

# The Encounter of Kurdish Women with Nationalism in Turkey

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Starting with the late eighteenth century military reforms, continuing with the Tanzimat Decree of 1839, the Second Meşrutiyet in 1908 and the Kemalist Revolution in 1923, modernization in Turkey has always been a ‘project’ to be adopted and implemented from above, unlike in the West where it was experienced as a ‘process’ which was the outcome of social, political and economic developments specific to the western context.<sup>1</sup> It seems possible to argue that this distinction has key significance for an accurate understanding of the social and political history of Republican Turkey in general and women’s history in Turkey in particular. The importance of the fact that modernization and/or westernization has been a ‘project’ rather than a ‘process’ becomes perhaps most visible when one looks at the changes brought about by the Kemalist Revolution in 1923.<sup>2</sup> The Kemalist Revolution ended the ongoing duality characterizing modernization attempts in the form of the side-by-side existence of the traditional/Islamic and modern/western, in favour of the wholesale acceptance of the latter at the expense of the former. The most important characteristic of the Kemalist modernization project, in this context, is the fact that it aimed to create an ethnically, linguistically and culturally homogeneous nation and nation-state out of the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, which was a multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and multi-cultural entity.<sup>3</sup>

With this social, political and historical background, this article emerged out of three sources of dissatisfaction. The first is the marginalization and estrangement of Kurdish women<sup>4</sup> by the Kemalist modernization project. This estrangement and marginalization was the result of a combination of two dimensions of Kemalist policies: the dismantling of Kurdish ethnic identity concomitant with the ‘emancipation’ of ‘Turkish’ women. As a result of this process, Kurdish women became doubly marginalized primarily because on the one hand their ethnic identity was severely crushed and on the other hand they became relatively disadvantaged and underprivileged compared to their Turkish counterparts who were potentially able to benefit from the secularizing and modernizing Republican reforms.

The second source of dissatisfaction has to do with the dominant mode of approach to Kurdish women within the Kurdish nationalist movement from the late 1970s through the 1980s and 1990s. As I will try to demonstrate, there have been inegalitarian, sexist and male-chauvinist approaches to Kurdish women within Kurdish nationalist circles. Thirdly, Kurdish women have received proper attention from neither feminist scholarship nor the feminist movement in Turkey. In some of

the very few studies dealing with Kurdish women, however, there are certain political and ideological biases.

This article is composed of three parts. In the first part, I will examine Kemalist elimination, repression and suppression of Kurdish identity in the first decades of the Republic. Also I will shed light upon its policies towards women. Moreover, I will analyze the development of Kurdish nationalism and feminism in Turkey specifically in their relationship with the Kemalist modernization project. I will argue that both the Kurdish nationalist movement and the feminist movement, despite *seemingly* touching on Kurdish women, have not been able to succeed in fully recognizing Kurdish women as such. In this sense, they have not been able to go beyond the failure of the Kemalist modernization project; on the contrary, they repeated the mistake of not seeing the existence of Kurdish women.

The second part of this article is devoted to a review of the scholarship on Kurdish women in Turkey. In addition to demonstrating the prevailing invisibility of Kurdish women in the recent scholarship on 'women in Turkey', it will expose the shortcomings of the very few studies dealing with Kurdish women. The third part of the piece is dedicated to the voices of nine Kurdish women who have been politically active in Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s. Presenting a politically and ideologically diverse picture, the experiences of these Kurdish women are taken to be the most important basis for the arguments and observations made throughout this paper.

The Kemalist modernization project reveals very strikingly that Kurdish women were doubly marginalized. On the one hand, their ethnic identity was dismantled; on the other, their Turkish counterparts became potential beneficiaries of the Kemalist reforms oriented to the improvement of the civil and political status of women in Turkey.<sup>5</sup> In this sense, there emerged a wide gap between these two groups of women in Turkey. The roots of the oppression and subordination of Kurdish women in Turkey can best be grasped at this dual juncture: the interwoven dismantling of Kurdish ethnic identity with the 'emancipation' of 'Turkish' women.

As was noted earlier, the Kemalist Revolution aimed to construct the Turkish nation within the borders of the newly established nation-state of the Turkish Republic. Although the passage from the *millet* system to the nation was a radical one *in form*, it was *in essence* the continuation of the *millet* system. In this sense, Baskin Oran notes that one reason behind the fact that the 'Protection of Minorities' section of the Lausanne Treaty is limited to 'non-Muslim minorities' has to do with the legacy of the *millet* system, according to which every religion was considered a different 'millet'. Oran states that:

Accordingly, all Muslims, regardless of their other (ethnic etc.) differences, belonged to the one and same 'Muslim Nation' (umma). Therefore, Kurds (or, any other Muslim ethnic group) were never considered to have a separate identity. When the Republic was founded in 1923, this legacy of the Millet system fitted very well into the nationalist policy of the State that hated to allow for multiple identities.<sup>6</sup>

One can therefore see the 'strategic' use of the legacy of the *millet* system to facilitate the construction of a homogeneous Turkish nation, which, in turn, required the

elimination and assimilation of different groups to the dominant Turkish national identity. Undoubtedly, this article does not suggest that it was only the Kurds whose identity and language were repressed. However, it goes without saying that the Kurds are the largest linguistic minority in Turkey.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the Kurdish movement was considered to be the greatest danger for the new Republican regime.<sup>8</sup> As is well known, there were a number of Kurdish revolts in the first decades of the Turkish Republic, such as the Sheikh Said Revolt in 1925, in 1930 the Dersim Revolt and the Mount Ararat Revolt between 1936 and 1938.<sup>9</sup> To give an example of the seriousness of these Kurdish revolts, one should note that 35 per cent of the annual budget of the state in 1925–26 was used in the repression of the Sheikh Said Rebellion.<sup>10</sup>

Ahmet İcduygu and his colleagues point to the assimilationist policies of the new regime towards the Kurds, as in the following: ‘Since its founding in 1923, the Turkish Republic has pursued aggressive assimilationist policies towards its Kurdish minority. The new republic was based solely on Turkish culture and identity, and hence did not permit the expression of Kurdish identity and language within its borders’.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the basic argument of their significant study based on the data from the 1993 Turkish Demographic and Health Survey (TDHS) is put forward as in the following: ‘Our key claim is that the Kurdish population in Turkey is relatively much worse off than the Turkish population in the country’.<sup>12</sup> According to the authors, the material and non-material insecurity of the Kurdish population is a key variable, which prepares the ground for an ethnic nationalist mobilization. While material needs are seen as access to ‘land, income, education, health, possessions, state resources and even life’,<sup>13</sup> the non-material ones are ‘language, culture and belonging’.<sup>14</sup>

In a similar vein, Ayşe Gündüz Hoşgör and Jeroen Smits’ essay based on data from the 1993 and 1998 TDHS demonstrates the striking difference between Turks and Kurds in addition to the difference between Kurdish men and women. In the context of education, they observe that:

With regard to education level, there are large differences between Turks and Kurds. About one quarter of the Kurdish males and more than 70 per cent of the Kurdish females have not completed primary education. For the Turks these percentages are 7 and 22 per cent, respectively. Only 2.8 per cent of the Kurdish males and 0.5 per cent of the Kurdish females have more than secondary education, against more than 10 per cent of the Turkish males and almost 5 per cent of the Turkish females.<sup>15</sup>

These are quite important observations. First of all, the authors show that a distinction between Kurds and Turks is not groundless. On the contrary, it is a valid one. Secondly, there is the big gap between Kurdish men and women. Although Kurdish men and women are of the same ethnic origin, they differ in their access to education to a significant extent. In other words, this difference shows that the experience of being a Kurd is not the same for Kurdish men and women. Thirdly, these observations demonstrate that being a woman is a considerably different experience depending on one’s ethnicity. In this context, Kurdish women are much more disadvantaged compared to their Turkish counterparts regarding educational level.

Haldun Gülalp also points to the denial of the existence of the Kurds by the Turkish state. He notes that: 'In a policy set in the early years of the republic, the Turkish state officially denied the existence of a distinct Kurdish ethnicity'.<sup>16</sup> It seems therefore that the nationalist policies of the Kemalist Revolution have contributed to the development of Kurdish nationalism to a significant extent. Referring to Oran, Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow indicate that: 'The development of Kurdish nationalism was largely a reaction to the rise of a Turkish nationalism with its emphasis on Turkish ethnicity and language'.<sup>17</sup> Based on these observations, then, it should be clear by now that the distinction between Turks and Kurds put forward in this article should not be seen as an overemphasis on ethnicity.<sup>18</sup>

It is significant to note that the Kemalist nationalist project has had long-lasting effects on the social and political life in Turkey up to the present. The most important one, in terms of its 'price', has been the crystallization and development of the Kurdish 'question'. In other words, it seems convincing to argue that the Kurdish 'issue' has been politicized and become a 'problem' and/or 'question' in Turkey primarily due to the Kemalist nationalist policies denying the existence of the Kurds.<sup>19</sup> The last and most crucial embodiment of the Kurdish question was the armed insurgence of the PKK, the Kurdish acronym for the Kurdistan Workers' Party. The PKK began its armed insurgence in 1984. Until the arrest of its leader Abdullah Öcalan in 1999, 30,000 people lost their lives during the fight between the Turkish armed forces and the PKK. The PKK militarized and popularized Kurdish nationalism to a significant degree.<sup>20</sup> This article puts the stress on the preceding social, political and historical context that led to the re-emergence of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey from the late 1970s on.<sup>21</sup>

