

T.C.
MARMARA ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
SİYASET BİLİMİ VE ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER ANABİLİM DALI
ULUSLARARASI İLİŞKİLER(ING) BİLİM DALI

**A CASE STUDY ON THE POLITICIZATION OF INTERNALLY
DISPLACED KURDISH WOMEN IN PRO-KURDISH PARTIES AND
THE REMAKING OF GENDER RELATIONS IN ISTANBUL**

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GİZEM DAMLA ERES

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the development of political agency and of gender awareness among forcibly displaced Kurdish women in the context of forced migration in the 1990s in Turkey. It focuses on the narratives of migrant Kurdish women settled in Istanbul about their experiences of displacement, violence, gender and ethnic based discrimination to explore the relationship between displacement and the construction of gendered identity. Through the use of theoretically informed 16 semi-structured in-depth interviews with politicized Kurdish women residing in three different districts of Istanbul, this thesis contends that internal displacement opens up new socio-spatial spaces for Kurdish women to negotiate and remake established gender roles and gendered social practices within their families and communities. By analyzing the narratives of these women, it argues that internal displacement has a transformative effect on displaced women's perceptions of gender roles and ethnic belonging in several ways: not only does it promote new subjectivities through reconfiguration of gender relations, but it also blurs the distinction between private and public gendered spaces as it implies a reconfiguration of traditional patterns of social and economic activity. In order to substantiate this argument, this study investigates changing gender dynamics and social relations governing the intra-household division of labor and decision-making related to expenditure and budget allocation, as women develop political agency through their socialization in pro-Kurdish parties in the urban context.

Keywords: Kurdish women, Istanbul, internal displacement of Kurds, political agency, gender awareness, transformation of gender relations

Advisor: Assistant Professor Nurşen Gürboğa KORALTÜRK

ÖZ

Bu tez, Türkiye’de 1990’larda deneyimlenen zorunlu göç sürecinde, ülke içinde zorla yerinden edilen Kürt kadınlar arasında siyasal öznellik ve toplumsal cinsiyet bilincinin gelişimini incelemektedir. İstanbul’a yerleşmiş olan göçmen Kürt kadınların yerinden edilme, şiddet, etnik ve cinsiyet temelli ayrımcılık deneyimleri hakkındaki anlatılarına odaklanılarak, yerinden edilme süreci ve toplumsal cinsiyet kimliğinin inşası arasındaki ilişkiye bakılmaktadır. Bu çalışma, İstanbul’un üç farklı ilçesinde ikamet eden ve politize olmuş 16 Kürt kadın ile yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmelere dayanarak; yerinden edilme sürecinin, kadınların aile ve topluluk içindeki yerleşik toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini ve cinsiyetçi sosyal pratikleri müzakere edebilmeleri ve yeniden kurabilmeleri için yeni sosyo-mekânsal alanlar açtığını iddia etmektedir. Anlatılar incelenerek ülke içinde yerinden edilmenin kadınların etnik aidiyet ve toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine ilişkin algıları üzerinde dönüştürücü bir etkisi olduğu öne sürülmektedir: Yerinden edilme süreci, toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkilerini yeniden şekillendirmek yoluyla yeni öznellikler üretmekle kalmayıp; geleneksel sosyo-ekonomik pratikleri dönüştürerek cinsiyete dayalı kamusal ve özel alan ayrımını da belirsizleştirmektedir. Bu argümanı desteklemek amacıyla bu çalışma, kadınların Kürt hareketini temsil eden siyasi partiler içinde sosyalleşerek siyasal öznellik geliştirmesi ile birlikte hane içi iş bölümü, bütçe tahsisi ve harcama konularını belirleyen sosyal ilişkiler ve toplumsal cinsiyet dinamiklerindeki değişimi incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Kürt kadınlar, İstanbul, Kürtlerin ülke içinde yerinden edilmesi, siyasal öznellik, toplumsal cinsiyet bilinci, toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkilerinin dönüşümü

Danışman: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Nurşen Gürboğa KORALTÜRK

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Gizem Damla ERES

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AFP	Armed Forces of the Philippines
BDP	Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi
DDKD	Doğu Devrimci K�lt�r Dernekleri
DDKO	Devrimci Doęu K�lt�r Ocakları
DEV-GEN�	Devrimci Gen�lik Federasyonu
DISK	Devrimci İř�i Sendikaları Konfederasyonu
GAD	Gender and Development
GAFM	Gender and Forced Migration
G���-DER	G�� Edenler Sosyal Yardımlařma ve K�lt�r Derneęi
GPID	Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement
HDP	Halkların Demokratik Partisi
H�NEE	Hacettepe �niversitesi N�fus Et�tleri Enstit�s�
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
IHD	İnsan Hakları Derneęi
OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
KDPT	Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey
KDRP	K�ye D�n�ř ve Rehabilitasyon Projesi
KHRP	Kurdish Human Rights Project
MAZLUM-DER	İnsan Hakları ve Mazlumlar icin Dayanıřma Derneęi
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province
OHAL	Olaęan�st� Hal
PKK	Partiya Karker�n Kurdistan
TAF	Turkish Armed Forces
TIHV	T�rkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı
TWP	Turkish Worker's Party
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WAD	Women and Development

WID

Women in Development

WIFM

Women in Forced Migration



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The 1990s was marked by an ongoing internal armed conflict in Turkey between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*, PKK) and Turkish security forces which lasted until 1999, having profound economic, political and social consequences on all strata of society. One of the most immediate consequences of the conflict was the forced internal displacement of the Kurdish population from the eastern and southeastern parts of Turkey.

There have been various estimates as to the number of Kurds who were displaced from their hometowns in this process. In its 2001 report, Migrants' Association for Social Solidarity and Culture (*Göç Edenler Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Kültür Derneği*, GÖÇ-DER) claimed that an estimated 4 to 4.5 million Kurds were forced to flee their homes.¹ The Kurdish Human Rights Project (KHRP) estimated the number to be around 3.5 million.² According to a 2005 report published by Hacettepe University Institute of Population Studies (*Hacettepe Üniversitesi Nüfus Etütleri Enstitüsü*, HÜNEE), the number of the population who had to flee their homes due to security reasons ranges between 953.680 and 1.201.200 over a 20 year period since 1986.³ However, the official numbers reported by the Turkish government seems to be much lower. Considering the number of applications made to the governorships within the scope of the Return to Village and Rehabilitation Project (*Köye Dönüş ve Rehabilitasyon Projesi*, KDRP), the official sources estimate the number of those

¹¹ Mehmet Barut, *Zorunlu Göçe Maruz Kalan Kürt Kökenli TC Vatandaşlarının Göç Öncesi ve Göç Sonrası Sosyo Ekonomik, Sosyo Kültürel Durumları, Askeri Çatışma ve Gerginlik Politikaları Sonucu Meydana Gelen Göçün Ortaya Çıkardığı Sorunlar ve Göç Mağduru Ailelerin Geriye Dönüş Eğilimlerinin Araştırılması ve Çözüm Önerileri* (İstanbul: Göç-Der, 1999-2001).

