

**İSTANBUL KÜLTÜR UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

**A REVIEW OF THE POLITICAL STANCE OF KURDISH WOMEN:
LEYLA ZANA PORTRAIT**

Master of Arts Thesis by

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Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Özge ZİHNİOĞLU

MAY 2016

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**KÜRT KADINININ SİYASİ DURUŞU ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME:
LEYLA ZANA PORTRESİ**

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ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	: <i>Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi</i> (Justice and Development Party)
BDP	: <i>Bariş ve Demokrasi Partisi</i> (Peace and Democracy Party)
CHP	: <i>Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi</i> (Republican People's Party)
DEP	: <i>Demokrasi Partisi</i> (Democracy Party)
DEHAP	: <i>Demokratik Halk Partisi</i> (Democratic People's Party)
DGM	: <i>Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemesi</i> (State Security Court)
DTH	: <i>Demokratik Toplum Hareketi</i> (Democratic Society Movement)
DTP	: <i>Demokratik Toplum Partisi</i> (Democratic Society Party)
HADEP	: <i>Halkın Demokrasi Partisi</i> (People's Democracy Party)
HEP	: <i>Halkın Emek Partisi</i> (People's Labour Party)
HDP	: <i>Halkların Demokratik Partisi</i> (Peoples' Democratic Party)
HDK	: <i>Halkların Demokratik Kongresi</i> (Peoples' Democratic Congress)
IPU	: Inter-Parliamentary Union
İHD	: <i>İnsan Hakları Derneği</i> (Human Rights Association)
PKK	: <i>Kürdistan İşçi Partisi</i> (The Kurdistan Workers Party)
LGBT	: Lesbian, Gays, Bisexual, Trans
MHP	: <i>Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi</i> (Nationalist People's Party)
OHAL	: <i>Olağanüstü Hal</i> (State of Emergency)
STK	: <i>Sivil Toplum Kuruluşlar</i> (Non-governmental Organizations)
TAYAD	: <i>Tutuklu Aileleri Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği</i> (Prisoners Solidarity Association)
TBMM	: <i>Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi</i> (Turkish Parliament, The Grand National Assembly of Turkey)
TRT	: <i>Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu</i> (Turkey Radio Television Corporation)
UN	: United Nations

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ABSTRACT

A REVIEW OF THE POLITICAL STANCE OF KURDISH WOMEN: LEYLA ZANA PORTRAIT

Ecem Hazal Öksüzömer

This study deals with women who have an effective stance in politics. The main objective is to see the dynamics of this stance. This research has centralized the image of women and mother. All through the research, it has been referred to the relevant literature and historical development.

The study helped to identify the stance of Kurdish women, influential female figures from the past to the present and political parties with their practices. The road started with Feminism and Nationalism reached its goal, and portrayed the point where the Kurdish women, different from other women, stand. The subject line drawn by the portrait of Leyla Zana is the key factor to help us understand the Kurdish women.

Key Words: Kurdish Women, Politics, Feminism,
Nationalism, Kurdish Nationalism,
Maternity, Important Women Figures,
Kurdish Parties, Women Policies

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KISA ÖZET

KÜRT KADINININ SIYASİ DURUŞU ÜZERİNE BİR İNCELEME: LEYLA ZANA PORTRESİ

Ecem Hazal Öksüzömer

Bu çalışmanın konusu siyasette etkili bir duruşa sahip olan Kürt kadınlarıdır. Hedef, bu duruşa giden yolda etkisi olan dinamiklerdir. Bu araştırma kadın ve anne imajını merkeze koymaktadır. Konuyu incelerken literatürden ve tarihsel gelişimden yardım alınmıştır.

Çalışma, Kürt kadın duruşunu geçmişten günümüze etkili kadın figürleri, siyasi partiler ve onların uygulamaları ile açıklamaya yardımcı olmuştur. Feminizm ve milliyetçilik ile başlayan yol hedeflediği noktaya ulaşmıştır. Kürt kadınının günümüzde diğer kadınlardan farklı olarak geldiği noktayı sergilemiştir. Konu ile çizilen Leyla Zana Kürt kadını anlamada anahtar niteliğindedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kürt Kadını, Politika, Feminizm,
Milliyetçilik, Kürt Milliyetçiliği,
Annelik, Önemli Kadın Figürler,
Kürt Partileri, Kadın Politikaları

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Kurdish women's movement struggles in two dimensions. The first dimension is freedom of their nation and the second is freedom of women. Understanding the change in the Kurdish women's movement is only possible by considering the concepts of public freedom and women's freedom together. Women consider these two dimensions to be completely interconnected with each other. The truth is that politics is an effective power. A method of representation cannot be under the control of community, race, ideology or sex. Being of this power, Kurdish women open new path for the other women who follow them.

Women are the representatives of the greatest power that can ever emerge. Those who notice this power have succeeded in increasing their influence by using women in political representation, which is more political than emotional.

A transformation of Kurdish women has been observed from past to present. Previously, there were powerful tribal women who had a voice in their tribes and nowadays we see more women among the community. In our day, we actually observe two types of Kurdish women who are being politicized; one is a woman figure in sexual terms and the other is a woman figure as a mother. While having been trying to prove themselves to the society around for a long time, Kurdish women have found themselves in armed struggle. On the other side, there is another figure of woman who joins the struggle by a stance of maternity and represents herself in political and societal fields. Women have become one of the most important protagonists of political struggle. They are primarily the most dynamic piece of society as mothers, sisters and wives. The strength they take from their gender is reflected in the steps they take in societal events. The voice of women is now heard more in those societal events whereby males remain more passive.

Influential women we are familiar with from history provide us with more detailed information about the nature and position of Kurdish women. Such important names, about whom we obtain information through the image of an Amazon woman, reveal the development, losses and/or gains of Kurdish women from past to future.

With the changing conjuncture in Turkey after 1980, Kurdish women began to become a player rather than being an only subject of politics. The adverse implementations experienced during the military coup caused women to realize that they, as wives, mothers and sisters, cannot remain passive against what happened.

Beginning to have a presence in the Kurdish political movement, women also began to be involved in the fields of political parties. In the end of a long walk, rights such as the 40 percent women's quota and co-presidency were introduced. In the last elections, People's Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi, HDP) made a significant change by removing the women's quota and launching the system of equal representation. With this new system, women will be assigned directly by their own political structures, and they themselves will determine all their areas of activity.

One of the most important women in the current process of political representation is Leyla Zana. She has become an inspiration to many women with the path she takes and the stance she has adopted. She has made it a goal to represent women who feel themselves insufficient in all circles of the society. The Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, TBMM) is the place where she expressed this representation most influentially. She has never refrained from declaring her ideology anywhere. What I try to emphasize here is not to claim the path taken by her to be either right or wrong but to indicate the change she has enabled. The initial and the current situation of Zana's influence is converged on the same incident; the oath crisis!

As one of the candidate names listed by Social Democrat Party (Sosyal Demokrat Parti, SDP) as a result of the general elections of 1991, Leyla Zana completed her oath, which she started in Turkish language in the deputyship oath ceremony in the Turkish Parliament on 6 November 1991, with the following sentence in Kurdish language; "I take this oath in the name of the brotherhood of the Turkish and the Kurdish publics". The oath that she took led to some results some changes for Kurdish women that will be discussed in detail in subsequent sections and some changes for Kurdish women. On 17 November 2015, another oath crisis involving Leyla Zana is the agenda again after 24 years. Getting into the parliament as the Ağrı Deputy of the HDP during the general elections of 1 November 2015, Leyla Zana

demonstrated that she has not changed her path in the course of time by using the expression “the Nation of Turkey” instead of “Turkish Nation”. Considering the initial and the current point of Zana, this study will analyse how Kurdish women manage to be on the forefront in politics by drawing upon Zana’s political position.

1.1. Research Questions

The research questions in this thesis are based on Kurdish women as a symbol on the forefront in politics. The dynamics that keep Kurdish women on the forefront are the political and social factors which are influential on these dynamics. The changing structure of the Kurdish political parties is what triggered the transformation which women have experienced in politics. Thus the focus of this study is the Kurdish women’s movement which emerged in Turkey’s politics and which begins to attain an influential position. We will talk about a name has been effective in policy recently on Turkish and Kurdish politics which is the name is Leyla Zana. In this context, the main research questions of this thesis are “Why do Kurdish women take place in the foreground in Turkish politics?” and “How does Leyla Zana have an impact as a female actor on this stance?” Three interrelated puzzles have been identified as the research sub-questions in order to contribute to the argument of this thesis. Accordingly, the first sub-question is “What does the world in which they live look like?” when we look at the historical development that the events which occurred are not independent from the general structure of the world. This question examines relationship between life expectancy and conditions. It is not possible to assess false behaviours before understanding the conditions of the related period. In connection with these reasons, references can be made to the leading stance of Kurdish women. Events are subjected to changes directly in connection with the dynamics surrounding them. The second sub-question is “How do Kurdish women’s practices find a suitable way to develop?” This question shows the discovery of the woman factor by Kurdish political parties because of the change in the course of the process. The final sub-question is “How do women fictionalize their life story?” This question is a key point regarding how the stance of women is shaped in their own expressions and it shows real stories of women with losses and gains in the Kurdish movement. The life stories of women show an extremely important point for understanding the path and the stance they adopt. Leyla Zana also has a significant

share of this pie after 1980s. She is an effective women figure with her stance, life and political identity.

Before concretizing the subject beginning to assess the representation of Kurdish women in politics, it is necessary to cite some studies on Kurdish women and their political aspects.

With the “Feminist Theory”, which was written by Josephine Donovan in 1985 and which is the most important source of the theoretical part of our subject, we firstly can understand the continuous transformation of women from the first centuries. Through these historical transformations, we witness how the workplace and the household were separated, which reveals how the thought of enlightenment that is identified with women is supported. The book provides us with detailed information about the position of women.

A very important work is “Devletsiz Ulusun Kadınları: Kürt Kadını Üzerine Araştırmalar” (Original Name: “Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds”) by Shahrazad Mojab, in which she emphasizes that being without a state is a restrictive factor in the analysis of the stance of Kurdish women. In the book, Mojab explains the influence of feminism on Kurdish women. She discusses the place of the concept of leadership in the Kurdish society. She also refers to nationalist Kurdish men, reveals the hidden meaning behind their egalitarian discourse, and gives some key information for future studies on the issue.

Difficulty faced by women in making politics within the Kurdish political movement is one of the main subjects of “Anneanne, Ben Aslında Diyarbakır’da Değildim” (I was Not Actually in Diyarbakır, Grandma) by Tuğçe Tatari (2015), through which we observe the ideational distance the author covers; Pervin Buldan as one of the accentuated names got into the parliament in representation of the Saturday Mothers and she is the first woman deputy from Iğdır. Another name, Aysel Tuğluk, is a woman who performed co-presidency in Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi, DTP).

Detailed information is offered about global women’s movements in “Birkaç Arpa Boyu... 21. Yüzyıla Girerken Türkiye’de Feminist Çalışmalar, Birinci ve İkinci Cilt” (Only Few Steps... Feminist Critics in Turkey at the Beginning of 21st Century,

Vols. I and II) compiled by Serpil Sancar (2011), who aims to present a critical picture on woman studies. The historical background of the Kurdish women's movement has an important place in this compilation.

Another work which is also very important for our analysis of the woman figure is "Geçmişten Günümüze Kürt Kadını" (Kurdish Woman from Past to Present) by Mehmet Bayrak (2002), in which we find Amazon Kurdish woman names that changed in the course of time. In his book, Bayrak manages to portray the nature of Kurdish women by describing their regional and cultural characteristics. Names of some influential Kurdish women are highlighted in the book.

Underlining the importance of maternity in the societal life of Kurdish women, A. Vedat Koçal made an important study entitled "Kürt Kimliğinin Toplumsal Evrimi Bağlamında Geleneksel Aileden Modern Bireye Kürt Kadınının Toplumsal Değişim Dinamiklerinden Biri olarak Çatışma Ortamı" (Clash Environment As One of the Social Change Dynamics of Kurdish Women from Traditional Family to Modern Individual within the Context of the Social Evolution of the Kurdish Identity). The concept of maternity is an important influence in the politicization of women, who inevitably find themselves in political struggle. He discusses some societal events, refers to the "Martyrs' Mothers" and the "Saturday Mothers", and thus reveals for us the stance of women in the face of such events.

The article entitled "90'larda Türkiye'de Siyasal Söylemin Dönüşümü Çerçevesinde Kürt Kadınlarının İmajı: Bazı Eleştirel Değerlendirmeler" (The Image of Kurdish Women within the Frame of the Transformation of Political Discourse in Turkey in the 90s: Some Critical Assessments) by Lale Yalçın-Heckmann and Pauline Va Gelder, which sheds light to Kurdish women from their point of start, elaborates on the momentum gained by Turkey by Kurdish nationalism in the 80s, and makes some suggestions about how the political struggle and war launched against the Kurdistan Workers Party (Kurdistan İşçi Partisi, PKK) imposed two identities on the society.

Explaining the political infrastructure of the dynamics of the Kurdish women's moment, "The Kurdish Women's Movement: A Third-Wave Feminism within the Turkish Context" by Ömer Çaha (2011) is included in the book "Turkish Studies" and it expands on Kurdish women's movement in connection with feminism.

When we want to examine a study on the political representation of Kurdish women, we notice the influence of the book by Handan Çağlayan (2013) entitled “Kürt Kadınlarının Penceresinden Resmi Kimlik Politikaları, Milliyetçilik, Barış Mücadelesi” (From Kurdish Women’s Perspective: Formal Identity Politics, Nationalism, Struggle for Peace). In her book, Çağlayan sheds light on the gender composition in the Turkish Parliament, the criteria for selecting political party candidates in Turkey, the 40 percent gender quota applied in Kurdish political parties and the co-presidency system, and she shows us the path for a more detailed study on the subject matter. We witness the position of Kurdish women in “Analar, Yoldaşlar, Tanrıçalar Kürt Hareketinde Kadınlar ve Kadın Kimliğinin Oluşumu” (Mothers, Comrades, and Goddesses: Women in the Kurdish Movement and the Formation of Women’s Identity), which is another work by Çağlayan. The book highlights the concepts of women as mothers, as comrades and as goddesses.

The Leyla Zana portrait, which forms the foundation of my thesis is based on the information we obtain from the book entitled “Yemin Gecesi Leyla Zana’nın Yaşam Öyküsü” (The Evening of the Oath: The Biography of Leyla Zana) by Faruk Bildirici (2008). In his book, Bildirici provides readers and researchers with information on the private, political and social life of this very important Kurdish woman figure in the Kurdish politics. This research focuses on two significant issues of Kurdish women. One of them is societal representation and the other is political representation on the axis of Leyla Zana. In this respect, by asking the first sub-question of “What does the world in which they live look like?” this study attempts to provide more comprehensive understanding about world conditions and their affects. The second sub-question is “How do Kurdish women practices find suitable way to develop?” Accordingly, the third sub-question in a real concept, “How do women fictionalize their life story?” This more detailed exploration would enable a better understanding of the Kurdish women in societal and political life.

1.2. Main Arguments

In this thesis, the aim is to understand the political representation role of Kurdish women. And our main figure to help us understand this representation is Leyla Zana. Her life and political stance gives us detail about Kurdish women and their ideologies. It explains the change in men’s view on women’s behaviour. This change

began with the military coup of 1980. In that time period, those women whose husbands, sons, fathers and brothers were imprisoned developed an active identity in order to defend the rights of their relatives and of themselves.