What does the increasing militarization and popularization of Kurdish nationalism in the 1980s and 1990s suggest in regard to Kurdish women? Kurdish women were first politicized under the umbrella of Kurdish nationalism.<sup>22</sup> They were firstly politically mobilized through their ethnic identity. Yet during this process they were subordinated to men and they were not seen as women, rather they were viewed through sexist lenses. In addition, they were subjected to their male friends' male-chauvinistic attitudes.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, on the one hand, Kurdish nationalism politicized and mobilized Kurdish women.<sup>24</sup> On the other hand, unintentionally, it led Kurdish women to develop a womanhood and/or feminist consciousness by their questioning the prevalent sexism of Kurdish nationalist men. This process of questioning eventually gave way to an organized political activism of Kurdish women on their own behalf starting with the mid-1990s. Their activism was centred on journals and associations.<sup>25</sup> The journals that appeared in the second half of the 1990s were *Roza*, *Jujîn*, *Jin û Jiyana* and *Yaşamda Özgür Kadın*. As Necla Açıık points out, while *Roza* and *Jujîn* tend to be more feminist, a more nationalist overtone comes to the fore in *Jin û Jiyana*; in *Yaşamda Özgür Kadın*, on the other hand, one can see an overtly nationalist discourse on Kurdish women.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Açıık states that independent and feminist Kurdish women's groups came into existence as a reaction to the instrumental use of women in the Kurdish nationalist parties and organizations that are male dominated.<sup>27</sup> Taking this observation together with the experiences of the participants in this study, it seems possible to claim that the emergence of politically independent Kurdish

women can be called the unintended consequence of Kurdish nationalism. Although very important, Kurdish nationalism was not the sole factor behind Kurdish women's coming to the political arena as Kurdish women. The other crucial factor has to do with the failure of the feminist movement in Turkey, to which I turn in the next section.

Peyami Safa states that the two constant principles of Atatürk's revolution are nationalism and civilization.<sup>28</sup> If the development of Kurdish nationalism was closely related to the former, the 'emancipation' of women occupied a significant position in the latter.<sup>29</sup> Therefore, Kemalist modernizing elites introduced quite significant reforms aiming to improve women's civil and political status.<sup>30</sup> In 1926, the Swiss Civil Code was accepted. Accordingly, the following changes were introduced:

Civil law abolished polygamy, prevented child marriages by imposing minimum ages for marriage and recognized women as legal equals of men in certain areas (e.g., as witnesses in courts; in inheriting and maintaining property). It also granted women the right to choose their spouses, initiate divorce and maintain their maternal rights, even after divorce.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, in 1930 and 1934 women were granted the right to vote in municipal and national elections respectively.<sup>32</sup> Despite these radical changes, however, Kemalists did not allow an independent women's movement to flourish. They closed down the Turkish Women's Union in 1935.<sup>33</sup> In this sense, Kemalist state elites attempted to monopolize the woman question and women's emancipation, appropriating them from the women.

It appears that the seemingly 'paradoxical' approach of Kemalist elites to the 'woman question' becomes clear if one listens to the critique raised by some feminist scholars in Turkey. The most striking aspect of their critique is the fact that although the Kemalist modernization of women was a radical break with the Ottoman past, it presents continuity with it on the basis of patriarchy. The only change is in the form of patriarchy. For instance Ayşe Durakbaşa argues that: 'Kemalism, although a progressive ideology that fostered women's participation in education and professions, did not alter patriarchal norms of morality, and in fact maintained the basic cultural conservatism about male/female relations, despite its radicalism in opening a space for women in the public domain'.<sup>34</sup> In a similar vein, Fatmagül Berktaş argues that, on the one hand, there is a very significant point of rupture between Ottoman and Republican periods in terms of the position of women. On the other hand, she argues, there is continuity on the basis of patriarchy. Put bluntly, the nation-state patriarchy took the place of Islamic patriarchy. While the invisibility of women in the public realm was the norm in the former, their visibility became the new norm in the latter, both of which were fed by the same framework, that is, patriarchy.<sup>35</sup>

Ayşe Saktanber also attempts an analysis of the Kemalist women's rights discourse and concludes that it is a modernist, progressive discourse that gives priority to the achievement of equality of men and women at the legal level and with

this aim it attributes importance to working with the state in harmony. More importantly, she points out that:

Kemalist women's rights discourse puts the national identity above any other sort of identity and especially it excludes women's movements that are shaped around ethnic or religious identity demands. Also it views the achievements within the frame of women's rights as the means of Kemalist indoctrination and in this context; it attributes the mission of political socialization to education.<sup>36</sup>

As all the above-mentioned critical points demonstrate, in the early decades of the Republic, the autonomous voice of women's organizations and activities were repressed. As Şirin Tekeli argues: 'It should not be considered as an exaggeration to see this second phase of the history of feminism, as a period during which feminism was taken out of the hands of women and was used and was further converted to an anti-feminist state feminism and in the end, was made to be forgotten'.<sup>37</sup>

Although these criticisms are quite important, still one cannot deny the fact that these are not after all the critiques of a straightforwardly misogynistic and/or male-chauvinist regime. In other words, it does not seem tenable to claim that any Turkish feminist woman would deny the contribution of the Kemalist modernization project to the enhancement of the status of Turkish women. This is very important to bear in mind primarily because this is the point where 'Turkish' feminism and 'Turkish' feminists' relationship with Kemalism come to the fore and gain significance. However critical they might be of the Kemalist modernization project, it can be argued that Turkish feminist women are indebted to the Kemalist modernization of women. In this sense, there is a crucial relationship between Kemalism and feminism in Turkey. Therefore, as Berktaç points out, Turkish women internalized the Kemalist ideology to the extent that they had difficulty in developing an independent consciousness:

The Republican regime was opening a space for the feminism supported by the state, yet at the same time it [the Republican regime] defined it and kept it within certain/determinate borders. Moreover, the women themselves had internalized the Kemalist-nationalist ideology and this was making it difficult for them to develop an independent consciousness.<sup>38</sup>

In other words, historically speaking, there has been an undeniably close relationship between Kemalism and 'Turkish' women's 'emancipation'. The former overshadowed and influenced the latter to the extent that its imprints and/or traces can be seen even in the relatively radical feminist movement in Turkey in the 1980s and 1990s. This will be made clear below, where I will focus on the voices of Kurdish women.

The point to be noted here is that Turkish feminist women converged with Kemalist nationalism on the basis of their national identity. Thus, they have been potentially open to benefit from Kemalist reforms. Undoubtedly, as Nermin Abadan-Unat points out: 'It is true that Atatürk and his supporters based their system of women's reforms on the twin pillars of law and education, thus serving a

predominantly urban female elite'.<sup>39</sup> Yet in addition to class and urban/rural position of women, there is also another important factor that determines whether a woman could benefit from these laws:<sup>40</sup> whether she was Turkish or not. One simple but very crucial example is the language. Although I will focus below on Kurdish women's experiences, I would like to quote from one of them, namely Semra,<sup>41</sup> since it is very much related to the point at hand:

I started school when I was five and I started without knowing one single word of Turkish. Therefore, I started very much behind the point where a Turkish child starts. Now, I had to learn and get education in a language that does not belong to me... Of course these are the things that restrict our freedom of expression and the right to expression. Apart from this, there are some results of belonging to a nation, which lacks power, which is a minority and which cannot benefit from resources of power. You experience these, too. When all these come together, there emerge other demands of yours. When you express these demands of yours, they do not overlap with those of women of the other nation. Thus, these demands of yours do not find acceptance or they might remain as secondary. However, these are the things that determine your daily life.

Semra's experience seems to correspond to what Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits observe. With reference to the fact that free and compulsory primary education is in Turkish and that schooling in Kurdish is not allowed, the authors point out that: 'From the Kurdish point of view, these measures meant that their mother-tongue was not officially recognized. Speaking Kurdish at home but training in Turkish at school might hamper the Kurdish children's cognitive development and decrease their chances of moving into the higher ranks of society'.<sup>42</sup>

Here one might argue that it is not accurate to claim that Kurdish women did not benefit from Kemalist reforms as these were not solely limited to Turkish women. On the contrary, legal reforms are general and abstract rather than particular and concrete. Therefore, these reforms, one might go on, were equally valid for all women living in Turkey regardless of their ethnic identities. Moreover, one can claim that it is not accurate to view the Kemalist modernization project as the immediate source of the oppression and subordination of Kurdish women. In this sense, one also has to take into account the prevailing traditional, religious and tribal features of Kurdish culture and society. In other words, a sole focus on the Kemalist nationalist project cannot lead one to fully understand Kurdish women's oppression and subordination in Turkey.