² KHRP (Kurdish Human Rights Project), *Internal Displacement in Turkey*, accessed June 16, 2016, http://www.khrp.org/khrp-news/human-rights-documents/doc_download/285-internal-displacement-in-turkey.html.

³ HÜNEE (Hacettepe Üniversitesi Nüfus Etütleri Enstitüsü), *Türkiye Göç Ve Yerinden Olmuş Nüfus Araştırması*, accessed April 13, 2016, www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/tgyona/TGYONA_rapor.pdf

Kurdish citizens, who were displaced from the fourteen provinces under the state of emergency, to be at 386.360.⁴

Although governmental authorities and various non-governmental organizations provide different figures on the numbers of forcibly displaced Kurds, what they have in common is that they lack data on internally displaced persons disaggregated by gender, which prevents us from comprehending gender-specific impacts of displacement. Since internal displacement is a gendered process, affecting men and women differently, notions of both masculinity and femininity undergo a process of reconstruction, and gender roles are renegotiated.

Meanings attached to physical space, to spatial displacement, to the idea of home, to the death of loved ones, and feelings of loss of status followed by forced displacement, are all shaped by gendered constructions of the self. Thus, men's experiences of displacement cannot be discussed in isolation from those of women. Throughout the thesis, I will try to understand changing gendered power structures among displaced Kurdish population in the urban context with a specific focus on the effect of forced displacement on the development of gender and political consciousness among displaced Kurdish women.

There are various studies which shed light on how displacement shapes configurations of masculine practices⁵, but this thesis shifts the center of analysis to women in order to examine changes in gender relations both among politicized Kurdish women living in Istanbul, and between them and their male counterparts, through the gaze of women interlocutors due to time and space limitations. Despite this limitation, this thesis purports to show that as a gendered process, displacement reconfigures not only femininities, but also masculinities. The main questions this thesis purports to answer are: How gender relations are transformed or reproduced through the internal displacement of the 1990s as it implies a reconfiguration of traditional patterns of social

⁴ "Köye Dönüş ve Rehabilitasyon Projesi," T.C. İçişleri Bakanlığı İller İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü, accessed July 18, 2016, <http://www.illeridaresi.gov.tr/k-ye-d-n-s-ve-rehabilitasyon-projesi-kdrp->

⁵ Ronald L. Jackson II and Murali Balaji, ed., *Global Masculinities and Manhood*, (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2011 ; Peter Kabachnik et.al., "Traumatic Masculinities: The Gendered Geographies Of Georgian IDPS From Abkhazia," *Gender, Place and Culture* 20, no.6 (2013): 773-793.

and economic activity? What are the channels through which displaced Kurdish women are empowered as agents of change in the urban context? How did forcibly displaced Kurdish women enhance their social and political agency, and what were the ways in which this agency could manifest itself?

These are the questions that are prompted by the increasing public visibility of Kurdish women in the urban centers following their displacement in the 1990s. In order to understand what lies behind this increasing visibility, I contend that it is very significant to trace Kurdish women's experiences with displacement, violence, loss of loved ones and of home which played a key role in their identity construction as women and as Kurds.

Nira Yuval Davis argues that women's experience with conflict, violence and displacement can open up a space for enhancing their social and political agency while she acknowledges gender-specific vulnerabilities women face in times of conflict.⁶ Similarly, Cynthia Enloe argues in her book entitled, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases*, "Nationalism typically has sprung from masculinized memory, masculinized humiliation, and masculinized hope."⁷ With this statement, Enloe sheds light on the gendered and symbolic nature of women's participation in nationalist projects and conflicts, while at the same time she recognizes that their participation can enhance their socio-political spaces by moving out domestically defined roles such as motherhood.⁸ However, it should be noted that, as Nancy Scheper Hughes argues, women's practices of nurturing and caring cannot be conceptualized in an essentialist manner as universal practices guided by innate maternal qualities. As Hughes, this thesis takes the view that these practices can be performed beyond the domestic as a tool of exerting political agency⁹ as is the case with Saturday Mothers (*Cumartesi Anneleri*) who demonstrate, since 1995, in the name of their children who disappeared as a result of the conflict between the PKK and the Turkish security forces. From this

⁶ Nira Yuval Davis, "Nationalist Projects and Gender Relations," *Narodna umjetnost-Hrvatski časopis za etnologiju i folkloristiku* 40, no. 1 (2003): 22.

⁷ Cynthia Enloe, *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014): 93.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁹ Nancy Scheper-Hughes, "Maternal Thinking and the Politics of War," in *The Women and War Reader*, ed. Lois Ann Lorentzen and Jennifer Turpin (New York: New York University Press, 1998): 231-233.

point of view, this thesis considers internal displacement as a gendered process which transforms the perceptions of gender roles and which alters the meanings attached to being a man and a woman.

Throughout the thesis, I will try to consider the sources of displaced Kurdish women's politicization and of the development of gender awareness among them. In an effort to trace down the transformative effect of displacement on gendered power structures, I will analyze the changing gender relations at the household level as they are reflected in the increasing participation of women in household decision-making in relation to budgeting and spending. In doing so, I will benefit from the critiques targeting household as a holistic entity, representing the congruent interests of all, regardless of gender. As one of the prominent feminist scholars writing on the care economy and feminist economics, Nancy Folbre tries to demonstrate why the household should be conceptualized as a unit of conflicting interests based on gender and age by invoking the concepts of self-interest, altruism and reciprocity. Folbre draws our attention to the fact that who does what in the family is not only determined by pure altruistic or benevolent concerns, but also by gendered division of labor, resulting in the specialization of women in the caring work and of men in market production as breadwinners.¹⁰ I will use this gender-disaggregated analysis in order to explore the changes in gender role perceptions at the intra-household level brought about by Kurdish women's politicization in the context of displacement.

There are some studies on livelihood strategies arguing that women's control over and their access to livelihood assets is determined by gender relations and gender roles.¹¹ Trying to understand the gendered nature of access to livelihood assets is important in terms of disclosing both the disruptive and transformative effects of displacement on women's lives, which I will present by engaging with some studies

¹⁰ For detailed information see Nancy Folbre, "Hearts and Spades: Paradigms of Household Economics," *World Development* 14, no. 2 (1986): 245-255.

