ethnicity and class complicate matters when it comes to the voting behavior since those identities can cut across and interact with each other. They illustrate that the pro-Islamist parties are challenged by nationalist groups when they emphasize the religious identity over the ethnic one. They also suggest that the pro-Islamist parties are not supported by Alevis due to the religious division between Alevis and Sunnis that reinforces the pro-Islamist parties like the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*, WP) to become heavily Sunni-affiliated parties. Another point they highlight is that the Alevi-Sunni division also affects Kurdish nationalist parties since Alevi Kurds are more prone to secular left parties rather than ethno-nationalist Kurdish parties (Güneş-Ayata & Ayata, 2002). They claim that this causes a decrease in the support for Kurdish nationalist parties among Kurds (Güneş-Ayata & Ayata, 2002). However, pro-Kurdish parties have enhanced their popularity and have come as the winning party in Tunceli since the local elections in 2014 (Tunceli Seçim Sonuçları, n.d.).

The literature on sectarian differences among Kurds and their impact on vote choice focuses on the division among Sunni and Alevi Kurds. The tension dates back to the Ottoman empire and the cooperation of Sunni Ottomans and Sunni Kurds against Alevis especially in the form of political oppression due to the fears of Safavid influence over Alevis (Burinessen, 2000). Later, Alevi Kurdish tribes did not support Shaikh Said rebellion and the Dersim revolt of Alevi Kurds was not supported by Sunni Kurds (Leezenberg, 2001). What seems to be common in both Sunni and Alevi

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revolts was that in both of the revolts, nationalist, educated and secular Kurds could not expand their ideas without the help of spiritual leaders of the respective communities (Bruinessen, 2000). Another interesting point concerning Kurdish revolts, is that the urban Kurds are usually found to be more pro-state in their political preferences especially in the Shaik Said rebellion. Urban Kurds of Diyarbakır and Elazığ provinces did not support Shaikh Said and they even helped the government forces against the rebels (Entessar, 1992; Manafy, 2005).

Secular government of the CHP in the early years of the Turkish Republic was welcomed by Alevis. The Shaikh Said rebellion having a fierce religious discourse, was not supported by Alevi-Kurdish tribes (Manafy, 2005). Bruinessen (2000) states that this does not convey that Alevi Kurds were not nationalists, but they were more in favor of secularism rather than nationalism. He adds that this division among Sunni and Alevi Kurds also showed itself during Koçgiri and Dersim rebellions in 1920 and 1937 in which Sunni Kurds were not active whereas they participated in the Shaikh Said rebellion in 1925. So, ideologically, Alevi Kurds have been inclined to be closer to Alevi Turks, according to Bruinessen (2000). Sectarian differences can have more influence on voting behavior than ethnicity in this case in the sense that Alevi voters regardless of their ethnicity can favor the secular CHP more.

With regards to the attitudes of Alevis towards the PKK and Kurdish nationalism in general, Bruinessen (1994) highlights that the PKK could not attract Alevi support especially from Tunceli region where Zaza speaking Alevis reside. He suspects that one of the reasons why Alevis do not favor Kurdish nationalism could be the PKK's adoption of a tolerant stance towards Islam since the early 1990s. He also stresses the role of the Alevi revival which came about around the same time period. The PKK also established the Federation of Kurdish Alevis in 1993 in order to appeal

to Alevis as well (Ünal, 2014). Accordingly, the Turkish government demonstrated warm attitudes towards Alevis in order to hinder any support for Kurdish nationalism among Alevis. Leezenberg (2001) says that some Turkish accounts expressed that Alevilik is "an essentially Turkish folk variety of Islam" for the same purpose of preventing Alevi support for radical Kurdish nationalists (p. 33). As a reaction, the PKK tried to win Alevis back and made some propaganda claiming that Alevilik is a Kurdish religion, in addition to launching attacks in Tunceli to provoke Alevis against the Turkish security forces (Leezenberg, 2001). Hence, Alevis especially in Tunceli, remained supportive of the left parties rather than radical Kurdish ones, in the past as Bruinessen (1994) suggests, too. Nevertheless, recently in Tunceli, the election results show that pro-Kurdish parties have become popular and they won 2014 local elections, their nominee, Selahattin Demirtaş, for the presidential campaign came as the first in the city and in the later elections the pro-Kurdish party won, too (Tunceli Seçim Sonuçları, n.d.).

In the literature, Bruinessen's works on Kurds are quite broad and full of detailed information about their religion, the role of religious authorities and how religion and religious leaders affected Kurdish ethno-nationalism, in general. In his book *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics: The Role of Religion in Kurdish Society*, Bruinessen (2000) explains that Kurds are more likely to follow the Shafi jurisprudence within Sunni mazhabs, different from Turks in the region whose majority belong to the Hanefi school of law. As it has been important to attract supporters among religious Kurds for their campaign, the PKK has had to employ an Islam-friendly discourse even though the members have seen Islam as a tool of oppression (Bruinessen, 2000; Sarıgil & Fazlıoğlu, 2013; Sarıgil, 2018). Despite nationalist Kurds' distance to Islam, shaiks as tariqat leaders provided with leadership for the early Kurdish uprisings of Sunni Kurds.

The most influential tariqat in Turkish setting has been the Naqshbandiyya tariqat, one of the leaders of which was Shaik Said who organized a rebellion against the Turkish state (Bruinessen, 2000). Later, he also touches upon the Welfare Party and the party's approach towards Kurds in relation to its success in the elections by gaining support from local elites. What is interesting is that some of the religious-Kurdish nationalist formations like the Islamic Party of Kurdistan were supported by the Kurdish constituency who also supported the Welfare Party in the elections in regions like Batman although the support base of the Islamic Party of Kurdistan was smaller than the PKK (Bruinessen, 2000). As a conclusion, especially after the 1980s, Kurdish Islamists are more likely to be nationalists as well compared to the past when they stressed their religious identity over the ethnic one (Bruinessen, 2000).

Sarıgil and Fazlıoğlu (2013) suggest that the rising popularity of the AKP in the region might have led to the accommodation of Islam by the PKK in order to attract support from religious Kurds. Therefore, the party politics in the region could have caused the change in secular Kurdish nationalists' position towards Islam, realizing the religion's importance in Kurdish society while the PKK was blamed for mosque attacks in the past (Ciment, 1996; Leezenberg, 2001). Sarıgil and Fazlıoğlu (2013) explain that center-right and Kurdish nationalist parties traditionally competed in the region. Hence, the AKP's growing electoral support since the early 2000s might have galvanized a re-emphasis on Islam in the rhetoric of the secular Kurdish nationalists (Sarıgil & Fazlıoğlu, 2013). In an attempt to explain the variation in voting behavior among Kurds, Akdağ (2015) focuses on the swing voters to elucidate the variation among Kurdish voters who vote for either the AKP or the BDP and highlights the AKP's clientelistic strategies for mobilizing these swing Kurdish voters. On the other hand, Sarıgil and Fazlıoğlu (2013) observe that the reason why the AKP is still the

second influential party in the Kurdish populated region is due to their electoral base consisting of Hanefi Kurds as opposed to Shafi Kurds who predominantly support Kurdish nationalist parties. The extant literature attributes the support for the AKP by the Kurdish electorate, to the AKP's anti-systemic and conservative credentials or to a strategic voting choice between the AKP and pro-Kurdish parties to challenge the old, urban-elitist, secular establishment (Demiralp, 2012). However, the Hanefi-Shafi distinction in voting patterns of Sunni Kurds attests to the necessity for a better interpretation of the different political preferences among Kurds in regard to their vote choice. A better explanation should be provided to account for the existence of a Hanefi-Shafi differentiation among Sunni Kurds that are treated usually as a united front in the existing literature.

3.2 Religion, Ethnicity and Kurds in Turkey

Understanding the relationship between religion and ethno-political behavior is another important task for the current study. Houston (2001) believes that Kurdish ethno-nationalism is a reaction to Turkish nationalism and he conveys that 'Kurdish counter-nationalism' even copies the secularizing aspects of Turkish nationalism in its emergence and has condemned Islam for a long time (p. 108-109). Özpek (2018) suggests that this imitation of Turkish nationalism conducted by the PKK enabled the organization to consolidate its power as the representative of the Kurds in Turkey. In my interview with the general vice president of Hür Dava Partisi (HÜDAPAR), Mehmet Yavuz, he also suggested that Kurdish nationalism is a reaction to Turkish nationalism and the initial outlook of the movement has been secular, mimicking the Turkish nationalism on both accounts of nationalism and secularism. On the other hand, Tezcür (2009) asserts that putting Kurdish nationalism on the defensive disregards the fact that many Kurds have been and wanted to be a part of the system

and deemphasized their Kurdish identity in return. Another important factor Tezcür adds, is that the ethnic organizations, which are formed to empower the ethnicity in question, do not necessarily reflect the will of the ethnicity they aim to represent. He says, even if there is one powerful establishment in the town, all members of the ethnic group may not support it. He exemplifies this with a big portion of Kurdish origin people accepting Turkish identity without any affiliation to Kurdish nationalism (Tezcür, 2009). Many other authors[5] also suggest that Kurdish nationalism emerged as a reaction to Turkish nationalism and its exclusionary policies against Kurds. Tezcür (2009) disagrees and maintains that presenting Kurdish nationalism as a reactionary movement only downgrades Kurdish nationalism and cannot explain the diversity within Kurds and even among Kurdish nationalists.

Given this diversity among Kurds and Kurdish nationalists, Bruinessen (2000) says that secular Kurdish nationalists and other heterodox sects all together forms a very small portion of Kurdish people. The majority of Kurds are Sunni-Muslims. Frustrated by the Kurdish fondness of Islam, many Kurdish nationalists have had to accommodate Islam in order to attract Kurdish people into their cause. He gives the example of a magazine called *Hawar,* which changed its discourse to a more Islamic one by referencing Qur'an and the Prophet so as to appeal to more audience.

Religion and nationalism have an interesting relationship within the Kurdish context. On the one hand, Kurdish nationalists have tended to be more secular and disfavor the role of shaikhs and mullas in the society. On the other hand, orthodox Muslims are the very people supporting the Kurdish movement. To find supporters for the movement, nationalists have had to appeal to the society with reference to Islam

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[5] For example, see Yavuz (1998); Yavuz (2001); McDowall (2004) and Olson (1989).