I would like to respond to these two points starting with the second one. It is true that Kurdish culture and society are predominantly traditional, religious and tribal.<sup>43</sup> Perhaps Kurdish women have been suffering from patriarchal Kurdish social and cultural beliefs and practices as much as they have suffered from the direct and/or indirect consequences of the Kemalist modernization project. Certainly, it is not easy to clearly delineate where the oppression from either of them begins and ends. Indeed, this uneasiness is what makes an analysis of the experiences of Kurdish women a difficult task. However, it is important to note that Kemalist nationalist policies have been the constituent and prevalent ideology in Turkey since the

foundation of the Republic. In addition, as noted above, due to the 'fear' of separation, the Kemalist state elites have been especially pitiless towards the Kurds. Thus, it seems that Kemalist nationalist policies had priority and immediacy in the oppression and subordination of Kurdish women in Turkey. Needless to say, in an 'insecure' environment where Kurdish identity is not recognized, Kurdish women's existence and their oppression and subordination would also remain 'irrelevant'. Moreover, the denial of Kurdish identity seems to have closed the channels for an effective challenge of the male-dominated Kurdish social and cultural characteristics. It seems possible to add that it might have contributed to the perpetuation of these characteristics. Yet, in the meantime, Kurdish women have faced, for example, honour-killing. Therefore, Kurdish women's oppression and subordination is to a large extent interwoven with their being both Kurds and women. They undergo these complicated experiences *simultaneously* rather than at differing 'moments', which makes analysis a challenge.

The second critical point made above argues that the Kemalist modernization of women was open to all women living in Turkey since they live under the same legal framework. At this point, one should recall the example of language and one should bear in mind that due to their linguistic difference, Kurdish women have already been estranged from legal and official mechanisms through which they can seek their rights. In other words, it is possible for women in Turkey to benefit from the modernization of the status of women only if and when they are able to speak Turkish, which turns out to be a very crucial barrier. Indeed this argument can well be substantiated by Jeroen Smits and Ayşe Gündüz-Hoşgör's recent piece, which presents startling findings on this issue.<sup>44</sup> The authors base their arguments on data from the 1998 TDHS. A striking result of their analysis is the fact that 'about 4.1 per cent of the women aged 15–49 who live in Turkey is not able to speak Turkish. The large majority of these non-Turkish speaking women has Kurdish as their mother-tongue. A little more than 10 per cent has Arabic as their mother tongue and about 1 per cent another language'.<sup>45</sup> Thus, a considerable number of women in Turkey cannot speak Turkish and a considerable number of these women are Kurdish. The authors interpret these findings in light of Bourdieu's theory about linguistic capital, according to which: 'the ability to speak a country's dominant language is a resource that may be helpful in gaining access to the country's desirable rewards and positions'.<sup>46</sup> They reach the following conclusion regarding socio-economic consequences of the lack of linguistic capital: 'We found the non-Turkish speaking women to be less employed in the formal economy, to have husbands with lower educational levels and occupations and to have lower family incomes'.<sup>47</sup>

Turning to our discussion of the relationship of the 'Turkish' feminist movement with Kemalism, then, it can be argued that Turkish feminist women, despite their critique of Kemalism as patriarchal, are *in the last instance* indebted to the Kemalist Revolution for what it did for them. Moreover, they have implicitly and/or explicitly, intentionally and/or unintentionally followed Kemalist nationalist lines. This can be seen in the relatively radical and autonomous feminist movement which emerged in Turkey in the 1980s and flourished in the 1990s as Kurdish women's voices will show below. In this sense, Turkish feminist women mostly failed to see the Kurdishness of Kurdish women. They put the stress on Kurdish women's female identity instead. In addition to the failure of Kurdish nationalists in recognizing

Kurdish women as equals with men, it seems that this is the second reason behind Kurdish women's independent political organization from both Kurdish men and Turkish women in the second half of the 1990s. At this point, it should be noted that it does not seem possible to agree with Yeşim Arat, who tends to imply that Kurdish women's separate organization is a particularistic phenomenon. According to Arat:

There were discussions and some initiatives about defining Turkish feminism, but women's activism was primarily issue-oriented and universalist in its discourse.

While Turkish women in Turkey might have ignored their national identities in their activism, Kurdish women began organizing separately. Similar to other minority groups, dominated by the feminism of the majority, Kurdish feminists felt that their particular predicament could not be recognized within Turkish women's groups. They organized around the journal *Rosa* [sic], which began publication in March 1996, and then the journal *Jijun* [sic], which began publication in December 1996, in order to make themselves independent from the Kurdish nationalist movement, from men and from Turkish women. In an interview with the feminist journal *Pazartesi*, the editor of *Rosa* argued that within the Kurdish nationalist movement, women had to become like men to be taken seriously, which as feminists, was not what they wanted.<sup>48</sup>

The argument does not seem to suggest the full picture. First of all, how far is it possible to argue that someone, even if a feminist, could ever ignore his/her national identity? Especially if there is already a prevailing consciousness that some feminism is the 'feminism of the majority', whereas some feminism is the 'feminism of *other* minority groups',<sup>49</sup> including the Kurds, then there should be some sort of national identity of Turkish women, which they have not been able to ignore. Similarly, it seems important to ask the following question: how far is it tenable to attribute the question of ethnic/national belonging to the women of 'other minority groups' but not to the Turkish women? The problem is that if Turkish women have been the feminists of the majority then perhaps it is the Turkish women that should problematize their relationship with their national identity more than the women of 'other minority groups', including the Kurds, primarily because they are nationally in a dominant position. However, the implicit assumption in the argument above is that the issue of national belonging is relevant only for the Kurdish women but not for the Turkish women, and thus there is the attribution of the 'universalistic' position to Turkish women but the 'particularistic' one to Kurdish women.

Another very crucial observation here is as follows: if one looks at Kurdish women's journals, one can see that Kurdish women are critical of Turkish feminist women almost as much as they are critical of Kurdish men. In this sense, one should refer to the following pieces from the Kurdish women's journal *Roza*: 'Bir 8 Mart Daha Geçti',<sup>50</sup> 'Kürt Kadınlarına Batırılan Dikenler',<sup>51</sup> 'Türk Feminist Hareketin Çıkması',<sup>52</sup> and 'Mücadelede Kürt Kadını'.<sup>53</sup>

To conclude this section, then, one has to note that there has been an undeniable relationship between Kemalist nationalism and feminism in Turkey. Taken as a

whole, the Kemalist modernization project has advantaged and 'emancipated' Turkish women but not Kurdish women. It is also necessary to state that Kemalist nationalist ideas seem to have penetrated into the views and analysis of Turkish feminist women to an important extent. Thus, it seems that feminism in Turkey has failed to completely sever its links to Kemalism when encountering Kurdish women.<sup>54</sup> On the contrary, it implicitly and/or explicitly perpetuated Kemalist nationalist biases. Due to the different positioning of Kurdish and Turkish women vis-à-vis Kemalism in Turkey, it seems possible to claim that Kurdish women have, to borrow Sondra Farganis' concept, 'epistemic advantage' compared to their Turkish counterparts.<sup>55</sup>

A brief look at the recent literature regarding 'women in Turkey' shows that Kurdish women and their different experiences are invisible. For example, neither in *Women in Turkish Society*<sup>56</sup> nor in *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler*<sup>57</sup> is there a piece on Kurdish women, although these two books include such a broad title as 'women in Turkey'. Another book is titled *1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadın Bakış Açısından Kadınlar*.<sup>58</sup> This book includes a piece by Yakın Ertürk that 'touches' on Kurdish women, when it focuses on the problems women in the 'eastern region' of Turkey face. She makes a very important observation when she points out that the development/modernization project of the state has had a paradoxical impact on the lives of women in the 'eastern region' of Turkey. She notes that most of the women over the age of 30 do not speak Turkish, and have religious rather than official marriages.<sup>59</sup> As such, they can stake a claim for their rights over neither their children nor their share of inheritance before the modern/secular laws. Moreover, since they are not registered in the central population system, they are already officially 'non-existent'. Consequently, they have been marginalized by the process of national integration or modernization.<sup>60</sup>

Ertürk's point is noteworthy since it shows that the development and/or modernizing attempts of the state do not necessarily lead to the enhancement of the life conditions of women. In particular, her observation that the development projects have inherently had gendered characteristics which can be expected to have negative consequences in regard to both women and agricultural modernization in future is important.<sup>61</sup>

Yet there are two significant and interrelated points to be made about the above argument. The first one has to do with the fact that it does not take into account a very significant aspect of the problem at hand: the broader context of the Kurdish 'question'.<sup>62</sup> In other words, a perspective restricted to the projects of 'development' and failing to consider the ethnic aspect would not allow one to grasp the complete picture of Kurdish women's oppression and subordination. In this sense, instead of solely problematizing their not knowing Turkish, which deprives them of certain legal rights, it can be reformulated thus: why do non-Turkish-speaking Kurdish women not have access to benefit from these rights from within their own language? It is also important to note that in the piece under consideration Kurdish women are not called 'Kurdish women' but rather 'eastern' and/or 'rural' women. Thus, despite the fact that it pinpoints the marginalization of Kurdish women in an important manner, overall this approach seems to reflect and/or reproduce the Turkish state

discourse on the Kurdish question. Mesut Yeğen, in his analysis of the Turkish state discourse, reveals how the Turkish state avoided recognizing the Kurdishness of the Kurdish question. He argues that:

Any examination of the discourse of the Turkish state reveals that the Turkish state has consistently avoided recognizing the Kurdishness of the Kurdish question.

... Whenever the Kurdish question was mentioned in Turkish state discourse, it was in terms of reactionary politics, tribal resistance or regional backwardness, but never as an ethno-political question.<sup>63</sup>

Jenny B. White's recent article also accurately demonstrates that women in the predominantly Kurdish regions have been more disadvantaged than women in the rest of the country. However, it also leads one to similar questions raised above. In the article, White states that:

The strength of these traditional forces [aghas or large landowners, religious sheikhs and tribal leaders] and concomitant weakness of the state increased as one moved from the major urban centres of Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara in the west toward the isolated, mountainous and poorer areas of the east, at Turkey's borders with Iran, Iraq and Syria. It is these areas that remain the poorest and least developed even today and in which women have lower status and less access to their rights under Republican laws than elsewhere in Turkey.<sup>64</sup>

Again, one can see that the ethno-feminist<sup>65</sup> aspect of the oppression and subordination of Kurdish women is occluded under the question of regional backwardness.