¹¹ Leo de Haan and Annelies Zoomers, "Exploring the Frontier of Livelihoods Research," *Development and Change* 36, no. 1 (2005): 27-47; Tahira Sadaf and Karin Astrid Siegmann, "Gendered Livelihood Assets and Workloads in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP)," paper to be presented at the 7th Sustainable Development Conference, Islamabad, December 8-10, 2004.

examining the relationship between displacement and women's empowerment, and by benefiting from the literature on social capital.

This thesis rejects a reductionist approach to livelihood understood in economic terms, and instead, as some scholars¹² suggest, embraces a broader definition, emphasizing the role of social networks and human capital in granting access to livelihood assets. This implies that displacement is understood in terms of continuities with the past. I argue that viewing displacement as a case of state that implies a break with the past obscures the role of social capital in the socialization of Kurdish women in the urban context which has taken politically progressive forms. In this sense, this thesis views displacement as a process which opens up new socio-spatial spaces, allowing Kurdish women to develop resistance practices to negate norms and practices of masculinity. Drawing on the writings of James Scott on the resistance paradigm¹³, I argue that Kurdish women's experience with violence, domination and struggle in the rural setting played a key role in the creation of gendered subjectivities confronting inequalities at the intersection of gender and ethnicity. Furthermore, I contend that these gendered practices of resistance have taken political forms in the urban centers as Kurdish women have started to increasingly interact with representatives of state bodies, representing official discourse on Kurdish identity, and to encounter discriminatory practices on the basis of their ethnic and gender identity. This process of developing political awareness and gender consciousness which is mediated through socialization in pro-Kurdish parties have been reflected at the micro-level in the changing gendered power structures governing intra-household relations.

In the first chapter, I will provide the reader with an introduction to main themes and debates, and a brief overview of the methodology applied in this study. In the second chapter, I will examine the theoretical background of this research through

¹² Finn Stepputat and Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, "The Rise and Fall of 'Internally Displaced People' in the Central Peruvian Andes," *Development and Change* 32 (2001): 769-791 ; Leo de Haan and Annelies Zoomers, "Exploring the Frontier of Livelihoods Research," *Development and Change* 36, no. 1 (2005): 27-47; Hein de Haas, "The Internal Dynamics of Migration Processes: A Theoretical Inquiry," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 10 (2010): 1587-1617 ; Karen Jacobsen, "Livelihoods and Forced Migration," in *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*, ed. Elena Fiddian Qasmiyeh et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

¹³ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

presenting an outline of relevant literature and previous research on the themes of displacement, gender roles, livelihood and patriarchy. In the third chapter, I will present a historical outline of the transformation process in Turkey's Kurdish Southeast, generated by the interplay of gender relations and production relations. In chapter four, I will discuss Kurdish forced migration in Turkey from a historical and chronological perspective, and present a historical analysis of Kurdish resistance movements in the late Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey with a specific focus on the emergence of the PKK. And in chapter five, I will explore the Kurdish women's appearance in the public space as gender conscious and political subjects in the urban context, following their displacement.

Methodology

This study uses narratives as the primary sources in order to obtain information about the politicization of Kurdish women as being central to the remaking of gender relations in the context of internal displacement. By referring to Alfred Schutz, Marita Eastmond denotes experience as the main channel through which we attach meaning to phenomena.¹⁴ Narration as a process is shaped by the lived experience, but it also shapes the structure and the content of experience. Experience is the raw material of narrative but, in the process of telling, it is the narrator who chooses what and how to tell.¹⁵ Following Ruth Behar's definition of life stories, Eastmond presents life stories as signifiers of how the past is socially constructed and shaped by the present. In this way, narratives as social constructions provide a space for the conceptualization of the self as subject with the power to act and reflect upon the action.¹⁶

The central theme throughout the narratives by the Kurdish women I interviewed was the development of a sense of agency and capacity to resist state oppression and male domination in the context of internal displacement. I conducted semi-structured interviews with fifteen Kurdish women who were displaced from their hometowns as a result of the armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish Armed

¹⁴ Marita Eastmond, "Stories as Lived Experience: Narratives in Forced Migration Research," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 20, no. 2 (2007): 249.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid., 250.

Forces (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri*, TAF) in the 1990s. I also interviewed another woman aged 19 who is a university student. According to her narratives, she was 1.5 years old at the time of migration. Although she did not experience internal displacement personally, she was able to convey every detail of her family's life in both pre- and post-displacement years, and of the period of migration. In their book entitled *Storytelling in Daily Life: Performing Narrative*, Kristin Langellier and Eric Peterson elucidate the role of narrative performance in the production and reproduction of family identity and values.¹⁷ The authors depict storytelling as a 'survival strategy' through which individuals reflect on and reconstruct their identity throughout generations. Following this line of thought, I decided to reflect upon Leyla's¹⁸ account of her experience as a Kurdish woman in the city in order to demonstrate the power of storytelling on individual's sense of identity. Thus, a total of sixteen informants were interviewed in this study.

Interviews were either conducted in interviewees' houses or in the local branches of pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party (*Halkların Demokratik Partisi*, HDP). The fieldwork was conducted between February and June 2015 in three districts of Istanbul: Bağcılar, Ataşehir and Başakşehir. These were inner suburban districts which were shantytown neighborhoods where most of the immigrants were 'gecekondu tenants'.¹⁹

The process of finding interviewees was not an easy one. Before I started my fieldwork, I visited Istanbul office of pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*, BDP) and talked to the provincial vice chairman of the party hoping that he could act as an intermediary to put me in contact with interviewees. Then, I contacted the chairman of GÖÇ-DER in Istanbul, and also visited HDP office in the district of Bağcılar to ask for their help and guidance in reaching out to informants.

¹⁷ Kristin M. Langellier and Eric.E. Peterson, *Storytelling in Daily Life: Performing Narrative* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004), 34-35.

¹⁸ For ethical reasons and trust building, identities of the interviewees are not compromised. Names of the informants are pseudonym.

¹⁹ Fikret Adaman and Çağlar Keyder wrote a report on social exclusion entitled 'Poverty and Social Exclusion in the Slum Areas of Large Cities in Turkey' to be introduced to the European Commission for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. In this report, the authors use the term 'gecekondu tenants' to define the living conditions of the newly arrived migrants in the urban slums in the 1990s. For detailed information see http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_inclusion/docs/2006/study_turkey_en.pdf.

BDP and GÖÇ-DER officials were very welcoming and gave a warm reception to me. They treated me more like a fellow. However, during my visit, officials in the branch office of HDP in the Bağcılar district behaved in a more cautious manner for very valid reasons. It was obvious that there was a lack of trust towards ‘strangers’ which was one of the main obstacles I needed to overcome.