(Bruinessen, 2000). I think, this must have been necessary for both mobilization and legitimization of the movement. Bruinessen (2000) claims that even though there was the *Azadi* (Freedom) organization behind the Shaikh Said rebellion in 1925, the organization wanted Shaikh Said to be the leading figure since he was an influential religious leader who can mobilize more people. Azadi organization was nationalist and carried no religious agenda as opposed to the discourse of Shaikh Said who fiercely condemned the secular order (Olson, 1989; Bruinessen, 2000; McDowall, 2004). The abolition of caliphate and ban on madrasas were severely denounced by Sunni shaikhs, notables and chieftains, in general (Ciment, 1996; Bruinessen, 2000; McDowall, 2004). Despite differences of opinion about the main motivation behind the Shaikh Said rebellion whether it was religion or nationalism, what seems to be agreed upon is the fact that Shaikh Said used religious rhetoric and symbols to attract supporters and politically mobilize them (Bruinessen, 2000; Manafy, 2005). Bruinessen (2000) thinks that the root cause of the revolt was the clash of Kurdish Islamic values and the enforcement of secular reforms by the Turkish state. Thus, the revolt was an articulation of a struggle to preserve the Kurdish national identity which could be related to religion or ethnicity and it could be called as an ethno-religious rebellion (Olson, 1989).

In order to point out the importance of religion among Kurdish population, the influence of mystical or Sufi orders should be investigated. Sufi orders display "a pattern of social organization independent of the tribes (as well as the state)" and they assumed social and political roles in Kurdish society (Buinessen, 2000, p. 49). Bruinessen (2000) indicates that Kurdish people have a strong mystical understanding of Sunni Islam and this made the Kurdish ulema who received a madrasa education to be involved in a *tariqat*. The tariqats are led by shaikhs who are seen as spiritual leaders

and mediators between people and God. The most important tariqats in Kurdish society are the Naqshbandiyya and Qadiriyya (Ciment, 1996). Bruinessen (2000) points out that Naqshbandi tariqat was more powerful and influential in terms of mobilizing people around the nationalist agenda especially by bringing different tribes together. For example, Shaikh Said was a Naqshbandi (Olson, 1989; Bruinessen 2000). This belief in shaikhs' authority and their spiritual guiding gave the shaikhs some sort of a political leverage (Bruinessen, 2000). They became political leaders especially in the late nineteenth century when the Ottomans altered the status of the formerly semi-autonomous Kurdish emirates to enhance the central authority. Bruinessen (2000) explains that prior to these administrative changes, Kurdish population enjoyed a considerable degree of autonomy with the Kurdish emirs who could control so many tribes together. However, the centralizing reforms in the empire eliminated the control of Kurdish emirates and this gave rise to many problems between Kurdish tribes who cannot be brought together anymore by the appointed governors, who did not have a moral authority over the tribes as Kurdish emirates had before (Bruinessen, 2000). This power gap later was filled by the shaikhs who had the authority that transcends tribal boundaries and thus, could resolve the conflicts among the tribes (Bruinessen, 2000). Another reason as to why shaikhs' authority has risen among Kurdish tribes was the existence of Christian missionaries in the region which enabled shaikhs to mobilize around anti-Christian and anti-European sentiments (Bruinessen, 2000). So, insecurity and power vacuum among the tribes and anti-European sentiments all together increased the authority of shaikhs and especially the Naqshbandi tariqat.

Even the ban on tariqats after the Shaikh Said rebellion in Turkey, could not avoid the tariqat activities which were exercised secretly (Bruinessen, 2000). Therefore, the shaikhs' authority did not reduce and with the introduction of multiparty

politics, the shaiks and tribal leaders held even more leverage because the parties, in order to be elected in the Kurdish populated regions, needed the shaiks and tribal leaders to secure votes in return for some goods and services (Bruinessen, 1992). This reciprocal relationship led to political patronage by promoting the shaiks and tribal leaders' authority and their pragmatic relations with the political parties regardless of the parties' political stance in terms of Kurdish nationalism (Bruinessen, 1992; Bruinessen, 2000; Özpek, 2018). These kinds of alliances were harshly criticized by secular Kurdish nationalists, blaming the shaikhs for selling out Kurds to the state (Bruinessen, 2000).

The role of shaiks and tribal leaders as aghas for the elections in the eastern part of Turkey has been crucial for the political parties which wanted to be elected in the Kurdish populated region. Giving them enormous bargaining power, political patronage enabled aghas and shaiks to become deputies of their people and negotiate on behalf of them in the elections (Bruinessen, 1992; Bruinessen, 2000). Furthermore, appointed officials in the region also needed these aghas and shaiks to communicate and deal with Kurdish population. Even if the appointed officials would want to bypass these local aghas and shaiks to do something, they could not do so. Since these local leaders could also take measures to ensure their prestige and power as being the intermediaries between the state and Kurdish people. They even used violence against those state officials who undermined their authority (Bruinessen, 1992; Bruinessen, 2000). Therefore, the importance of aghas and shaiks were unequivocal for the state both for the party politics and local administrative issues.

When Democrat Party (DP) was in power in the 1950s, the Kurdish electorate was supporting the party thanks to the party's reforms such as, increasing cultural tolerance towards Kurds, the return of aghas and tribal leaders to Kurdish regions

where they had to migrate from, building roads and hospitals in the eastern parts of Turkey that were neglected before (Manafy, 2005). These developments concerning the Kurdish populated regions were manifested under the idea of Eastism (Doğuculuk) which refers to the efforts of Kurdish political elites who were incorporated by the parties like the DP or others like the CHP, to socioeconomically modernize the eastern regions (Entessar, 1992; Manafy, 2005). Later, after the coup d'etat in 1960, a more tolerant political atmosphere led to the emergence of new parties and one of them was the New Turkey Party (*Yeni Türkiye Partisi*, NTP) (Entessar, 1992; Manafy, 2005). Prof. Dr. Vahap Coşkun, in my interview, said that this party was supported by the Kurdish electorate in 1961 elections in the eastern region and competed with the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*, JP), another newly formed party. He emphasizes that the support for the NTP is indicative of some ethnic consciousness in voting behavior because the NTP included many Kurdish elites in its administration. This support from the Kurdish electorate shows that Kurdish voters care about the party's position on the Kurdish issue according to Coşkun. However, he highlights that the path changing development occurred when the HEP was established and entered in the elections in 1991 as a pro-Kurdish party because after that there have been pro-Kurdish parties with pro-Kurdish agendas in the political scene in the southeast region without leaning on other parties for doing the same. Additionally, the Workers Party of Turkey (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi,* TİP) provided an environment where nationalist Kurds could operate within the legal channels to discuss the Kurdish issue and grievances (Entessar, 1992; Manafy, 2005; Özpek, 2018).

In the 1990s, Islamist parties were more successful in the elections in Kurdish provinces of Turkey such as the National Salvation Party and the Welfare Party (Bruinessen, 2000; Leezenberg, 2001). It is discussed in the literature that the reason

why Kurdish people voted for Islamist parties is associated with their non-chauvinist attitude towards Kurdish population, different from other Turkish parties (Duran, 1998; Bruinessen, 2000). However, Bruinessen (2000) thinks that the Kurdish support for Islamist parties must be more related to patronage than their ideology and ethnicity. Another study by Leezenberg (2001) stresses that the WP was a "good oppositional alternative" to the banned pro-Kurdish Democratic Party (*Demokratik Parti*, DEP) and that's why, he considers the Kurdish votes for the WP as strategic voting even though it might have something to do with the rise of political Islam among Kurds (p. 32). He adds that the reduction of the support for the WP and the increase of votes for the pro-Kurdish party (HADEP) later in the 1998 and 1999 elections, demonstrates the fading effect of political Islam (Leezenberg, 2001).

As for the WP and its electoral victory in the 1995 general elections in Kurdish provinces, Duran (1998) suggests that the party did not really have a concrete solution to the Kurdish issue and he designates the relationship between the WP and the Kurdish problem as an "uneasy" one (p. 112). He believes that the party was pragmatic and inconsistent about the policies to be followed and due to the political environment, the WP acknowledged the socioeconomic problems in the southeast region while ignoring the other dimensions of the Kurdish issue (Duran, 1998). In my interview with Öztunç, he suggests that even though there has been a considerable level of support for the Milli Görüş parties[6] in the region, the Kurdish electorate has been sensitive to some parties and refrained from them due to their position towards the Kurdish issue. He said:

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[6] These parties include chronologically, the National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi, MNP), the National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi, MSP), the Welfare Party (Refah Partisi, RP), the Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi) and the Felicity Party (Saadet Partisi, SP). These are called as Islamist parties.

For example, the early general elections in 1991 show that Kurdish people are not comfortable with parties like Milliyetçi Çalışma Partisi, (MÇP)[7] who deny their existence and reflected their discomfort in the elections by reducing their support for WP who entered the elections with MÇP forming an electoral alliance.

Explaining current voting preferences of the Kurdish electorate, Akdağ (2015) suggests that the AKP and the BDP (now the HDP) have been the main competitors in the southeast region, especially in the 2007 and 2011 general elections. Even though the BDP is an ethnic party and has increased its vote share from 2002 to 2011, still large numbers of Kurds (swing voters as she calls) vote for the parties other than the BDP, making them potential supporters of the AKP. In other words, "a large number of citizens of Kurdish origin constitutes a common electoral base for the AKP and the BDP" (Akdağ, 2015, p. 19). Given the importance of Kurdish votes for an electoral victory in regions where they make up the majority, the AKP has a strong incentive to appeal the Kurdish electorate. She argues that as a strategy to attract Kurdish votes, the AKP uses clientelism in district and neighborhood levels. She finds that the main divergence in Kurdish voting preferences rests on the distinction between support for pro-Islamist and pro-Kurdish parties. The AKP also appeal the Kurdish electorate by using the Islamic brotherhood thesis which this study explains in the next sub-section.

Another study also acknowledges that the strength of the pro-Islamist (Milli Görüş) parties and pro-Kurdish parties have become institutionalized in the elections since the 1980s, and as their current representatives, the AKP and the BDP/HDP compete for the Kurdish votes (Dağ, 2017). In my interview, Coşkun too agreed that now in the southeast region, as if there is a two-party system with the AKP and the HDP competing for the Kurdish votes. This has started in the 2002 elections and

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[7] MÇP was the party formed after the 1980 coup d'etat to replace MHP (ultra-nationalist party).

established especially after the 2007 elections, till today according to Coşkun. He thinks that sometimes these two parties look like each other in their efforts to attract the votes of religious Kurds. He said, "for example, an HDP municipality can act like a classic AKP municipality in Ramadan, preparing *iftar* meals and arranging or broadcasting religious talks during Ramadan in order to appeal religious Kurdish voters." (personal communication, 2018). I think this has also something to do with the accommodation of Islam by the nationalist Kurds to expand their influence since as Coskun puts it "it does not make any sense to fight against sociology" because religion is at the heart of Kurdish society. Hence, realizing the importance of religion in Kurdish life, the HDP does not want to alienate religious Kurds that has been disregarded before by the PKK and other pro-Kurdish parties which had harshly criticized the role of religion in Kurdish society (Sarıgil & Fazlıoğlu, 2013).