The first comprehensive book on Kurdish women was published recently: *Women of a Non-state Nation: The Kurds*.<sup>66</sup> This edited volume brings together a number of very interesting and significant scholarly studies about Kurdish women. These studies are informed by quite diverse perspectives of scholars coming from different disciplinary backgrounds. Therefore, the importance of this book basically emanates from the fact that, as a pioneer, it sheds light upon gender and women's issues in Kurdish society, culture, history and politics from various perspectives. In what follows, I would like to focus on some of the essays in the volume.

Martin van Bruinessen's piece examines the best documented cases of Kurdish women who played major political roles in Kurdish history.<sup>67</sup> In this context, he throws light upon Adela Khanum of Halabja,<sup>68</sup> Kara Fatima Khanum<sup>69</sup> and Leyla Zana.<sup>70</sup> Van Bruinessen's most striking point is that, contrary to Kurdish nationalist discourse, according to which Kurdish women enjoy equality with Kurdish men, 'Kurdish society is highly male-dominated and it has been for all of its known history'.<sup>71</sup> Moreover, he concludes that:

It is true that some women have achieved extraordinary influence in Kurdish society, but the vast majority of them have not. It is also true that in some parts of Kurdistan women have a certain freedom of movement, perhaps more than

in many other parts of the Middle East. This is certainly not characteristic, however, of all Kurdistan, and the nature and degree of this freedom moreover depend much on their families' social status.<sup>72</sup>

Amir Hassanpour demonstrates in his study the patriarchal reproduction of power relations in the Kurdish language through a range of linguistic evidence.<sup>73</sup> Janet Klein attempts a discourse analysis of Kurdish intellectuals' dealing with the 'woman question' through a meticulous archival research of the Ottoman-Kurdish press around the turn of the century.<sup>74</sup> Perhaps the most significant point to note about Rohat Alakom's contribution is the fact that he unveils the existence of a Kurdish women's society in İstanbul in 1919. It was called the Society for the Advancement of Kurdish Women (Kürd Kadınları Teali Cemiyeti).<sup>75</sup> Despite the importance of his exploration, one can raise the following question: based on the little historical evidence he unearths in this study, is it really possible and/or accurate to speak of a 'Kurdish women's movement'? In other words, it seems that one needs more evidence to be able to call it a 'Kurdish women's movement', a phrase Alakom uses several times.<sup>76</sup> Or else he should make explicit what he means by the concept of 'movement'.

Shahzad Mojab, the editor of the book, contributes two chapters. I would like to examine particularly the one which is also the introduction. In this piece, Mojab points to the fact that starting with the post-First World War period, Kurdish lives in general and Kurdish women's lives in particular have been shaped by the repressive nation-state policies of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, among which the Kurds have been divided. In this context, she raises significant criticisms particularly against Turkish feminism<sup>77</sup> and Kurdish nationalism.<sup>78</sup> Indeed, Mojab not only criticizes Kurdish nationalism, but also emphasizes that nationalism and feminism are two conflicting positions.<sup>79</sup> It seems that Mojab touches upon quite crucial issues. Yet one needs to raise some questions particularly on the basis of what she notes in the following:

Until the 1990s, there was deadly silence, in feminist writing, about Kurdish women (see Alakom, this volume, for examples of the Turkification of the history of women's movement of the late Ottoman period). Even when Kurds appear in such writing, Kemalist politics determines the range of debate, and its terms, concepts and problematizations. For one thing, feminists generally do not deviate from the state's politics of denial of the ethnic and national diversity of Turkey. *Even if the existence of the Kurds is not denied, they are not treated as a nation with legitimate rights to self-rule.*<sup>80</sup>

One should again stress that her critique of nationalism in general, and that of Kurdish nationalism and Turkish feminism in particular, is tenable to a significant degree. There is one point, however, that leads to a problematic position. Despite her critique of nationalism, the way Mojab deals with the Kurdish issue and Kurdish women seems to lend itself to an apparently nationalist theoretical frame of reference. As is well known, the search for congruence between the political and national units and/or the right to the state is the leading political principle of nationalism.<sup>81</sup> Taken together with the titles of both the book and the piece in addition to the approach to the Kurds 'as a nation with legitimate rights to self-rule' seems to be a reading through a nationalist framework. This observation is

important as it shows that despite her critique of nationalism Mojab seems to be, at best, self-contradictory; if not simply reproducing the Kurdish nationalist discourse and thus remaining within the boundaries of the paradigm which she is criticizing, that is, nationalism.

Looking at the very few studies examined so far, then, one can conclude that there appear to be two problems. While one bears the traces of the Turkish state discourse on Kurds, the other one seems to be under the influence of Kurdish nationalist discourse. However, both are the seemingly 'different' manifestations of the same ideological position, namely, nationalism. It is necessary, thus, to study Kurdish women in a way that will allow one to get as close as possible to their true picture.<sup>82</sup>

I will now focus on the voices of the politically active Kurdish women in their relationship with the feminist movement and Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. Their experiences mostly demonstrate that the feminist movement in Turkey has disregarded and/or sidelined the experiences of Kurdish women.<sup>83</sup> Secondly, they will show the sexist and male-chauvinistic attitudes in Kurdish nationalist circles.

One point to be made here is that although this study is solely based on the experiences of Kurdish women, it does not mean that it did not include the views of Turkish feminist women. Although not as systematically as those of Kurdish women, the views of three Turkish feminist women have been important for the arguments of this article, alongside the experiences of Kurdish women. These Turkish feminist women are Aksu Bora, Nazik Işık and Nükhet Sirman. One important observation that Işık makes is that feminism in Turkey did not clash with the state.<sup>84</sup> Moreover, both Işık and Bora point to the heated debates in several feminist meetings in 2003. These debates were about the citation of the national anthem. On the basis of these debates, Bora observes that the Kurdish question will be a serious point of divergence for both Kurdish and Turkish women.<sup>85</sup> Professor Sirman, on the other hand, refers to a symposium that was held in Germany in the late 1980s. It was about women in Turkey. She notes that a woman in that symposium came up with the argument that, as Kurdish women, they had been oppressed and subordinated differently from their Turkish counterparts. Sirman reports that they, as Turkish women, all vehemently opposed that woman on the grounds that they all, as women, had been undergoing the common experience of oppression and subordination.<sup>86</sup> These three observations by Turkish feminist women are important on two points. Firstly, the arguments and observations made on the basis of Kurdish women's experiences are not entirely one-sided. Secondly, one should bear in mind that the 'Turkish feminist women' do not present, just like their Kurdish counterparts, a monolithic picture. Thus, one should be cautious not to overgeneralize about Turkish feminist women.

I would like to continue by focusing on the experiences of the nine Kurdish women with whom I carried out in-depth interviews. I got in contact with these women by means of a snowball technique. These women are by no means representative of all Kurdish women in Turkey. Yet I believe that their experiences can be well used to gain insights for an understanding of the oppression and subordination of Kurdish women in Turkey. It should also be noted that calling these women as 'Kurdish women' is my label. Their self-identifications vary but the two common dimensions of their self-identifications are related to 'Kurdishness' and 'womanhood'.

For instance, alongside self-identifications such as feminist, Kurdish, Kurdish feminist, Kurdish woman, one can also see others like Alevi, socialist and environmentalist. Thus, although 'Kurdish woman' is my label, it is not my preferential category; rather, it is based on a common ground on which all of them seem to stand. These women have been politically active in the 1990s in Turkey. Whether this activism was realized in the 'public' or 'private' spheres, the most important motivation around which their activism revolves are gender and ethnic concerns.

As to the background of the respondents, it should be noted that the nine Kurdish women whom I interviewed are in their thirties and forties. Only one is a primary school graduate, two of them are high school graduates and the rest are university graduates. One of them has a Master's degree. All of them have rural backgrounds; however, they have been living in the urban areas of Turkey, particularly in İstanbul, for a period of time ranging from one and a half to almost four decades. Seven of them live in İstanbul and one of them lives in Turkey – she did not specify a city. The other one participated in the interview via email from Britain, where she has been living for nearly three years. The political activism of some started in the 1970s and 1980s, yet, with no exception, all of them have been politically active in the 1990s in Turkey. I will firstly focus on their approach to the feminist movement in Turkey and then their approach to nationalism in general and Kurdish nationalism in particular.

The respondents in this study fall along a continuum with regard to their political ideological stance. Two of them are very reluctant to define themselves as feminists. Here are Zeynep's words:

Women in Turkey understand feminism in a very different way. I mean they perceive feminism as being against men, as being the enemy of men, as getting organized against men. I do not take feminism as such. I think that it is also somewhat necessary to raise men's consciousness. There should not be a concern of women to prove that 'we are superior over you', while men say, 'we are superior'.

A very similar argument is made by Ayşe:

I am looking somewhat differently at the phenomenon of feminism that is on the agenda today. I mean I do not agree with being a crude feminist, with the idea of a crude rejection of men. Rather, my idea, the idea that I adopt is a woman's ideology that even transcends feminism. Because if a life is to be conceived of, it should be conceived of as a shared life. I agree more with being able to walk together with men as comrades (*yoldaş*) and to live together in those happy days waiting to be created than with adopting a crude rejection of men.