As for the literature on the subject matter, we have examined some important relevant sources in the previous section. My target at this point is to find a clear answer to the present question with the help of the light shed by literature, and to elaborate the answer. My basic argument that I developed in the beginning as an answer to the question “Why are the Kurdish women at the forefront?” and “How does Leyla Zana have an impact as a female actor on this stance?” The aforementioned sub-questions will be very influential when we reach a conclusion about our basic research subject because subject matter is shaped by the current global conditions, women’s actions and how these actions are designed.

1.3. Chapter Outline

In this thesis, Chapter 1 refers to introduction section concerning research questions, main arguments and chapter outline.

Following this introduction, Chapter 2 discusses the concept of ethnic identity and nationalism. In this research, we investigate the concept of ethnic identity in the Kurdish question aspect and reconstruction of nations, the female factor which is effective in the process and feminist perspective. The target in this analysis is to find an answer to the question, “What does the world in which they live look like?” This question is a key point regarding how the stance of women is shaped in their own expressions. The past of women contains milestones for the path that leads to their future. In the same context, a basic assessment is made on the concept of Kurdish nationalism in the current study.

Chapter 3 analysing the place of women with feminist perspective and the maternal role of Kurdish women. The main point is try to find answer to the question, “What does the world in which they live look like?”.

In Chapter 4, the study makes a historical analysis regarding the path that leads to the Kurdish women’s movement. The target in this analysis is to reach an answer to the question, “How do Kurdish women’s practices find a suitable way to develop?” A

detailed transition process is offered by dividing the related timeline into three (the military coup of 1980, 1990 – 2005, and after 2005).

In Chapter 5, a detailed analysis is presented about the gender policies of Kurdish political parties within the political timeframe. The target in this analysis is, as in Chapter 4, to find an answer to the question, “How do Kurdish women’s practices find a suitable way to develop?” The changes experienced in the policies on women are detailed by an analysis of party constitutions. The woman quota and co-presidency systems, which are examples of good practice followed by Kurdish parties, are examined. Besides, opinions of influential woman figures are also shared. The Kurdish political parties analysed in this section include HEP, DEP, HADEP, DEHAP, BDP and the HDP.

Chapter 6 shows the three privileged policies that apply to Kurdish women as an addition to the analysis of the policies on women of the Kurdish parties examined in the previous chapter. These policies are the 40 percent woman quota, the co-presidency system and the right of equal representation. As in Chapter 3 and 4, an answer is sought for the question, “How do Kurdish women’s practices find a suitable way to develop?”

In Chapter 7, the analysis on the Kurdish women’s movement, the transition phase of which is addressed in the previous chapter, continues with an analysis of some important woman figures. The aim in this analysis is to find an answer to the question “How do women fictionalize their life story?” This research shows us how the change began and where it leads to with woman figures.

In Chapter 8, the study focuses on an influential political figure; Leyla Zana. It analyses her national and women-related struggle presenting details from her life. As in Chapter 7, the aim in this analysis is to find an answer to the question “How do women fictionalize their life story?” The conclusion chapter presents a review of the main arguments and findings of research.

CHAPTER 2: KURDISH ISSUE IN THE CONTEXT OF ETHNIC IDENTITY

This chapter, we want to find an answer to the sub-question, “What does the world in which they live look like?” Territory is a fundamental basis of the modern sovereign-state system and a central component of ethno-nationalist politics. The concept of ethnicity denotes the people who believe that they are originated from a community characterized by the common inheritance belonging to ancestors of that community. In this way, the concept of ethnicity comes from common origin in sociological way and it suits to cultural unit.¹

The dominant aspect of identity conflicts is ethnic, religious, tribal or linguistic differences. These conflicts often involve a mixture of identity and the search for security where the prime contention concerns the devolution of power. This was the main type of war in Sri Lanka, Palestine, Punjab, and struggle of Kurds in the 1980s. Such conflicts are likely to increase. Identity conflicts are subdivided into territorial conflicts, ethnic or minority conflicts, religious assertions and struggles for self-determination.²

The important question is how can ethnic identity become an ethnic conflict, what is the cause of ethnic conflict? Ethnic conflicts within a state belong to identity conflicts that are a type of internal conflicts. Besides identity conflicts there are other types of internal conflicts such as ideological conflicts, governance conflicts, racial conflicts and environmental conflicts. Sometimes the term “ethnic conflict” is used to describe a wide range of internal conflicts.³

Kurdish issue, which has been born such an internal problem, has gained international dimension. Kurdish issue has gained a new dimension for some reason. These are;

¹ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Inc., 1986)

² Gürsel G. Ismayilov, *Ethnic Conflicts and Their Causes*. (Tokyo: Jyochi University)

³ Michael E. Brown, ed., *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*. (Princeton: Paperback) 4.

1. Kurds are located under more than one state roof and geostrategic troubled region.
2. Kurds present differences in ethno-cultural terms from Arab, Turkish and Iranian societies.
3. Expectations and demands of the Kurds have to be justified by the international community and for this reason; it occurred sympathy for this community.
4. This problem has been an important factor bearing on the international arena, Kurdish rapprochement with the demands of international values (nationality policies after World War I, democracy after Cold War, human rights and cultural rights).
5. Fundamental changes in the international system have led to expectations for border changes in the region. In this case, the community has been motivated and has allowed them to establish contact with cultural forces.⁴

These reasons show us the basic triggers of ethnic issues are politicization of ethnic groups. This situation is closely related to the concerns of damage or destruction of physical assets or cultural identity of ethnic groups.

The political organization of Turkish Republic created by the ethno-political issues organized in accordance with stress or reorganizing like all other nation states since its founding as a nation state. This was also true for Turkey against Kurdish issue. Therefore, in the era of nation states to face and tussle the ethno-political issues, matters of this kind to count as legitimate or illegitimate part of the political negotiations the norm rather than the exception; It not by accident, is the rule.⁵

Republic of Turkey was referred to the many ways to deal with such Kurdish issue after setting up a nation-state according to the rule. Modern politics working with such issues have produced a lot instrument: purification, exchange, relocation, discrimination, assimilation, group rights, autonomy, federation and confederation

⁴ Erol Kurubaş, "Etnik Sorun-Dış Politika İlişkisi Bağlamında Kürt Sorununun Türk Dış Politikasına Etkileri," Ankara Avrupa Çalışmaları Dergisi, 8 (2009)

⁵ Mesut Yeğen, Müstakbel Türk'ten Sözde Vatandaşa. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014) 8.

are the best known of such separation. (...) Turkey's last century showing that many of these instruments to be filed.⁶

2.1. Kurdish Nationalism

The movements of nationalism that started among Serbians, Bulgarians and Greeks on the European side in the 19th century also triggered Kurdish nationalism. However, the most important effect was seen Arab revolt of 1916 that proved to have deep and long-standing impact on the political atmosphere of the Middle East where the Kurds predominantly lived. The uprising fire initiated with this movement. 16 of the 18 rebellions between 1924 and 1938 involved Kurds. The rebels were organized to maintain the tribal structure in the region that was based on Islamic rules. However, although there is some consensus on the existence of religious motives in the 1925 Sheik Said Rebellion, the two other major rebellions, namely the 1930 Ağrı Rebellion and 1937 Dersim Rebellion, were considered as the reactions to the assimilative and statist policies of the Republic. When we narrow down the subject matter, it is seen that those movements which are not reduced to ideology and politics and which are not transformed into political power can be much more influential in our time. One of the supporters of this argument is Touraine, who said:

“[...] conversely, the strongest societal movements of the past were subordinated to political agents, because they were wedded to national or class ideologies. The ‘weakness’ of new societal movements and of civil society is simply a corollary of their independence. The ‘new societal movements’ of the 1970s were rapidly exhausted, because they remained pre- or para-political movements. The women’s movement, by contrast, did not become a political force, and therefore penetrated more and more deeply into personal modes of behaviour, family relationships, and conceptions of law and education.”⁷

The full emergence of Kurdish nationalism and its becoming more visible occurred in 1923 when the revolutionary transformation of the Turkish history began. Konrad Hirschler points out that the transformation of the components from religious ties in the 1920s and the 1930s to class components in the 1960s and the 1970s and finally to ethnic ties in the 1990s summarizes the whole adventure of Kurdish nationalism.⁸

⁶ Yeğen 9.

⁷ Alan Touraine, Research Hand Markets Page, 22 Apr. 2016
<http://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/2249384/can_we_live_together_equality_and_difference.pdf>

⁸ Konrad Hirschler, *Defining the Nation: Kurdish Historiography in Turkey in the 1990's.* (London: Middle Eastern Studies, 2001) 146.

Some political scientists claim that the history of Kurdish nationalism dates back to the Ottoman era but the emergence of such nationalism does not actually dates back to the Ottoman era according to most other people due to the interconnection of various ethnic structures in the region and unfamiliarity with nationalism in that period. The revolts that occurred in that period were not ethnically oriented but were connected with the efforts of tribes to take the control in the Ottoman territories, which would eventually be broken into pieces. And in the 20th century, the formation and development of nationalistic ideas among Kurds were more shaped by the reaction displayed against the central government. Their foundations were laid by the activities and organization efforts of elite Kurdish luminaries and rulers.⁹

Consequently, Kurdish nationalism arose with the wind of the process of change and become a structural concept. The nationalistic movement was formed based on the thought of becoming a separate nation. The movement is dependent on politics and its spirit belongs to the Kurdish society.

It was emphasized firstly in feminist social science studies that ethnic and national movements and processes have to settle with the gender problem, and that they deal with gender as a category and a symbol and thus create certain images and visions to challenge against other images and visions. Feminist scientists challenged the traditional assumptions held by the literature of nationalism and ethnicity studies, and they attracted attention to the weight and range of gender concepts and practices in national and ethnic processes. It becomes gradually clearer that the discourse relating to gender differences is central to the self-definitions of political groups and that it shapes the cultural and political projects of societal movements. The discourses and policies of nationalism, therefore, often lead to a new codification and crystallization of gender relationships and identities on the one side and to a transformation of the meanings and understanding relating to the concepts of ethnicity and nation to impose certain roles and tasks on women on the other side. Women not only teach and transmit the cultural and ideological traditions of ethnic or national groups but also often build the current symbolic descriptions of such groups. “The image of a nation as an endangered mother who loses her lover or her

⁹ Emre Paksoy, Derin Düşünce Page, 22 Apr. 2016 <<http://www.derindusunce.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/kurt-tarihi-uzerine.pdf>>

sons in a war is a frequently appearing element of the nationalist discourse in national independence movements or in other types of national conflicts whereby men are called to combat for the ‘welfare of women and children’ or to protect their ‘chastity.’¹⁰

But engaging women as activists of nationalism is a complicated process full of conflicts. On one side, nationalist movements invite women to higher rate of participation and national activism as mothers, trainers and educators, workers or warriors and draw once more the boundaries of feminine behaviour allowable in cultural terms, on the other side, they force women to express their interests that arise from their genders and a frame of a given nationalist discourse. The paths taken by women’s movement and women’s salvation were and still are one of the important components of many nationalist movements in the course of history; however, the experience of women show that the rights painstakingly gained in the first periods of such movements “can be sacrificed to identity policies” in another phase after salvation.¹¹ In the meantime, the sub-question that is asked in the beginning of the chapter, “What does the world which they live look like?” find a road to improve with the main topic. The ethnic identity and the relation between Kurdish identity are examined topic during all process related to Kurdish nationalism. Being nation and having an identity should not be the cause for ethnic conflict.

¹⁰ Nira Yuval-Davis, Floya Anthias. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) introduction Part

¹¹ Deniz Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler Bacılar Yurttaşlar*, trans. Aksu Bora (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1997)

CHAPTER 3: WOMEN IN THE RECONSTITUTION PROCESS

In this chapter, we want to find an answer to the question, “What does the world in which they live look like?” Being a woman, a man or a child, each of them means being a part of a nation. And the designation of Kurdish women is originated in the community to which they belong. And the influential standing of women cannot be considered separately from the evolution experienced by the world. The concept of nationalism and the development of this concept is the starting point of our thoughts on the matter. To know about the beginning of nationalism will help us see the path of that concept and shed light on other concepts that it influences.

In the evolution of the world, we observe the warm and cold contacts that nations made to protect their own integrities. These nations were formed of people who live on the same piece of land and by gathering of those people. At this point, we see that the land on which humans exist and maintain their lives is ideologically blended with human nature. What is meant here is that human regardless of being a woman, man or child is a whole from the lowest stratum to the highest. The concept of a nation is combined with a state as the administrative organ and it has produced the synthesis of “nation-state”. A nation is a cultural entity while a state is a political entity. Emerging through a combination of these two separate concepts, a nation-state is significantly differentiated from earlier structures of state. The concept of nation-state involves some elements shared by all the citizens that form a nation; common language, common culture and common value. It has also become an inspiration to the movement of nationalism as it contains the idea that each nation possesses a right to self-determination. For a long time, an effort has been taken to attribute nationalism to a specific gender. The reason for this is that men play the leading role in the restructuring process of nations. In the 19th and 20th centuries, all the developments were being experienced through nationalism. The ideology of nationalism was influential in the formation of nations but what was nationalism formed of? It is necessary to think of nationalism not just as political ideology in its narrow sense but as a connected series of ideas and practices among social, economic and cultural formations, and as a way of understanding the world; therefore, we must

shift our perspective from the political platform to the field of culture.¹² As regards the concept of nationalism that we address, which brings people together under the same roof is the sense of cultural appropriation while political ideology is the way such feelings are used by states in an international level. A nation is created by the both genders; male and female. Masculinity and femininity are not biological differences but rather differences which gain a meaning depending on the conditions of our society and the period in which we live. Political and social events result in changes in the standing of women and men in their society. From past to present, the specific structure, as regards the woman factor, of the societal events involving the perspectives of masculinity and femininity ignited the wick of social and political change. Women who think, write and speak up became agents of national struggles. The ideology of nationalism that has a masculine connotation, on the one hand, and woman, on the other is a structural whole in the restructuring process of nations.

3.1. The Place of Women in the Process

The change that the world passes through symbolizes a whole which contains the involved dynamics. The distance covered in this process is the biggest evidence on how much progression was made by the system. And what we will discuss is how women are influenced by social movements in the process, and the path that leads to the formation of women organizations.

Class-based labour and union movements, national independence movements, civil movements that develop within the frame of the right of self-determination, societal movements which are more originated in the political dynamics of the 19th century such as civil right movements, all are known as old societal movements. Old societal movements were essentially movements of equality and freedom which were influenced by such “big ideologies” as Marxism, Liberalism and Nationalism. Women’s movements which developed in parallel to such political movements contained women from both the working class and also the middle class from the end of the 19th century.¹³ As the world changed in time, this was also influential in the

¹² Ayşe Gül Altınay, “Giriş: Milliyetçilik, Toplumsal Cinsiyeti ve Feminizm,” *Vatan Millet Kadınlar*, ed. Ayşe Gül Altınay (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013) 17.

¹³ Serpil Sancar, “Türkiye’de Kadın Hareketi’nin Politığı: Tarihsel Bağlam, Politik Gündem ve Özgünlükler,” *Birkaç Arpa Boyu... 21. Yüzyıla Girerken Türkiye’de Feminist Çalışmalar*, ed. Serpil Sancar (İstanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011) 61.

transformation of women's movements into a global nature. The transnational* women's organizations which have been developing since the 1990s are a product of an effort for creating a global woman mind.¹⁴ Transnational women's movements have not been a singular antagonist but a part of a whole, and the institutional roof of this whole is the United Nations. The UN Women's Conferences both include intergovernmental conferences in the international level and they create an environment for the presence of NGOs and for alternative organizations and networks. According to various citations these gatherings ensure that the women problem is addressed in diplomacy and gains importance in an international level.