Around the 1960s, the leftist movements in Turkey provided with opportunities for Kurdish nationalists, for example, the TİP was an organization where Kurdish nationalists could voice their existence for the first time with a legal channel (Entessar, 1992). However, Kurdish ethno-nationalism in party politics with pro-Kurdish parties entering into the elections has started in the 1990s. These parties carrying a Kurdish identity and, in an effort to voice the Kurdish demands, have been legally operating but closed down by the Constitutional Court and were accused of having ties with the PKK and making propaganda of terrorism (Watts, 2006). Namely, these parties are the HEP, the Freedom and Democracy Party (*Özgürlük ve Demokrasi Partisi*, ÖZDEP), the DEP, the HADEP, the DEHAP, the DTP and the BDP/HDP (Yeğen, et al., 2015). These parties provided Kurdish nationalists with legal opportunities to institutionally gather and publicly mobilize people around pronouncing the Kurdish grievances and demanding the recognition of Kurdish identity (Watts, 2006). Furthermore, these

parties' "grievances and demands were explicit and confrontational, celebrating Kurdish identity, supporting PKK goals and offering passionate criticism of the state" while utilizing legal channels for ethno-political activism (Watts, 2006, p. 134).

Since 1995 onwards, pro-Kurdish parties entered in elections as follows; the HADEP in 1995 and 1999 elections, the DEHAP in 2002 elections, the DTP in 2007 elections, the BDP/HDP in 2011 and the HDP in the following elections (Akdağ, 2015). The support for pro-Kurdish parties has been visible starting from the 1995 general elections with the HADEP which came as the winning party in the elections while the RP was the second. In the 1999 general elections, the HADEP increased its votes slightly and won the majority votes in the region. This rise in the HADEP's votes and the decrease in the RP's votes is found be to be important by Mehmet Yavuz and in my interview with him, he suggested that the secular understanding of Kurdish nationalism has gained supporters around these times with the party politics. In the 2002 general elections, the DEHAP was the first party with a considerable rise in its vote share in the region whereas this time, the AKP was the second party. In this election, the DEHAP came first in the cities which previously supported pro-Islamist Felicity Party (e.g. Bitlis, Siirt, Şırnak). Later, the HADEP could only gain the majority votes in 6 cities in the 2007 elections where the AKP came first in Kurdish populated eastern provinces in general.[8] In the 2011 elections, the BDP gained 7 cities in the eastern region while there has been a decrease in the AKP's votes. Akdağ suggests that the nature of competition between the AKP and the BDP forces the AKP to attract the Kurdish swing voters. The success of the AKP is discussed as the party's stance on behalf of the periphery's struggle with the Republican elite, its tolerance for cultural

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[8] There are some studies concerning the geographical distribution of votes according to the region-wise election results and they divide regions into 3 parts as coastal cities, eastern-Kurdish populated cities and the others between the two regions (Çarkoğlu, 2000).

pluralism and some reforms concerning Kurds (e.g. abolition of emergency rule, broadcasting in Kurdish etc.). Later, the AKP announced the democratic opening package and made several reforms even though it was criticized by the national circles and then, the closure of the DTP and the Union of Communities in Kurdistan (*Koma Civaken Kurdistan*, KCK) arrests increased polarization which resulted in with a decrease in the AKP's votes in the 2011 general elections. The BDP increased its vote share and was the first party in the region in this election. Akdağ (2015) asserts that through time, there is a stabilization of electoral politics in the southeast region revolving around the AKP and pro-Kurdish parties just like the stabilization occurred in the country in general. She confirms that the main competition happens between the AKP and the BDP by looking at the provincial level total electoral support which indicates that the AKP and the BDP were supported by 90% of the electorate in the eastern provinces in the 2007 and 2011 general elections (except for Iğdır, Kars and Tunceli). This is apparent in provincial level volatility which shows the vote shifts between the AKP and the BDP more clearly. She adds that there are provinces where the AKP has a constant share of votes despite changing contexts in different elections and these provinces are Şanlıurfa, Bingöl, Kars and Siirt. She explains this outcome with the provincial parameters (local level clientelistic mobilization) shaping the AKP's strategy to gain votes.

As it can be seen, clientelism or patronage is one of the explanations put forward by the extant literature to explain the pro-state behavior among Kurdish people. Clientelism diverts the voters' attention from the party's programmatic stance to the networks of clientelism promised by the party especially in order to influence the voters who are not concerned with the ideological differences, called as swing voters, and voters who are socioeconomically deprived (Akdağ, 2015). The

organization of the parties is designed so as to reveal the voters' characteristics and ensure control over them by means of clientelism through a close relationship between the party activists and the electorate. Akdağ (2015) highlights that the Kurdish case is suitable for parties to use clientelism by including members of the ethnic minority into the party because there is a considerable degree of ethnic consciousness even though the voters differ in their electoral choices and there is also a potential for violent mobilization of the ethnic group. This inclusion of co-ethnics shrinks the limitations faced by the party and allow for more resources to control the electorate. Furthermore, the use of clientelistic mobilization with the inclusion of co-ethnics who could detect the swing voters, provides with psychological party attachment and party identification through the establishment of common values between the party and the voters. As a result, clientelism could be very useful for the success of the party for a long period of time "even under conditions where the party programmatically positions towards the opposing end of the salient dimension." (Akdağ, 2015, p. 63) I think, Akdağ reveals that this mechanism of clientelism which leads party identification in the long run, could be the result of the frozen cleavages in the society and in a sense, this implies a path dependent approach to the divisions shaping the political preferences among Kurds although she does not explicitly say so. With this logic in mind, Akdağ's study explores that the support for the AKP within the Kurdish electorate is consolidated by and dependent on the "clientelistic accountability" of the party (Akdağ, 2015, p. 253). The approach of the study towards ethnic mobilization in voting behavior is the rational choice approach where individuals of the ethnic group struggle with other groups over material interests to explain political patronage.

Even though Akdağ's account can explain how a party could use clientelism as a strategy to attract Kurdish votes, it still remains limited to understand why there is a

divergence along the sectarian lines among Sunni Kurds with respect to their voting behavior. Below, in Figure 1, there is data on the voting patterns of Shafi and Hanefi Kurds in the years 2011, 2013 and 2015. The density plots indicate that Shafi Kurds are more likely to vote for pro-Kurdish political parties such as the BDP and the HDP. On the other hand, Hanefi Kurds are relatively more likely to vote for non-ethnic political formations such as the AKP. Moreover, this pattern seems to hold across time. Thus, ethnic voting behavior seems to be relatively more common among Shafi Kurds than Hanefi Kurds.
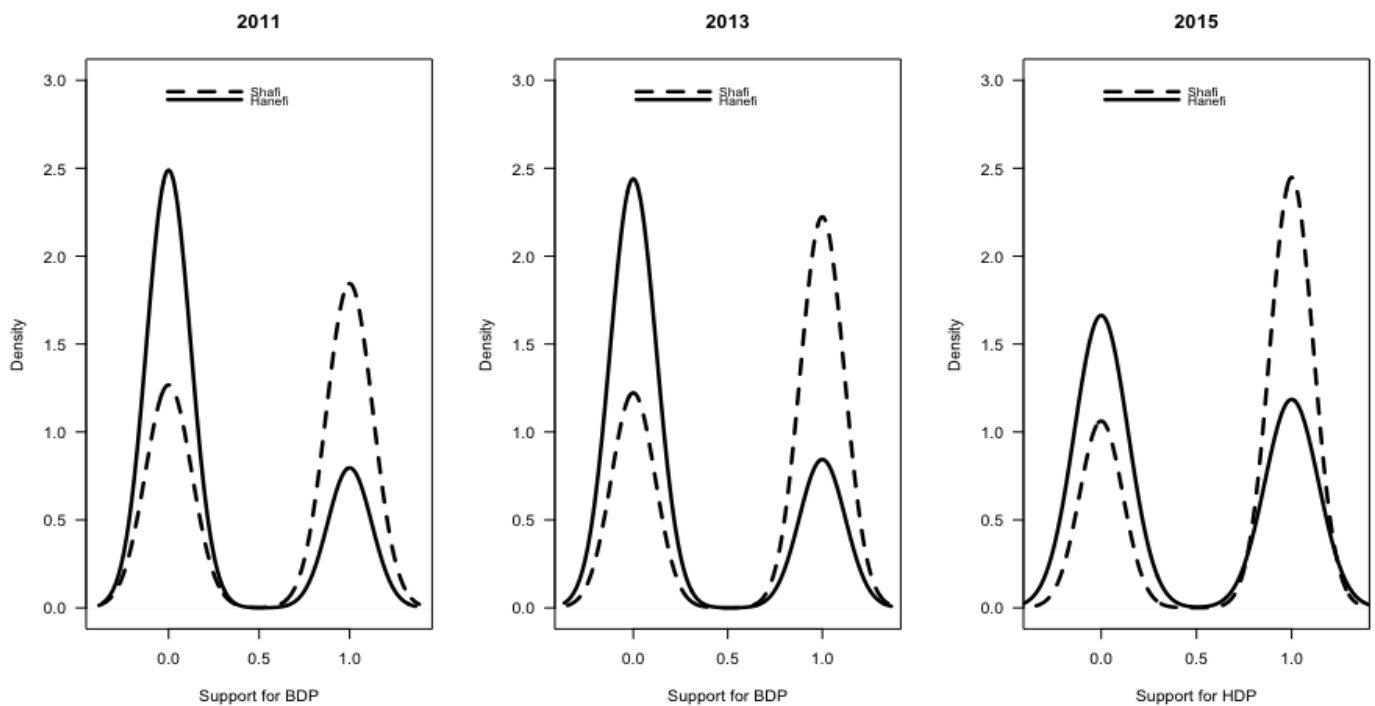

Figure 1: Shafi and Hanefi support for pro-Kurdish political parties (2011, 2013, 2015).