Zeynep and Ayşe are the least positive towards feminism in Turkey among the respondents. As one moves from this side of the continuum towards the other, the critique of the feminist movement lessens somewhat. Zehra, who is in between the two extremes of the scale, says Turkish feminists behaved like 'big sisters':<sup>87</sup>

They made me feel even more oppressed. I think that this was something like behaving like a big sister (*ablalık yapmak*) to us. In the same vein, they started

to do more things than us about our own problems, about the problems that we live. They started to form opinions or to talk on our behalf. Moreover, they became like the spokesperson of Kurdish women. This is what I mean when I say to be like a big sister to us.

Moreover, Zehra points out that the feminist movement is not critical of Kemalism:<sup>88</sup>

In my opinion, the Turkish women's movement takes its nutrition from Kemalism. I mean I do not think that it has something that is completely distinct from Kemalism or that is constructed upon its rejection or that criticizes it. There are things from Kemalism [in it]; there is a racist approach in the Turkish women's movement as well.

Similarly, Hatice recounts her experiences in the feminist meetings as follows:

In the beginning, they did not pay attention to us very much. They really did not. I mean in those several meetings of ours, for example it was a general meeting; there were all women's groups. They did not really give us the chance to talk. I mean they behaved as if we did not exist. I mean it was like their place, it was as if they constituted the basis and we were just watching like guests.

Melike, in parallel to Nazik Işık, whose ideas I referred to above, indicates that the feminist movement in Turkey has been on the side of the state rather than that of the Kurds:<sup>89</sup>

I think that the women's movement in Turkey did not take any risk in the demands, actions and organizations related to Kurds. This is very important. It does not still take a risk. It still does not take much risk . . .

There was the state against Kurds. If you are on the side of Kurds, the state will stand against you. You may prefer this. Yet they did not. I think that the feminist movement in Turkey in that sense was not on the side of Kurdish women or Kurds.

Elif states that all Turkish feminist women did not have the same attitude towards Kurds:

In 1993, a group of feminist women in İstanbul published a notice that opposed what was going on in Kurdistan because of the force of the state and they made a press statement. Also some women in this group became members of DEP,<sup>90</sup> symbolically. In addition, it is possible to say that the attitude of the Pazartesi and of some of the women working there was positive. Apart from these ones, it is possible to say that Turkish feminists stood away. It is possible to say that by overlooking, they had a chauvinist attitude. The ones other than radical and socialist feminists demonstrated a racist attitude and they panicked by saying 'The homeland is going out of our hands'.

Further, Elif points to inadequacies of the feminist movement in Turkey as in the following:

[In the 1980s, the Turkish feminist movement] spoke of a political organization and liberation that included all women. But this turned out not to be possible in practice. First of all, Turkish feminists did not touch on the relationship between sexism and racism on this soil where racism and all sorts of discrimination are deep-rooted and where they have been started to be talked about anew, and where there are multi-lingual/cultural/ethnic identities. They did not see that there was experienced a difference between different ethnic identities and between women of oppressing and oppressed nations. They assumed that the common denominator of being oppressed as women was enough. Secondly, although the existence of classes was recognized, they were forgotten and they supposed that they addressed all women. Yet it was limited to educated, middle-class women.

Esma replies to the question if she was ever excluded by Turkish feminist women by saying:

Not exclusion, but there are instances when I am not understood. For instance, our experiences in the context of the relationship with the state, the relations at the workplace, the relationship between the wife and the husband, mother and child relations are quite different. When I express these, filled with astonishment, Turkish feminist women ask: 'Really? Are there things like that? Can it ever be real?'

Semra emphasizes the difference of Kurdish women as in the following:

When I enter Turkey's women's movement, I intersect with them at one point: I intersect as a woman, with my identity of womanhood. Yet I have another intersecting point of mine: being Kurdish. Because I am not only a woman over there. Naturally, I also experience something else that makes me who I am and that transforms my thoughts. Now the friends here say: 'All right, we are only women, this is enough for us'. But this is not enough for us. What will we do with the things that we live in terms of both being a woman and our ethnic identity, that is, the things that we live as Kurdish women? I mean does this not concern the others?

There is only one woman, Filiz, at the other extreme of the continuum. She was the most positive towards the feminist movement in Turkey. For instance, to the question if Turkish feminist women were nationalists, she replies by saying:

I think that there was nationalism. In my opinion, there was nationalism but it was not nationalism as follows: it was not a nationalism that was at the level of denial; it was an objective nationalism. This country is a nationalist country. Even if you are a feminist you take your share from it. What I mean is that there was not a special blindness, a deliberate rejection. Moreover, as I said before,

the battle of life already took those women's energy. I mean they were engaged with themselves and they were struggling for survival against others. They were trying to say, 'We are here' and at that point to expect from the feminists something that does not exist in this country seems to be a criticism at a level that they do not deserve. That is the point that I want to make. In this country nobody does this. Kurds are killed, Kurds are dying, Kurds are assimilated. It is asked as: 'Why did feminists not oppose?' But no one opposed it, how could feminists?

But when we come to the '90s, to me, very rapidly, feminists, since they are feminists, started to think of Kurdish women. And feminists did this. Leftist men did not do this. I mean, as a feminist, as a Kurd, I was participating in the movement of the '90s very actively and very consciously, and in that period what I saw was extraordinary. I mean extraordinary in that sense: I had relations in a way with leftists, also I had relations in a way with Kurds, also I had relations in a way with men but I saw the sensitivity concerning the fact that Kurdish women had a different form of oppression and that they had a different womanhood condition nowhere else as much as Turkish feminists were concerned with it.

As to their approach to nationalism, while some have a positive stance, some have a quite negative one. For instance, some of them differentiate between racism and nationalism. Hatice indicates that: 'I mean a human being who loves his/her nation without arriving at racism is a nationalist. His/her nation, homeland, I mean I do not know, his/her soil... When it becomes racism, nationalism goes to very dangerous dimensions'. Similarly, Zehra notes that: 'Nationalism is, outside of racism, not to see one's own national identity as superior over others, nor is it to reject/deny it. [Nationalism is] to be able to protect one's cultural values or national identity'. Melike states that:

To me, nationalism is to be a member of an oppressed people and to fight for freedom. I mean, including one's own, to fight for the freedom of that people... For me nationalism is legitimate because I am a member of an oppressed people, I am in no way free. I can neither use my language, nor can I live my traditions, nor can I live in my own country; right? Nor can I dream in my language, nor can I imagine in my language. Until you are 5, or 6, while you do not know one word of Turkish, all of a sudden you are told: 'You will learn Turkish, you will forget [your own language]'. Now this is racism. This is racism. On the other hand, mine is to protect myself. If this is nationalism, I mean if to protect oneself is nationalism, yes, I am a nationalist. I am protecting myself because I am denied to exist.

The positive overtone starts to shift slightly towards a negative one. Being a nationalist is legitimated on the grounds that it is the imposition of the circumstances. In this sense Zeynep notes:

Perhaps it is not completely true to say that I am a Kurdish nationalist from my political point of view but I care very much about the interests of the Kurdish

nation and for this I fight. I mean I fight not only for Kurdish women but also for Kurdish people. As a Kurdish woman, I perceive as my duty the fight against the ones who deny its existence. Circumstances have forced people to be a little nationalist. It is necessary not to think too much in terms of nationality. Perhaps this was true 20 years ago as well. I think that there was the necessity of fighting for the peoples of the world, fighting for the oppressed peoples of the world. I still think like that but as I say, as far as you are not accepted and you are rejected, it is unavoidable to slip towards that side. You feel obliged to fight for your people. Thus, you approach a little nationalistically; you approach events more in a nationalistic sense.

Filiz and Esma, however, reject nationalism in a straightforward manner. Filiz indicates that:

As a feminist, I see nationalism as something against women, something against feminism. I mean it is a concept and condition that feminism cannot accept. Consequently, I am an anti-nationalist. It is something that threatens feminism, I see it as something that feminism should be careful about; I see it as an issue that an eye should be kept on.

Esma notes that nationalism is another version of racism:

I [Interviewee]: In my opinion nationalism is to defend the superiority, yes, the superiority of a nation. Almost to the extent that it can be called racism.

R [Researcher]: Then nationalism and racism are ...?

I: They are close to each other, not the same.

R: Then what is racism?

I: I think that racism is more about the skin of the body. I think that it has some biological dimension. Nationalism is more about the national. If you are from the nation A, it is the most superior nation.

As to Kurdish nationalism, there are two opposing experiences. Here it is worth quoting from Ayşe:

When I initially became involved in politics, frankly speaking, I got involved solely from within a national consciousness. I mean, in the event, every one of us was oppressed, but we were not aware of the fact that we were also oppressed as a sex. I mean not only me, but also many of my female friends, lived these experiences. I mean, although we were in a political organization we could not say that we moved within the identity of woman.

But this changed later on. Her and her friends' awakening to their difference from men and their disadvantaged position vis-à-vis men based on their gender identity was realized through and within the boundaries of their political organizations. Though the respondent says that she was not initially motivated by gender concerns during her participation in politics, she notes a recent and significant change in the

approach to women of her political organization.<sup>91</sup> This was a point that was confirmed and emphasized by most of the other respondents as well. In other words, many of the other respondents pointed to the fact that this political organization has been undergoing noteworthy transformations in terms of its approach to the woman issue. That is why it seems important to quote at length the conversation at this point:

R: What was it that facilitated or pushed this transformation of both you and your male friends? I mean what influenced you regarding the woman issue? For example, as far as I understand you were different five or ten years ago.