Although women's organization in an international level goes back to the 19th century and it became a part of diplomacy in the 20th century, emergence of the concept of "globalisation" as a key category in feminist analyses corresponds to a much closer date. We can observe the introduction of the concept of globalisation into the feminist literature from the middle of 1990s. Bringing the remotest point to the closest, the state of being global has also connected ideologies and concepts to each other.

It is not possible to assess the changing role of women separately from the concept of gender. Gender is not the result of something but the beginning of everything. Each of us is born a male or female. This is not something that we choose. Regardless of the culture and the era we live in, being born a male or female is a quality of our biological existence, just like being mortals. The roles and responsibilities societally imposed on men and women in different cultures and in different parts of history are called gender. There are many texts in the literature regarding the concept of nation but gender is a concept, which has been ignored in those texts. The owner of the most important contribution to the subject matter is Yuval-Davis and Anthias.

In the introduction part of their book, Anthias and Yuval-Davis argued that there are five main ways for women to be included in the ethnic and national process:

1. As the biological producers of the members of ethnic communities,
2. As the reproducers of the borders of ethnic and national groups,

¹⁴ *Sancar 71.*

* Reaching beyond or transcending national boundaries.

3. By taking a central role in the ideological reproduction of a community and being a transmitter of culture,
4. By indicating ethnic and national differences, that is, as the symbols situated in the centre of the ideological discourses which are used in the transformation, reproduction and construction of ethnic and national categories,
5. As the participants of national, economic, political and military struggles.¹⁵

We observe that the concepts of nation and nationalism are treated differently over men and women. We often watch two different approaches to any national, ethnic or racial project. Women appropriate national and ethnic projects as much as men but their priorities are somewhat different compared with those of men. Men bring the existence of a nation to the forefront while women take their own existence and the nation together and figure out how they can represent a gender. Women attempt to actualize their nationalism through the traditional roles imposed on them by nationalists - by supporting their husbands, growing their children (the children of their nation) and being the symbols of the nation's morals.¹⁶ What women assume is a societal role, a cultural stance.

3.2. Feminist Perspective

During the 17th and 18th centuries – including the preceding and the ensuing times- the assumption that women as wives and mothers belong to their home was universal. From the middle of the 18th century and especially in the beginning of the 19th century, historical transformations, especially the Industrial Revolution, isolated women in the private field and separated the workplace from the household. Along with the mechanization of factories and the collapse of the small-scale household industry, the public world of business and the private world of the house were unprecedentedly separated from each other. Such developments supported the

¹⁵ Anthias, Yuval-Davis, Introduction Part

¹⁶ Joane Nagel, "Erkeklik ve Milliyetçilik: Ulusun İnşasında Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Cinsellik," *Vatan Millet Kadınlar*, ed. Ayşe Gül Altınay (İstanbul: İletişim, 2013) 81.

thought of enlightenment which identified rationalism with the public space, and irrationalism and morals with private space and women.¹⁷

Gender and the struggle of Kurdish women that led to differentiation will be analysed through the positive discrimination struggle of working women that started in the USA in the 1970s; Nancy Maclean's "The Hidden History of Affirmative Action: Working Women Struggles in the 1970s and the Gender of Class".¹⁸ In this article, Maclean tells the story of how, in 3 different areas, working women or those women who wanted to get into the Maclean's world expressed their demand for rights through positive discrimination in the USA of the 1970s. In this story, we learn many interesting details from women's tactics of organization and men's reactions to this struggle to the gains of positive discrimination and the nature of solidarity among women. Maclean's fundamental concern in her article is to reveal the contributions made to feminism by the struggles and positive discrimination demands of working women in the 1970s in a time period when the borders among concepts were becoming gradually more indistinct or variable. She argues that women redefined the concepts of gender, race and class, and rocked, even if they could not destroy, the basic power coalitions like capitalism and patriarchy through the series of these struggles that women initiated against the discriminative policies and lower wages applied to them in workplaces. Maclean's piece enables us to reconsider the relationship between class and sexism, which has not been addressed sufficiently in the feminist literature in recent times, and it also provides us with the opportunity for a brainstorm about why the positive discrimination demand of feminism failed to become an agenda topic in the context of Turkey.¹⁹

In order to understand how the feminist current changed shape in the women's movement in Turkey and see the path it followed, we need to look at the classifications made on the matter; first of all, a small group of feminists is described in Yeşim Arat's "Türkiye'de Modernleşme Projesi ve Kadınlar Projesi" (The

¹⁷ Eli Zaretsky, *Capitalism, the Family and the Personal Life* (New York: Harper, 1976) Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and the Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper, 1977)

¹⁸ Nancy, Maclean, *The Hidden History of Affirmative Action: Working Women's Struggles in the 1970s and the Gender of Class*. Spring, 1999, 21 April 2016
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<http://www.academicroom.com/article/hidden-history-affirmative-action-working-womens-struggles-1970s-and-gender-class>>

¹⁹ Begüm Uzun, *Feminisite Page*, 22 Apr. 2016
<<http://www.feminisite.net/news.php?act=details&nid=516>>

Modernization Project and the Women Project in Turkey), in which we see that women enjoyed an influential role on the ideals that the Republic tried to develop in the establishment period in Turkey.²⁰ From the viewpoint of many, feminists were heretical and outsider or, at least, a marginal group, and dwelling upon their actions renders visible the hidden lines, targets, successes and borders of the modernization project of the Republic. Emergence of feminism reveals that the modernization project is alive. Second, we witness feminism in Turkey in the post-Soviet era. Such that, unlike many other countries, feminism in Turkey began to develop in a period when the destruction of an authoritarian military order started and a more liberal structure began to be established. Third, we notice a women's movement after 1980. Fourth, there is a women's movement, which progressed synchronously with the libertarian movement. This movement concurred with the ethnically and religiously oriented political movements that were shaped by political demands regarding identity and cultural recognition that marked the 1990s in Turkey. Fifth, we see an example of feminism in the grip of Kemalism and Islamism. This line of feminism was caught between modernization on the one side and religion on the other side. Some political events diverted the feminist thought to the "defence of secularism". The change of the represented thought resulted in the ignorance of the essential thought which is to be defended. Sixth, we observe a version of feminism whereby Western and Eastern women opposed each other. The new war policies that developed in the 2000s and especially the stance demonstrated in the Middle East led to the development of a new movement of organizing and ideological renewal among Muslim communities across the world. In the light of this newly emerging situation, some women who described themselves as Islamist feminists preferred to draw upon Islamic rather than feminist sources and they began to be distanced from the global network. Seventh, we come to the concept of ethnic identity politics, that is, the relationship between the Kurdish movement during its development and feminism.²¹ This subject is very important in the development of my thesis because it will be much helpful for us to understand the matter if we know by which influence the new and powerful role that Kurdish women began to have in politics progressed.

²⁰ Yeşim, Arat "Türkiye'de Modernleşme Projesi ve Kadınlar", Halkevleri, 21 April 2016
<http://www.halkevleri.org.tr/sites/default/files/indir/01-11-2010-arat_yesim_turkiyede_modernlesme_projesi_ve_kadinlar.pdf >

²¹ *Sancar* 78.

Thanks to the woman, organizations that newly began to form, the Kurdish women's movement developed in two different routes: On the one side, independent feminist organizations began primarily to deal with violence against women and with all kinds of problems of women. Inside the political organizations that made ethnic identity politics, (the line followed by DTP and BDP), on the other side, organized women pioneered some very important and unique developments, which would change the style and content of women's representation in political parties and in the Turkish Parliament in Turkey. For the first time in Turkey, they implemented equal political representation mechanisms in political organizations such as the woman quota in deputy lists, woman co-presidency in political parties and local governments, and women's assembly within political parties. They became the party that contained the highest number of woman deputies in the Turkish Parliament and they managed to carry women to politics setting the first example of successfully implementing quota policies in a political party. In this sense, they served as an important model for feminism carried on ethnic and identity policies in the world.

We see the Kurdish Feminism on the other side. Kurdish Feminism produces and positions itself naturally differs from that of the dominant feminist understanding. In the dominant feminist understanding, there exist, roughly, two different genders, that is man and women. Therefore, "the other" of women is naturally man. However, "the other" of those women who constitute Kurdish Feminism is not man alone. While one pillar of "the other" for Kurdish feminists is men, the other is Turkish women.²²

We referred above to the development of the feminist current in the women's movement in Turkey. And we also notice the development of a Kurdish feminist movement which considers itself to be different from the existing feminist understanding in Turkey; Kurdish women became politically active in the 1960s and the 1970s. Politically active Kurdish women, as did their man counterparts, struggled for socialism.²³ Women were able to take part in the leftist movements of the 1970s only by being purified from their genders, or in the other words, by being

²² Ömer Çaha, "The Kurdish Women's Movement: A Third-Wave Feminism Within the Turkish Context," (Turkish Studies Nov. 2011) 435-449.

²³ Interview by Hande, "1970-1980 Arası Kadın Grupları II: Rızgari ve Alarızgari Kadın Grubu II," *Jujin*, Vol. 3-4 (October 1997) 13.

masculinized.²⁴ During the 1980s, the Kurdish ethnic movement increasingly prioritized the ethnic problem over socialism.²⁵ It is a matter of fact that the armed movement developed through the PKK after 1980 and the political Kurdish movement developed through a series of ethnic-based political parties beginning in the early 1990s have carried numerous women from behind the walls of their houses to the public sphere, to the streets. Kurdish women's movement goes back to the feminist movement that emerged in Turkey after 1980. Kurdish women, whose political attitudes had been shaped by socialist and ethnic struggles, were swift to take their places in the emerging feminist women's movement. The feminist movement that developed in Turkey encouraged Kurdish women to become gender-conscious, to separate themselves from their men's organizations, to be organized on their own and define and express their identities as feminists.²⁶ Kurdish women's group began to make their voices heard through publications, foundations, associations or cultural houses in 1990s. *Roza*, the first of the Kurdish women's journals to be published at this time. *Roza* was the first of the Kurdish women's journals to be published at this time. The *Roza* magazine supported many Kurdish women to issue their own magazines. These are *Jujin*, *Jin u Jiyar*, *Yaşamda Özgür Kadın* (Free Women in Life), *Özgür Kadının Sesi* (the Free Women's Voice) and *Ji Bo Rizgariya Jina*. These magazines cover such subjects as human rights, nationalism and gender.

And we can clearly see that a very short distance was covered in terms of change in women's rights in Turkey and that this very little amount of change became only possible by political events. The world we live in is a global formation which considers freedom and rights under the shadow of politics, and development and change is under the control of actors which shape this formation.

3.3. Kurdish Women and Their Maternal Role

Being without a state or being forcefully included in an oppressive state influence each field of Kurdish women's life.²⁷ According to the Kurdish identity's historical

²⁴ Hande, "1978-1980 Arası Kadın Çalışmaları: DDKAD," *Jujin*, Vol. 1 (December 1999-January 1997) 17.

²⁵ Hasan Cemal, *Kürtler*. (Istanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık, 2003)

²⁶ Çaha 435-449.

²⁷ Shahrzad Mojab, *Devletsiz Ulusun Kadınları Kürt Kadını Üzerine Araştırmalar*. (Ankara: Avesta, 2005) 27.

story and its sources of existence, clash environments and their conditions were the primary source of the emergence of Kurdish women as an identity. The existential and living problems of the Kurdish identity as the owner of a non-state ethnic identity in the age of nation-states naturally apply to Kurdish women as well.²⁸ As it is difficult to assess Kurdish women in their own ethnic category due to being stateless, they are often included in the category of Eastern women or rural women. With the proclamation of the Republic, women were granted more rights but only some of these rights applied to Kurdish women. Women mentioned here refer to individuals who were subjected to overlooking, not categorized and without a clear-cut history. The social position which Kurdish society deemed suitable for Kurdish women has been that of maternity. The restricted area that was tried to be created for women has been expanded by women themselves.

Women have always been shown as the symbol of fertility and maturity, and they find a place in the society with this identity. This identity applies to all women in all communities because motherhood is a value above everything else and maintains itself at all times. It tends to be one of the most important factors in the politicization of women.²⁹ Both women as individuals and women's movement find themselves in a political struggle inevitably.³⁰

The reason for our differentiating the motherhood of Kurdish women is that this is the most important role that gets them into politics. This is not actually a difference but an embodiment of the cry of Kurdish women. Ideologies clash one another. In one side we see martyrs' mother who cry for their lost sons and on the other side, Saturday Mothers* who cry for their lost children. As potential "mothers" in emotional, even if not biological, terms, women could not remain silent for their losses and they chose politics where they could be most influential in order to make themselves heard. Therefore, the start point of Kurdish women is not societal but rather emotional.

²⁸ Shahrzad Mojab, *Vengance and Violence, Kurdish Women Recount The War*. (Toronto: Canadian Women Studies, 2000) 89-94.

²⁹ Serpil Sancar, "Türkler/Kürtler, Anneler ve Siyaset: Savaşta Çocuklarını Kaybetmiş Türk ve Kürt Anneler Üzerine Bir Yorum," *Toplum ve Bilim* Autumn Term, 22-40.

³⁰ Özgen Dilan Bozgan. "Kürt Kadın Hareketi Üzerine bir Değerlendirme," *Birkaç Arpa Boyu... 21.Yüzyıla Girerken Türkiye'de Feminist Çalışmalar*, ed. Serpil Sancar (İstanbul: Koç Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2011) 757-799.

*Saturday mother has been searched their relatives, who lost in custody and became victims of unsolved political killings, every Saturday from 27th May 1995 in Galatasaray Square .

Both because of the religions and beliefs of their culture and also because their relations of production and living conditions, Kurdish people maintained their matriarchal living style for a long time.³¹ Due to their concerns for protecting and feeding their children, mothers have made their marks on each of the first successes that created civilization: Houses, early agriculture, early medicine and domestication of animals. Women also have been encouraging certain societal behaviours which encourage closer relationships in a community such as “the art of peace and the feeling of consanguinity”. “Maternity needs are the true source of all initiatives taken in a civilization.”³² Mothers ensure the shaping of individuals just like the shaping of a piece of dough. Although they are considered to be the weak part of societies, they are actually the most important agents that sustain societies.

Although currently the inclusion of women in the process of peace is organized through the discourse of maternity in the national popular plane, the truth is far from that. For about ten years since the end of the 1990s, women have intensely been creating the conditions of coming together. They have been organizing marches and conferences in Diyarbakır, İstanbul, Ankara and in Hakkari, and publishing joint manifestoes.³³ The integrity that women strive to create an externalization of the societal value they own; maternity and official identity.

With the re-consideration and prioritization of motherhood, the concept of “maternity” expands and gains a new meaning which is connected with both gender and also a new national component. The rewritten “patriotic” maternity is based on women’s will of joining the public struggle and thus it appears to be challenging against the government policy. This is described as their participation in the “national family”. “Mothers” frequently emphasize that they struggle not for their own children only but also “for all warriors and captives either male or female”: “They are all my children, my sons, my daughters.”³⁴

³¹ Mehmet Bayrak, *Geçmişten Günümüze Kürt Kadını*, (Ankara: Özge Yayınları, 2002) 12.

³² Josephine Donovan, *Feminist Teori*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013) 86.

³³ Handan Çağlayan, *Kürt Kadınların Penceresinden Resmi Kimlik Politikaları, Milliyetçilik, Barış Mücadelesi*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013) 30.