Even though shaiks were "the first quasi-nationalist Kurdish leaders of the modern age" this role has transformed, and shaiks and tribal leaders were coopted initially by the DP and later by other parties for electoral gains with a sense of quid pro quo, establishing a system of patronage in the region (Ciment, 1996, p. 41). The

literature on religion and ethnicity in relation to Kurdish voting behavior has focused on either the role of religion and religious leaders or on patronage to explain why some Kurds have supported the Turkish state or voted for pro-state parties in the elections. However, clientelism or patronage does not explain the differences observed in voting preferences of Sunni Kurds that diverge in line with their sectarian identities as Hanefis and Shafis. Therefore, even though clientelism tells a lot about how pro-state parties have been using it to attract votes and later consolidate them, it cannot account for our research puzzle concerned about the variation among Sunni Kurds in terms of ethnic voting. In brief, if clientelism and patronage works among Hanefi Kurds and consequently they are more likely to vote for pro-state parties, we should expect similar dynamics to operate among Shafi Kurds as well since the clientelism is not confined to only Hanefi Kurds. Nevertheless, in general, Shafi Kurds differ from Hanefi Kurds in their voting behavior. Thus, cooptation as the earlier suggestion with patronage in the literature and clientelism as a party strategy cannot account for the divergence of voting preferences of Hanefi and Shafi Kurds.

3.2.1 Islamic Brotherhood and Kurdish Ethno-nationalism

It is also believed that pro-state behavior among Kurds could be explained by their religiosity and that nationalist Kurds are usually less religious. This idea is also supported for it might explain why some Kurds vote for pro-state parties and others vote for the ethnic parties by especially some state officials (Sarıgil & Fazlıoğlu, 2013). Even though the nationalist formations, in general, appears to be more secular among Kurds, there have been also Islamist nationalists who emphasize both their ethnicity and religion (Bruinessen, 2000). In the 1980s, *Medreset-üz-Zahra* has been a moderate-nationalist religious Kurdish group (Bruinessen, 2000). As examples of more radical formations among Kurdish Islamists, there were Islamic Liberation Army

(IKO) and Islamic Party of Kurdistan (Bruinessen, 2000). Both were not as influential as the PKK and these Islamist formations were also in conflict with the secular ones especially till the PKK accommodated the Islam (Bruinesen, 2000).

The relation between Islam and nationalism is quite interesting since Islam does not promote any nationality by emphasizing the Islam itself as an identity (Ataman, 2010). Bruinessen (2000) thinks that Islam was the major source that brought together Kurds and Turks by uniting them as being Muslims against the non-Muslims especially in the Ottoman era and in the World War I. Nevertheless, Atatürk's secular regime broke down this unity and some of the Kurdish rebellions appeared to be against the secular order that was perceived to be a threat to Islamic sentiments which held together the Turks and the Kurds, according to Bruinessen (2000). This idea of Islam as a uniting force implies that Turks and Kurds can be brought together with the promotion of Islam. This implication has had real consequences, especially after the 1980 coup by advocating the Turkish-Islamic Synthesis (Bruinessen, 2000). The idea was that Islam can be an antidote to Kurdish nationalism. However, many Islamists have been also nationalists. Furthermore, the PKK as well, realized the importance of Islam by trying to reconcile with the Islamists (Sarıgil, 2018). Since Kurdish nationalists were influenced by secularism and Marxism during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, they were distant to Islam and Islamic circles (Sarıgil, 2018). Bruinessen (2000) indicates that there were even armed confrontations between Kurds who oppose secular nationalism and the PKK in the 1990s. He maintains that soon after, the PKK realizing the importance of Islam for Kurdish society, formed two Islamic groups by renouncing its anti-religious stance. These groups are the Union of Religious Persons and the Union of Patriotic Imams (Sarıgil, 2018).

The compatibility of Islam and nationalism in Kurdish society has been possible before and after the accommodation of Islam by secular nationalist Kurds, according to Bruinessen (2000). More recently, there are studies which question whether Islam can be a bridge between Kurdish and Turkish nationalities even though Bruinessen (2000) says that, that bridge has been long burned by Atatürk's regime that "undermined the very foundation of Turkish-Kurdish unity" with secularization. Özpek (2018) also supports that the secular-nation state eroded the most important element of solidarity between Turks and Kurds through secularism and Turkish nationalism. The idea that Islam can be a cure for ethnic tension between the different ethnic groups, puts emphasis on the Islamic community conception of *ummah* as opposed to ethnic identities since Islam is also at odds with the idea of nationalism (Gürses, 2015). For instance, Ataman (2010) argues that "ideal Islamic theory" and its practice in the history, shows the appreciation of different ethnicities and cultures rather than the "imported foreign institutions and ideas" such as nation-states which are not compatible with the "historical realities" and the cultures of the societies adopted them (p. 100). He believes that Islam could bring together the differences in a peaceful way if we can apprehend the true notion of Islam which gave cultural, legal, political and religious autonomy to Muslims and non-Muslims throughout the history.

On the other hand, Houston (2001) suggest that Kurdish Islamists perceive the issue as an exploitation of Islam which is used against their nationalist agenda. Furthermore, some also feel like today's Islam in Turkey has been Turkified with the state control over religion and favoritism of Hanefi-Sunni Islam (Sarıgil & Fazlıoğlu, 2013). As the first quantitative study questioning the Islamic brotherhood argument, Sarıgil and Fazlıoğlu (2013) show that Islamic groups in Turkey also support the ethno-nationalist demands of Kurdish nationalists. In fact, Shafi Kurds who are found

to be more religious than the other Kurds, are more likely to support pro-Kurdish ethnic parties and tend to be more ethno-nationalist. Gürses (2015) too, remarks that religious and ethnic identities are not mutually exclusive as it has been assumed by some politicians to attract Kurdish voters or decrease the radical tendencies among Kurds. Although not denying the fact that Islam plays a big role in identity formation among Kurds, Gürses (2015) believes that the armed conflict has been more influential in determining their ethno-nationalist orientations. In another study, Somer and Glüpker-Kesebir analyze whether the AKP's efforts to solve the Kurdish problem is supportive of Islamic brotherhood thesis since contrary to their secular counterparts, the AKP as a pro-Islamic party have made unprecedented cultural, legal and political reforms. However, the authors argue that structural factors enabled the AKP governments to pursue those reforms rather than their Islamic ideology even though they can be considered more open towards different ethnicities compared to the past secular governments. Those structural factors are the elimination of the military tutelage and electoral strategies (Somer & Glüpker-Kesebir, 2015).

Sakallıoğlu (1998) also in an earlier study supports the complexity of identities and provides that Kurdish Islamists have found ways to embrace both Islam and Kurdishness together and blame Turkish Islamists for using Islam as a way to shadow Kurdish grievances and taking side with Turkish nationalists. What's more, they claim that Turkish Islamic understanding has been always obedient to the state authority (Sakallıoğlu, 1998). Similarly, Houston (2001) argues that Islam is tolerant to cultural rights of minorities and diversity as long as this does not threaten the Muslim identity, but Islamists might differ in their understandings of this attitude of Islam towards ethnicity especially, the statist Islam could have a problem with the ethnicity of ethnics and in this case with the Kurdishness of Kurds. Thus, he thinks that Kurdish Islamists

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not only try to assert their distinctiveness against the universal conception of ummah but also stick to the ummah conception against other particularistic understandings like Turkish Islamism. According to Kurdish Islamists, Islam promotes acknowledgment of ethnic diversity by encouraging communication and tolerance and in Houston words, "Allah delights in diversity" (Houston, 2001, p. 177).

In the interview, Mehmet Yavuz said that especially after the 1970s, Kurdish nationalists have become more secular implying that religion was more important before and after the 1970s, identity gained more weight than religion for nationalist Kurds. He blames the "secular Turkish state" for the emergence of such secularism in Kurdish nationalism, preparing a suitable environment for organizations like the PKK. Furthermore, Coşkun explained that the *ummah* conception upheld by Kurdish Islamists allows them to legitimize their nationalist demands like education in mother language, on the grounds that it is a right mentioned in the Holy Quran. Yavuz says that they demand such a right not from a nationalist perspective because according to their understanding, this demand is not a nationalist one but a human right essentially. Both Yavuz and Cihan Öztunç, perceive nationalism in a negative way by equating it with racism. Yavuz refers to nationalism as a way of life that does not give a chance of existence for the 'other' and that their demands in terms of language and identity should not be regarded as a nationalist demand.

Yavuz also does not consider the HDP as a nationalist party just like the HDP member that I interviewed. They both referred Hasip Kaplan's tweet as a racist move and the HDP member, Yusuf Altaş, said that "I'm ashamed of his tweet and if he still had been in the party, I would not be."[9] While Yavuz argues that nationalism has

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[9] Hasip Kaplan's tweet as "HDP kurultayında Demirtaş'ın yerine sakın bir Türk göz dikmesin, benim naçizane önerim, herkes haddini bilecek..!" received a lot of criticism from many circles including the HDP and later, he resigned from the party. He was a member of the parliament from Şırnak. HDP

negative connotations from an Islamist perspective; Yusuf Altaş, who is an Alevi Kurd, asserts that HDP should not be ethnically homogenous, from an ideologically leftist perspective. Yavuz also asserts that their demands are religious in nature since Islam is sensitive to language and identity-related rights. By criticizing nationalist ideas and indicating that they are not nationalists, HÜDAPAR and HDP differ in their understanding of Islam's role. According to Mehmet Yavuz, Islam still has the potential to bridge the differences between Kurds and Turks, but secular nationalism is to be blamed for shrinking this potential. Altaş, on the other hand, suggested that Islam's potential to curb ethnic demands have decreased and Islamists now more openly voice their ethno-political demands.

Cihan Öztunç from the AKP, insisted that Islam continues to be the bridge between Turks and Kurds in addition to Mehmet Yavuz. He said that "If you take away Islam, there remains only two society having a blood-feud and if today, individuals from these communities can get marry, share the dinner table despite the forty years of conflict, it is thanks to Islam." As for the theologists, Prof. Dr. Onat asserts that Islam's potential to diminish the ethnic tension has reduced due to the Kurdish Initiative or the Peace Process. He believes that Kurdish nationalists understood that their religiosity or Islam does not refrain them from ethno-political demands during the Peace Process. Therefore, he thinks Islam cannot be the bridge as it was before between the two communities. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kalaycı and the other theologist I interviewed also agree that Islam's potential has decreased to prevent ethnic demands in Turkey due to Kurdish nationalists' accommodation of Islam and increasing efforts to appeal to religious Kurds.