In the Bağcılar district of Istanbul, one of the members of GÖÇ-DER in Kemalpaşa neighborhood accompanied me during my visit to the first interviewee’s house. He introduced me to my informant and then left. Two weeks after the first interview, I was introduced by my first informant to another woman. I arranged an interview with her, but she first postponed and then cancelled the interview. For the next two months, the process had been blocked and I was not able to conduct any interviews. In April 2015, I again contacted officials from the HDP’s Istanbul branch and tried to arrange interviews with displaced Kurdish women through their intermediation. In this period, all political parties were running their election campaigns for the general elections which took place on 7 June 2015. Party officials had a very busy schedule in the run-up to the elections. They were organizing large public meetings and pre-election briefings to which I also attended. They provided me with contact details of politically active men and women in local party branches. Their mediation in the process of finding informants was of outmost importance.

My key informant was a Kurdish woman, aged 37, who had been active in the HDP's women's branch in the Bağcılar district of Istanbul. During my visits, she accompanied me for the purpose of being my guide, as she had strong political connections in the vicinity and had good relations with the residents. She knew the neighborhood and had the trust of other Kurdish women living in the neighborhood. In most of the cases, interviews were conducted in informants’ houses. Since I asked questions about male domination and gender relations, I preferred to interview women without the presence of male family members. In one of my visits to an interviewee’s house, a politically active male party member and activist who introduced me to my key informant, joined us and wanted to stay in the room while we conducted the interview. I could observe that the interviewee was in tension due to the presence of the man in the

room although she knew him. When asked to express her ideas about social relations between men and women, she looked at him in the eye for a few seconds before answering the question. At that moment, I realized that she could have narrated her story differently if he was not there sitting in the room and listening her life story. After this event, I interviewed women in private rooms either on a one to one basis or in the company of my key informant.

Nine out of sixteen interviewees lived in different neighborhoods of the Bağcılar district. The remaining seven informants were residents of gecekondu neighborhoods largely populated by Kurdish migrants in the districts of Ataşehir and Başakşehir. The interviewees are between 19 and 54 years of age. As the largest group, ten interviewees belong to 31-39 age group. Among the informants, fifteen are married women who entered into a marriage before they reached adolescence. All of my informants except one are strongly affiliated with pro-Kurdish People's Democratic Party. They are politically active and conscious subjects.

I asked open-ended questions throughout the interviews and let the interviewees dominate the flow of conversation. Each interview was tape-recorded and lasted about 45 to 90 minutes. Each informant is asked for their consent to use the tape recorder. Two of my informants refused their life stories to be recorded. In such cases, I took notes. For ethical reasons and trust building, identities of the interviewees are not compromised and they are identified through an anonymous interviewer ID. However, the women I interviewed did not have second thoughts about revealing their real names.

Interviews were conducted in Turkish. Lack of knowledge of Kurdish has been a significant limitation to the conduct of my fieldwork. Before I started my field research, I had the fear that not being able to speak Kurdish would cause my respondents to be reluctant to narrate their stories. However, in the times that I spent with Kurdish women in the field, I made every endeavor to show my readiness to know more about their life stories and to understand what they have been through. This message of sincerity was very helpful in overcoming the language barrier. Another limitation encountered in this study was that the sample is drawn from a universe which is composed only of politicized and gender-conscious Kurdish women. Collection of

narratives from women who are not politically affiliated with the Kurdish movement would be a significant contribution to this study in terms of tracing the implications of politicization on women's perceptions of the self and of gender relations.



CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This thesis examines the transformation of gender relations in the context of internal displacement of the Kurds in Turkey in the 1990s by employing rural-urban classifications. Internally displaced Kurdish women's experience of oppression and subordination, their resistance patterns against male domination and the state as a tool of patriarchal oppression will be traced through their pre and post displacement narratives. A historic approach will be adopted in order to analyze changes and continuities between rural and urban lives of migrant Kurdish women with a reference to the interplay of gender order and production relations. The experience of internal displacement will be central to the analysis of politicization of migrant Kurdish women and resultant changes in their socio-economic status. In order to have a deep understanding of such transformations, the concepts of male domination, internal displacement and livelihood will be clarified in the following part.

2.1 Internal Displacement as a Gendered Process

The number of people internally displaced by conflict has risen from 16.5 million in 1989 to 38 million in 2014 on a global scale.²⁰ According to the data gathered from the UNHCR's database (*the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*), women account for almost half of the population who are forced to flee their homes within the borders of their own country.²¹ Although the statistics on internal displacement is indicative of the gendered nature of displacement process, a gender perspective has been missing in studies on internal displacement within the broader field of forced migration. This gender-blind approach started to be questioned by feminists in the 1970s who pointed to the agency and subjectivity of women as a means to obtain knowledge, and to the centrality of women's experiences.²² This feminist

²⁰ "Global Figures," Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, accessed March 6, 2016, <http://www.internal-displacement.org/global-figures>

²¹ "Particular Challenges and Risks," The UN Refugee Agency, accessed March 6, 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c1d9.html>

²² Elena Fiddian Qasmiyeh, "Gender and Forced Migration," in *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*, ed. Elena Fiddian Qasmiyeh et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 396.

critique first manifested itself in the academics' and practitioners' efforts to analyze the issue of development through a gender lens and permeated discussions of forced migration as well. Thus, in order to have a deep understanding of how gender is incorporated into forced migration studies, it is necessary to analyze the previous attempts at integrating gender as a perspective into development studies in the 1970s and 1980s.

Historically, there have been three approaches which aimed to include women in development. The first one was *Women in Development (WID)* approach which oriented towards bringing women into existing development schemes.²³ However, the WID approach has not been an inclusive one in the sense that it did not address the root causes of women's exclusion from established development initiatives.²⁴ The WID approach has been followed by the introduction of *Women in Forced Migration (WIFM)* approach in the field of forced migration in the mid 1980s.²⁵ This approach stressed that women's experiences should gravitate towards the center of forced migration studies at the discursive and practical level. However, attention has been paid to how women experienced the migratory process, but the underlying factors behind and effects of migration have not been analyzed through a gender lens.

The second approach to include women in development has been called *Women and Development (WAD)* which emerged by the end of 1970s. The WAD approach has been developed within the neo-Marxist tradition and drew on class analysis to underline disparities on a global scale and processes of exploitation in development frameworks.²⁶ This approach drew attention to the centrality of women in development and women's exclusion and exploitation in development systems. Doreen Indra states that this emphasis on the effects of class structures upon the global development framework has been criticized by some scholars as being inadequate to explain the gendered organization of everyday life.²⁷

²³ Doreen Indra, "Not a 'Room of One's Own': Engendering Forced Migration Knowledge and Practice," in *Engendering Forced Migration Theory and Practice*, ed. Doreen Indra (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), 10.