³⁴ Lale Yalçın-Heckmann, Pauline Van Gelder “90’larda Türkiye’de Siyasal Söylemin Dönüşümü Çerçevesinde Kürt Kadınlarının İmaji: Bazı Eleştirel Değerlendirmeler,” *Vatan Millet Kadınlar*, ed. Ayşe Gül Altınay (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013) 341-342.

* A geographical region on the south of the Caucuses and in the Middle East covering some part of the territories of Armenia, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey.

“The image of mothers and sisters as active participants of the Kurdish movement developed during the mass protests in 1992-93” (Handan Çağlayan, 2013). Almost in all the smaller and bigger cities of Kurdistan where there is intense Kurdish population, women, girls, children and youth attended street demonstrations, Newroz festivals and hunger strikes. The image of “mothers-sisters” in these protests, also called the “Kurdish Uprising”, shifted its focal point from guerrilla women to victimized mothers. Women as mothers became the evidences of the popular support for the PKK and/or the Kurdish national protest movement. Nevertheless, the picture of mothers in 1992-93 creates a more “Kurdish national” impression than the “Mothers of Lost Children” or the “Pro-Peace Mothers”. The “Mothers of Lost Children”, who have been carrying out sit-in protests in Istanbul since 1995, and also called the “Saturday Mothers”, perform a protest which is not specific to Kurdish people. Just like in the case of the Pro-Peace Mothers, this is a way of protest which brings together wider circles. At a minimum, this is how the image of protesting mothers was recognized, so much so that now it is considered as a pure type of protest and an evidence of civilian opposition. It is not just opposition groups who organize their own group of mothers as a way of protest but the mothers of the Turkish (also Kurdish and other ethnicities) soldiers who died in the war against the PKK have also managed, with the support of the government, to organize under the name “Saturday Mothers”. So we can summarize the answer to the question “What does the world in which they live look like?”, which we asked in the beginning of the chapter, as states shifted to a transnational structure since the 90s, women’s organizations also became a part of this structure. The momentum that feminism gained in the world showed itself in the women’s movements in Turkey. This picture reveals the conditions of the world and all the period.

CHAPTER 4: THE ROAD OF THE KURDISH MOVEMENT TO TURN INTO A KURDISH WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

In this chapter, we want to find an answer for the question, “How do Kurdish women’s practices find a suitable way to develop?” The transformation of the Kurdish movement shows us how Kurdish women have become influential and accounts for their highlighted image. Analysing the change within a certain time scale will effectively reveal both the conditions of various periods and the stances of societies.

In the 1960s and the 1970s, leftist youth movements around the world and in Turkey caused new Kurdish elites who gathered in cities to develop the Kurdish identity consciousness in a leftist frame.³⁵ Similarities with the leftist movement are already obvious when the nature of the Kurdish movement is considered; especially their perspective about women and their political stances whereby women are on the forefront.

PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan’s explanations on women were influential on Kurdish women. However, it would be both inaccurate and also unfair to claim that Öcalan’s opinions were the only factor in the development of Kurdish women’s awareness of their womanhood and Kurdishness. Just like the Kurdish society is not certainly homogeneous, social belongingness of Kurdish women also displays a heterogeneous nature. It is possible, in this frame, to argue that ethnic identity demands began to arise in different platforms from the beginning of the 1980s. Primary examples of these platforms include literature and feminist publications like *Roza*, *Jujin*, *Jin u Jiyar* and *Yaşamda Özgür Kadın*, in which Kurdish women demanded both equal

³⁵ Handan Çağlayan, *Analar, Yoldaşlar, Tanrıçalar Kürt Hareketinde Kadınlar ve Kadın Kimliğinin Oluşumu*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013) 88.

rights with men and also their ethnic identity. But it would not be correct to say that all publications on Kurdish women defend the same position.³⁶

Yaşamda Özgür Kadın, which is known for its closeness to PKK, exalts suicide attacks and armed struggle carried out by women while *Roza* and *Jujin* suggest that Kurdish women should exert a separate struggle isolated from men. It is clear that these publications have influences on the increasing awareness, empowerment and freedom of Kurdish women. They are also important because they start discussions on the role of Kurdish women in the Kurdish society and in their fight for national salvation.³⁷

After 1980, the concept of “public combat” arose and discourses began to be offered on this theory. “Long-term public combat” was attracting attention because women consisted more than half of the public. The events that started with the coup of 1980 expanded in the course of years and have continued through various transformations. In a Kurdish political movement, which grew more violent with the coup of 12 September 1980, the role of women was transformed from social housewives to social individuals and active participants, and this, according to some Kurdish specialists, has reached to such a level which is unprecedented in the Kurdish political tradition.

Along with the steadily increasing dynamism of women in the public space, politics, non-governmental organizations (Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları, STK), unions, prisons, political actions and armed struggles, the unique role of women was highlighted around such images as “peace mother”, “warrior”, “guerrilla”, “goddess”, etc. among Kurdish people. The concept of “building a new identity” (new woman, new man, new family) also exists in the ideology of the Kurdish movement. Kurdish women are central in this concept because they have been performing the substantial task of sustaining the Kurdish identity from past to present.

When we consider that feminist colours, present in the ideological infrastructure of the Kurdish political movement, we can see the existence of strategies which

³⁶ Necla Açıık, “Re-defining the role of the women within the Kurdish national movement in Turkey in the 1990s” eds. Cengiz Güneş, Welat Zeydanoglu, *The Kurdish Question in Turkey-New Perspectives on Violence, Representation and Reconciliation*. (Oxford: Routledge, 2014)

³⁷ Metin Yüksel, *The encounter of Kurdish women with nationalism in Turkey*. (London: Middle Eastern Studies, 2006) 777-802.

influence the societal stance for women and which aim to create a collective women force. In the post-1980 period, women already began collectively to pass to political movement.

These women who experienced the oppressive and violent days of the 1990s were politicized in the Kurdish political movement. It is not coincidental in this period that not only those women who joined PKK but also those who lived in cities were politicized very rapidly and that those groups such as “Saturday Mothers” or “Peace Mothers” which attracted attention to the adverse events and demanded peace emerged in the same period. That is to say, against the state’s homogenizing and discriminative policies, Kurdish women have learned how to raise their voice and how to position themselves in the prominent areas of the society for expressing their social and political demands, and they have become aware that their power would increase by politicization.

The “mountain team” of the Kurdish movement grew with the influence of the emotional atmosphere created by the developments which, in 1991, led nearly one and a half million Kurdish refugees to Iran and Turkey from northern Iraq. In 1993, one third of the organization’s mountain staff were women.³⁸

The image of mothers and sisters as active participants of the Kurdish movement developed during the collective protests in 1992-93. Women as mothers became the evidence of the popular support to the PKK or the Kurdish national protest movement. The “Mothers of Lost Children”, who have been carrying out sit-in protests in Istanbul since 1995, perform a protest which is not special to Kurdish people. Just like in the case of the Pro-Peace Mothers, this is a way of protest which brings together wider circles.³⁹

Previously assuming roles in party structures and participating in street demonstrations and subsequently joining armed struggles, Kurdish women occasionally turned into the most influential element of this movement. Although it is claimed that Kurdish women participated in political struggle in the name of ethnic identity, it is actually seen that they struggled to not remain in the background of the

³⁸ Çağlayan, *Analar Yoldaşlar Tanrıçalar Kürt Hareketinde Kadınlar ve Kadın Kimliğinin Oluşumu* 101.

³⁹ Yalçın-Heckmann, Van Gelder, 90’larda Türkiye’de Siyasal Söylemin Dönüşümü Çerçevesinde Kürt Kadınlarının İmajı: Bazı Eleştirel Değerlendirmeler 340.

society and to transform the part written for them. Currently still unable to leave their home due to the pressure of their family members, many young and elderly Kurdish women can easily join political parties and street demonstrations for the struggle of identity and gender equality.

For scholars of gender and party politics, it is important to explore how and why the male politicians who traditionally dominate party politics agree to power sharing. In the Kurdish case, there was a need and space for women with “clearer/better records than men in legal electoral politics because many male Kurdish politicians were imprisoned and prohibited from political participation as a result of the frequent closures of Kurdish parties by the Turkish Constitutional Court.”⁴⁰

4.1. 1980 Military Coup

The process which extends from the military coup of 12 September 1980 to the 1990s left behind numerous custodies, tortures, losses, violations of human rights, unidentified murders as well as Diyarbakır Prison, emergency state implementations (Olağanüstü Hal, OHAL), the village guardianship system, village evacuations, and compulsory migration of Kurds to metropolises. This process created a different consciousness for Kurdish women;

- 1- First, the gathering in front of Diyarbakır Prison provided a new publicity and an area of shared experience for women.
- 2- Due to the prohibition of speaking Kurdish in the prison again, the connection of Kurdish women to the Kurdish identity was reshaped in terms of language and identity.
- 3- Compulsory migration started a new period for Kurdish women.⁴¹

We see transformation of the Kurdish women’s movement because of the military coup. Their relatives imprisoned and women could not reach them. In that adverse situation, Kurdish women cannot speak Turkish and the rules did not allow them to communicate with their relatives in their own language. The quote “Speak Turkish Speak more“ was written on the door entrance during summer months in 1981.

⁴⁰ Zeynep Şahin Mencütek, “Strong in the Movement, Strong in the Party: Women’s Representation in the Kurdish Party of Turkey,” Political Studies Association, 12 Feb 2015
<<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-9248.12188/abstract>>

⁴¹ Bozgan 78.

Meetings were limited to one minute. In meetings, Turkish was made compulsory and it was forbidden to speak Kurdish. This was a requirement of the law of 12 September and essentially rules of Diyarbakır No. 5 prison.⁴² Some women came together in front of the prison displayed a collective standing to defend their rights. This narrow space helped them come out of their shell and stand on their own feet.

4.2. 1990 - 2005: Kurdish Movement in Turkey and the Awakening of Women

From 1989, murder of civilians, evacuation of villages, and reception of guerrilla corpses by the public community resulted in mass protests. Women also attended these protests collectively.

In 1989 and 1990, the women's movement was depoliticised and lost its anti-system character. In addition, it is necessary to mention that feminism did not really continue even in inner circles after 1990.

An intense woman participation in the political and armed units of the movement occurred especially in the 1990s; the number of women in the armed units reached one thirds of men in 1993. After 1990, we can see the rise of the Kurdish national movement. According to Nicole F. Watts, the term of Kurdish national movement comes from institutions who are working on behalf of the Kurdish nation and other actors. Defenders of the Kurdish movement have three main tendencies: regional authority (land and resources), cultural freedom (protect and maintain the culture on through democratic mechanisms) and the construction of the Kurdish nation.⁴³

The 1990s in Turkey witnessed PKK violence on the one side and politicization of the Kurdish people on the other side. The process that began with the People's Labour Party (Halkın Emek Partisi, HEP) continued with the Democracy Party (Demokrasi Partisi, DEP) and People's Democracy Party, HADEP). The Constitutional Court closed each of these three parties. Because of the events that were very far away from democracy, the Kurdish women's movement that began to rise in 80s gained momentum in the 90s and witnessed women's participation in guerrilla movements. Why did Kurdish women choose to be armed despite their

⁴² İrfan Welat, *Auschwitz'den Diyarbakır'a 5 No'lu Cezaevi*. (Diyarbakır: Aram Yayınları, 2011)

⁴³ Nicole F. Watts, *Sandıkla Meydan Okumak Türkiye'de Kürtlerin Siyasi Yolculuğu*. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2014) 30.

strong image as mothers? Actually, this can be a product of a great reaction because upon being subjected to exclusion, Kurdish women tried to prove themselves by showing that they could do anything that men could.

In connection with the lead of these women, who otherwise are highlighted by their identities as “mothers”, the diversity of participating women also increased after the silence of arms after 1999. Beginning to show up in local elections, 3 of the 39 mayors of HADEP who won the local elections in 1999 were women.⁴⁴ The role model woman protagonists as the building blocks of the identity of HADEP women included Zilan (Zeynep Kınacı), Clara Zetkin, Leyla Zana, Sema Yüce, Rosa Luxemburg ve Leyla Quasım.⁴⁵ Beginning to get into politics abundantly in 1999, Kurds came under the influence of a peace process which would continue until 2004. Along with the stance of political woman players in this period, Kurdish parties began to get significant results.

4.3. After 2005: Peacekeeping and The Role of Women

Stating that the Turkish state did not take any significant steps for resolving the Kurdish problem in the end of the proclaimed process of peace, the Kurdish movement signalled that it would revert to its active defence strategy under the name PKK again.

DTP was established in the transition phase in 2005. The gains of women were overshadowed in the process of transition from Democratic People’s Party (Demokratik Halk Partisi, DEHAP) to HDP. With the resume of conflicts, however, the effective stance of women in the peace process gained importance again. Their acquisitions in the area of equal political representation continued increasingly, the number of women organizations aiming to resolve women’s problems rose each passing day, and it became possible to take women’s problems and demands to the parliament thanks to Kurdish women. The draft of Anti-Terror Law was passed in the General Assembly of the Parliament on 29 June 2006. The basic goal in the introduction of this law was to increase penal sanctions against those who attended the demonstrations organized by the Kurdish movement. With this law, boundaries

⁴⁴Bozgan 763-764.

⁴⁵ Çağlayan, *Analar Yoldaşlar Tanrıçalar Kürt Hareketinde Kadınlar ve Kadın Kimliğinin Oluşumu* 160.

of freedom of expression in Turkey were significantly diminished, sanctions against those who were associated with the Kurdish movement and with the leftist position were increased, and sympathizers of these policies were tried to be prevented from participating in political activities. Within the frame of this law, it became legal to judge anyone who attended the demonstrations organized by the Kurdish movement with the charge of membership in and/or propaganda for a terrorist organization, and it would result to years of imprisonment just to publish the names of those who were assigned to fight against “terror”, law enforcement officers and informants. On 1 January 2009, a TV channel named TRT-6, which would broadcast in Kurdish for 24 hours, began its life. With the start of the Kurdish initiative, efforts were taken to make a progress in the path to peace but most of the steps taken proved to be ineffective due to the influence of the past of the parties and to the egos of leaders.

