



DEQ

I AM A DYING ART

I was born and raised in Germany. I speak German better than I speak English and English better than I speak Turkish, and Turkish isn't even my mother tongue – Kurdish is but I actually don't know how to speak it. Sometimes I understand some bits of my parents' conversations and even though I don't fully understand what they are saying it makes me happy when they do talk in Zazaki because there was a time when our language was forbidden. A time when kurdish people were oppressed and killed. A time when the root of your identity was seen as sin. When I listen to my parents speak our language I hear the sound of my ancestors praying to the sun, thanking the wind and being one with the ground they've walked on but I also hear screams, I hear the painful voices of mothers and think of fathers buried next to their sons. When I listen to my parents talk their mother tongue I remember – it is also mine. I might not know a lot of words but I sure do know these four as well as the stigmata that through the process of orientalism are attached to them:

- Dayê** (mother): a woman they would have considered another oppressed and codependent middle eastern wife not knowing she was cleaning hotel rooms while her man was taking care of their first born at home
- Pîye** (father): a man they would have considered uneducated because he was struggling to speak german, not knowing he has a library of over housand books at home
- Bira** (brother): a man they would have described as dangerous or wild not knowing that he would be the one showing civil courage and protecting strangers on the street no matter what troubled situation they may have been in
- Ez** (me): a woman they would have describe as mad when getting asked the question „so if you are kurdish, what kind of passport do you have?“ not knowing a piece of paper could never hold the depths of my identity

THE SOUND OF
OUR HISTORY IS
RINGING IN MY EAR

Your identity is linked to your culture, your belief system, your outlook on life, your interests, your surroundings as well as your dreams, wishes and desires. A form of art that Kurds would use to not only express their cultural identity but also their hopes was Dêq. **Dêq** are traditional kurdish tattoos. This practice was traced back over centuries some even say over 10.000 years to the people of Mesopotamia. Dêq is not only an accessory but stands for the desires and wishes of the person. Common symbols are the sun, the moon, the stars, a variety of crosses or the tree of life. Those symbols are not only decorating the bodies but also can be found on carpets, grave stones and embroidery. The different symbols are often geometric designs that resemble nature. Depending on the tribe one belongs to or the religion one believes in, each symbol has a specific meaning and some even are said to have protective and strengthening powers.





Traditionally, tattoos are made by mixing the breast milk of a woman who has given birth to a girl and soot, or ashes. The reason behind using the breast milk of a girl's mother stems from the belief that the milk makes the tattoo permanent.



The sun and the stars are symbols from when kurdish people worshipped the skies. Crosses are tattooed for protection from the evil. Circles represent the womb and are tattooed to increase fertility. The tree of life symbolizes the desire for a never ending life as well as marriage, birth and reproduction. The symbol combining a dog, a serpent hole, and the sun disc used by Yezidi women is a fascinating reminder of this combination in ancient Mithraic religious sculptures (the sun god Mithras killing the bull of heaven, from whose blood springs a serpent and a dog, the symbols of balancing forces of good and evil).



Dêq is mostly common around the older generations, due to the islamization tattoos are considered a sin and it is assumed that the remaining elderly people with dêq will probably be the last generation embracing this visible part of their cultural identity.



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