²⁴ Qasmiyeh, "Gender and Forced Migration," 396.

²⁵ Indra, "Not a 'Room of One's Own,'" 17.

²⁶ Qasmiyeh, "Gender and Forced Migration," 397.

²⁷ Indra, "Not a 'Room of One's Own,'" 12.

The late 1980s saw the shift from WAD to GAD (*Gender and Development*). Post-colonial and socialist feminist theorizing has influenced the development of the GAD approach.²⁸ This approach used a gender lens to discuss the issue of development. GAD scholars had a social constructionist view of gender. They viewed gender as a category which is not static, context dependent, and which refers to both men and women. This created the basis for questioning the gender roles and attributes associated not only with women but also with men, and paved the way for changing unequal and gendered power structures. The application of a gender lens to understand women's relationship to development has been echoed in forced migration studies. What would have corresponded to GAD approach made its appearance in the form of *Gender and Forced Migration* (GAFM) paradigm. In the literature on migration, scholars started to analyze migratory movements from a gender perspective with a focus on the impacts and effects of migration that are shaped by gendered organization of daily life.²⁹ Nonetheless the way women are included in forced migration studies remains questionable.

My review of the literature on internally displaced persons (IDP) suggests that whereas some scholars study internally displaced women almost exclusively from a vulnerability perspective, some others put an emphasis on the human agency while recognizing the vulnerability of the displaced women as well. Before discussing different approaches to IDPs employed by various studies, it is necessary to provide an apt conceptualization of internally displaced persons for which *the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement* (GPID) serve as a key point of reference.

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement is a UN report introduced by Francis Deng to the UN Commission on Human Rights in 1998. The report represents an international community attempt to define the status and entitlements of IDPs and responsibility of national governments for the protection of displaced populations. The report describes IDPs as follows:

²⁸ Qasmiyeh, "Gender and Forced Migration," 397.

²⁹ Heaven Crawley, foreword to *Gender and Migration: Critical Issues and Policy Implications*, ed. Sibel Safi and Şeref Kavak (London: London Centre for Social Studies, 2014).

*“Internally displaced persons are persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border.”*³⁰

Although the Guiding Principles has been recognized as an important step to set international standards for defining and protecting IDPs, it adopts a gender-blind approach and addresses the issue of displacement from a vulnerability perspective.

The Guiding Principles uses a gendered language to represent internally displaced women. Women are treated as a vulnerable group in need of protection as observed in lexical choices of the text of the Guiding Principles. In discussing how gender stereotypes influence the representations of women in advertising, María Jose Luzón Marco draws attention to the impact of ideology on lexical choices.³¹ I concur with Marco whose work incorporates the feminist argument that sexist discursive practices stereotypically categorize women as a distinct group with distinct attributes such as fragility, impotence and docility. In a study on the need for integration of a gender sensitive approach into the refugee research, Young and Chan also point to this trend to classify refugee women into categories identified under special populations in need of protection along with individuals with disabilities, young persons and children.³²

The articles below unveil the impact of linguistic choices on how displaced women are perceived. It seems that there is a tendency to use the passive voice when describing the experiences of internally displaced women who are perceived as passive recipients of assistance. They are portrayed as victims, as passive and dependent objects and their agency is not recognized.

Principle 4 - Article (2):

30 OCHA (The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs), *Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement*, accessed September 15, 2015, <https://docs.unocha.org/sites/dms/Documents/GuidingPrinciplesDispl.pdf>.

31 María Jose Luzón Marco, “Linguistic Choices for the Representation of Women in Discourse,” *Bells: Barcelona English Language and Literature Studies* 8 (1997): 248, accessed March 20, 2016, <http://www.raco.cat/index.php/Bells/article/download/102801/149206>.

³² Marta Y. Young and K. Jacky Chan, “The Psychological Experience of Refugees: A Gender and Cultural Analysis,” in *Psychology of Gender Through the Lens of Culture*, ed. Saba Safdar and Natasza Kosakowska-Berezecka (Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2015), 18.

“Certain internally displaced persons, such as children, especially unaccompanied minors, expectant mothers, mothers with young children, female heads of household, persons with disabilities and elderly persons, shall be entitled to protection and assistance required by their condition and to treatment which takes into account their special needs.”

Principle 7 - Article (3) (d):

“The authorities concerned shall endeavor to involve those affected, particularly women, in the planning and management of their relocation.”

Principle 19 - Article (2):

“Special attention should be paid to the health needs of women, including access to female health care providers and services, such as reproductive health care as well as appropriate counseling for victims of sexual and other abuses.”

As mentioned before, the Guiding Principles serve as a key reference point for scholars studying internal displacement. In discussing the plight of internally displaced women, whereas some studies employ vulnerability approach which is embedded in the text of the Guiding Principles, some others bring the agency of women to the fore while at the same time recognizing their vulnerability. Erin Mooney appears as one of the scholars who approach to the issue of internal displacement from a vulnerability perspective in line with the Guiding Principles.

Mooney discusses whether IDPs should be treated as a distinct category with distinct needs or not. Mooney draws attention to the highly vulnerable situation of IDPs which is caused by displacement. The author points to the principal vulnerabilities of IDPs stemming from displacement such as gender-based violence, loss of documentation, lack of shelter and food, the loss of their cultural space and traditions.³³ However, she defines IDPs only as victims of displacement and does not treat them as agents who are capable of changing their life trajectories. This line of thinking also manifests itself in her statements concerning the plight of internally displaced women. In discussing the vulnerabilities that women face in the context of displacement, she falls into the trap of gender stereotyping by grouping internally displaced women in the

³³ For detailed information see Erin Mooney, “The Concept of Internal Displacement and the Case for Internally Displaced Persons as a Category of Concern,” *Refugee Survey Quarterly* 24, no. 3 (2005): 9-26.

same category as children who are identified as victims in need of assistance and protection.

This categorization of women as vulnerable has been criticized by feminist scholars who focus attention on the active role played by women in rebuilding war-torn societies while also highlighting their vulnerabilities. In her study on nationalism and gender relations, Nira Yuval Davis closely examines the relationship between gender and war. She argues that ‘militarized images of femininity’ are complementary to ‘militarized images of masculinity’ which is important to sustain the war. She contends that wars are waged by *potent* men in order to protect *vulnerable* women and children at home.³⁴ Davis refutes this myth of protection as she points out to the issue of wartime rape as a weapon of war to dishonor the enemy, and to the composition of refugee population of whom around %80 percent is children and women. However, Davis claims, in times of conflict women take on more responsibilities related to agricultural production and maintenance of the basic social structure of the community alongside childcare and household chores due to disappearance of men and their recruitment into fighting units.³⁵

In this sense, Davis does not portray women’s experiences of displacement through the lens of victimhood. Instead, she acknowledges vulnerabilities facing women in the context of conflict and of resultant displacement, but on the other hand she puts an emphasis on women’s agency by referring to their role in the reproduction of the household and the community.