The reason for excluding with different pretexts those women who pose a threat by questioning the positions of men is connected with the conjuncture that was experienced in 2005. The political atmosphere changed greatly with the establishment of the Kurdistan Regional Government where there is intense Kurdish population. The Kurdish movement became the primary agenda topic of Turkey. Criteria for women to become deputies in the political parties of the parliament include being a university graduate and having a professional occupation while the criterion to be a DTP deputy is to have taken an active role in the Kurdish politics from the grassroots. To name a few of these women;

- Emine Ayna, Fatma Kurtulan and Sebahat Tuncel – from Local Women’s Commissions
- Sevahir Bayındır – from the Women’s Branch
- Ayla Akat – from the Women’s Platform of Diyarbakır
- Pervin Buldan – from a nongovernmental organization founded by the relatives of missing persons
- Gültan Kışanak – from a municipality’s commission of women’s affairs
- Aysel Tuğluk – from Democratic Society Movement (Demokratik Toplum Hareketi, DTH) process

The transformation from BDP to HDP and Selahattin Demirtaş, who assumed the task of co-presidency, achieved a phenomenal success at the time this thesis was

written. His policy that exalted solidarity among women, men, children, youth and elderly helped him become successful. In the general elections of the Republic of Turkey on 7 June 2015, HDP exceeded the election threshold of 10 percent and reached 13.01 percent with the support of 6.058.150 voters. In addition, it achieved the highest rate of representation of women in the parliament. In HDP, which obtained 79 deputies, 26 women entered the parliament. This meant that one thirds of all HDP deputies in the parliament were women. Abdullah Öcalan's niece Dilek Öcalan also entered the parliament as the Deputy of Şanlıurfa from HDP. When determining its candidate lists, HDP reaped the fruits of specifying equal numbers of man and woman candidates in each election region by getting 30 woman deputies out of 80. The political changes on the way to November 1st elections have affected the results against HDP. The new table shows us. HDP decreased its vote rate from 13.01 percent to 10.75 percent. However, AKP increased vote share. This new situation has also affected the distribution of women in parliament. The record of women representation provided in the 7th June elections has been weakened on the 1st November elections. Decline of HDP's vote rate has reduced the number of women entering Turkish Parliament.⁴⁶

Great changes occurred in the Turkish politics after 2005. Kurdish women who were influential in the course of history failed to display the effectiveness expected from them. Achieving success among themselves through collective activities, they could not walk hand-in-hand with other women. Of course, it is not women alone to blame for this. Enjoying the greatest presence in politics, men preferred to create their own peace processes instead of supporting women's stance on the path to peace. Therefore, we can summarize the answer to the question "How do Kurdish women's practices find a suitable way to develop?" which we asked in the beginning of the chapter, in the following way: The process, which began with the military coup of 1980, triggered a change in women's movements as well. It triggered an intense woman participation in the political and armed units of the Kurdish movement between 1990 and 2005. Moreover, a transitional phase is dominant in 2005 and afterwards. Women have always been involved in the process, sometimes centrally and sometimes more peripherally.

⁴⁶ Eren Umurbilir, Aljazeera Turk Page, 16 Apr. 2016 <<http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/al-jazeera-ozel/kadin-vekil-sayisi-azaldi>>

CHAPTER 5: POLITICAL PARTIES AND WOMEN'S REPRESENTATION

In this chapter, we want to find an answer to the question, "How do Kurdish women's practices find a suitable way to develop?" During the last couple of years, women have become more effective topic for political life according to earlier. There are two decades to support this idea; studying the various factors and mechanism that affect women's representation in political institutions remains crucial for understanding and perhaps for improving contemporary democracies. The growing scholarship on gender and politics demonstrates that women's political representation varies dramatically across countries and often in parties with the same country.⁴⁷

Historically, politics has excluded women.⁴⁸ Even the first democratic experiences and the social and political developments paving the way to these experiments did not attribute political roles to women.⁴⁹ Today, representative democracy theoretically accepts integration of women in politics; yet, serious problems still exist in practice. As of May 2011, the percentage of women in single houses or lower houses of 188 countries throughout the world is reported to be 19,5 percentage. This percentage is interpreted to be highly problematic as it is far from reflecting the percentage of women in the world's population. The ideal in this regard is explained to be women constituting half of the decision-making as they constitute half of the world's population.⁵⁰

Three points should be highlighted in analysing women's representation; First, ethno-nationalist movement emanate from highly mobilised or even armed movements. Second, ideological leanings have important value for women's equal

⁴⁷ Mencütek 1.

⁴⁸ Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988)

⁴⁹ Lloyd M. Sachikonye, "Democracy, Sustainable Development and Poverty: Are they compatible?," *Development Policy Management Forum*, 2002, ed. Addis Ababa, 23 Apr 2016
<<http://www.dpmf.org/images/occasionalpaper2.pdf>>

⁵⁰ Nazlı Çağın Bilgili, "Briding the Gender Gap in Turkish Politics: The Actors Promoting Female Representation," *European Perspectives – Journal on European Perspectives of the Western Balkans*, 2011, Oct. 107.

representation. The left-leaning ethno-nationalist parties may be supportive of women's equal participation in party politics. Third, voluntary party quota can work but not sufficient for women's representation. It helps to improve women's representation and political empowerment.⁵¹

Most studies have found that, party ideology has an important role defining party policies about women's representation. For example, Leftist parties are more open to gender quotas while ethnic parties prefer to keep out women's representatives and religious ethnic parties select low percentages of women.⁵²

Recording women's representation in Turkish politics, the most frequently repeated fact is that Turkish women received political rights even before most of their Western European counterparts. Turkish women received right to vote and run for office for the first time in 1930 local elections and in 1935 general elections following it.⁵³

Turkey is a developing country that is governed by a parliamentary system based on the single-chamber Grand National Assembly to which members are elected to serve four-year terms. The assembly is made up of 550 seats, with seats distributed to electoral districts according to population. Women's representation in Turkey is dramatically low; being ranked 92nd out of 143 countries according to the "Women in National Parliaments" dataset compiled by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (2013). Descriptive representation in the Turkish Parliament remained around 4 per cent from 1935 to 2002. However, it rose from 4.4 per cent in 2002 to 9.4 and 14.4 per cent in 2007 and 2011, respectively.⁵⁴

The actors are playing an important role for political representation. According to Bilgili's idea, three actors have the power to influence political parties that in return play an important role in increasing women's political representation. These are civic actors, international actors and political role models (Kurdish Political Parties). The

⁵¹ Miki Caul Kittilson, *Challenging Parties, Changing Parliaments: Women and Elected Office in Contemporary Western Europe*. (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 2006)

⁵² Stephanie S. Holmsten, Robert G. Moser, Mary C. Slosar, "Do ethnic Parties Exclude Women?," *Comparative Political Studies*, 2 Sep 2010 <<http://cps.sagepub.com/content/43/10/1179.abstract>> 179-201.

⁵³ Şirin Tekeli, *Women in Turkish Politics*, ed. Nermin Abadan Unat. (Leiden: Brill Publishers, 1981) 293-310.

⁵⁴ Mencütek 5.

Kurdish Political Movement is a significant role model. Parties and candidates representing in the Kurdish movement have recently started to play such a leading role in women's representation in Turkey. Women have a significant place in public representation of the movement and women's rights deserve a special attention within the party discourse.⁵⁵

5.1.1. Women Policies of the Kurdish Parties

Having analysed the path that led to the Kurdish women's movement, we now need to address the direct or indirect influences of Kurdish political parties on women's stance. The awakening of the Kurdish political movement and the feminist movement focused on liberalizing Kurdish women from their passive, closed, suppressed, deprived and slave-like status. Movement leaders noticed that this development was beneficial for the Kurdish public and their struggle and thus made this situation as the foundation of the ideology. After 1980, like before, as a matter of fact, women's position in their society was addressed as an indicator of the societal political status of Kurds. Despite the treatment, in the previous period, the image of a "liberal, strong and leading" Kurdish woman as a symbol of Kurds' being a "separate" and "civilized" nation, we witness an image of a "slave" and "degraded" Kurdish women as a symbol of the "enslavement" and "downgrading" of Kurds after 1980, and this was followed by a figure of women who would liberalize the society along with themselves. Surely, criteria which would strengthen identity and especially the moment were carried to politics.

Currently the Kurdish movement defends for women a life which is liberal, egalitarian and against gender discrimination, within the frame of women's salvation. Political parties, organizations, unions, books defending and suggesting these values, and studies were intensified much more especially after 1990. Today, there is almost no political party or organization which, despite having contributed to the Kurdish struggle, does not defend libertarian and egalitarian principles at the same time. A detailed analysis of the subject matter is only possible by a detailed examination of the issues of woman policy and women's problems of the legal Kurdish parties that took place in Turkey's politics. This is because woman policy was from time to time

⁵⁵ Bilgili 113-123.

developed in the programs and constitutions of the below mentioned parties and evermore expanded.

There is a conventional support for women in the programs of the prohibited Kurdish political parties (HEP, DEP, HADEP, DEHAP). The concept of conventional support is mentioned here refers to the general women's right conceptualizations contained in the constitutions of these parties. However, it was Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP), which displayed implementations that are more effective. By dealing with the woman issue in a general manner, the Kurdish parties preceding BDP served both to render the problem collective and holistic and to create the infrastructure of the current powerful dynamism of Kurdish women. We can hypothesize, therefore, that the Kurdish movement made either a direct or an indirect influence on the gender composition, institutional structure and policy creation of the legal political parties founded in 1990s including HEP, DEP, HADEP and DEHAP.

5.1.1.1. HEP

HEP is a political party which existed in Turkey between 1990 and 1993. HEP is known as Turkey's first legal Kurdish party. There are some features to support this situation: Kurds are the majority of supporters, it emphasizes on solving the Kurdish problem, and it has close ties to the PKK. As regards its structure, it did not feature a specific policy on women and no women's unit was established in connection with the party either. Apparently there were no female members among the founders of HEP, which was established in 1990, and it is declared in HEP's constitution that it is the "party of workers, the unemployed, clerks, teachers, democrats, social democrat and socialist luminaries, tradesmen, craftsmen, oppressed public communities and everyone who supports democracy", where no mention of women was made. The lack of reference to women is due to the male dominance and the visibility of women. Therefore, women were neither to acquire nor to lose any rights. So the constitution of HEP begins with an introduction whereby the situation in Turkey is explained. In addition, the introduction is followed by such subheadings as social law state, human rights, pluralism and participation under the main heading of the democratization of the state and the society. The Kurdish problem is also assessed under this heading.

The subsequent main headings concern local governments, law and justice, external affairs and defence, social policies, and environment and economy. "Women's rights" is addressed under the main heading of social policies and after such subjects as nutrition and housing problem. The party opinion on women's rights was stated in the following single paragraph in that party constitution, which consists of 64 pages including one and a half pages on nutrition and two and a half pages on housing problems:

"The type of education which denies the equality of women and men and excludes women from societal life shall be prevented, rules in violation of the equality of women and men shall be eliminated from laws, and economic, societal, cultural and legal measures shall be taken for ensuring women's equality to men in all areas of societal life." In this paragraph, as seen, no determination is made regarding the woman problem but targets for ensuring man-woman equality are listed. It is followed a section on "Protection of Family":

"Family as the natural and basic unit of the society shall be protected. All kinds of assistance shall be supplied towards the peace and welfare of family, protection of the health of mothers and children, and for improving the relationships among family members to ensure that they can improve themselves even more. The broadest protection and assistance shall be provided for mothers' health and children's health, care and education. No union of marriage shall be established without a free and complete consent of willing spouses."⁵⁶

5.1.1.2. DEP

DEP is a political party which was founded in the process of the Democratic People's Movement in 1991. Like HEP, it did not have a specific woman policy. No arrangement is made in its constitution regarding a woman policy other than the statement in its membership section: "In memberships, no discrimination shall be made based on race, sex, language, religion, sect, family, clan, class or profession." Although the constitution of HEP defended education, employment, finance and basic principles for self-expression, all of which support women's position in the society, DEP addressed these in more detail in its own constitution;

- 1- Gender inequality is addressed as a violation of human rights.

⁵⁶ HEP Party Statute, TBMM Page, 23 April 2016
<<https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/eyayin/GAZETELER/WEB/KUTUPHANEDE%20BULUNAN%20DIJITAL%20KAYNAKLAR/KITAPLAR/SIYASI%20PARTI%20YAYINLARI/199004408%20HEP%20PROGRAMI%201990/199004408%20HEP%20PROGRAMI%201990.pdf>>

- 2- Making of laws which specifically would enable men and women equality was advocated instead of an equality generalization.
- 3- In the argument on women's labour, low-profile public space employment was also offended for them. In this point, DEP utilizes in its constitution the solution of "women's employment in the public space" as one of the three strategies suggested by the feminist author Simone De Beauvoir for women to overcome being the second gender.

5.1.1.3. HADEP

People's Democracy Party (Halkın Demokrasi Partisi, HADEP) is a political party which was founded on 11 May 1994 during the process of the Democratic People's Movement. In the constitution of HADEP, the policy on women was taken from the section of social policies to the democratization section. Section titles might also be considered as an order of significance, this can indicate the level of importance attached to the issue.

In terms of daily political activities as well, just like in the case of manifestoes and constitutions, women seems to have remained far from the focus of interest of these parties. Press releases of parties regarding their activities as reflected in media organs also focused more on violations of human rights and the resolution of the Kurdish problem.

It is not difficult to understand this. Political parties cannot operate normally under continuous threat of being shut down while the extent to which violence towards civilians reached left almost no opportunity for ordinary agenda topics.

Unidentified murders which reached a climax in the middle of 1990s began to decrease from 1996 but the pressure on the party was maintained. However, in the process of HADEP, which is the most long-lived party among others in the same category, there were some improvements in terms of women's participation.

Women's units were formed in HADEP by time in parallel to the rising participation of women. The centralization of the women's units and their beginning to coordinate among themselves beginning from 1997 gave the signal of change.

In parallel to the initiation of the process whereby the women in local organizations began to work in coordination with a central women's unit, they also began to notice the gender discriminative practices in the party.

It should be stated that the main radical change occurred in HADEP Congress in 2000. In this Congress, the women's branch and the youth branch were recognized as autonomous organizations entitled to elect their own managements and, even more importantly, the principle of "positive discrimination" was introduced to the Constitution with the supplemental 4th article.⁵⁷

5.1.1.4. DEHAP

In 2005, Democratic People's Party (Demokratik Halk Partisi, DEHAP) was the latest among political party attempts (HEP-DEP-HADEP) of Kurds for participating in the political life in Turkey beginning from the ends of the 1980s. In the process of the foundation of DTP, DEHAP abolished itself to join DTH process.

In terms of manifesto and constitution principles, the most radical arrangements regarding "women's freedom" are found in the manifesto and constitution that was amended by DEHAP in its congress in 2003. In formal terms, "freedom of women" was placed not in the ending sections are like other manifestoes but in the second place immediately following the heading of "the democratization of the state and the society".

DEHAP based its opposition to gender discrimination not on a necessity of democracy or on a subject of social policy unlike the previous parties but on its strategic approach and addressed gender discrimination as a systemic problem.

The principle of positive discrimination is the primary implementations adopted by the party as a duty:

"DEHAP deems it is an essential duty to overcome the obstacles before the participation of women in the political and societal life. Positive discrimination shall apply until the conditions preventing women from being represented in the

⁵⁷ HADEP Party Statute, TBMM Page, 23 April 2016
<https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/e_yayin.eser_bilgi_q?ptip=SIYASI%20PARTI%20YAYINLARI&pdemirbas=199600971 >

processes of decision taking and implementation are eliminated. Accordingly, some arrangements shall be made in the Law on Political Parties."⁵⁸

The number of women candidates in DEHAP's lists for the year 2002 exceeded 100. Half of them were nominated in the first three places while women were nominated in the first place in 25 cities including cities with higher voting support potential such as Adana, Ağrı, Batman, Diyarbakır, Gaziantep, İstanbul (the 3rd Region), Siirt, Urfa and Van. This election was the one in which the woman quota was applied for the first time and additionally women were influential in the determination of woman candidates.

5.1.1.5. BDP

Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP)⁵⁹ was established as a social democrat and social liberal party in Turkey in 2008. Ex parties abolished the activities. All these formed a continuation with each transition women policy was imposed and finally recreated in BDP with some additional changes.