I: Yes yes, it passes from recognizing ourselves. I mean, in the past, we . . .

R: I mean is this only a result of an inner questioning? I mean self-questioning, or were you affected from outside? For instance let me say: 'We were affected by the feminist movement in Turkey'. For example can we say this?

I: No, not from such an influence. I mean we seriously started to get to know ourselves, to search ourselves. Because in the past, in fact, while in politics or in real life, when we looked in the mirror, we used to look at ourselves with the eyes of the male. I mean this is not true only for the Kurdish woman.

R: Then what happened which made you look at yourselves as women?

I: I mean everyday there were discussions on this topic in the political struggle in which I was involved, and also some scientific research was there. Indeed it needs to be expressed frankly. There are ideas and definitions about women, about which Abdullah Öcalan wrote, there are books Abdullah Öcalan wrote. We, too, get and read them. In these books, especially the ideas about women have been very mind-broadening for us. I mean it developed in us something that helped us understand ourselves. These books are an incredible friend in the analysis indeed. I mean where did women lose, how is the situation of women today? . . . In these books, there are serious explanations concerning women. I mean I think that these explanations have been very useful in terms of recognizing ourselves and in terms of handling more consciously the problems that we live as women.

Zeynep, on the other hand, points out that men in the Kurdish nationalist organization in which she had been active behaved in a sexist manner:

For example let us say that there will be constituted a divan [an elected committee presiding over the meetings in a political organization], in no way would a woman be there. Definitely men would be the president and the vice presidents of the divan. They would always behave as if there were only men in the meetings. For example when an activity was carried out, they behaved as if there was no woman. I mean this was not about the fact that our number was small; rather it was the mentality that was brought about by the patriarchal ideology. Perhaps some were not even aware of this but we were, and we thought that we should separate ourselves from them.

And she notes that this was the reason behind Kurdish women's independent political activism:

They were keeping us out. They were seeing us as if we were men. They were expecting us to behave like men in every way. Their viewpoint is very different . . . I mean the wrong approach of men, their looking completely with male ideology. At the moment when we noticed this, we realized that we could be with them in the political sense, but in order to prove ourselves both to us and to them, to prove that we existed, we should get organized separately. We are still with them in the political sense, but of course as women, there should be a separate organization of ours, and for that reason we thought that we should be able to express ourselves in that way.

Esma, similarly, indicates that Kurdish nationalist men had a desexualized view of women:

Let me put it that way: it was necessary for me to be sexless or it was necessary for me not to express the problems that I lived as a woman. And whenever I expressed, like someone who talks unnecessarily, I was not to be seen, not to be heard and not accorded any importance. When I talked about the subjects to which they attributed importance, it was, however, taken to be important, or I was given importance when I did what they said.

Ernest Gellner notes that: 'Nationalism is not based on common memory but common oblivion'.<sup>92</sup> It seems that Kurdish women have been the victims of common oblivion of nationalism in Turkey, no matter whether Turkish or Kurdish. They or a part of their identities have been made to be forgotten by the Kemalist nationalist project, Kurdish nationalism and 'Turkish' feminism. Therefore, Kurdish women have been suffering from nationalist biases. Their specific set of experiences have been either missing from the agenda or they have been seen through nationalist lenses. Therefore, this study will best be appreciated if it can draw attention to the fact that it is time to acknowledge Kurdish women's existence, listen to their own voices and understand them *on their own terms* without denying their identity or without subjecting them to any political and/or ideological prejudices.

## Notes

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1. For further elaboration on the political implications of this distinction in Republican Turkey, see A. Kadioğlu, *Cumhuriyet İradesi, Demokrasi Muhakemesi* [Republican Will, Democratic Reasoning] (İstanbul: Metis, 1999).
2. In this article, I use 'Kemalism' in the sense that Taha Parla defines. According to Parla, 'Kemalism is a political ideology' and it is the dominant-official (egemen-resmi) ideology in Turkey. T. Parla, *Türkiye'de Siyasal Kültürün Resmî Kaynakları: Kemalist Tek-Parti İdeolojisi ve CHP'nin Altı Ok'u* [The Official Sources of the Political Culture in Turkey: Kemalist Single-Party Ideology and the Six Arrows of the RPP] (İstanbul: İletişim, 1992), pp.21 and 9.
3. Within the confines of this essay, I use the nation in the sense that Benedict Anderson defines. According to Anderson, the nation 'is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign'. B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 2003), p.6.
4. This study is of the persuasion that in Turkey there is a group of women who can be categorized as Kurdish women. This is by no means to imply that they present a monolithic and/or homogeneous picture. Despite their heterogeneity in several respects, however, they can be categorized as such primarily because the oppression and subordination that they undergo originates, to a large extent, from their being both Kurds and women. Indeed that is why this piece restricts itself to ethnic and gender aspects of their experiences, which does not necessarily mean that these are the sole factors behind their oppression and subordination.
5. The Kemalist modernization of women, however, received much criticism from feminist scholars in Turkey. I will focus on their critique below.
6. B. Oran, 'Linguistic Minority Rights in Turkey, the Kurds and Globalization', in F. Ibrahim and G. Gürbey (eds.), *The Kurdish Conflict in Turkey: Obstacles and Chances for Peace and Democracy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), pp.154–5.
7. H. Güllalp, 'Islamism and Kurdish Nationalism: Rival Adversaries of Kemalism in Turkey', in T. Sonn (ed.), *Islam and the Question of Minorities* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996), p.94.
8. H. Bozarslan, 'Les révoltes Kurdes en Turquie Kémaliste (quelques aspects)', *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains*, Vol.38, No.151 (1988), p.121.
9. *Ibid.*, p.121.
10. *Ibid.*, p.121.
11. A. İçduygu, D. Romano and İ. Sirkeci, 'The Ethnic Question in an Environment of Insecurity: the Kurds in Turkey', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.22, No.6 (1999), p.993.
12. *Ibid.*, p.991.
13. *Ibid.*, p.996.
14. *Ibid.*, p.997.
15. A. Gündüz-Hoşgör and J. Smits, 'Intermarriage between Turks and Kurds in Contemporary Turkey', *European Sociological Review*, Vol.18, No.4 (2002), p.424.
16. Güllalp, 'Linguistic Minority Rights in Turkey, the Kurds and Globalization', p.93.
17. K. Kirişçi and G.M. Winrow, *The Kurdish Question and Turkey: An Example of a Trans-state Ethnic Conflict* (London: Frank Cass, 1997), p.103.
18. Yet it should also be noted that this distinction should not lead to a view that the Turks and the Kurds are two polarized and socially, culturally and geographically isolated social groups. For example, there are numerous Kurds living in the western parts of Turkey and there are a lot of intermarriages between Kurds and Turks. To give an example, not all the parents of respondents in this study are Kurds. Two of them have a Turkish mother or father. Thus, while the above-mentioned distinction on the basis of ethnicity is valid, one should be aware of social intermixtures between Turks and Kurds. But still it should be noted that, strikingly enough, intermarriages between Turks and Kurds are not to the advantage of Kurdish women. See Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits, 'Intermarriage between Turks and Kurds in Contemporary Turkey'.
19. It should be noted that recently there have been noteworthy developments regarding the recognition of the Kurdish identity and language in the process of Turkey's accession into the European Union. Moreover, there have been discussions going on about 'multi-cultural constitutional citizenship' rather than 'ethno-cultural citizenship'. See among others, F. Keyman, 'Çok Kültürlü Anayasal Yurttaşlık'