Based on the discussions above, this thesis will analyze displacement from a gender perspective which unveils gender-based vulnerabilities displaced women face and which acknowledges the transformative impact of internal displacement on the empowerment of Kurdish women as agents of positive change. The agency of internally displaced Kurdish women will be discussed with a reference to access to livelihood assets through social networks.

³⁴ Yuval Davis, “Nationalist Projects,” 24.

³⁵ Ibid., 22.

2.2 Internal Displacement: A Break with the Past?

In order to examine the intersection of gender, displacement and livelihood, first the definition of livelihood needs to be clarified. The concept of ‘sustainable livelihood’ provided by Chambers and Conway in IDS Discussion Paper 296 will be used to understand the sources of livelihood for internally displaced persons and their access to livelihood assets in the context of displacement.

Robert Chambers and Gordon R. Conway drew upon the definition of ‘sustainable livelihood’ provided in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987 and suggested a revised conceptualization. The authors state that sustainability of a livelihood comes from its ability to withstand shocks and strains, to develop capability and enrich assets, and to create fertile ground for the upcoming generation in order to maintain their lives.³⁶ There are two distinguishing characteristics of the sustainable livelihood framework that has been developed by Chambers and Conway. In discussing the issue of sustainability, the authors shift the focus to the provision of basic conditions which help individuals enhance their capabilities. This means that exercise of capabilities is a pre-condition of gaining a livelihood which in turn provides the necessary means for an individual to reproduce himself and deploy his capabilities. Following this logic which is in line with Amartya Sen’s capability approach, the authors classify the ability to withstand shocks and strains as a capability which is of vital importance for the sustainability of a livelihood.³⁷

This capacity to withstand shocks is closely related to the possession of livelihood assets. In line with Swift’s classification, Chambers and Conway divide assets into tangible and intangible ones. Different from Swift, the authors classify four subcategories that are combined under general headings of intangible and tangible assets which are resources, stores, claims and access. Whereas stores and resources are categorized as tangible assets, claims and access are classified as intangible.

³⁶ Robert Chambers and Gordon R. Conway, “Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century,” IDS Discussion Paper 296, accessed November 15, 2015, <http://www.ids.ac.uk/publication/sustainable-rural-livelihoods-practical-concepts-for-the-21st-century>

³⁷ Ibid., 4.

This brings us to the presumption that the idea of a livelihood cannot be understood only in material terms. A social dimension needs to be integrated into the concept of livelihood. Chambers and Conway discuss the social dimension of livelihood by extending the concept to include intangible assets which are claims and access. The authors define ‘*claims*’ –a sub-category of intangible assets– as demands made on social circles, state and non-state institutions for receiving in-kind and material support and gaining access to resources and information. As the authors note, access is “*the opportunity in practice to use a resource, store or service or to obtain information, material, technology, employment, food or income.*”³⁸

There have been studies concerning the effect of forced displacement on livelihoods in terms of access to assets. It is widely acknowledged that displacement hinders access to assets which results in the loss of livelihoods understood in narrow terms. However, a review of literature on IDP livelihoods suggests that social capital plays a vital role in access to livelihood assets. Leo de Haan and Annelies Zoomers draw attention to this extended livelihoods approach which acknowledges both economic and socio-cultural aspects of livelihoods. In their work on access to livelihood opportunities, they focus on the capacity of human agents in framing livelihoods by relying on social networks and human capital along with material assets.³⁹ Similarly, in their study on IDPs in the Central Peruvian Andes, Stepputat and Sørensen analyze continuities between the past and present lives of IDPs with a focus on networks and human agency that are critical for the maintenance of livelihood in the context of displacement. They criticize the trend in migration studies to focus attention on discontinuities in the explanation of the plight of IDPs and refugees. Instead, the authors reject the notion of spatial fixity and bring to the fore *mobile* livelihood practices which transcend spatial boundaries through socio-economic engagement across different localities.⁴⁰ This shifts the emphasis from a narrow view of livelihood understood in economic terms to a broader definition of the concept emphasizing social and cultural aspects, particularly social capital.

³⁸ Ibid., 8.

³⁹ Leo de Haan and Annelies Zoomers, “Exploring the Frontier of Livelihoods Research,” *Development and Change* 36, no. 1 (2005): 33.

⁴⁰ Finn Stepputat and Ninna Nyberg Sørensen, “The Rise and Fall of ‘Internally Displaced People’ in the Central Peruvian Andes,” *Development and Change* 32 (2001): 769-770.

The discussions above bring to mind the question of how do we define “social capital.” In the "Forms of Capital" Pierre Bourdieu defines social capital as the totality of authentic or potential resources that originates from being member of a community which provides long-lasting relationships.⁴¹ These relationships are marked by the characteristic that involved parties recognize each-other and that they enjoy the benefits of capital possessed by the community. Group solidarity is the pre-condition of profits derived by the members which in turn reinforces solidarity.⁴²

According to Bourdieu, social exchanges between group members become markers of mutual acknowledgement which in turn reinforces group solidarity. Over time, group members start to feel social obligations towards each other. From this process of social exchanges arises the feeling of ‘gratitude’ which results in the fulfillment of obligations without expecting something in return.⁴³ In his analysis of social capital, Robert Putnam also stresses the role of what he defines as bonding social capital in the reinforcement of reciprocity and mobilization of solidarity within homogeneous communities, as does Bourdieu. Putnam points out the significance of social networks based on reciprocity and trust, in the provision of emotional and social support to those disadvantageous members of ethnically homogeneous groups.⁴⁴

In a study, Hein de Haas touches upon the role of social capital in facilitating migrants’ access to resources by drawing upon Bourdieu's concept of social capital and Douglas Massey’s definition of migrant networks.⁴⁵ In her study on livelihoods of refugee livelihoods, Karen Jacobsen stress the role of the social capital possessed by forced migrants in meeting basic needs such as shelter and employment along the same lines as Haas does.⁴⁶ All these studies demonstrate that such social networks which transcend spatial boundaries are mobilized by migrants in order to gain access to

⁴¹ Pierre Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” in A. H. Halsey et al., eds., *Education: Culture, Economy and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 51.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid., 54.

⁴⁴ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 20.

⁴⁵ Hein de Haas, “The Internal Dynamics of Migration Processes: A Theoretical Inquiry,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 36, no. 10 (2010) : 1590.