Declaring that it is a democratic, liberalist and egalitarian leftist mass party which takes as the basis the Kurdish ethnicity and values of the democratic civilization age, which is peaceable, pluralist, participative; which considers differences as the richness of the society, rejects all kinds of discriminations, takes as the basis human in society oriented democratic politics based on dialogue and agreement, appropriates universal values, defends innovation; in which believes that liberalization of humanity is only possible by equality between the genders and which, in this context, targets a democratic-ecological society and represented in the Turkish Parliament (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi, TBMM), BDP applies in its constitution. 40 percent gender quota for all kinds of elections inside the party and for the determination of candidates in local elections, and it takes the both genders in its quota. What makes the party special about its gender quota and what is considered

⁵⁸ DEHAP Party Statute, TBMM Page, 23 April 2016
<<https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/eyayin/GAZETELER/WEB/KUTUPHANEDE%20BULUNAN%20DIJITAL%20KAYITLAR/KITAPLAR/SIYASI%20PARTI%20YAYINLARI/200707309%20DEHAP%20PROGRAM%20VE%20TUZUK%202003/200707309%20DEHAP%20PROGRAM%20VE%20TUZUK%202003.pdf>>

⁵⁹ BDP Party Statute, TBMM Page, 23 April 2016
<http://www.bdp.org.tr/>

one of the most important points is the fact that the party implements positive discrimination in all the fields and levels of the party.⁶⁰

5.1.1.6. HDP

Peoples' Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi, HDP) is a leftist and claims to be anti-nationalist political party that operates in Turkey. It was established as the political branch of the Peoples' Democratic Congress (Halkların Demokratik Kongresi, HDK) on 15 October 2012. The party leadership is carried out based on the co-presidency system. According to the foundation constitution of the party, we find a broader definition compared with other Kurdish parties. According to this definition;

"The party is a political party which targets a democratic public power where all the oppressed and exploited people; all the excluded and ignored people and belief communities, women, workers, labourers, villagers, the youth, the unemployed, retirees, the disabled, LGBT individuals, migrants, those whose living areas have been destroyed; luminaries, writers, artists and scientists and all the circles who performs a struggle along with all these people come together to eliminate all kinds of oppressions, exploitations and discriminations and to establish a life with human dignity. It has adopted as its principal to oppose inequality between the genders in all the fields of the political, economic and societal life, and to struggle for eliminating all kinds of violence against women."⁶¹

Result of the elections that were carried out on 7 June 2015, HDP reached the highest rate of representation of women in the parliament. In HDP, which obtained 79 deputies, 26 women entered the parliament of the 25th term. This meant that one thirds of all HDP deputies in the parliament were women. So we see that HDP aimed to support Kurdish women who would get into politics based on HDP's woman quota and its co-presidency implementations. When we analyse the distribution in the Turkish Parliament of the 26th term after the last elections, a great difference between the Turkish parties and HDP is noticed;

⁶⁰ If one of the equal rated candidates is female, female candidate shall be deemed elected. BDP statute. Principles of Party Mechanism: Article 4, g

⁶¹ HDP Party Statue, HDP Page, 23 April 2016

<<http://www.hdp.org.tr/images/UserFiles/Documents/Gallery/Tuzuk.pdf>>

Table1: Women Representation after 1st November 2015 Election, Turkey

Party Name	Women		Man		Total
	Number	%	Number	%	
AKP	35	11%	282	89%	317
CHP	21	15,5%	113	84,5%	134
MHP	3	7,5%	37	92,5%	40
HDP	23	38,9%	36	61,1%	59

The distribution of the 26th Term Turkish Parliament as a result of the elections of 1 November 2015.⁶²

Table 1 shows us the women's and men's representation rates by parties in the elections of 2015. The importance attached by HDP to women's representation is obvious from the table. So we can summarize the answer to the question "How do Kurdish women's practices find a suitable way to develop?", which we asked in the beginning of the chapter, in the following way; women's problems also began to be included in party constitutions along with the changing structuring of parties and with changing societal political conditions. This change, which is not an easy one from a historical point of view, has progressed significantly by the route taken by politics. HEP, DEP, HADEP, DEHAP, BDP and HDP are the Kurdish parties we have been provided with by the process. Not so much influential initially in terms of women, these parties changed their constitutions, that is, their internal structures along with their names, that is, their external shells.

⁶² Çiçek Tahaoğlu, Bianet Web Page, 16 Apr. 2016, < <http://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/168890-kadin-vekil-orani-dustu-43-ilden-sadece-erkek-vekil-cikti>>

CHAPTER 6: EXCLUSIVE WOMEN PRACTICES IN THE KURDISH PARTIES

In this chapter, we want to seek an answer to the question, "How do Kurdish women's practices find a suitable way to develop?" In addition to the implementations about women, we observed in Kurdish parties, other influential practices performed again by these parties support the prominent stance of Kurdish women. Women, the importance of which was noticed in Kurdish political parties, have taken their places within the political atmosphere as a fundamental element of politics. By striving to organize their own lives, Kurdish women have created their unique organizations. Despite states and societal pressures, they have marched over the problems. While fighting against the dominant masculine mentality on the one hand, they have also fought against the traditional stance of women. They have exerted a bitter struggle in order to have a voice in all fields of societal life because the difficulties experienced could only be overcome by women's politics. Women's making politics with their own essence is important in this sense. Having continued on a state oriented line until now, Kurdish women have modified their standing. The women's politics in the new era aims to prioritize them. Directly participating in politics and the struggle, Kurdish women's stance also influences other women inside the politics in Turkey. This situation directly influences the positions of both the ruling party and also the opposition parties in Turkey's politics. As women begin to raise their voices, parties have begun to modify their structures to take women more to the centre. Increasing the number of women in political parties, the parliament, municipalities and assemblies and ensuring that they can take place in all positions which are held by men is a significant distance that has been covered although it does not mean everything. Kurdish women have been covering that distance rapidly.

6.1. 40 Percent Quota for Women

The effective application of quotas, particularly the voluntary party quotas, depends on many interrelated factors including the willingness of party leaders to open up decision-making positions and candidates to women, the specific placement of women on candidate list, sanctions for non-compliance, and penetration of women in the party structures by obtaining mid- and upper- level directing positions. The 40 percent woman quota is a product of struggle in Turkey. In 1999, HADEP started to implement voluntary quota for women. It was the first political party in Turkey to start this practice. HADEP was started 25 percentage quota for women in the party charter. This percentage has been increased with the each new Kurdish party. DEHAP, 35 percentage; DTP, 40 percentage. Participating in the General Parliamentary Elections of 22 July 2007 by independent candidates, DTP applied the 40 percent gender quota and specifying its candidates. This implementation was influential as 8 out of the 21 deputies, who joined DTP after participating in and winning the election as independent candidates, were women. Now, HDP use equal representation between men and women candidates.

BDP, which replaced DTP, exactly adopted the gender equality policies of DTP in particular. As for the other parties in the Turkish politics, a woman quota of 25 percent previously applied in Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi CHP) for instance, and this rate has been increased to percent there is no such quota practice in Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) and Nationalist People's Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP).

The 40 percent woman quota is a system that ensures that women obtain more floors in political life. This opportunity aims to resolve their insufficient representation and ensure equality between the genders. Despite these quota implementations, we have not yet reached global levels. Gaining political rights before did the women of many Western countries the participation of Turkish women in political life draws a sorrowful picture when compared with some other countries. With a rate of 14.4 percent based on information provided by National Parliaments by 1st April 2016, Turkey is on the 98th place in the list published by the UN and the Inter-Parliamentary Union. Table 2 shows the rates of women's representation in the top 20 countries.

Table 2: Representation of Women Rate in National Parliament

RANK	COUNTRY	SEATS	WOMEN	WOMEN%
1	Rwanda	80	51	63.8
2	Bolivia	130	69	53.1
3	Andorra	28	14	50.0
4	Cuba	612	299	48.9
5	Sweden	349	156	44.7
6	Seychelles	32	14	43.8
7	Senegal	150	65	43.3
8	Finland	200	85	42.5
9	Nicaragua	92	39	42.4
10	Ecuador	137	57	41.6
11	South Africa	400	166	41.5
12	Iceland	63	25	39.7
13	Norway	169	67	39.6
14	Belgium	150	59	39.3
15	Denmark	179	70	39.1
16	Netherlands	150	58	38.7
17	Timor-Leste	65	25	38.5
18	Mexico	500	187	37.4
19	Angola	220	81	36.8
20	Argentina	257	94	36.6

The percentage of women in national parliaments⁶³.

The 20 countries listed in Table 2 are only some of the countries which successfully implement a woman policy. Kurdish political parties which have successfully applied the 40 percent woman quota make a significant influence that supports an effective representational woman. This positive this termination towards women is the most important supporter of Kurdish women.

6.2. Co-Presidency System

The co-presidency system aims to ensure an equal representation involving one woman and one man in order to increase the representation and visibility of women in a party. We can already see this egalitarian approach in the woman deputy profiles of Kurdish parties. Therefore, women candidates of Kurdish parties come from the Women's Assemblies of the related party. They are elected from among the

⁶³ Inter-Parliamentary Union Page, 23 Apr. 2016 <<http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>>

candidates of those assemblies. The woman deputy profile of DTP/BDP is different from the other parties. It is possible to say that women deputies of Kurdish parties are also different in terms of their parliament activities. The co-presidency system has provided women with an equal opportunity for representation and appeal towards both the own voter mass party and also towards the external public. When compared with the political tradition whereby the leadership position of representation unquestionably longs to men, it can be said that co-presidency poses a radical alternative to that tradition.⁶⁴

Currently the co-presidency system of BDP and HDP enable women to take an active part in decision-making mechanisms in all regions and cities where woman candidates are nominated. It will contribute to the creation of conditions which will diminish the movement area of the "power" system of gender discrimination in local government steps in which do not recognize any gap in politics. It will reveal that politics is not just men's work, and cause the masculine mentality to transform and the "power" dominant style of politics to break. The co-presidency system is a mentality revolution in this sense.

Table 3: The co-presidents in HDP⁶⁵

Women	Men	Beginning of Task	Enf of Task
Fatma Gök	Yavuz Önen	15.10.2012	27.10.2013
Sebahat Tuncel	Ertuğrul Kürkçü	27.10.2013	22.06.2014
Figen Yüksekdağ	Selahattin Demirtaş	22.06.2014	on duty

The women's names listed in Table 3 is another act of positive discrimination performed after the practice of the 40 percent quota and an influential application that carry Kurdish women to higher levels in representation.

6.3. Equal Representation

Considering the 40 percent woman quota to be insufficient, HDP has taken this implementation one-step further with an egalitarian approach and replaced it with "equal representation". After the election declaration that they prepared for the General Elections of 1 November, HDP also made the Declaration of Women's

⁶⁴ Çağlayan 137.

⁶⁵ Wikipedia Page, 23 Apr. 2016,

<http://tr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Halklar%C4%B1n_Demokratik_Partisi#E.C5.9F_Ba.C5.9Fkanlar>

Election. This declaration announced with the motto, "Women Will Win for Freedom and Equality". We need to look to the parliament to see the women's representation as a result of the situation. 98 women deputies go into the parliament in 2015.

One third of these deputies are from HDP. The party sends 32 women deputies to the parliament thanks to its policies of co-presidency and the opportunity of national women from eligible places in equal conditions. About 40 percent of HDP deputies, 16 percent of AKP deputies and 14 percent of CHP deputies consist of women. The party with the worst score in this election in terms of the number of women deputies was MHP with only four women deputies.⁶⁶

6.1.1. Kurdish Women's View

In the previous section, we analysed the women's policy implementations of Kurdish political parties in detail and gave some good practice examples including the 40 percent quota and co-presidency. And now we will have a look at the opinions of some women in the Kurdish political parties. We will learn about their opinions about both being a woman and being inside a societal struggle. The first of these names, Pervin Buldan, is the first woman deputy from Iğdır. She is among the 1000 women who were nominated for noble peace prize by a Swiss women's initiative in 2005. Another name, Aysel Tuğluk, is a woman who performed the task of presidency in DTP. Both of them are concrete examples of the figural women we analysed above. Two women who obtained the power over representation on their own feet. They are the living evidences of the 40 percent quota implementation. Aysel Tuğluk also demonstrates that co-presidency is not just something spoken of but something actual.

Pervin Buldan walked on a long path that has extended from housewifery to politics. According to her;

"It is not just the struggle made by the freedom movement but at the same time the victimization caused by the state and the system, the pains that were experienced by women, and killing of men. Women including daughters, wives, mothers who

⁶⁶ Rengin Aslan, BBC Turkey, 23 Apr. 2016
<http://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler/2015/06/150608_kadin_kader_gs2015>

experience the pain that remains. But women began to fight rather than sit in their homes."⁶⁷

As one of the names who sought a path for themselves out of the order which tries to restrict women in a mould, Pervin Buldan preferred not to wait in her home but to oppose the war imposed and to seek her own right. The situation has two aspects; the struggle for freedom on one side and the women's freedom struggle within the general Kurdish freedom movement on the other side. Buldan emphasizes that the reason for getting to the parliament was to represent "Saturday Mothers". According to her, the venue where to perform the struggle is the Grand National Assembly of Turkey.

Aysel Tuğluk became an independent candidate of the Peace and Democracy Party from Van in the 24th Term General Parliamentary Election that was carried out on 12 June 2011. Explaining that it is very difficult to make politics as a woman inside the Kurdish politics, Tuğluk told;

"The biggest difficulty of struggling as a woman is that you have to do everything that men do not have to do. It might appear simple but we could not wear trousers in the parliament until recently, for instance. So we have to start from a disadvantageous position just because our identity as women."⁶⁸

Already serving as a co-president in the party, Tuğluk has taken the greatest step for women to actualize their dreams by getting into the parliament as an independent candidate.

It is clear from these explanations how difficult it is to be a woman and to struggle. Another fact, which adds to this difficulty, is to be a Kurdish woman. So we can summarize the answer to the question "How do Kurdish women's practices find a suitable way to develop?", which we asked in the beginning of the chapter, in the following way; noticing the importance of women, Kurdish political parties have recognized some privileges for them in order to appeal to a wider audience. While the male-dominated politics think that it can exploit women as a means to become more influential, women considered such privileges as a means to appeal to masses.

⁶⁷ Tuğçe Tatari, *Anneanne, Ben Aslında Diyarbakır'da Değildim*. (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2015) 168-169

⁶⁸ Tatari 181-189

CHAPTER 7: THE NAMES OF INFLUENTIAL KURDISH WOMEN

The final question we address is “How do Kurdish women fictionalize their life story?” Since it will not be possible to find our path without looking at the Kurdish women’s foreground, we are going to briefly go over a few key Kurdish women figures that were influential throughout the history.

Since Kurdish community has been earning its living with livestock and agriculture, women mandatorily joins working life. However, in time, because of the adaptation of the Islam in Kurdish dominated region, women gradually were withdraw from economic life. Therefore, there are differences in between Kurdish communities who adopt Islamic religious sermons and the ones who are not.

One criteria of the civilization are the women’s place on the community and the achievements they have made. In civil societies, women actually are the half of the nation: all kinds of rights and privileges, prestige and significance that the men have will also be granted to women generously.⁶⁹ Kurdish women living in the tribes are extremely emancipated at home. They live among men with a respectable status and also when it is necessary they have to power to undertake the authority of their spouses.

The women we have mentioned here are different from the Kurdish women who are getting belittled as we have laid emphasis before. In every community, there is a privileged class and Kurdish community shares this situation as well. The women who live in the tribes while assuming the roles of tribe daughters and wives of the tribe leaders have right to speak and can be influential. These women can be exemplified as it is shown in Picture 1.

⁶⁹Mehmet Bayrak, *Geçmişten Günümüze Kürt Kadını*. (Ankara: Özge Yayınları, 2002) 194.