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announced that his racist expressions do not reflect the party's position by condemning it. For the details, please see, Hürriyet (2018, January 9), HDP'den Hasip Kaplan açıklaması: Kınıyor ve ayıplıyoruz. Retrieved from http://www.hurriyet.com.tr

CHAPTER IV

EXPLAINING THE DIFFERENCES WITHIN SUNNI KURDS: A PATH DEPENDENCE APPROACH

4.1 Does Hanefilik and Shafilik Matter?

Most of Sunni Kurds follow the Shafi school of law while most of Turks in Turkey follow Hanefi school (Entessar, 1992; Bruinessen, 2000; Manafy, 2005). Bruinessen (2000) thinks that being a Shafi is one of the designators of Kurdish identity. Kreyenbroek (1996) suggests that "the link between religious allegiance and ethnic identity…sometimes led to claims that those who are not Shafi'is cannot be Kurds" (p. 93). Two of the three theologists I interviewed (Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kalaycı and the theologist who does not want to share his identity) agrees that the Shafi rite could be considered as a part of Kurdish ethnic identity while Prof. Dr. Onat argues that this is a complicated matter since there are also Shafi Turks and Hanefi Kurds and that's why, we should not make generalizations.

Bruinessen (2000) and Manafy (2005) argue that Shafi school of law seems to be stricter than more flexible Hanafi school. Again, the theologists that I interviewed, in general, agree that Shafi school of law is stricter in some respects than Hanefi school such as; the former is theologically more determinist while the latter is more flexible, adaptive and rational. Also, a document provided by one of the theologists suggests that in general, Shafi school is more prone to mysticism which also provides with a more "emotional religious experience" (Bulliet, 1972, p. 39). This mysticism and emotional religious practices coincide with the tariqat experience of Kurds and their

fondness for mysticism. Prof. Dr. Hasan Onat also confirmed this attachment, in my interview with him. He suggested that tariqats have been the "focal points of power in the region and they have been influential in determining the political preferences of people by gaining support from the state" (2018). He added that tariqats had been under the control of the state in the Ottoman times, but this changed in the early years of the Turkish Republic and they went underground expanded their influence especially in the southeast part of Turkey. Nevertheless, the theologist who wants to remain anonymous pointed out that despite the differences between Shafi and Hanefi jurisprudences, they have become centralized today, making the differences trivial over time.

Hanefi school of law is believed to have more room for "individual reasoning" while Shafi school is identified as insisting on the tradition and historical knowledge when interpreting the religious texts (e.g. the Qur'an) (Black, 2011, p. 25, 34, 35). In terms of state-religion affairs, the Shafi school, according to Black (2011), emphasize the supremacy of the religious laws over the non-religious laws. The ruler in a state should also be bounded by the religious laws, which gives the religious authorities relatively an upper hand compared to the ruler (Black, 2011, p. 113). As for the Hanefi jurisprudence, Black (2011) claims that it has been more in favor of "the rule of law and not specifically the Shari'a" (p. 116). He exemplifies the Ottoman state where the *örfi hukuk* as the rule of law was more eminent by asserting that this could be due to the "pragmatic" nature of Ottoman political thought (p. 116, 202).

With regards to the state of Shafi Kurds in the Ottoman times, there is some interesting information, Bruinessen (2000) provides from Evliya Çelebi's Seyahatname in relation to the religious life in Diyarbakır in 1655. He says that there are multiple references to Shafi mazhab which was given special importance in the

madrasa education. This indicates a special attention given to Shafi mazhab along with the official Hanefi mazhab in Diyarbakır. Evliya Çelebi exemplifies some of the mosques in the city having separate prayer halls for Shafis (Bruinessen, 2000). Bruinessen (2000) also points out that there can be specific situations where Shafis can adhere to Hanefi mazhab, such as the Friday prayer for which there need to be at least 40 men available to perform it for Shafis whereas 8 men are enough for Hanefis. Since there were some villages with small populations, Shafis could adhere to Hanefis in this matter to perform the prayer (Bruinessen, 2000). This demonstrates an example to the fact that within Sunni mazhabs, people can choose to adhere to a mazhab different than theirs for specific issues and that there are no strict divisions among Shafis and Hanafis unlike the division between Alevis and Sunnis.

Kurds and Turks are Sunni Muslims which can be identified as an upper identity as Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kalaycı puts it while Hanefilik and Shafilik constitute a sub-identity under the Sunni mazhabs. One of the reasons why Kurds and Turks have lived side by side as neighbors in spite of many years of conflict between the state and the PKK according to Coşkun, is that they believe in the same religion. Tezcür (2014) also agrees that one of the characteristics of the fight between the state and the PKK in Turkey is that it remained between the armed combatants compared to other examples in the world. I think, not only the belief in Islam in general but also belonging to Sunni mazhab has been quite crucial in bringing the two communities together, avoiding a civil war situation and preventing the expansion of the ethnic conflict to the civilians. As an example, sharing the same belief, historically brought together Turks and Kurds if we consider the fear of invasion of the southeast part of Turkey by non-Muslims (e.g. Armenians, Russians) and the fight against those in the Independence War. Even before this, Sunni Turks and Kurds in the Ottoman era had united against

Şah Ismail of Shia – the leader of the Safavids (Bruinessen, 2000; Houston, 2008). Additionally, in the interview, Coşkun said that there are also other reasons why Turkish and Kurdish communities could live together peacefully, such as demographic integration of many Kurds, living not only in the eastern provinces anymore. To illustrate, Coşkun explained that the expansion of kinship bonds among Turks and Kurds via marriages enabled Kurds to become more integrated. However, it seems that without sharing the same belief system, the other forms of social integration would be limited between Turks and Kurds. Therefore, sharing the belief in Sunni Islam has had a profound impact in prevention of the expansion of ethnic conflict to civilians. Above and beyond, Hanefi-Shafi distinction does not reflect a conflictual state as in the case of the Alevi-Sunni division.

When asked about the influence of Hanefilik and Shafilik on the vote choices of Kurds, none of the respondents in my interviews agreed that they matter. They said the differences encountered in Kurdish votes should not be associated with Hanefilik and Shafilik but with the different levels of ethnic consciousness, experiences of unjust treatment, past victimization and social interaction among other variables like education, socioeconomic status, etc. Yavuz points out that in the more eastern and rural parts of Turkey, the AKP could be viewed as a representation of the Turkish state which might lead to different outcomes for different people carrying distinct political orientations. Since the state and its representations like the AKP have usually negative connotations in people's mental maps, contrary to the attitude towards the pro-Kurdish ethnic parties like the HDP. Therefore, Yavuz believes that the determining factor in voting preferences must be related to the attitude towards the state and its counter alternative depending on the personal experiences. This explanation has a lot to offer in terms of the consolidated ideas and behavior among the Kurdish electorate.

Nevertheless, if there are no major differences between Shafis and Hanefis in terms of the religious beliefs and practices, then, how can we account for the different political orientations among Hanefi and Shafi Kurds? In the next chapter, this study utilizes the notion of ideational path dependence to unfold the underlying reasons for differing political preferences of Sunni Kurds.

4.2 Path Dependence and Its Application to Sunni - Kurdish Voting Behavior

This study employs the notion of ideational path dependence to explain the variation among Sunni Kurds in terms of their vote choices. McDowall (2004) talks about Kurds who situate themselves ideationally to either "pro-Turkish," "pro-Allies" camps and "Dersim Kurds" who favored independence at the beginning of the eighteenth century in the Ottoman era (p. 125). This implies the existence of pro-state and anti-state political stances towards the Ottomans at the time and later, towards the Turkish state among Kurdish population in Turkey. Therefore, in the literature, pro-state and anti-state attitudes are dated back to the late Ottoman era in terms of Kurdish ethno-nationalism and we can use the same thinking in our research to explain the ethno-nationalist orientations of the Kurds in Turkey.

Although we see little difference between Hanefi and Shafi Kurds in terms of religious beliefs and customs, they seem to diverge in terms of political orientations. In order to account for this difference, Sarıgil and Fazlıoğlu (2013) draw attention to the role of self-reinforcing mechanisms and dynamics. They emphasize the role of historical factors such as Hanefi Kurds' settlement in urban centers and close relations with the state authorities as opposed to the more rural and peripheral status of Shafi Kurds. Later, Sarıgil and Fazlıoğlu (2014) further note that Shafi Kurds have a stronger perception of state discrimination and so they are relatively more ethno-nationalist

than Hanefi Kurds. The integration of Hanefi Kurds into the system unlike Shafi Kurds and the promotion of Hanefi Islam by the Diyanet together with the less deferential nature of the Shafi Kurds are seen as the factors explaining the difference in their political behavior (Sarıgil & Fazlıoğlu, 2014). Following Sarıgil and Fazlıoğlu (2013; 2014). Building on those studies, this study utilizes path dependence approach and tries to find out more about self-reinforcing mechanisms and historical factors leading to the divergence of voting patterns among Sunni Kurds.

Path dependence refers to the "historical sequences in which contingent events set into motion institutional patterns or event chains that have deterministic properties" (Mahoney, 2000, p. 507). In other words, "small, accidental or random occurrences happening at a certain time are expected to have long-lasting, self-reproducing patterns or paths" and path dependence "emphasizes the role of the timing and sequence of events" (Sarıgil, 2011, p. 1830). Path dependence should have properties of "unpredictability, inflexibility, non-ergodicity and potential inefficiency" (Sarıgil, 2015, p. 231; Pierson, 2000, p. 253). Scholars have used path dependence in relation to historical institutionalism as well as other institutionalist accounts and policy analysis by using either a utilitarian approach or a normative perspective (Sarıgil, 2015). While the utilitarian approach is widely used by economists with a focus on *increasing returns* or *positive feedback mechanism*, the normative approach to path dependence is associated with historical sociology and its mechanisms to identify self-reproducing processes by "legitimation mechanisms" (Mahoney, 2000, p. 509). From a utilitarian perspective, "with increasing returns, an institutional pattern -once adopted- delivers increasing benefits with its continued adoption, and thus over time it becomes more and more difficult to transform the pattern or select previously available options, even if these alternative options would have been more "efficient""

(Mahoney, 2000, p. 508). Normative approach to path dependence could explain where optimal choices in a utilitarian sense are abandoned due to concerns for rules, norms, identity, legitimacy, beliefs, values, ideas, etc. in addition to other explanations like functional approach and power struggle (Mahoney, 2008; Sarıgil, 2011; Sarıgil, 2015). *Ideas* scholarship provides that "once successfully institutionalized (i.e., taken for granted by actors), ideas shape actors' perceptions, goals, behaviors, and consequently political outcomes" and as a result, "some choices will be regarded as more favorable or appropriate than others" by the process of cognitive locking in (Sarıgil, 2011, p. 1834). This way, "ideational continuities becomes taken for granted or legitimate…" and they become the very mechanism of self-reproduction by legitimation (Sarıgil, 2011, p. 1834; Sarıgil, 2015).

