

Resonating Mountains

An Internship at the Institute Kurde de Paris

Subject: Internship Proposal LUC

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Internship Coordinator LUC: Drs. Hung-Wah Lam – Leiden University College

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My name is a dream,

I am from the land of magic, my father is the mountain, and my mother the mist,

I was born in a year whose month was murdered,

a month whose week was murdered,

a day whose hours were murdered.

If you could one by one

count all the leaves in this garden

If you could count all the fish

Little and big

In the flowing river in your front of you

If you could one by one count

The migratory birds

during their migration season

From the north to south

and from the south to north,

I would also promise to count

one by one

All the victims of this beloved land of Kurdistan.

The Cross, the Snake, the Diary of a Poet

Sherko Bekas

1: Introduction

My name is Kavien Begikhani and I was born in Southern Kurdistan (Iraqi-Kurdistan) in 1995. When I was two years old, my parents and I were forced to flee the country – along thousands of others – because of the former Iraqi Ba’ath regime and its Anfal operations. And so have I been privileged to be able to grow up and pursue my education here in the Netherlands, a country which has respected my civil, political and human rights. It has been of fundamental importance for me to be able to cultivate my Kurdish as well as my Dutch identity in harmony and in a peaceful environment, for the Kurdish identity has often been denied to millions across the larger geographical area of Kurdistan in general, which has crystalized in a wide spectrum of assimilation, persecution, deportation and genocidal campaigns during the last century.

It has been the difficult history of the Kurds in general and the experiences of my family in particular, which have made me interested in the history and motivated to contribute towards a better future for Kurdistan, the wider region, and beyond. Well aware I am that this direction of my interests and academic focus, as well as the other artistic and extracurricular activities that I am involved in, are certainly also a mechanism of ‘self-continuity’ of my individual identity within the larger framework of the Kurdish collective identity and heritage.

Enfin, currently I am studying Human Diversity at the Leiden University College in the Hague, which comprises a fruitful academic community and learning environment. With my great interest in world history, culture and literature in general, and Kurdish history in particular, I believe that doing an internship at the prestigious Kurdish institute of Paris will meaningfully contribute to my current academic studies, as well as enable me to crystalize how I would like to give form and shape to my future academic development and research.

2: Description of Internship Partner

The Kurdish Institute of Paris was established in 1983 by Kurdish intellectuals and artists in exile and is currently run by a 15-member Board of Directors. With the support of the French government and recognized as a ‘foundation of public benefit’, as well as the support of many international intellectuals and artists – among which former politician and physician Mr. Bernard Kouchner and the wife of former French president, Ms. Danielle Mitterrand – The Kurdish Institute serves as an embassy of heritage and development in Europe and beyond.

As the Institute affirms: **‘For the defence of a thousand year old culture in peril’**, and:

‘Its objectives are to maintain in the Kurdish community a knowledge of its language, its history and its cultural heritage, to contribute to the integration of Kurdish immigrants to Europe into their host societies and to make the Kurds, their culture, their country and their present situation known to the general public.’¹

¹ Extensive information regarding the history of the Institute and its current activities and objectives can be found on the website: www.institutekurde.org

3: Motivation behind internship application

With my strong interest and passion regarding world history, culture, arts and literature in general and the Kurdish heritage in particular, I believe that the prestigious Institute in Paris will greatly enable me to learn, develop and cultivate my interests and knowledge. This internship will also empower my academic development and personal skills – especially when considering that the Institute is located within a dynamic and fertile environment in the heart of Paris. Both at LUC, as a preparation for my bachelor thesis – which I would like to focus on **Kurdish literature and arts as a form of self-continuity** – as well as my masters and doctoral research regarding such themes.

Moreover, as I am doing the Human Diversity major within the larger Liberal Arts & Sciences framework, I believe that the experience and knowledge I've gained so far at LUC will also enable me to meaningfully contribute to the Institute's activities and objectives in general and my internship in particular.

Moreover, as I am particularly interested in literature and arts within the historical context of Kurdistan, and beyond through comparative analysis, I am honoured and privileged to have two experienced expertise-supervisors, both at the Institute, as well as my university.