Picture1: Kurdish Women



Amand Freiherr von Schweiger – Lerchenfeld: *Das Frauenleben der Erde*; Vien, Leipzig-1881

Kurdish women are standing against the applied assimilation and corruption politics. The Geography that Kurdish women lives affect their posture. Women who are stuck in between feudality and societal rules of `requirements of Islam` that are out of its essence are performing their fight for liberation of their country along with the fight for the women rights.⁷⁰ We see similar women's movements in Soviet, Algerian and Palestinian women.

Becoming an influential figure even in times of just being women was a struggle is one of the most distinctive aspects of the past period Kurdish women. The charisma of these women does not come from the men but instead their position and courage. In some areas, Kurdish women have certain freedom of movement, perhaps more than many other parts of the Middle East, but this is certainly not characteristic of all Kurdish dominated areas, and the nature and degree of this freedom moreover depend much on their families. The leading women who were discussed so far all belonged to those aristocratic circles, and each of them owed her authority initially to her father or husband.

⁷⁰ Hazal Peker, *Kürt Kadını – Amazonlar*. (İstanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayın, 2015) 13.

Today, Kurdish women are a part, manager and power of a collective force. The strategy commenced years ago; has given a new role to the Kurdish women that are limited by being influenced of the religion, political and social conditions. Mobilization is over taken. Individuals of Kurdish community in Turkey are indeed in political mobilization from `Kids who threw rocks`⁷¹, to old mother who was sentenced to home confinement for `to aid an organization` as she sent a sweater to her son in mountain troops in PKK.⁷² In this case, politization of Kurdish community can be completed as a whole with all indicators covering data like age, gender, marital status. This kind of women's movement does not seem too much. Free, warrior and leader Kurdish women have been organized in many ways such; mother for peace, goddess and guerrilla.

In Kurdish community, women identity is in the foreground. These are the very important symbols of gender equality and Kurdish women movement. Some of those names are; Adela Khanum, Kara Fatima, Mayan Khatun, Leyla Qasim and Kesire Yıldırım. These names that I have picked from a lot of influential women are individuals who have the will to take action regarding the change of the course of history for themselves and their people. These women not only challenge the ruling of the country they are living in but to the ruling system of the entire world.

At this point, we will see pioneer Kurdish women figures of the Kurdish history. Maybe we will understand how influential the women we have mentioned above by touching upon parts of their lives.

7.1. Adela Khanum (1847-1924)

Jaf were probably the most important tribe of southern side of Kurdish dominated areas. The person occupying the pinnacle of this social pyramid was not a man but a woman, Adela Khanum. She was the wife of Usman Pasha, the Begzade chieftain. Even when her husband was still alive, it was Adela Khanum who gradually assumed effective authority. Upon Usman Paha's death in 1909, she remained firmly in control, and her

⁷¹ UNICEF Turkey Page, 23 Apr. 2016 <http://www.unicef.org/turkey/pc/_gi58.html>

⁷² NTV Page, 23 Apr. 2016 <<http://www.ntv.com.tr/arsiv/id/25465757/>>

authority went unchallenged until her death in 1924. Adela Khanum was by all accounts a most remarkable woman and the author of two classical books on southern side of Kurdish dominated areas. Adela Khanum was not born into the Jaf tribe herself but hailed from the leading Kurdish family of the former principality of Ardalan the major center of Kurdish court culture, arts and literature in Iran. Khanum managed to keep those improved communications and Ottoman control at a distance. She has remarkable power and authority. Without such a family background, and without a tolerant husband, it would be extremely hard, if not impossible for a woman to achieve a position like hers. However, the anomaly of female leadership appears to be much more acceptable among the Kurdish than in the most other Middle Eastern societies.⁷³ When it is evaluated, we see that Kurdish community is more accepting from other Middle East countries in terms of women leaders. Women who have an important role in the family may also have a say in the tribe.

7.2. Kara Fatma (1888 – 1955)

Kara Fatma is known as Amazon*, Kurdish tribe leader, Kurdish Princess and hero in Western literature. In the 1850's another combative Kurdish woman captured the European imagination. Kara Fatma Khanum ("Black Lady Fatma"), the female chieftain of a Kurdish tribe from Marash (present Kahramanmaraş in Southeastern Turkey). Lady Fatma travels from Maras to Istanbul with 300 warriors in her command to show her support and loyalty to Ottoman Sultan I. Abdulmecid.

"Kara Fatma", as shown in Picture 2, was pictured as a woman with male looks in Australian press. When we evaluate her life, we can say that the impressive stance and commander image of her is making her more manly in this image.

⁷³ Martin Van Bruinessen, "From Adela Khanum to Leyla Zana: Women as Political Leaders in Kurdish Society," *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, Costa Mesa, CA, ed. Shahrzad Mojab, 2001,1-4.

*Ancient warriors of the legendary women. It is said they lived on the shores of the Black Sea. In Greek mythology, the warrior had carried out a form of matriarchy. Amazon would fight on horseback.

Picture 2: Kurdish Amazon Kara Fatma was in Austria Press



Amand Freiherr von Schweiger-Lerchenfeld: *Das Frauenleben der Erde*; Wien-Leipzig/1881

The original chieftain of Kara Fatma's tribe, Lady Fatma's husband, had run into trouble with the Ottoman government and had been put in jail for reasons that remain unclear. From the day of her husband's arrest, Lady Fatima had acted as the chieftain of the tribe.⁷⁴

Some of the Kurdish writers especially argue that women being involved as chiefs of tribes would constitute as a proof that women and men have equal rights in Kurdish community. A great number of Kurdish nationalists also argue that in Kurdish tribe system women had equal rights but this situation was changed with adaptation of the Islam. Kara Fatma was an influential women figure and one of the examples of woman representation. Her difference from Kurdish women figures of today, in old time's women had some rights from birth. Today's women fight to have rights that should have already been given by birth.

7.3. Leyla Qasim (1952-1974)

Leyla Qasim was born in Xaneqin in 1952. Leyla Qasim, attempted to hijack a plane in 1974 in order to draw attention on Kurdish genocide and oppression. This attempt did not conclude. She and her 4 friends were taken hostage on April 24, 1974 by operations conducted by the occupant regime. Leyla Qasim denied to be on trial in occupant court rooms. She said "Kill me! But you must also know that after my death thousands of Kurds will wake up. I feel proud and I am happy to sacrifice my life for the freedom of Kurdish dominated areas." Iraq regime stated if they apologize to them, they will be pardoned, but if not they will be executed. Leyla

⁷⁴ Martin Van Bruinessen, "From Adela Khanum to Leyla Zana: Women as Political Leaders in Kurdish Society," 5.

responded as “I apologize from Kurdish people because my life was not long enough to service more”. When Leyla Qasim was executed with her 4 friends she was only 22 years old.

In every May, annual commemorative ceremonies are held for Leyla Qasim who is a symbol for Kurdish Freedom Fight. Daughters born after that case were named as Leyla and women who joined in armed interventions used Leyla’s name as their code names.

7.4. Kesire Öcalan (Yıldırım) (1951 -)

Before giving details about Kesire Yıldırım, we need to mention PKK’s point of view on women identity. Because Kesire Yıldırım is directly within PKK organization. Women freedom movement is significantly stressed in PKK’s correspondences. Abdullah Öcalan that is general leader of PKK was supports double freedom for both Kurdish community and Kurdish women. These correspondences cause of undeniable results. Within PKK, both men and women become aware for traditional gender equality but the roles does not change that fast. Upon evaluating women profile of PKK who are on mountain troops, it can be said that joining to the guerrilla was a quick way to escape from marriage for young women but this escape results in other unequal relationships and new prejudices.

Abdullah Öcalan was in conflict with his enemies in many times but one of the most important conflicts was between him and his wife Kesire Yıldırım. Kesire Yıldırım was one of the founding members of PKK. She started her political career as a student activist, like her male colleagues. According to interview with Hüseyin Yıldırım we are going to have more detailed information about Kesire Yıldırım.

“She desired to follow the policy of PKK and have the position of the Öcalan. Kesire has a big impact in the formation of the repressive logic of PKK. And also, she has a great role in the rise of Abdullah Öcalan who becomes the dictator.”⁷⁵

She left the organization as she disagreed with Ocalan in the period of structuring of the PKK in the Bekaa Valley and she is still living in the Scandinavian countries.

⁷⁵ Cihan Page, 30 Mar. 2016 <<https://www.cihan.com.tr/tr/yildirim-kesire-ocalanin-gizli-baglantilarini-ogrenince-ayrildi-2-1900.htm>>

In response to the question of “How do Kurdish women fictionalize their life story?”, we can say that the women figure within historical development come as a response to the question of how they reshape their lives. These names no only change their own futures but also become examples for the future generation for the development.



CHAPTER 8: LEYLA ZANA PORTRAIT

This chapter also addresses question of the “How do Kurdish women fictionalize their life story?” Multi-dimensional problem that is invisible in the social sphere is the situation of Kurdish women because Kurdish women have tried to be visible not only in the patriarchic system but also with their political identity. Lately increasing Kurdish rhetoric and political struggle have made the political representation of Kurdish women one of the most discussed topics.

This chapter examines and discusses Leyla Zana in detail that forms the outline of the thesis in order to see the change experienced in terms of Kurdish women. Leyla Zana is one of the most important representatives of Kurdish women’s presence in politics with her life and political posture. She was a kid like everyone else, a child bride like some, she is a woman, she is a politician and she is a name to have become a symbol of freedom for many more people. We will go over the key points of her life.

It is possible to get some understanding on the codes related with Leyla Zana’s life from the story that she tells basing on a fairy tale;

“...Little Black Fish is a river fish that river is slimy, shallow and snowed. Although all the pressure from the jealous and bigoted environment, it sets off to find the sea and ignoring its tiny body, it dives to the depth of the water with its giant heart. It overcomes many traps, whirlpools, waterfalls... It overcomes many obstacles, pressure...It resists them and it does not fit into head waters as long as it resists. Alas! When everything is over, it becomes hopeful suddenly with friendship of lizard, frog, snail and gazelle. Even spoon maker swallows the bird, it gets rid of the spoon maker’s bag with her longing for the sea and loving for freedom. Handsaw fishes, snakes, crabs, cormorants and cognates and homogenous that are ready to swallow it in one bite...Nasty blows coming where and when it least expects...It is in a welter of blood. However it is still determined, resistant and knows that there is no tendency to go back from this road (...) It had once rebelled. Moreover, it is not regret. Despite everything and everything persist it should go no matter what happens, it says I should go and it goes. Little Black Fish is neither a philosopher nor a wise and a time child. Especially, it is not those who lost their mind and disturb mind. It is faithful on the

contrary. It is brave and smart and also is determined. It is rebellious and exultant. It is not in the eternity of the rivers, streams, floods, but it is in the eternity of the sea. It is told from generation to generation. Red, yellow, green, blue, orange and white colored fishes track footstep of the legend of little black fish. Because, it destroyed small worlds and its world before anything else for a free world and it did it.”⁷⁶

While putting emphasis on the political representation of Kurdish women, it is extremely important to understand a real women figure Leyla Zana and to be informed about her life. There are three identities to be highlighted regardings Leyla Zana. One of them is the “motherhood” identity. The second is “warrior”. The last is “goddess” identity mentioned much more in Leyla Zana’s defense texts.⁷⁷

There are the points that should be underlined about Leyla Zana; she has been recognized as a symbol of the Kurdish movement in the international community. Her career starts with the geographical, political and symbolic opposition. She has been described as peasant women and tried to offer herself as the representation of the suffering oppression and underdevelopment of Kurdish dominated areas as a symbolic image of rural and untrained women. She shows herself as a successful political representative of “Kurdish interest” in “the Turkish Parliament”. Women had been a matriarchal structure in the Kurd geography. Now, this power goes back to the rightful owner. Leyla Zana is a symbol now.

8.1. The Beggining of The Road

Leyla Zana was born in Bahçeköy hamlet of Silvan district, Diyarbakır in 1961. This region has political power on people. Before PKK, in this region there were other organizations in which women took active roles.

When Leyla Zana started elementary school, she was deeply concerned getting training but she had difficulty in speaking Turkish. She did not know Turkish and would not to understand what the teacher said. In 1975, she was obliged to get married with her father’s decision at the age of 14. Her husband Mehdi Zana was 20 years older than her and also he had kinship with her. Leyla Zana settled in Diyarbakır after getting married. After settling in Diyarbakır, Mehdi Zana has begun

⁷⁶ Leyla Zana, interview, Free Agenda Newspaper 13 Nov. 1997

⁷⁷ Arzu Yılmaz, “Siyaset ve Kadın Kimliği: Leyla Zana,” T.C. Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Kadın Çalışmaları Anabilim Dalı, 2006, Ankara, 23 Apr. 2016
<<http://acikarsiv.ankara.edu.tr/browse/3324/4180.pdf>>

to be visible within the political life but she did not support him to be mayor. Mehdi Zana was determined and he became the independent Kurdish candidate.

Leyla Zana was part of the changes result of policy on September 12, 1980 military coup. Mehdi Zana was arrested in the period of 1980 military coup, as he was a mayor. Leyla Zana experienced many difficulties in her prison visits, as she could not speak knowing Turkish. During the years following the coup, the regime has banned Kurdish. Mehdi Zana's term in prison has led to the start of a fundamental change in her life.

“Sevgili Leyla, Uzun Bir Sürgündü O Gece” (Dear Leyla, A Long Exile That Night Was) is the biggest example of the feelings of Mehdi Zana. This book is a long letter that was written by Mehdi Zana to Leyla Zana. It gives us short but remarkable document from the experience he had before. Mehdi Zana speaks of things that he lived in prison, and his memories during the transition process from Diyarbakır to Aydın prison. We can understand some feelings based on the letter;

“Dear Leyla,

Today it is the 17th day of whereas my other friends are on 32nd day. Therefore, now it is 2nd August 01.00 pm connecting 3rd of August. I removed my bed tired and exhausted way. My body became slower. I am asking about how will these exiles when the hunger reach death border. I think everyone has this question in his or her eyes. When we came eye to eye with the friends, I see it more clearly. Yes, where are we and how we are?...”⁷⁸

8.2. Changing Conditions

Leyla Zana was actively involved in politics during Mehdi Zana's term in prison. Women were consoling each other with the hope to see their relatives and shared similar feelings. Women had taken the action with the identity of “mother” and “wife”. Their power became more visible by other people. In that period, Leyla Zana grew much more conscious. 1980-90 can be described as a period of a rebirth for Leyla Zana. She learned to read and write together with her children. She received her elementary, secondary and high school degrees by taking exams outside. We see that the waiting in front of the prison becomes a political identity.

⁷⁸ Mehdi Zana, Sevgili Leyla Uzun Bir Sürgündü O Gece. (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1995)

One of the prisoners said that “our families should walk to Ankara”. The women waiting in front of the prison did not have an association. They have taken the road from Diyarbakır with Prisoners Solidarity Association (Tutuklu Aileleri Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Derneği, TAYAD). Leyla Zana was like a natural leader of the women. Women were listening to her and respecting her opinion and decisions.

Ankara visit was a turning point for women and they gained the ability to act collectively. The volition of her, the women decided to make hunger strike. Hunger strike was widely covered by the press. Improvements were made in the prison when the action ended. Most importantly, speaking Kurdish was permitted.

Mehdi Zana was sentenced to 9 years. Leyla Zana could not visit him often with the reason that he will be transferred to the Aydın Prison. Therefore, she began to devote herself more time. The position that she began actively in Human Rights Association (İnsan Hakları Derneği, İHD), Diyarbakır Branch was her first time to be member of an association.