⁴⁶ Karen Jacobsen, “Livelihoods and Forced Migration,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies*, ed. Elena Fiddian Qasmiyeh et al. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 100.

resources in the context of displacement. This way of thinking makes room for alternative conceptualizations of IDPs that stress continuities with the past and appreciate human agency.

Based on the discussions above, this study will use the broader definition of livelihood which focuses on both economic and social aspects of making a living in order to understand the role of social capital on internally displaced Kurdish women's politicization of their gender identity which produce changes in their status within the household.

2.3. Displaced Livelihoods: A Gender Disaggregated Analysis

The premise that gender shapes social relations provided the foundation to interrogate intra-household gender dynamics, power structures and resource allocation in studies on both development and forced migration.⁴⁷ Some development scholars criticized the holistic approach to household economic activity which presumes that interests of household members are in harmony with one another irrespective of gender.⁴⁸ This criticism led some to analyze household economic activity through a gender lens in studies on development which has been reflected in studies of forced migration.

There have been studies suggesting that women's position in the household is negatively affected by forced displacement. The results of the fieldwork on the status of women returnees in Burundi within the household and the community suggest that Burundian women have a greater tendency to have a negative view of displacement concerning its effects on their participation in household decision making and their status in the community.⁴⁹ This study argues for a gender analysis of the impact of forced displacement on women's social status at the household and community levels. The authors give examples of current studies in economics and psychology that

⁴⁷ Indra, "Not a Room of One's Own," 12.

⁴⁸ For further discussion see Lourdes Beneria, "Toward a Greater Integration of Gender in Economics," *World Development* 23, no. 11 (1995), 1843, quoted in Doreen Indra, *Engendering Forced Migration Theory and Practice* (New York: Berghahn Books, 1999), 13.

⁴⁹ Isabel Ruiz, Melissa Siegel, and Carlos Vargas-Silva, "Forced Up or Down? The Impact of Forced Migration on Social Status," in Sibel Safi and Seref Kavak, eds., *Gender and Migration: Critical Issues and Policy Implications* (London: London Centre for Social Studies, 2014), 370.

associate women with emotional and anxious reactions to stress in the face of unpredictable events. They use these examples to illustrate the difficulty in making such precise assumptions regarding gender differences in responses to displacement. At this point, they cannot escape criticism about their tendency to resort to women stereotypes in explaining men's and women's experiences of displacement.

The authors argue that it is not clear whether lived experience or gendered perception of displacement constitute the main source for Burundian returnees' answers to the survey questions.⁵⁰ Contrary to their argument, I claim that not only do lived experiences shape the perception of women towards their roles and status in the household and community, but also it is the other way around. By the same token, Burundian women's perceptions of forced migration cannot be understood independently of gendered social and cultural contexts which shape how women experience displacement and how they are positioned within a household. In discussing the process of displacement of Burundian women, the authors treat gender as one of the categorical variables among others which I strongly criticize.⁵¹ Instead, I concur with Indra's statement that gender permeates all aspects of everyday life and that study of gender should be culturally, spatially and temporally contextualized.⁵²

On the other side of the spectrum, there are studies suggesting that migration has been instrumental in empowering women. The report published by the Brookings Institution in collaboration with the London School of Economics demonstrates that internally displaced women in Mindanao took on leadership roles in the restoration of disrupted livelihoods both inside and outside the evacuation camps in the aftermath of recent displacement that took place after the outbreak of armed conflict between Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP).⁵³ The report says that it was internally displaced Mindanao women who managed the relief distribution process in the evacuation camps, and that they supplied means of

⁵⁰ Ibid., 372.

⁵¹ Indra, "Not a Room of One's Own," 1.

⁵² Ibid., 6-8.

⁵³ For detailed information see Rufa Cagoco-Guiam, "Gender and Livelihoods among Internally Displaced Persons in Mindanao, Philippines," The Brookings-London School of Economics Project on Internal Displacement, accessed March 4, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Gender-and-Livelihoods-Among-IDPs-in-Mindanao-Philippines-July-2013.pdf>.

subsistence to their family and ran their households outside the camps which were instrumental in their empowerment.⁵⁴

Whether forced displacement negatively or positively affects women's position in the household is closely related with access to livelihood assets. An analysis of livelihood strategies at the household level fails to notice how gender inequity permeates everyday life. De Haan and Zoomers draw on the work of scholars who studies social exclusion in order to demonstrate that social relations play a pivotal role in determining access to livelihood assets.⁵⁵ The authors arrive at the conclusion that access to livelihood assets and the resultant livelihood outcomes are shaped by socio-spatial configurations of inclusion and exclusion. If social relations and practices in everyday life are governed and regulated by gender as argued by Doreen Indra, it is clear that gender affects patterns of social relations regulating access to livelihood assets.

Similarly, Tahira Sadaf and Karin Astrid Siegmann explore the differential access of men and women to financial, environmental and human assets through a gender lens, and its effect on the amount of work done by men and women in rural areas of Pakistan North-West Frontier Province (NWFP).⁵⁶ On the basis of the data gathered from the Sustainable Livelihoods Survey 2004, Sadaf and Siegmann demonstrate that gender is an important determinant of rural women's freedom of mobility which has direct effects on the sharing of the workload by men and women. The research shows that rural women's mobility is limited by gendered and unpaid tasks associated with the reproduction of domestic sphere and with agricultural work, which they perform either in the homestead or around it.⁵⁷ This puts an immense workload pressure on rural Pakistani women and acts as a restrain on women's access to assets necessary for the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 10-11.

⁵⁵ De Haan and Zoomers, "Exploring the Frontier of Livelihoods Research," 34-35.

⁵⁶ See Tahira Sadaf and Karin Astrid Siegmann, "Gendered Livelihood Assets and Workloads in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province (NWFP)," paper to be presented at the 7th Sustainable Development Conference, Islamabad, December 8-10, 2004.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 13-14.

As the discussion above suggests, gender relations shape access to livelihood assets which has been further disrupted by the experience of forced displacement. Displacement is itself a gendered process which affects men and women differently. In order to capture the changing role and status of women facing displacement, one should closely examine gendered power dynamics and distribution of decision-making power within households before and after displacement.

Taking as my starting point the premise that gender shapes social relations, this thesis will attempt to apply gender-disaggregated analysis of household livelihood to the study of the impact of internal displacement on patriarchal relations and socio-economic status of displaced Kurdish women by employing rural-urban classifications. An analysis of household livelihood at the intra-household level provides the opportunity to examine the impact of asymmetrical relations of power within the household, which are underpinned by patriarchal norms and practices, on access to livelihood assets. In order to have a deep understanding of women's position in the household, it becomes necessary to provide a working definition of patriarchy.

