
City of Terrorism - City of Breakfasts: the Image of Diyarbakir in the Soap Opera *Sultan*.

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Résumé

Biography

Francesco Marilungo is currently in second year of PhD research on the cultural definition of the city of Diyarbakir, (Turkey/Northern Kurdistan), supervised by Clémence Scalbert-Yücel at the University of Exeter, IAIS (Institute for Arab and Islamic Studies). His research is based on the geocritical approach and uses recent theories of space and place. He graduated in Italian Literature at University of Rome "La Sapienza" and subsequently spent three years in Turkey and Kurdistan working as a teacher and translator. In this presentation, he will analyse the image of the city of Diyarbakir as emerging from the soap-opera *Sultan*. As he will argue, the representation of the city offered by the series raises concerns of ethnic, gender and linguistic nature. Furthermore, on the basis of articles and media reports, he will look at the political attitude of Kurdish local authorities regarding misrepresentations and the realization of the soap-opera.

Abstract

Despite the fact that the first serials in Turkey tackling the Kurdish issue date back to late 1990s, the first one set in Diyarbakir, city-symbol of the Kurdish political resistance, had to wait until 2012. In previous years, the unmistakably political identity of the city was probably too hard to dilute in the narrative of multiculturalism. *Sultan* kicked off in May 2012 and lasted for only 20 episodes. According to the producer, Sevilay Demirci, the city is the "main character"; the story is not adapted to the place but "written specifically for it, taking as ground base the multicultural texture of Diyarbakir". The main actor, Nurg'ul Yeşilçay, declared that the troupe had strong support from the local community, even though youngsters with clear political stances attacked the set with Molotov cocktails. In fact, the channel producing the series, Kanal D, has a reputation of portraying the Kurds in a derogatory manner. The intervention of the local authorities from the Kurdist party (BDP), made possible the acceptance of the TV troupe by locals. For the pro-Kurdish party, the soap-opera would represent a "great contribution" to Diyarbakir. Mayor O.Baydemir and Municipal Councillor A.Demirbaş obviously tried to advertise the image of the city in order to place it on the map of national and international tourism. Nonetheless, they had to ignore the soap-opera's downplaying of Diyarbakir's political identity, among a number of other mystifications. In none of the episodes is the Kurdish question mentioned overtly

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and almost no Kurdish word is spoken. The characters speak Turkish with an unnatural "local" accent. Politics are avoided and thviewers get an impression of a city in which there are neither social problems nor any oppressive policy whatsoever. An impression as such, would clash with the day-to-day representations of Diyarbakir in the media and strengthen the opinion that Kurds have actually nothing to complain about. Despite the obvious misrepresentations, journalists could claim that "the real Diyarbakir" was finally shown to the public. Demirbař claimed he was content that at least inhabitants were not portrayed in a derogatory manner.

Showing clips of the soap-opera I will analyse stereotypical representations of Diyarbakir in *Sultan*, looking at issues of ethnicity, gender, and linguistics; subsequently, analysing media reports and articles, I will look at the political context, focusing on the market strategies of exploitation of the touristic potential of the city by Kurdish administrations, also looking at the contradictory reception of the soap-opera in the country.