Leyla Zana became well known and one of the popular people when İHD/HRA activities addend upon prison actions. She has been accepted as Leyla Zana.

Because of her political stance, many people wish her to replace Mehdi Zana for Diyarbakır Municipality, but Leyla Zana did not accept this situation. Then she was brought to the Diyarbakır office representative of the daily “Yeni Ülke/New Country”. With the duty that would last a year, she was more interested both managing the office and issues related with distribution and sales in the Southeast.

The Kurds who were expelled from the Social Democratic Populist Party (Sosyaldemokrat Halkçı Parti, SHP) formed a new party. The new established party was HEP. HEP wished Leyla Zana as a woman candidate. As a result of a long struggle, She accept this request. She emphasized the struggle of the Kurds in every speech. Her only regret was low female participation in the election campaign. She addressed to the women in Dicle;

“There are women in all spheres of life. Women enduring the pain of life. Why do not they determine their own future? Why will others appoint them? I will not speak if women come here.”⁷⁹

Leyla Zana was aware of the expectations of people that voted her to solve the identity problem and stop the bloodshed. She thought they occupied the ministerial seats unless they solve it.

She entered to Turkish Parliament as the first Kurdish women parliament from 1991 general elections. She was elected by forty five thousand preference votes in Diyarbakır where she went to the polls. HEP has made an alliance with SHP. The purpose of this alliance is to stop political bloodshed.

After the elections in 6 November 1991, Leyla Zana stranded on the parliamentary platform, she took her oath, but she continued rather than descend from platform. That sentence has meaning as follows: “I have read this oath for the brotherhood of the Kurdish and Turkish peoples”. She was speaking Kurdish for the first time in the Parliament platform.

Leyla Zana was arrested on 3 March 1994. She was sentenced to 15 years. She entered Ankara Ulucanlar Closed Prison in 1994 and remained there for 10 years. Although there were many of her friends entering the prison, headlines have always mentioned her, the reason for that she was the only one to take her oath as Kurdish in Turkish Parliament.

Picture 3: Leyla Zana’s trial process in 1991



DEP MP’s whose untouchableness was lifted after the oath crisis in 1991 was sentenced to imprisonment by being tried in State Security Court (Devlet Güvenlik Mahkemesi, DGM).

⁷⁹ Faruk Bildirici, *Yemin Gecesi Leyla Zana’nın Yaşam Öyküsü*. (İstanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2008) 107.

The place of Kurdish language in Leyla Zana's life is dramatic. She was not able to complete her education, not speak with her husband in the prison. She was removed from the Turkish Parliament.

Turkey is being in civil war and the request to be member of EU have caused to Europe to address the violations of Human Right. Leyla Zana became a symbol of freedom, especially in Europe. Leyla Zana's call for freedom has been the subject of press campaigns in Europe for a long time. Indeed, thanks to the popularity of this campaign, France Honorary Citizenship Title, granting Leyla Zana's name on a street in Paris and candidatedship for Nobel Peace prize have been brought to agenda. Leyla Zana did not receive the Nobel Peace prize, but the European Parliament gave her "Skharou" freedom prize in 1995.

When we look at Leyla Zana's profile, we can see that she uses the woman identity together with "motherhood". She has preferred to be recognized with this identity in the foreground of every field that she works. Leyla Zana has managed to put away social perception toward her sexual identity in this way. She tried to form a shield by putting motherhood in front of womanhood, as "motherhood" identity is a category-making woman nonsexual in every aspect.

Women would outweigh the feminist side is concerned. Leyla Zana is Kurdish nationalist as well as women's rights advocate. She has not finished the positive aspects of women by counting;

"Woman is the seeker of justice and truth. Woman is a peaceful, maternal and libertarian. Woman is an egalitarian, devoted and self-sacrificing. Therefore, they symbolize social freedom at the long termed history pages."⁸⁰

Leyla Zana has lived in prison too. While reviewing the aftermath of three years in prison, she emphasizes the incident on the oath ceremony. When looking back, she was seeing only one problem. I emphasized fellowship of the people as Kurdish. I should have emphasized the fellowship of Turkish and Kurdish", she was thinking of these, but not accepting that she was wrong, and paying the penalty.

⁸⁰ Arzu Yılmaz, "Siyaset ve Kadın Kimliği: Leyla Zana," T.C. Ankara Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Kadın Çalışmaları Anabilim Dalı, 2006, Ankara, 23 Apr. 2016
<<http://acikarsiv.ankara.edu.tr/browse/3324/4180.pdf>>

Leyla Zana entered prison by accusations for her Kurdish speech in the oath ceremony in the Parliament, after 10 years she was welcomed with Kurdish language with green-red-yellow colors out of the prison. Kurdish programs are being broadcasted even in the state television, TV channels are being formed to make Kurdish broadcasting, and Kurdish language classes took their place in the curriculum of universities. It seems there are some changes on the way.

When out of prison she found herself right in the middle of a busy political agenda. However, Leyla Zana has changed; the reason for the change was prison life. Firstly DEHAP was terminated and DTP was established, it began to form a new order. However, Leyla Zana did not take place in this new order, although people had been waiting for, and wished to see her at the political stage. Ongoing political bans were shown about the reasons her not involving in this new party. Then Leyla Zana almost disappeared, she fall into silence beyond these political ban. She expressed as follows:

“No one has the right to deceive the society for 1,5 years, to put into expectations, to break their hope. I cannot anymore, I cannot offer contribution. Because I cannot deceive my people. The thing you bring and you perform is very different. That is all from me, have a good trip. I wish you great success.”⁸¹

Leyla Zana was sad about not realizing her dream of establishing a new party embracing all of Turkey. She was thinking of herself not being a part of discriminatory policy. Many things changed for her.

After 1st November election, she stepped back again. AKP has achieved majority for the power alone, only 20 Kurdish deputies entered into parliament. The most refreshing aspects of the election results for Leyla Zana, was that there were eight women among the deputies. All the women member of parliaments saying, “We are Leyla Zana” by taking her as an example. In fact, the reality is that people are always proud of their success stories. Kurdish women see their representative. That is why She has a symbolic significance. She is a woman living with the same problems like other women. Motherhood at the young age, prison, economic difficulties.... She wants to give back what she has learned in this short life, to the community. For my view; Leyla Zana could not say Kurdish words in the oath ceremony, there were so many women behind her so that she wanted to prove something that might change,

⁸¹ Bildirici 341.

that day in the Parliament, she looked pretty alone, but in fact she was not alone. There were thousands of women behind her. Maybe it was possible for women to be ignored until that day. But after that day, it would no longer possible to ignore the existence of women. Zana's entering into Parliament, became a significant milestone in terms of presenting political struggle against obstacles that both patriarchies in their society and official language, identity politics put in front of Kurdish women and making this struggle visible.

Leyla Zana was removed by being taken into custody in 1994 from the Parliament that she first entered in 1991. She has achieved to enter into the Parliament as a Diyarbakır Deputy for the second time. Leyla Zana who was one of BDP backed independent candidate of continuation of HEP tradition stranded in the Parliament bench to swear her oath. This time, it was not faced with a 'crisis'. She did not speak Kurdish in the parliament.⁸²

Picture 4: Leyla Zana's oath ceremony, on 1 October 2011



Leyla Zana was once again on the parliamentary platform for an oath-taking ceremony on 1 October 2011.

The situation changed again when the date shows 17 November 2015 for a oath ceremony in the Parliament on 1 October 2011 after 20 years. Leyla Zana who was elected Ağrı Deputy from HDP (People's Democracy Party) on 1 November 2015, used the "Nation of Turkey" expression instead of "Turkish Nation" when she was in the Parliament platform, a similar crisis was faced once again like the oath crisis in 1991 after 24 years.

⁸² Portrait: Leyla Zana , Aljazeera Turk Page, 23 Apr. 2016, <<http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/portre/portre-leyla-zana>>

Picture 5: Leyla Zana's oath ceremony on 17 November 2015



Leyla Zana was on the platform for an oath ceremony on 17 November 2015 after 24 years later.

She has been trying to establish a connection between Kurds and Turks to show her response that received the oath ceremonies. According to conversation with her, there are three ways to make the relationship regularly:

- “- Once terrorism and Kurds expression should not be remembered together.
- Second, Kurdish identity should be a constitutional guarantee.
- Third, Kurdish children too suffer from assimilation.”⁸³

There were many Kurdish women in the parliament today that watched Zana alone at the first oath. Many things have changed since then. For example, women are represented almost 50 percent in decision and governing body of the party. The unchanging thing is a colossal struggle between existing struggle, and solidarity of labor and women.⁸⁴

The fact that related with Kurds who are part of a community not to feel that they belong themselves anywhere and Kurdish women who are the most important value of that community; the way of being one is passing through being all. Leyla Zana is a part of a whole and she is an effective female figure. The political will that she has followed carried her in front of many women. She became a role model for many women. Although she is an important figure, she has not participated in legislative activities like her political stance.

When we look at her legislative activities in Assembly, the table is very surprising; on one hand there are no first signature owned Legislative Proposals, General

⁸³ Enis Berberoğlu, Metehan Demir, Hürriyet Gazetesi Page, 10 Apr. 2016
<<http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/inaniyorum-bu-isi-erdogan-cozer-20756906>>

⁸⁴ Handan Çağlayan, Bianet Page, 10 Apr. 2016 <<http://www.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/160802-leyla-zana-bir-gun-bir-dil-tarih>>

Meeting Resolution, Non-confidence Motion, Parliamentary Investigation Proposal and Research Council Resolution; owned Oral Parliamentary Questions; Signed General Meeting Resolution and Parliamentary Investigation Proposal. On the other hand, we will see some written Parliamentary Question, General Assembly Speech, signed Non-confidence Motion and signed Parliamentary Research Proposals.⁸⁵ The reason for the statement to be surprising is her very few actions include women's issues. She has 3 first signature owned Non-confidence Motion. These are related with Manisa/Soma disaster also she has 185 first signature owned Research Council Resolution. These are related with land corruption, air pollution, native tongue, women's murders, housing problems of university students, floods, retired citizens, ISID, forest fire, industrial sector, Syrian civilians, unsolved murders, stem cells researches, asylum-seekers, drugs, use of bicycles, unemployment insurance, socio-economic problems, systematic violence against women, food safety, Turgut Özal's death, tea manufacturer, disabled citizens, health services in their mother tongue, Chernobyl disaster, discrimination and hate crimes. This table shows us her fair side. She did not concentrate only women issues and she has addressed the problems of the Kurdish and Turkish people common problems.

And, the most intriguing question about her “What does she think about the exclusive women practices (%40 quota, co-presidency system and equal representation)?” I have no doubt that she supports such practices. According to Leyla Zana, co-presidency system will be a model for Turkey;

“(...) we try to create alternative system which as on male one female. This system will be imposed by all political parties by all people of Turkey maybe two years, three years later.”⁸⁶

Leyla Zana is one of the influential women names for Kurdish women. We have examined detail about her political stance from following interview with her;

“How do you explain Leyla Zana?

I look myself as a human being after that as Kurdish women.

⁸⁵ TMMBB Page, Leyla Zana's Legislative Activities, 10 Apr. 2016

<https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/milletvekillerimiz_sd.sonuc?p_donem=25&adi=&soyadi=zana&il=&parti=&kelime>

⁸⁶ Leyla Zana, Aljazeera Turk Page, 16 Apr. 2016 <<http://www.aljazeera.com.tr/haber/zana-esbaskanlik-turkiyeye-ornek-olacak>>

How do you reflect women issues as a woman?

We do not consider Kurdish women separate from their people. Their salvation depends on the liberation of the Kurdish people. The demands of the Kurdish women are always suppressed. Today, they are sending me to the parliament as an indication of democratization.⁸⁷

We see once again; the women's movement inseparable from the social movements. According to Leyla Zana, loyalty comes first among other values that follow it. The portrait drawn is being Kurd, being woman, being mother and being human: We have summarized the question of "How do Kurdish women fictionalize their life story? that we asked at the first of the Chapter; when answer this question related with Leyla Zana, we have seen a figure who stands firm, has the courage convictions and accepts the existence of nation that it is more important than her own life. So Kurdish women have come to prominence in politics by such implementations as the 40 percent quota, co-presidency and equal representation.

⁸⁷ Leyla Zana, Röportaj Gazetesi Page, 21 Apr. 2016 <<http://www.roportajgazetesi.com/leyla-zana-biz-et-ve-kemik-gibiyiz-c2868.html>>

CONCLUSION

As analyzed above; Kurdish people, who played an important role in the representation of a specific ethnicity, has continuously changed their shell within the Turkish political structure. Women have been effective and significant figures of Kurdish parties with their differentiating political stance. Gender effect, recognized today with its ethnicity coming from past and strong identity, has been noticed by the Kurdish political parties. Women, who pose a steady stance at the points where men remain incapable, have achieved to prove themselves also in political arena.

The nation is a part where someone belongs to and the sense penetrates into the nation is nationalism. While mentioning about Kurdish community and its women, who are a significant part of that community; we need to examine the superior group, which they belong to. The distance taken by the nationalism in the world also reflected to Kurdish community.

While talking about the women of a nation, we also need to mention about the concepts of being a nation and nationalism; hence, the start point of this way is nationalism. We need to be unified and only in this way, we can be a nation. While making research about Kurdish women; in the beginning, we needed to have detailed information about the nation that these women belong to, then we were able to see the women figure, that we analyzed. And the detailed causes that push them for a change. As a result; the point that we have examined in detail is globalized Kurdish women.

While making research about Kurdish women; we initially examined the women as gender. From the general framework, we observed the differentiating process of the women. The women, who have been globalized in time, were able to change itself within the process. Nationalism, which is a masculine concept, has been unified with women gender and in this way it achieved to affect a broader area. Whether she is Kurdish or Turkish, motherhood concept is a very significant issue that cannot be

ignored while analyzing woman's stance. She thinks both in an emotional and logical way, but she is able to blend these two and reach to the truth. The load shouldered by woman is very heavy along the long arduous journey.

The past of Kurdish women has been extremely important on their effective political stance. The geography which they lived in, and their sub cultures have been able to survive until today. It is possible to see the effect of the other women figures dating back on their say in the community. The Kurdish women, who have been mentioned in detail before, have achieved to be role model for the next generations due to their outstanding stance in their communities. Many Kurdish women today adopted the stance of these women heroes, to whom they believe in, and aimed to follow their track. In their own words; their challenge is about both their own gender and the community they live in.

Besides the social dimension, there is an effective political progress for Kurdish women. Kurdish parties and men set up, whom recognized the social power hold by the women, recognized that the change is required. Women, who entered into the party directives of Kurdish parties, achieved to take active roles. These new party formations that aim to defend positive discrimination towards women have been an active voice for political changes such as 40 percent women quota, co-presidency and equal representation.

Starting from the initial point, where I emphasized and tried to highlight the prioritized political stances of Kurdish women, to the point I came now; I achieved to be a witness of the starting point of a community and the point where it tries to reach. I realized the importance given to the steps taken for Kurdish women today and their different stances. Leyla Zana, sample portrait of my topic, is an effective Kurdish woman who has a significant contribution on the change and who reveals this change today. The changes in her life are parts of Kurdish community and she is an important representative of Kurdish women's stance. Her life has been an example for many women similar to her and maybe has shed light to the way of the other women who follow her. Leyla Zana, who grew up and matured with the difficulties she experienced, aimed to go further instead of giving up. She realized that being woman necessitates moving further rather than going back and she raised awareness

both in her own group and in other groups where the male-dominant perception persisted. Now, the politics is much more woman and mother.



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