Drs. Joyce Blau is a linguist and professor emeritus at the INALCO - *Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales* in Paris. Currently she is the treasures of the Kurdish Institute, as part of the Board of Directors.

Drs. Jacqueline Hylkema is a professor in art history and cultural history at Leiden University College, with a particular focus on forgery studies. Moreover, she is also the coordinator of the Brill-Nijhoff Writing Centre.

4. Nature of activities

What makes the Kurdish Institute an unique learning environment for me, is that it's a kind of 'fruitful space' where cross-cultural exchange and academic research and development are facilitated and empowered, both by the experts in their respective fields who work for the Institute, and also by the diverse mosaic of guests who visit the institute. With these intrinsic dynamics of the internship-environment in mind, I think it would be wise to leave some space open for improvement of the (general) research-question, specific research-activities and the co-research assignment with Drs. Blau.

With Drs. Blau as my experienced supervisor, I expect to be involved within a wide spectrum of (collective/team) activities and objectives of the Institute. From analysing and categorizing documents in the library, to receiving guests and writing reports and/or articles, to preparing and participating in workshops and other activities. An example of such an activity could be the Kurdish Studies Summer School, which will be convened on 3 – 6 September 2018.

Moreover, as I have also informed Drs. Blau about this preference, I would particularly like to include research-based elements in my activities, e.g. by conducting a research-project together with Drs. Blau and with assistance and feedback from other researchers at the Institute. In addition, I hope to improve my Kurdish as well as my French language and comprehension skills, which also be of advantage to my French language minor at LUC.

I seek to discover and immerse myself within the heart and spirits of the Institute and it's visitors, and I am open to any new challenges and experiences, as suggested and advised by both Drs. Blau as well as Drs. Hylkema and other (academic) staff at the Institute.

RESEARCH BASED ELEMENT:

Within the larger spectrum of activities that I seek to experience at the Kurdish institute – being located in such a vibrant and dynamic city as Paris – I will also do a co-research project with Drs. Blau, i.e. which will later also serve as a foundational pillar for my capstone research at LUC – and – subsequent MA and Doctoral research on Kurdish literature, arts and cultural heritage. Here it must be noted that I will attempt to constructively merge my separate research-projects and will **respect the guidelines of research processes and rules in academia**, e.g. avoid self-plagiarism and mistakes as such. Along the process of both my internship and the bachelors capstone, I will also ask both Drs. Blau and Drs. Hylkema to advise me, i.e. as to make sure to fully comply with the rules of conduct.

General Research Question:

How do memory and nostalgia – embodied in literature, arts and other cultural-artistic expressions – serve as a mechanism of self-continuity for the Kurdish Nation?

Specific Research Question:

In-Between Worlds: How does the Institute Kurde de Paris, with its extensive collection on Kurdish literature, arts and cultural heritage, serve as a mechanism of self-continuity for the Kurdish diaspora in France and beyond?

(sub-research questions)

What challenges does the Institute face in its wide spectrum of activities, and how can its impact and exchange with the Kurdish diaspora be improved, both domestically in France, as well as in Europe and among the people across Kurdistan?

‘Don’t let the past remind us of what we are not now’, as stated in the classic song *Suite: Judy Blue Eyes*. Proceeding with this thought, a theoretical grounding that may be relevant to justify this research question are the following:

In *Nostalgia and Its Discontents*², Svetlana Boym argues the following:

‘Diasporic intimacy is not opposed to up-rootedness and defamiliarization but is constituted by it. So much has been made of the happy homecoming that it is time to do justice to the stories of non-return and the reluctant praise of exile. Non-return home in the case of some exiled writers and artists turns into a central artistic drive, a homemaking in the text and artwork, as well as a **strategy of survival**. Ordinary exiles often become artists in life who remake themselves and their second homes with great ingenuity. Inability to return home is both a personal tragedy and an enabling force. That does not mean that there is no nostalgia there, only that this kind of nostalgia precludes the restoration of the past. Diasporic intimacy does not promise an unmediated emotional fusion, but only a precarious affection – no less deep, yet aware of its transience.’