The existence of path dependence is determined especially by the 'contingent historical events' that lead to critical juncture according to Mahoney (2000). Therefore, the outcome of the path needs to be stochastically related to the 'initial conditions' that bring about the critical juncture (Mahoney, 2000). To put differently, Mahoney (2000) explains that if the circumstances before the critical juncture or 'institutional genesis' can explain or anticipate the result of the critical juncture, then the process cannot be called as path dependent since the conditions in the pre-critical juncture period need to be contingent (p. 537). On the other hand, 'the intermediate events' are related to the outcomes in a path dependent process (Goldstone, 1998, p. 834). Also, According to Mahoney (2000):

> "In the actual practice of research, social analyst will consider an event to be contingent when its explanation appears to fall outside of existing scientific theory… Analysts may also treat an outcome as contingent if it contradicts the predictions of a *particular* theoretical framework specifically designed to account for this class of outcome. In this case, although the outcome is potentially consistent with the predictions of other theories not examined, the

analyst deems it to be contingent because its occurrence directly challenges the specific theoretical framework of interest." (p. 514).

From this point of view, our case of divergent political behavior among Hanefi and Shafi Kurds could be considered as an outcome of a path dependent process. This study treats the pro-state behavior of Hanefi Kurds as the result of a path dependent process and designates the urban settlement of Hanefi Kurds as a contingent event which brought about a pro-state attitude and voting pattern among Hanefi Kurds. As the review of the existing studies above suggests, we cannot explain the voting behavior of Hanefi Kurds by the relevant ethnic voting behavior theories and by clientelism, patronage and religiosity factors. This study suggests that the notion of path dependence would be quite useful to account for the differences seen in Sunni Kurds' voting preferences. Furthermore, just like the marketplace where better choices are not necessarily always adopted for the sake of efficiency, as argued by David (1985), not all Kurds vote for the ethnic party even though it could potentially be beneficial for them, in terms of high level of representation by their co-ethnics, for instance. Therefore, as efficiency is not always the whole story when it comes to the economic stories of institutional development,[10] the obvious political interests or effective representation does not correspond to the voting preferences of Hanefi Kurds who vote for a pro-state party. The ideational path dependence of Hanefi votes shows that their votes do not have to coincide with the expected belief that ethnic groups would vote for the ethnic parties representing them.

We can relate to utilitarian logic, system functionality or elite power approaches as well, in our case by referring to learning and coordination effects and

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[10] For example, see David (1985) for Qwerty example and how despite a more efficient alternative keyboard, Qwerty keyboard has been used and adopted widely in the world, exemplifying the importance of time and sequence in path dependence.

adaptive expectations and costs of reversal especially in relation to *"incentive structure", "integration, adaptation, survival"* (Mahoney, 2000, p. 518-519, 523; Sarıgil, 2011). However, our case is more prone to be associated with an ideational path dependence approach rather than the utilitarian perspective to point out a path dependent process. Since a long-term cost-benefit analysis might be quite difficult to make when it comes to a more uncertain social and political environment unlike the marketplace (Mahoney, 2000). That's why, the current study utilizes terms such as *moral grounds, appropriateness, legitimacy, cognitive lock-in,* and habitual path dependence approach's *habituation* term. While *ideas* or ideational path dependence provides with legitimacy, appropriateness for path maintenance, habitual path dependence approach refers to routines, traditions, dispositions for cognitive lock-in of certain habits (Sarıgil, 2015).

Claiming about the institutionalization of Hanefi-Kurdish votes for the pro-state parties necessitates us to look for the "causal relevance or origins, sequences and temporal processes" (Skocpol & Pierson, 2002, p. 708). Outcomes that are seen in the long-time period should not be treated as if the agents have been aiming those outcomes in the first place since political actors usually do not consider the long-term effects of their actions and try to save the day by solving the immediate issues at hand. This leads us to get away from functional accounts of politics and to realize that the long-term results are usually the "by-products of social processes" (Skocpol & Pierson, 2002, p. 708). Skocpol and Pierson (2002) suggest that historical institutionalism underlines the surprise element emerging out of the previous political decisions and relations which keeps happening for a long time. Similarly, path dependency can assist us to comprehend the "way individuals develop and reinforce particular mental maps of the social world" (Skocpol & Pierson, 2002, p. 709). This way, historical

institutionalism can help us understand the support for pro-state parties among Kurdish voters who also vote for anti-state or ethnic parties with the use of path dependence approach. Why some Kurdish electorate have supported pro-state parties and why others have not could be explained through the lenses of path dependence, in particular, ideational path dependence.

Another reason why path dependence is a useful tool for this study is that it highlights the importance of "interaction effects" by indicating the importance of "overarching contexts" (Skocpol & Pierson, 2002, p. 8, 15). In this study, one of the reasons why Hanefi - Shafi relations are not antagonistic and the real reason of division seen in their political preferences might have something to do with the overarching context. As it was pointed out by the interviewee, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kalaycı, the existence of an Alevi-Sunni cleavage in the society unites Sunnis on common grounds and prevents fragmentation on a political level. Therefore, as opposed to Alevi-Sunni division, Hanefi – Shafi sects do not constitute a religious or political division within Sunnis on the basis of their sectarian identities. This is explained by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kalaycı, in my interview with him, as "having a sub-identity does not constitute a conflictual relation when there is more pressing supra-identity". In this account, sub-identity is Hanefi or Shafi while supra-identity is Sunni or Alevi. Thus, the pre-existing social boundaries in a given environment shapes other identities' relations with each other. What's more interesting is that the relation between Hanefilik and Shafilik in the history is not always found as a peaceful one due to changing political environment and power struggle between the two as exemplified by Bulliet (1972). So once again, historical institutionalism informs us why in different times in the history, we see the same phenomenon in different states (relation between Hanefilik and Shafilik, as a peaceful or conflictual one). The answer lies in the changing overarching contexts and

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historical institutionalism helps us notice those contexts (Skocpol & Pierson, 2002, p. 711-712).

As for the *ideas* scholarship, ideas could be defined as frames or "cognitive and moral maps that orient an actor" according to Bleich (as cited in Blyth, Helgadottır, & Kring, 2016, p. 151). The incorporation of ideas in historical institutionalism even though for some scholar have been called as "unconscious uncoupling" in earlier times and "conscious re-coupling" later, could have offer a lot in terms of supplementing each other's deficiencies (Blyth, Helgadottır, & Kring, 2016, p. 142-143; Lieberman, 2002). In a similar vein, Lieberman (2002) suggests that we can try to understand political situations by looking at the institutional and ideological paths they follow. He adds that when these paths of ideas and institutions are in harmony, they bring about a reproduction of the status quo; however, when ideas and institutions conflict with each other, they have a potential to produce change. Also, for historical institutionalism to be up to date and relevant, it needs to accommodate ideas since, the circumstances that make historical institutionalism "operationalizable, stable states, with long-lasting and slowly evolving complexes of institutions," could be a hard job in the world of twenty first century (Blyth, Helgadottır, & Kring, 2016).

Ideas are important tools in legitimating, convincing the individuals to take part in a certain path with reference to social learning (Lieberman, 2002; Béland, 2005). Ideas are not only legitimate continuity but also the change. They can be used by actors who want to make a reform by leaning on them as moral grounds to make the changes that are said to be necessary (Béland, 2005). This sort of a legitimation by ideas could be exemplified by the use of religious ideas for mobilization of Kurdish rebels in Shaikh Said rebellion. When rebels wanted to make some changes in status quo, they needed to rely on ideas, religious beliefs (a shaikh as the leader of the movement is

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appealing for religious Kurdish people) and to justify this need for change, ideas provides with "the social construction of the need to reform" (Béland, 2005, p. 11). Thus, discourse provided with the religious ideas that Islam is in danger with the secularizing reforms of the Republic, in Shaikh Said rebellion, helped to legitimize the rebellion and mobilize Kurdish people around the same purpose with their shaikh. A similar process seems to be visible in the motivation of secular nationalist Kurds when they adopt an Islam-friendly discourse. In short, as Béland (2005) argues, ideational path dependence not only has the potential to explain continuity or the reproduction of old institutional patterns but also the change for which historical institutionalism has been criticized not accounting for it endogenously.[11] So, once again, ideational path dependence seems to be very useful to explain different ethnonational orientations among Kurds with reference to ideas as self-reinforcing mechanisms.

"Irreversibility due to learning and habituation" provides us an important aspect of path dependency that is useful to understand the concept of "behavioral lock-in" (Barnes, Gartland, & Martin, 2004, p. 372). This concept refers to the maintenance of a sub-optimal or inefficient behavior for reasons like "habit, organizational learning, or culture" and "institutional pressure, the reluctance to give up power and control, and status quo" are also in effect when behavioral lock-in emerges (Barnes, Gartland, & Martin, 2004, pp. 372-373). In a similar vein, Pierson (2000) indicates the importance of incentives (as positive feedbacks) in shaping "cumulative commitments" which reinforce people to behave or think in particular ways locking-in them in irreversible paths (p. 265). Cognitive lock-in occurs when the repeated behavior creates increasing returns which gives incentives for following the same path

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[11] For criticisms about path dependence, see Liebowitz & Margolis (1995); Lieberman (2002); Ebbinghaus (2005); Ross (2007); Sarıgil (2012).

(Sarıgil, 2012). When we consider the institutionalization of Hanefi-Kurdish votes for the pro-state parties as a path dependent behavior, we can also talk about the incentives brought by this vote choice. Power and control could be among those incentives side where the pressure of status quo can be counted as a cost of reversal after some time of habit of voting. After a certain behavior is repeated and internalized by the society, the inertia (status quo) could disfavor the alternative behavior or thinking. Furthermore, the repetition of certain choices, voting preference in this case, can lead to the emergence of a party-affiliation or an emotional attachment to the party that has been voted for in a community even if there could be some other parties that could favor them more. Availability could pose a threat in this sense to the choices individuals make. This could be exemplified with WP's victory in the 1995 elections since the pro-Kurdish party (DEP) was banned in 1994 and it is suggested that WP was a good alternative to DEP compared to other parties for the Kurdish electorate (Leezenberg, 2001). Therefore, behavioral lock-in could also be bound by the availability.

