

Rivers of Memory - Voices from Kurdistan

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These are recordings of us walking on snow next to a small stream formed by melting snow water.

Human memory tends to forget.

The beginning of our journey was jumping naked into a river. The point where we took off our clothes was the ground of the Neolithic Revolution, which is the greatest women, culture, and society revolution in history. The river, flowing from the beginning and renewing as it flows, is like a summary of the history of humanity, in fact, of the motion of the universe. It all started with knowing the water we are in, in other words, knowing oneself.

In Southern Kurdistan (Iraq), we are inside a prehistoric cave. We hear the sounds of bats and discuss when the excavations in this cave were conducted, which revealed traces belonging to the Neanderthals.

This knowledge has enabled us to adhere to the principle, "It didn't come like this, and it won't go like this either." In other words, society exists only with freedom. When we began to break free from the voice that capitalism whispers to us every day, saying, "it has always been like this, there is only one option, get used to it," we set out on the path. This is also the reference point for where we will reach. Without postponing until we reach our destination, we are already using creating prototypes of tomorrow as a reference for ourselves.

There is no single way to listen to the past. However, it's a bit different for Kurds and similar societies. Because the past, like today, is constantly turning upside down. We are constantly under the pressure and guidance of the tangible and the real to live. Whereas the tangible becomes meaningful within the abstract, and the abstract becomes meaningful within the tangible.

The Kurdish people have a decisive aspect in preserving their existence, which is the continuation of storytelling through Dengbêjî and Çîrokbêjî. One of the most influential factors in preserving Kurdish language and culture to date is the oral literary tradition known as Dengbêjî.

This melody belongs to Dengbêj and is one of the folk works telling a love story passed down from ear to ear, mouth to mouth in Botan (Northern Kurdistan/Turkey).

So, when a Dengbêj tells a love story, they also narrate massacres, wars, betrayals, and heroism. Sometimes the same event is passed down in dozens of different versions, accumulating like a

snowball and reaching us today. An event that occurred a few hundred years ago has come down to us through generations. This especially allows us not only to recognize and imagine the past through the "true event" but also through its mythological character. The song of the Dengbêj, the tale of the Çîrokbêj, not only conveys historical truth to us but also keeps our imagination alive, ensuring that we do not entirely surrender to reality.

Kurds are one of the peoples of a country that has been torn apart not only in the last 10 years but for centuries. Each melody reminds us of our villages where we were born but could not grow up, our cities where we went to school but could not work. It is as if each local sound keeps us connected to the land we were forced to leave. It may not be meaningful for others, but when you are forced to leave the place where you were born and raised, you always keep those sounds alive in your memory. Sometimes the sound of a bird, sometimes the sound of a sickle reaping wheat, sometimes the sound of a donkey... These are like a code, each time you hear them, they help you remember your past.

We are somewhere on the edge of a swamp, frogs stop croaking when they hear us. But as soon as we whistle, they start croaking like a symphony.

It may be different for other societies, but since the Kurdish people have been under oppression for decades and their language and culture have been banned, our dreams about the future as a society are related to freedom and justice. In other words, our thoughts about the future are social rather than individual or individualistic. Our dream for the future is to come together in a democratic, ecological, and women's liberation-oriented space.

The voice we hear here belongs to Peyam Abdullah, who was born in Sulaymaniyah. In October 2022, she lost her life in a chemical attack by the Turkish army. We got to know her through this recording. And then, along with 30 Kurdish artists, we added vocals to that voice.

If you are asking about the future, it sounds like we are a people of social action. Solidarity and hope are very important points for us; we are in solidarity with each other in the fields we cultivate, in the places we work, in the music we produce, in the movies, in short, in every aspect of life.

The Kurdish people have been under oppression for more than a century and they have not given up, they have struggled for decades and have always maintained hope. This hope played a big role in the realization of the Rojava revolution. And this hope is a reference for the realization of our other dreams.

This is perhaps the most critical question: "Who are your fellow travelers?" Yes, let's repeat it one more time, but together... Every objector who says "It didn't come this way and it can't go this way" is our fellow traveler; even if we don't know each other at all...