Displacement and the Strategies of Sovereign Domination in the Kurdish Region in Turkey
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Displacement has been a crucial strategy deployed by the Turkish state since the inception of the republic in 1924. The republican state has continuously displaced different ethnic communities to ensure sovereign domination. This paper focuses on the application of this strategy to the Kurdish community exploring process and outcomes of Kurdish displacement in different periods of sovereign domination, comparatively. The conflict between Turkish state and the Kurdish resistance in two different periods thus forms the foci of the investigation. The strategy of displacement in the 1990s targeted the rural population in the countryside. Kurdish villages were emptied out of their inhabitants and burned to the ground and the displaced population was thus forced westward to settle in predominantly Turkish urban centers. The displacement was followed by technologies of domination geared to assimilation of the displaced Kurdish population in the larger Turkish society. In recent years, however, the mode and objectives of the strategy of Kurdish displacement have changed owing mainly to the change in the character of the conflict between sovereign power and the Kurdish resistance movement. Now Kurdish urban centers form the loci of the conflict and the main Kurdish cities as Sur district in Diyarbakır are sites of military confrontation and inhabitants are forced to seek safety by leaving their homes and localities. The strategy of Kurdish displacement is followed by the strategy of urban renewal recently declared by the government. The destruction of Kurdish urban centers and the displacement of their inhabitants now have set the stage for projects of urban renewal grounded in neoliberal theories of economic development. In Kurdish region, sovereign domination is ensured by an articulation of the strategies of urban destruction/population displacement and urban renewal/economic growth. Sovereign violence is the nexus of this strategic articulation of political domination and economic growth.