- [Multi-cultural Constitutional Citizenship], *Radikal İki*, 21 Nov. 2004; M. Yeğen, 'Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler' [The Republic and the Kurds], *Radikal İki*, 5 Dec. 2004. It is also important to note that the process of Turkey's integration with the EU seems to have had a very positive impact on the Kurds of Turkey. See Y. Odabaşı, 'Kürtler Ne İst(eyem)iyor?' [What cannot/do the Kurds Want?], *Radikal İki*, 19 Dec. 2004.
20. M.H. Yavuz, 'Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Vol.7, No.3 (2001), pp.1–24.
  21. There might be other contributory dynamics to this process, though. Globalization could be one of these. For instance, Ergun Özbudun argues that: 'Both challenges [the rise of political Islam and Kurdish nationalism] – obviously the products of numerous factors – are related in some degree to the cultural effects of globalization, which include the growth of ultranationalist and religious fundamentalist parties, increased demands for recognition of cultural and other differences, and the rise of identity politics as a reaction to the culturally homogenizing effects of globalization'. E. Özbudun, *Contemporary Turkish Politics: Challenges to Democratic Consolidation* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), p.141. Yet since it is beyond the scope of this article to give consideration to all possible dynamics that might have impacts on the issue at hand, I have not included a debate on globalization.
  22. For a nuanced analysis of the changing position and representation of Kurdish women in the Kurdish nationalist discourse in the 1990s, see L. Yalçın-Heckmann and P. van Gelder, '90'larda Türkiye'de Siyasal Söylemin Dönüşümü Çerçevesinde Kürt Kadınlarının İmajı: Bazı Eleştirel Değerlendirmeler' [The Image of Kurdish Women in the Framework of the Transformation of the Political Discourse in Turkey in the 1990s: Some Critical Evaluations], in A.G. Altınay (ed.), *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar* [Homeland, Nation, Women] (İstanbul: İletişim, 2000), pp.308–38. Another very interesting analysis of the representation of women in the Kurdish nationalist discourse is provided by Necla Açıık's article, which is referred to below. It would also be very interesting, however, to examine the representation of women in the Kurdish nationalist imagination, with reference to the framework provided by Partha Chatterjee's monumental work. See P. Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), especially chapters 6 and 7.
  23. These points will best be demonstrated below with particular attention to Kurdish women's experiences.
  24. For some critical theoretical reflections on the relationship between gender and nationalist projects and processes, see the followings: N. Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage, 1997); S. Ranchod-Nilsson and M.A. Tétreault, 'Gender and Nationalism: Moving Beyond Fragmented Conversations', in S. Ranchod-Nilsson and M.A. Tétreault (eds.), *Women, States and Nationalism: At Home in the Nation?* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), pp.1–17; L. Racioppi and K. O'Sullivan See, 'Engendering Nation and National Identity', in Ranchod-Nilsson and Tétreault (eds.), *Women, States and Nationalism*, pp.18–34; J. Nagel, 'Masculinity and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.21, No.2 (1998), pp.242–69; A.G. Altınay, 'Giriş: Milliyetçilik, Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Feminizm' [Introduction: Nationalism, Gender and Feminism], in Altınay (ed.), *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar*, pp.11–28.
  25. 'Kürt Kadınlarının Ayrı Örgütlenme Tarihine İlişkin Notlar' [Notes Concerning the History of Kurdish Women's Separate Organization], *Roza: Cinsiyetçiliğe ve Irkçılığa Karşı İki Aylık Kürt Kadın Dergisi* [Roza: A Bimonthly Kurdish Women's Journal against Racism and Sexism], No.7 (1997), pp.3–4. At this point, one should also point to the praiseworthy activities of the women's organizations in the predominantly Kurdish regions. These organizations have been doing an amazing job for the immediate improvement of the lives of the women in these regions. For one of these organizations, see N. Akkoç, 'Diyarbakır Ka-Mer'in Kuruluş Hikâyesi ve Yürüttüğü Çalışmalar' [The Story of the Establishment of Diyarbakır Ka-Mer and the Works that It Carries Out], in A. Bora and A. Günel (eds.), *90'larda Türkiye'de Feminizm* [Feminism in Turkey in the '90s] (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), pp.205–16.
  26. N. Açıık, 'Ulusal Mücadele, Kadın Mitosu ve Kadınların Harekete Geçirilmesi: Türkiye'deki Çağdaş Kürt Kadın Dergilerinin Bir Analizi' [National Struggle, the Myth of Woman and Mobilizing Women: An Analysis of the Contemporary Kurdish Women's Journals in Turkey], in A. Bora and A. Günel (eds.), *90'larda Türkiye'de Feminizm* [Feminism in Turkey in the '90s] (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), pp.280–2.

27. Ibid., pp.279–80.
28. Cited in N. Göle, *The Forbidden Modern* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996), p.59.
29. Such an assertion definitely does not imply that there is a strictly clear-cut differentiation between the two aspects of the Kemalist modernization project. Rather, they are the two complementary faces of Kemalism. For the sake of analytical purposes, such a differentiation and its interrelations with both the Kurdish and woman questions seem useful.  
One important and interrelated point is the tension brought about by the establishment of the Republic in Turkey in the context of the much sharper divide between the traditional/Islamic and the modern/western. From the inception of the Republic, through the gradual rise of political Islam in the 1980s and 1990s, the question of this divide and particularly its implications for the experiences of Kurdish women are beyond the scope of this article.
30. For an excellent critique of the Republican reforms concerning women, see M. Yeğenoğlu, *Colonial Fantasies: Towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp.131–6.
31. Z.F. Arat, 'Turkish Women and the Republican Reconstruction of Tradition', in F.M. Göçek and S. Balaghi (eds.), *Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East: Tradition, Identity and Power* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp.62–3.
32. Although these were very radical changes, it can well be argued that the full picture could not be grasped without referring to women's social and political activism from the late Ottoman Empire through the early decades of the Turkish Republic. For more on the women's movement in this period, see the following works, among others: A. Demirdirek, *Osmanlı Kadınlarının Hayat Hakkı Arayışının Bir Hikayesi* [A Story of Ottoman Women's Search for the Right to Life] (Ankara: İmge, 1993); S. Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* [Ottoman Women's Movement] (İstanbul: Metis, 1996); Ş. Tekeli, 'Birinci ve İkinci Dalga Feminist Hareketlerin Karşılaştırmalı İncelemesi Üzerine Bir Deneme' [An Essay on the Comparative Examination of the First and Second Waves of Feminist Movements], in A.B. Hacımirzaoğlu (ed.), *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler* [Women and Men in 75 Years] (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1998), pp.337–46; A. Baykan and B. Ötüş-Baskett, *Nezihe Muhittin ve Türk Kadını (1931): Türk Feminizminin Düşünsel Kökenleri ve Feminist Tarih Yazıcılığında Bir Örnek* [Nezihe Muhittin and Turkish Woman (1931): The Intellectual Origins of the Turkish Feminism and an Example from the Feminist Historiography] (İstanbul: İletişim, 1999); R. Alakom, 'Araştırmalarda Fazla Adı Geçmeyen Bir Kuruluş: Kürt Kadınları Teali Cemiyeti' [A Not-often-mentioned Organization in Researches: Association for the Advancement of Kurdish Women], *Tarih ve Toplum*, Vol.29, No.171 (1998), pp.36–40.
33. For more on this conflict, see Y. Zihnioğlu, *Kadınsız İnkılap: Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği* [Revolution without Women: Nezihe Muhiddin, People's Party of Women, Women's Union] (İstanbul: Metis, 2003).
34. A. Durakbaşa, 'Kemalism as Identity Politics in Turkey', in Z.F. Arat (ed.), *Deconstructing Images of 'The Turkish Woman'* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), p.140. See also A. Durakbaşa, *Halide Edib: Türk Modernleşmesi ve Feminizm* [Halide Edib: Turkish Modernization and Feminism] (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002).
35. F. Bertkay, 'Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Feminizm' [Feminism from the Ottoman through the Republic], in M.Ö. Alkan (ed.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi* [Political Thought in Modern Turkey: The Accumulation of the Tanzimat and Meşrutiyet] (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), pp.348–61.
36. A. Saktanber, 'Kemalist Kadın Hakları Söylemi' [Kemalist Women's Rights Discourse], in A. İnel (ed.), *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Kemalizm* [Political Thought in Modern Turkey: Kemalism] (İstanbul: İletişim, 2001), p.332.
37. Ş. Tekeli, '80'lerde Türkiye'de Kadınların Kurtuluşu Hareketinin Gelişmesi' [The Development of Women's Emancipation Movement in Turkey in the '80s], *Birikim*, No.3 (1989), p.35.
38. F. Bertkay, 'Türkiye'de "Kadınlık Konumu"' [Status of Womanhood' in Turkey], *Yüzyıl Biterken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, Vol.13 (İstanbul: İletişim, 1996), p.760.
39. N. Abadan-Unat, 'The Impact of Legal and Educational Reforms on Turkish Women', in N.R. Keddie and B. Baron (eds.), *Women in Middle Eastern History: Shifting Boundaries in Sex and Gender* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), p.177.
40. Pınar İkkaracan's research demonstrates that despite the existence of the standardized modern civil law, traditional and religious laws are still very strong depending on the 'region, economic conditions,