Network effects, on the other hand, can bring about some rationale for the vote choices of Hanefi Kurds. Network effects relate to the link between the development of social interpretations and positive feedback (Pierson, 2000). According to Pierson (2000), "once established, basic outlooks on politics, ranging from ideologies to understandings of particular aspects of governments or orientations toward political groups or parties, are generally tenacious. They are path dependent." (p. 260). Our claim is that since Hanefis have lived in urban areas historically, they were more in contact with other Hanefis who are more likely to be Turks in Anatolia and also Hanefi Kurds might have encountered with embodiments of state in urban space. To explain why this could be the case first, we need to establish that Hanefis have lived in urban

places while Shafis have lived in rural areas, in general. The idea that Hanefis are more likely to live in urban regions compared to Shafis who are more likely to be in rural areas is agreed upon by the theologists according to my interviews even though one of the theologists refrained from making generalizations in principle. This idea coincides with some of the religious rules, making people's lives easier with regards to the regions where they reside. For example, for Hanefis, if a person's thumb bleeds even very little, she or he needs to perform an ablution while this is not a problem for the *abdest* of Shafis and this is usually explained by the works and actions of Shafi people who generally live in rural places where they might have to do manual work and encounter more problems like bleeding. Therefore, to ease their prayer, bleeding is not a violation of abdest for Shafis whereas, Hanefis who do less work which could cause bleeding since they have usually resided in urban areas. Another example is that if a man's hand touches a woman's hand or vice versa, the person needs to perform an ablution since the *abdest* is violated according to Shafis while this does not apply for Hanefis. The explanation provided for this is that Hanefis are more likely to get in touch with the opposite sex in urban areas where they usually live and so, to ease their lives, touching opposite sex's hand does not violate *abdest*. These examples not only demonstrate the interaction of religious rules with the regional residence of people but also reveals how contextual factors might generate self-reproducing patterns.

Next, we claim that in urban spaces, Kurdish people might have been challenged to maintain their Kurdish identities in display and "any equivalent crafting of a Kurdish national self is disallowed" (Houston, 2008, p. 4, 152). Houston (2008) argues that the modern city has bounded Kurdish people living in it by designing the city in a way that changes the "daily practices and social relations" of people by altering the "schemes of cognition" in order to launch a political revolution through

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de-Ottomanization (with secularism and Turkish nationalism) (p. 143). For instance, the Republican city centers were based around "government building and central square, the 'administrative and ceremonial spaces of the Turkish Republic'" (Houston, 2008, p. 143). This perception of urban space as the places where Turkish nation and Turkish identity are emphasized at the expense of Kurdish people by the design of public sphere and symbols, rituals and "expected convivialities" together with "the practice and performance of nationalist Turkish citizens", demonstrate that urban spaces might have affected the Kurdish people living in them in terms of their assertiveness in ethno-nationalism (Houston, 2008, p. 146-147). Since challenging the Kemalist order of the urban space by Kurdish people could be punishable easier than the rural space where state control could be limited. In fact, the punishment of Kurdish people who tried to show their ethnic affiliation vividly had been the case for a long time in Turkey. Given all these factors contributing to the integration of Kurds living in urban spaces by either display of Turkish nationalism (e.g. statues of Atatürk, public ceremonies, etc.) or suppression of ethnic identities and consciousness, it could be plausible to argue that Hanefi Kurds who usually have lived in urban areas could be more integrated than their Shafi counterparts who usually reside in rural spaces.[12]

Then, Hanefis who are more likely to live in urban areas could be prone to also network effects much more, since the interaction between different groups of people in urban space is likely to be higher than rural areas because urban places are more cosmopolitan. In such a place, Hanefi Kurds could be affected by other groups like Hanefi Turks and also since urban areas are places where the state authority is more visible, Hanefi Kurds could have been influenced by all these factors which might

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[12] For more information about how the modern city life affects Kurds and their identity, see Chapter 5 in Cristopher Houston's book: Kurdistan: Crafting of National Selves (2008).

shape their political preferences in the form of a pro-state one through time. Thus, network effects might lead Hanefi Kurds to adopt a more pro-state attitude in political matters since they have lived in urban spaces where they have had more interaction with Hanefi Turks and the state authority. In this explanation, the incentives for Hanefi Kurds to have pro-state attitudes could be their relations with the state and their environment and costs of jeopardizing those relations could be high as well as the relations with their Hanefi Turkish neighbors. As for Shafi Kurds who are more likely to be influenced by their tribes rather than the state in a rural space, network externality has led them to follow the tribal choice and since the defection costs are higher in tribal communities, Shafi Kurdish votes could be more uniform when supporting for a certain party. Hence, cognitive lock-in in party preference might have been affected by the network effects of Hanefi and Shafi Kurds with respect to where they have lived. This lock-in in voting behavior might have led to an inertia causing Hanefi Kurds to support for pro-state parties in general and Shafi Kurds to vote for usually anti-state ones. Network effects might have brought about "adaptive expectations" which creates mental maps and "communities of discourse" possible to be shared and copied again and again to produce a common ideology and in this case, support for certain parties (Pierson, 2000, p. 260). All these explanations also provide a solid ground for an ideational path development as well because the logic of appropriateness leads individuals to behave in certain ways that they deem as right, morally good, influenced by their surroundings. Therefore, adaptation or integration of Hanefi Kurds could be associated with the logic of appropriateness in an urban space while the expectation from Shafi Kurds would be different in a rural setting in which logic of appropriateness might have caused the initiation of a pro-ethnic path shaped by different values, ideas, beliefs formed by different experiences than Hanefi Kurds.

In the interviews, all the theologists acknowledged the historical state of Hanefilik in association with urban life and Shafilik in association to rural life. In other words, the idea that Hanefis have lived in urban places and Shafis have lived in rural places is supported by the theologists. Yavuz and Öztunç agreed as well and underlined that people usually choose their rite according to where they reside. However, Yavuz, Öztunç, Coşkun and Altaş said that this might not reflect today's situation where Kurds now live in city centers. However, even though Kurdish population is not confined to the rural areas today, there is a historical background which accounts for their geographical position as a rural one both considering their Kurdishness and Shafilik according to the theologists I interviewed and many other accounts in the literature (Cement, 1996; Izady, 1992). This historical background regardless of its current state seems to still shape the pattern of their political preferences via the mechanisms of ideational or cognitive lock-in. Even though the current state has changed about the urban-rural distinction, the political preferences might have locked-in in the past and this maintenance of the same path despite the changes in urban-rural distinction is the very sign of a path dependent process based on also possibly a habitual logic. Öztunç, in the interview, when asked about the possible reasons of Hanefi – Shafi distinction in terms of voting behavior, he also suggested that this could be due to that Hanefi Kurds generally reside in urban areas and they are more open to outside influences thanks to high interaction level in city centers as opposed to Shafis who usually are found to be in rural parts of the region where they are more isolated. He thinks that this difference could account for the variation in their voting behavior. An interesting point also made by Altaş (the HDP member I interviewed) about the isolation of Shafi Kurds, was that in the eastern part of Turkey, religion is practiced through local religious authorities like mullas, shaiks rather than müftüs who are appointed by

Diyanet (Directorate of Religious Affairs) which is viewed as an extension of the state in the region. Even in the religious matters, Hanefilik and müftüs who are associated with the Diyanet could be seen as the reflection and authority figures of the state. Therefore, mullas, shaiks have been more influential in religious affairs than state-appointed müftüs in rural areas where mostly Shafi Kurds have lived. These heterodox religious figures might have reproduced and reinforced relatively more ethno-nationalist attitudes among Shafi Kurds.

Ideas, values, legitimacy concerns have a profound impact when people form their political attitudes. Where people form these attitudes, provides another determinant influencing the formation of political attitudes in relation to *ideas, values and legitimacy concerns* especially in a social context where individuals could be affected by one another. This interaction effect with respect to where people are when forming their political attitude, might encourage or discourage people to think and behave in certain ways. I think, an individual might be bounded in their thoughts and acts by their environment. To illustrate, the interaction between an individual and those who join a social movement might motivate the individual to think in the same way with them and take part in their activities since their interaction possibly affects the mental maps of the individual. This interaction could encourage or discourage individuals from voting for a certain party. Therefore, *ideas* are crucial to determine one's vote choice depending on the existence of likeminded people and one's proximity to them in an environment. Furthermore, the interaction of rural Kurds and the Turkish state has been uneasy due to stronger military presence and pressure in the rural areas of the southeast region. This uneasy interaction might have boosted anti-state attitudes among Shafi Kurds who usually have resided in the rural southeast region. Another perspective could also be exemplified in terms of exposure to

propaganda. The PKK's influence has been less historically in urban areas while in rural places where the state authority could not reach all the time as effective as in urban places. The PKK had the advantage to influence people's political preferences in the southeast region even though this might have started to change to some extent due to urbanization and the spread of urban branches of the PKK (Davis, Larson, Haldeman, Oguz, & Rana, 2012). Supporting an ethno-nationalist agenda could be considered as a collective action among Kurds. Robinson and Meier (2006) suggest that a path that is chosen before, generates an environment or a context which imposes certain limits on the level of influence of an organization. In terms of the organizational behavior, the PKK is bounded by its environment, too. Then, since the PKK has been more likely to operate in rural areas more comfortably at least initially, Shafi Kurds who are more likely to live in rural villages are more likely to be affected by them when they form their political preferences.

Cement also (1996) supports that political repression and economic marginalization of Kurdish people in the eastern part of Turkey due to lack of or inefficient reforms to transform the rural and peripheral status of the region led Kurdish people to develop ethno-nationalist tendencies. Özpek (2018) suggests that harsh measures towards the Kurdish rebels by the CHP in the early years of the Republic could be considered as not only a conduct of the nation-building project but also as an opportunity to get rid of the opposition parties to the single-party government. These repressive measures increased the authoritarianism of the CHP and give rise to the marginalization in the southeast where the state security troops established control in order to avoid and suppress the Kurdish rebellions (Özpek, 2018). Without a political solution to the Kurdish grievances, a security-oriented approach to the Kurdish issue, The Turkish state alienated the Kurds who, then, were

recruited by the PKK to "initiate systematic anti-state violence" (Özpek, 2018, p. 15). The trauma induced by the state's military operations in the region promoted a fierce ethno-nationalist agenda among the Kurds who experienced these harsh and repressive military responses, and "material and non-material insecurities" (Özpek, 2018, 25).