‘Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy. Nostalgic love can only survive in a long-distance relationship. A cinematic image of nostalgia is a double exposure, or a superimposition of two images – of home and abroad, of past and present, of dream and everyday life. The moment we try to force it into a single image, it breaks the frame or burns the surface.’

² Boym, S. (2001). *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic.

In confirmation of the aforementioned, in *Nostalgia as Enabler of Self-Continuity*, Arndt et al. suggest that indeed, nostalgia is an important mechanism that enables self-continuity through two fundamental sources of identity; the individual and collective selves.

Moreover, for the fact that the Kurdish institute is a interdisciplinary breeding space of research and cross-cultural academic exchange, I believe it is also good to keep some space open for later modification of my research question, i.e. perhaps after 5 days of literature reviews, I come up with a very different (challenging) research question.

It is self-evident here that I take full responsibility and accountably to ensure that the research I conduct will be meaningful for both the internship and its database, as well as my own capstone research at LUC.

*I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope,
For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love,
For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.*

Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought:

*So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing.
Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning.*

*The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry,
The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy
Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony
Of death and birth.*

5. Organizational Hierarchy

The Kurdish Institute is run by a Board of Directors which consists of 15 members.

At this moment of time, the exact scope, degree and schedule of my activities is not determined yet. However, I believe that my supervisor, Drs. Blau, will judiciously enable me to participate and contribute to the Institute in all its dimensions, as to make it a meaningful, enriching and thought-provoking learning environment, not only for me, but also for the people that I will be able to interact and exchange with.

Moreover, since the people working at the Kurdish Institute, as well as my supervisor Drs. Joyce Blau have an enormous network of other relevant (educational) institutions, i.e. like the INALCO and the Sorbonne University, I believe that I will be stimulated and challenged to acquaint myself with these organizations as well, i.e. by visiting the libraries of these prominent institutions and i.e. already try to get a glimpse of the activities, values and objectives of these institutions for my MA applications, e.g. by exchanging with staff and students from Paris and the wider region.

6. Assessment Methods and Criteria

A: Format

I expect Drs. Blau to provide me with oral and/or written feedback and suggestions for improvement during the internship period. In this way I can keep a kind of log-book and learn from my mistakes and challenges, as to develop me personal, work and educational skills.

B: Content

As until now, no specific criteria, deadlines and goals are set, yet. However, together with Drs. Blau, I will outline and crystalize these during the internship at the Institute. In other words, within the first few days of my arrival we will put these goals and criteria into a detailed roadmap.

C: Timing

This is something which also depends what is most viable and suitable depending on my activities in the dynamic environment of the institute. For example, in case of a co-research project with Drs. Blau, I expect to receive specific guidelines and goals which I have to reach on time, but I also expect – along the way – to be challenged and intrigued towards different unique approaches and pillars of research.

More generally, I believe that the exchange and communication between Drs. Blau, Drs Hylkema, as well as Drs. Lam, will be defined by transparency and constructive feedback, in the interest of all those involved, as well as future cooperation and exchanges between the Leiden University College and the Kurdish Institute of Paris.

7: Agreement and Signature Section

We, the undersigned, have read the internship proposal of Kavien Begikhani Suleiman and agree with the motivations and execution of the internship at the Institute Kurde de Paris.

Drs. Joyce Blau

Date & Signature

Drs. Jaqueline Hylkema

Date & Signature

Drs. Huang-Wah Lam

Date & Signature

Kavien Begikhani

Date & Signature

We were millions
An old tree
A young tree
We were seeds
The helmet of Ankara
In a bloody night came
To uproot us
They did,
They took us away long away!
On the way many old trees bent
In the cold many young trees died
They froze
Many seeds were trampled
They were lost and forgotten
Like a river in the summer we had little water
Like birds in the autumn, we became fewer
We ended up in thousands of homes
There were still seeds among us, the wind took them
The wind returned them
They reached the thirsty mountains
They hid among the rocks
The first rain
The second rain
The third rain
They grew again
We are now a forest again
We are millions