- denomination and ethnic identities'. P. İlkaracan, 'Doğu Anadolu'da Kadın ve Aile' [Woman and Family in the Eastern Anatolia], in A.B. Hacimirzaoğlu (ed.), *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler* [Women and Men in 75 Years] (İstanbul: Tarık Vakfı Yayınları, 1998), pp.173–92.
41. When referring to Kurdish women who participated in this study, I use pseudonyms to keep their identities secret.
  42. Gündüz-Hoşgör and Smits, 'Intermarriage between Turks and Kurds in Contemporary Turkey', pp.418–9.
  43. Starting with the 1960s, and continuing especially with the 1980s and 1990s, however, several concurrent developments led to the gradual disintegration of the traditional Kurdish social and cultural features. Among these developments one should mention the following: the impact of leftist-secularist Kurdish nationalism, migration to urban centres such as İstanbul, increasing levels of literacy and education, the spread of the means of mass communication. Yet still it is not uncommon for one to see that some deep-rooted 'features' like honour (*namus*), whose marker/symbol is the woman and her chastity, and honour-killings prevail. This is by no means to imply that 'honour-killing' is specific to the Kurds.
  44. J. Smits and A. Gündüz-Hoşgör, 'Linguistic Capital: Language as a Socio-economic Resource among Kurdish and Arabic Women in Turkey', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol.26, No.5 (2003), pp.829–53.
  45. *Ibid.*, p.839.
  46. *Ibid.*, p.846. P. Bourdieu, *Language and Symbolic Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991).
  47. *Ibid.*, p.829.
  48. Y. Arat, 'From Emancipation to Liberation: The Changing Role of Women in Turkey's Public Realm', *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol.54, No.1 (2000), pp.120–1.
  49. This is a distinction that Arat does not seem to disapprove of.
  50. 'Bir 8 Mart Daha Geçti' [One More March 8 Passed], *Roza*, No.8 (1997), pp.9–11.
  51. F. Kayhan, 'Kürt Kadınlarına Batırılan Dikenler' [Thorns Stuck into Kurdish Women], *Roza*, No.13 (1998), pp.3–8.
  52. F. Kayhan, 'Türk Feminist Hareketin Çıkmazı' [The Dilemma of the Turkish Feminist Movement], *Roza*, No.13 (1998), pp.9–13.
  53. Cevahir, 'Mücadelede Kürt Kadını' [The Kurdish Woman in the Struggle], *Roza*, No.5 (1996), pp.6–7.
  54. Undoubtedly, cutting ties with Kemalism has not been questioned and/or problematized by Kemalist feminists. On the contrary, Kemalism is revered as it brought equality, liberation and emancipation to Turkish women. Among others, see A. Çelikel, 'Cumhuriyetimizin 75. Yılı'nın Düşündürdükleri' [What the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Our Republic Makes One Think of], in N. Arat (ed.), *Aydınlanmanın Kadınları* [Women of the Enlightenment] (İstanbul: Cumhuriyet Kitap Kulübü, 1998), pp.41–9; E. Doğramacı, *Women in Turkey and the New Millennium* (Ankara: Atatürk Research Centre, 2000).
  55. Farganis uses this concept in the context of Black women. She argues that Black women have 'epistemic advantage' since 'by virtue of their "marginality" they are able to see the world in a clearer way'. S. Farganis, *Situating Feminism: From Thought to Action* (London: Sage Publications, 1994), p.33.
  56. N. Abadan-Unat (ed.), *Women in Turkish Society* (Leiden: Brill, 1981).
  57. A.B. Mirzaoğlu (ed.), *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1998).
  58. Ş. Tekeli (ed.), *1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadın Bakış Açısından Kadınlar* [Women in Turkey in the 1980s from a Woman's Perspective] (İstanbul: İletişim, 1995).
  59. Ayşe Güneş-Ayata also points out that religious marriages are mostly seen among Kurds. A. Güneş-Ayata, 'The Politics of Implementing Women's Rights in Turkey', in J.H. Bayes and N. Tohid (eds.), *Globalization, Gender and Religion: The Politics of Women's Rights in Catholic and Muslim Contexts* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p.170.
  60. Y. Ertürk, 'Doğu Anadolu'da Modernleşme ve Kırsal Kadın' [Modernization in Eastern Anatolia and Rural Women], in Tekeli (ed.), *1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadın Bakış Açısından Kadınlar*, pp.202–3.
  61. *Ibid.*, p.208. At this point, it should briefly be noted that such a gendered characteristic is not limited to development projects. On the contrary, it is embedded in some other aspects of the Turkish nation-state. One striking example is obligatory military service. While Kurdish men learn not only Turkish but also some literacy, Kurdish women lack even this opportunity. The debates in the 'Contemporary Feminist Theories' class of Professor Yıldız Ecevit at Middle East Technical University in 2002 drew

- my attention to this point. For Kurdish women, however, in the mid-1990s some centres have been established in the Kurdish-populated regions. These are called ÇATOM (Çok Amaçlı Toplum Merkezleri – Multi-purpose Community Centres). The official declaration of the aim behind the establishment of the ÇATOMs is as follows: ‘Targeting young girls and women over age 14, the ÇATOM aims at building awareness among women about their problems, creating opportunities for the solution of these problems, ensuring their participation to the public sphere, promoting gender balanced development by empowering women and developing replicable models relevant to local context. ÇATOM programs and activities center around five basic areas including education and training, health, income generation, social support and cultural-social activities’. See <http://www.gap.gov.tr/English/Frames/fr21.html>. All Kurdish women who participated in this study think that the ÇATOMs were oriented to the assimilation of Kurdish women, except one who said she was not knowledgeable about the ÇATOMs. For a similar critique of the ÇATOMs, see Bawer, ‘Çatom’lar Ne İstiyor?’ [What do the ÇATOMs Want?], *Roza*, No.13 (1998), pp.38–9.
62. Shahrzad Mojab criticizes Ertürk on the grounds that she does not note that ‘these “development projects” continue to be ingrained in policies of ethnic cleansing and forced assimilation’. S. Mojab, ‘Introduction: The Solitude of the Stateless: Kurdish Women at the Margins of Feminist Knowledge’, in S. Mojab (ed.), *Women of A Non-State Nation: The Kurds* (California: Mazda Publishers, 2001), p.5.
  63. M. Yeğen, ‘The Turkish State Discourse and the Exclusion of Kurdish Identity’, in S. Kedourie (ed.), *Turkey: Identity, Democracy, Politics* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), p.216. See also M. Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu* [The Kurdish Question in the State Discourse] (İstanbul: İletişim, 1999).
  64. J.B. White, ‘State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman’, *NWSA Journal*, Vol.15, No.3 (2003), p.157.
  65. I am indebted to Mazhar Yüksel for the formulation of this concept.
  66. Mojab (ed.), *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*.
  67. M. van Bruinessen, ‘From Adela Khanum to Leyla Zana: Women as Political Leaders in Kurdish History’, in Mojab (ed.), *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, p.95.
  68. *Ibid.*, pp.96–8.
  69. *Ibid.*, p.99.
  70. *Ibid.*, pp.106–7.
  71. *Ibid.*, p.95.
  72. *Ibid.*, p.103.
  73. A. Hassanpour, ‘The (Re)production of Patriarchy in the Kurdish Language’, in Mojab (ed.), *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, pp.227–63.
  74. J. Klein, ‘En-gendering Nationalism: The “Woman Question” in Kurdish Nationalist Discourse of the Late Ottoman Period’, in Mojab (ed.), *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, pp.25–51.
  75. R. Alakom, ‘Kurdish Women in Constantinople at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century’, in Mojab (ed.), *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, p.60.
  76. *Ibid.*, pp.54, 60, 63.
  77. S. Mojab, ‘Introduction: The Solitude of the Stateless: Kurdish Women at the Margins of Feminist Knowledge’, in Mojab (ed.), *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, pp.5–6.
  78. *Ibid.*, pp.8–9.
  79. *Ibid.*, p.6. See also S. Mojab, ‘Women and Nationalism in the Kurdish Republic of 1946’, in Mojab (ed.), *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, pp.71, 88.
  80. *Ibid.*, p.5 (italics added).
  81. See E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983), p.1; E. Hobsbawm, ‘Ethnicity and Nationalism in Europe Today’, in G. Balakrishnan (ed.) *Mapping the Nation* (London and New York: Verso, 1996), p.256.
  82. For a study that is based on Kurdish women’s own voices and experiences, see H. Çağlayan, *Feminist Perspektiften Kürt Kadın Kimliği Üzerine Niteliksel Bir Araştırma* [A Qualitative Research about Kurdish Woman Identity from a Feminist Perspective] (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Ankara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Kamu Yönetimi ve Siyaset Bilimi, 2006; being prepared for publication).
  83. Certainly such a viewpoint does not rule out the fact that the feminist movement contributed to the strengthening and/or deepening of democratization in Turkey. For an emphasis on the feminist movement as deepening and strengthening democratization in Turkey see the following studies by Yeşim Arat: ‘Women’s Movement of the 1980s in Turkey: Radical Outcome of Liberal Kemalism’, in

- Göçek and Balaghi (eds.), *Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East*, pp.100–12; ‘Rethinking the Political: A Feminist Journal in Turkey’, *Pazartesi*, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, Vol.27, No.3 (2004), pp.281–92; ‘Toward a Democratic Society: The Women’s Movement in Turkey in the 1980s’, *Women’s Studies International Forum*, Vol.17, No.2–3 (1994), pp.241–8; ‘Democracy and Women in Turkey: In Defense of Liberalism’, *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society*, Vol.6, No.3 (1999), pp.370–87.
84. N. Işık, Email to the author, 15 Aug. and 8 Sept. 2003.
85. A. Bora, Email to the author, 2 Sept. 2003.
86. N. Sirman, ‘Kadın’dan Toplumsal Cinsiyet’e’ [From Woman to Gender], A talk delivered at the 10th Anniversary of the Establishment of Research and Implementation Centre on the Problems of Women at Ankara University, Ankara, 23 Jan. 2003.
87. For a parallel criticism of Turkish feminist women, see Canan, ‘Gözüm Aynı Göz, Sözüm Aynı Söz, Tenim Farklı!’ [My Eye is the Same Eye, My Word is the Same Word, My Skin is Different!], *Jujîn: 2 Aylık Kürt Kadın Dergisi* [Jujîn: A Bimonthly Kurdish Women’s Journal], No.7 (1998), pp.30–2.
88. For a similar critique, see S. Tanrıku, ‘Dilimi Bilsen Beni Anlayabilir misin?’ [Could You Understand Me If You Knew My Language?], *Jujîn*, No.3–4 (1997), p.27.
89. N. Işık, Email to the author, 15 Aug. and 8 Sept. 2003.
90. ‘Democracy Party’, the pro-Kurdish party of the day. It was closed down by the Constitutional Court in June 1994.
91. For a striking critique of the Kurdish nationalist organizations from a Kurdish woman’s perspective, see Zelal, ‘Kürt Erkeklerine veya Erkek Kürtlere’ [To Kurdish Men or Manly Kurds], *Roza*, No.6 (1997), pp.13–4.
92. Cited in A. Kadioğlu, ‘Women’s Subordination in Turkey: Is Islam Really the Villain?’, *The Middle East Journal*, Vol.48, No.4 (1994), p.659.