The importance of *ideas* in relation to geography has been implied in the interviews. When asked about the divergence of Hanefis and Shafis in their vote choice and possible reasons for that, they all agreed that the regional experience of state repression and the PKK terrorism as the causes for different perspectives developed towards the state, the PKK and the political preferences in lieu of a sectarian divide between Hanefis and Shafis. This is in line with Sarıgil and Fazlıoğlu's (2014, 2016) research which informs us that the level of discrimination perception is relatively higher among Shafi Kurds. Respectively, the level of discrimination perception is 30.3% and 56.1% for Hanefi Kurds and Shafi Kurds (Sarıgil & Fazlıoğlu, 2014). This might be due to the idea that Hanefi Kurds are relatively more integrated into the socio-political system, that gives rise to a lower level of discrimination perception among Hanefi Kurds. Mehmet Yavuz, in my interview with him, explained this divergence of votes and ethno-nationalist orientations of Hanefi and Shafi Kurds in terms of geography in these words: "The upper side of the Euripides River has experienced more discrimination, the state's military operations have been intense in that region along with the sufferings caused by the PKK attacks while the west side of the river has remained more peaceful." This idea does reflect both the geographical differentiation between Hanefis and Shafis and the reason why their vote choices differ by the diverse experiences they have due to their geographical location.

The persistence of Hanefi Kurdish votes for pro-state parties and Shafi Kurdish votes for pro-Kurdish ethnic parties shows an ideational path dependence. The values

shaping this preference have continued to exist and creates self-reinforcing attitudes and beliefs about political preferences. The influence of ideas on institutional development has been studied by Blyth (2002) to explore the importance of ideas in constituting, shaping the political preferences of individuals. Likewise, Cox (2004) suggests that ideational path dependence holds that old ideas create inertia and protect it for a long time. He maintains that with the application of ideas, individuals adopt cognitive maps, they share those ideas with a logic of appropriateness and they hold a profound, deep attachment towards them (Cox, 2004). Similarly, because of a shared attachment to a party for a long time, those values might constitute a path dependent process.

Apart from an ideational lock-in, this might also indicate a habitual lock-in of voting for the same party for generations since it becomes almost customary or traditional to vote for the same party. Cox (2004) identifies this inclination towards not letting a particular idea to go away for a long time in a changing environment, as the path dependency of an idea. Pro-state attitudes, ideas might have been highly regarded by Hanefi Kurds, these ideas, in turn, might have shaped and institutionalized the political preferences of Hanefi Kurds. Once established, previously decided choices "indirectly affect the scope of alternatives by changing the relationship between an organization's environment and its current alternatives" (Robinson & Meier, 2006, p. 242). The maintenance of pro-state voting behavior that constitutes an ideational path, affects the political orientation of Hanefi Kurds, determining the relationship between them and their co-ethnics formed by integration to the system. As for Shafi Kurds, relatively stronger anti-state and ethno-nationalist attitudes generated a path following behavior (i.e. greater likelihood of voting for ethnic parties).

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CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Recent findings in the literature have shown that there is a consolidation of voting patterns in the southeast region of Turkey (Akdağ, 2015; Yeğen, et al., 2015). These studies show that the Kurdish electorate either votes for the AKP or the HDP and the other parties enjoy very little support in the region. Furthermore, quantitative data in the study suggests that Hanefi Kurds have been more likely to vote for conservative AKP, while Shafi Kurds usually support pro-Kurdish HDP (see also Sarıgil & Fazlıoğlu, 2014; Yeğen, et al., 2015). We designate the AKP as a relatively more pro-state and the HDP as an ethnic party. Our research question that guided this study is that to what extent sectarian identities among Sunni Kurds affect their voting behavior and how can we explain this divergence in their voting preferences which tells us about their differing attitudes on Kurdish ethno-nationalism.

The main argument in the study is that the urban-rural settlement of Hanefi and Shafi Kurds respectively seems to have initiated an ideational path which led to pro-state attitudes and voting behavior among Hanefi Kurds and pro-Kurdish attitudes and voting behavior among Shafi Kurds. For the development of this ideational path, we designate the urban settlement of Hanefi Kurds as the contingent event. Several mechanisms play a role in the maintenance of the path. These mechanisms might be associated with not only *integration, power, control, influence, positive feedbacks* but also mostly be related to *ideas, norms, legitimacy, beliefs, values* and *habituation* in our case. Ideas as self-reinforcing mechanisms enable cognitive locking-in of pro-state

and pro-Kurdish attitudes and behavior among the same ethnic group. In this vein, sectarian identities provide with identification for supporters or non-supporters of a co-ethnic. Consequently, historical contingencies impact how Sunni Kurdish voters vote today and how they view Kurdish ethno-nationalism.

This research does not neglect the previous explanations about why some Kurds are less ethno-nationalist in their political behavior. In fact, our explanation about the path dependency of the pro-state attitude and voting behavior could also be associated with the explanations provided by the extant literature about the role of the religious leaders or chieftains, the influence of patronage, the existence of swing voters and religiosity in the region as the legacy of especially pro-state parties. For, these explanations strengthen our argument about the path dependence of a pro-state stance of some Kurds. However, these previous explanations, do not take the role of sectarian differences among Sunni Kurds into consideration which seems to affect how Sunni Kurds have been voting. Therefore, our research not only acknowledges the previous work in relation to voting preferences of Kurds but also contributes to a neglected area where Sunni Kurds are treated as if they constitute a homogeneous group but in fact, diverge in their voting choices. This research indicates that the reasons why Hanefi and Shafi Kurds differ in their ethno-nationalist orientations are historically contingent factors and their persisting influences.

The implications of this research suggest that the constructivist account of ethno-nationalism tends to neglect historical conditions and legacies and their long-lasting effects on ethnic groups especially when they form their political attitudes and behavior. This study shows that while Hanefi Kurds are found to be less ethno-nationalist since they usually vote for pro-state parties, Shafi Kurds are more likely to vote for the ethnic or pro-Kurdish parties. What seems to explain this divergence

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among the same ethnic group in terms of supporting and not supporting their co-ethnics, is the ideational path dependence of pro-state attitude that coincides with Hanefilik and pro-Kurdish support that correlates with Shafilik among Sunni Kurds. This implies that historical conditions and legacies might have a substantial impact on ethnic consciousness and behavior. In the last decades, constructivist approaches have become highly popular in ethnicity and nationalism studies. Although the constructivist account has substantially contributed to our understanding of ethnicity and nationalism phenomena, it has some limitations as well. For instance, Brubaker sees ethno-nationalist mobilization as the result of networks and entrepreneurs by using cognitive frames which institutions have shaped (Ruane & Todd, 2003). Furthermore, ethnic communities are "contingent events" established over and over again by the new makers for a variety of reasons in multiple times according to the changing context where they are built (Ruane & Todd, 2003, p. 213) from a constructivist perspective. However, the emphasis on elites, entrepreneurs or ethnic parties brings about an elite-driven ethno-nationalism (Goode & Stroup, 2015). The idea of *change* and the *fluidity* of ethnic identities might be overemphasized, ignoring the persistence of some factors that characterize ethnic identities. That's why, the current study suggests that most constructivist accounts of ethnicity and nationalism remain largely *ahistorical*. Thus, the constructivist approach to ethnicity and nationalism should have greater room for the role of the legacy of contingent developments and conditions in the past.

Another theoretical contribution of this study is that historicist perspectives such as path dependence approach could be quite useful in terms of studying ethnicity and nationalism phenomena. It is simply because ethnicity and nationalism have not only flexible/contingent/constructed aspects but also fixed and durable dimensions.

Historicist perspectives are especially helpful in terms of grasping the latter aspects. This study indicates that the notion of ideational path dependence is helpful in terms of explaining the diverging outcomes of voting patterns within the same ethnic group (i.e. Sunni Kurds). As Hall puts it, ideas are better at explaining the relationship between state and society and how they are understood by people with discourse and interpretations (as cited in Blyth, 1997).

Future research could be made in comparison with the case of Northern Ireland where the Catholic Irish people are seen to be nationalists or republican and the Protestants are as unionists or loyalists (Evans & Tonge, 2013). This case also demonstrates that sectarian divisions can coincide with political cleavages within an ethnic group. Some studies suggest that the conflictual relations of the past between Protestants and Catholics among Irish people has led to the political, cultural and geographical alienation of Protestant Irish people while on the other hand, Catholic Republicans have disarmed themselves to ensure some sort of a compromise (Southern, 2007). Nationalism and religion are so intertwined in the Northern Ireland case that it promises a quite interesting case to analyze how Irish community isa affected by these dimensions. Similar to the Kurdish case where Shafilik mostly corresponding to Kurdishness, Catholicism seems to be linked to Irish national identity and it is found that Catholic identity is quite salient in party politics as well (Evans & Tonge, 2013). However, different from our case, there is no religious or political antagonism experienced as a communal conflict between Hanefi and Shafi Kurds as has been in the case of Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. Taking into consideration of similarities and differences, the Northern Ireland case could shed some light on the issue of the resilience of historical contingencies and how they generate variation in ethno-nationalist attitudes of ethnic groups via comparing it with

the Kurdish case. Additionally, it would also be interesting to see how sectarian differences shape ethnic voting behavior in other parts of the Middle East where Kurds have dispersed. That's why, other cases for future research could concern the Kurds in Nothern Iraq, Syria and Iran, especially in relation to sectarian differences.

As Brubaker (2008) points out ethnic groups should not be treated as if they are internally coherent, unitary and externally bounded with the same goal. Instead, ethnic groups are heterogeneous and contextual. In the Kurdish case, not only the division between Alevi and Sunni Kurds but also Hanefi - Shafi distinction among Sunni Kurds and the reflection of their sectarian differences on their political attitudes and preferences, implore us to regard the Kurdish identity as a complex one, having multiple dimensions. In brief, hoping for a wider understanding of the sectarian influence on voting behavior in Turkey, the study tries to fill a neglected area in the literature where Sunni Kurds have been regarded as a homogeneous entity.

Finally, as for the implications for voting behavior literature, this study provides that ideational forces also play a crucial role in determining one's vote choice without de-emphasizing the impacts of other factors (e.g. material issues). This research indicates that even within the same ethnic group, ideas profoundly matter in shaping one's cognition of what is appropriate with respect to voting behavior. Rather than voting for the parties that represent themselves, the individuals comprising an ethnic group might have divergent voting behavior. This study proffers that ideas could create certain paths via the mechanisms of the logic of appropriateness by modifying the schemes of cognition. This, in return, brings about the institutionalization of support for certain parties within an ethnic group. Ideational path dependence can offer explanations for the contemporary voting behavior of ethnic groups, which attests to the resilience of ideas.

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