"The Dream of Kurdistan is Buried Here:" Re-reading Kurdish Nationalism as a Critique of the Nation-state
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Most histories of Kurdish armed struggle are told as the entwined stories of the “making” of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, or Syria and the “unmaking” of Kurdistan. The Kurdish peoples’ struggles for autonomy since the end of the First World War are written as both chapters in the violent making of the modern nation-state in the Middle East and as episodes in a chronology of the failures of Kurdish nationalism, bequeathing to Kurds an unfulfilled “yearn[ing] to be what other more fortunate people are—a nation-state” (Jwaideh 2006). Ironically, although denied a country, Kurdish history is still narrated by state, written as a recurring tragedy in another’s linear national epic. Some scholars go further, arguing that without a state of their own, Kurds are trapped in an “endlessly present past” that prevents them from imagining a future. However, what happens if we narrate stories of Kurdish nationalism as neither denial or postponement but as “histories still being made now?” (Massey 2005) This paper examines both the cartoons published by the Turkish press during the Mount Ararat Rebellion (1926-1930) and their reconfiguration by Kurdish nationalists, including the “commemoration” of one of these cartoons by in Doğubayazıt, Turkey, three months after Sırrı Sakık becomes the first “pro-Kurdish” mayor of Ağrı, to trace the transformation of Kurdish national thought and practice in Turkey. Over the summer of 2014, the cartoon that the “mouthpiece” of the Kemalist regime, Milliyet, publishes to announce the “end” of the uprising is used by the “descendents of the Ararat rebels” to re-write the tragedy of Kurdistan as a critique of, rather than a longing for, a nation-state, in the process mapping for Kurds a future “informed by history” and yet “unconstrained by the past” (Coronil 1996).