2.4 The Concept of Patriarchy

This section aims to analyze relations between men and women at the intra-household level which have an impact upon the differentiated access to livelihood assets. Specifically, it examines sites of women's oppression and their resistance patterns against male domination with a reference to gender relations within peasant households in the Kurdish regions of Turkey in the periods before and after displacement. At this point, it becomes important to clarify the nature and dynamics of male domination.

In the literal sense, male domination is equated with patriarchy. Nonetheless, there is no commonly accepted definition of patriarchy. Within feminist analysis, different theoretical perspectives have been used by different thinkers to define the concept of patriarchy. In her book "Theorizing Patriarchy", Sylvia Walby examines how patriarchy has been conceptualized by different feminist perspectives and criticizes them.

The author begins by arguing that the generational dimension of patriarchy should be omitted from the definition of the concept in order not to cause confusion. In an attempt to explain the rationale behind making such an omission, Walby claims that the generational hierarchy among men is not the only basis of women's oppression, and she draws our attention to the inequalities experienced by women along gender lines. This point can be clarified by looking through Walby's analysis of private and public patriarchy. She argues that private patriarchy is characterized by the presence of a patriarch who dominates women in the household. When discussing public patriarchy, she emphasizes the domination of women by patriarchal institutions outside the domestic sphere.⁵⁸ Her emphasis on the domination faced by women not only by a patriarch within the confines of the domestic sphere, but also by patriarchal institutions in different areas of society along the axes of gender and power, clearly justifies such an omission of generational hierarchy. Thereafter, she puts forward her own definition of the concept: "*Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women.*"⁵⁹

While such conceptualization of patriarchy as a system of exploitative social structures and practices reveals the many faceted nature of women's oppression in different socio-spatial contexts, the omission of a generational element from its definition obscures women's experience of oppression on intersecting axes of inequality, pertaining to race and class. At this point, Deniz Kandiyoti's analysis of classic patriarchy with a specific focus on the role of intra-gender inequalities in sustaining masculine patriarchy in traditional family systems deepens our understanding of the concept of patriarchy as suggested by Walby.

In her study on women's coping strategies against patriarchy, Deniz Kandiyoti discusses how women under classic patriarchy reproduce the patriarchal system in the expectation that they will hold power within the household and be respected at their old ages.⁶⁰ This finding of Kandiyoti corroborates what I observed during my interviews with internally displaced Kurdish women. In this sense, this thesis will adopt a

⁵⁸ Sylvia Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 178.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁶⁰ Deniz Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," *Gender and Society* 2, no. 3 (1988) : 279.

comprehensive approach to patriarchy which recognizes participation of both men and women in the oppression of women.

Walby talks about six patriarchal structures through which women are oppressed and subordinated. Different patriarchal structures interact with each other and shape different forms of patriarchy. The first tier uses a class-based analysis to examine intra-household gender relations.⁶¹ Here, Walby points to household as a site of oppression where men exploit and appropriate women's labor. The second tier explores how patriarchal relations leads to the concentration of women in low paid and lower skilled jobs. In the third tier, Walby characterizes the state as a tool of patriarchal oppression. The fourth tier focuses on the role of the state in sustaining patriarchy through creation of policies and structures which legitimize male violence against women on at individual and institutional levels. The fifth one draws attention to the patriarchal idea of heterosexuality which is presented as an instrument of men to oppress women. The last and sixth tier emphasizes cultural institutions that portray women in stereotypical ways in many areas of social life.

Walby's work is valuable in the sense that it underlines the patriarchal logic in the functioning of the state which is portrayed as a masculine entity. This portrayal of the state as a heterosexual and masculine entity is very much in line with internally displaced Kurdish women's view of the Turkish state apparatus as repressive and patriarchal. In this sense, this thesis employs Walby's conceptualization of patriarchy as a multi-tiered social structure shifting the focus to different forms of oppression that women experience individually and collectively.

As the discussions above suggest, the concept of patriarchy that will be used in this study acknowledges generational and historical dynamics with a focus on both inter-gender and intra-gender relations. Taking this definition as my starting point, now I will explore the system of male dominance and women's coping strategies with patriarchy in the rural Kurdish regions in Turkey since a great majority of Kurdish women that I interviewed are of peasant origin. The experiences of oppression and

⁶¹ Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy*, 179.

subordination will provide insights into the changing patterns of patriarchy and women's resistance strategies in the context of displacement.

In the literature on peasant communities, it is widely acknowledged that production within household is organized along gender lines. However, there have been discussions as to the extent of women's subordination and of power wielded by peasant women.

In a study, Kandiyoti compares forms of patriarchy and women's coping strategies via examples from peasant communities in sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East, South and East Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa, she argues, women developed resistance strategies in the face of attempts at devaluation of their labor and refused to give their husbands the power to appropriate their labor.⁶² On the contrary, Kandiyoti's findings suggest that women in the Middle East, South Asia, and East Asia adapt themselves to the patriarchal system which Kandiyoti calls classic patriarchy. In patriarchal extended family, Kandiyoti claims, the oldest male member of the household has the ultimate authority and control over other members of both sexes.⁶³ Classic patriarchy is maintained by the patrilocal extension of the household which means that the newly married women settle in their husband's homes and lives with their family. She states that newly married women are dispossessed individuals and their prestige in the household is established through their reproductive power and age.

Women demonstrate compliance with patriarchal norms in the expectation that they will achieve an authoritative status in the household at older ages and maximize their security through appropriation of younger women's labor. In this sense, what these women do to achieve security and status at an individual level results in the reproduction of patriarchy at the structural level. This is what Kandiyoti defines as patriarchal bargains.

In her study on relations between men and women in peasant communities, Susan Carol Rogers claims that male dominance is a myth and that peasant women

⁶² Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," 276.

⁶³ Ibid., 278-279.

actively participate in decision-making processes and control resources.⁶⁴ Rogers argues that peasant women show their reverence for men in public in order not to undermine their so-called authority, and that in return peasant men implicitly accept the fact that women hold positions of actual power.⁶⁵ As Rogers argues, this results in the establishment of horizontally organized relationships between peasant men and women which are marked by no real male domination and female subordination. Rogers' line of thinking evokes the concept of patriarchal bargains developed by Kandiyoti, but unlike her, Rogers does not pay attention to the actual conditions and material basis of women's oppression. The findings of my case study suggests unveiled that male dominance was not a myth in the rural setting and that Kurdish women's oppression was a lived experience.

In his analysis of the hidden transcript, James Scott argues that the personal experience of humiliation leads one to develop self awareness about his/her state of being oppressed.⁶⁶ Thus, the awareness of exploitation and patriarchal oppression is internal to women's consciousness and it is not imposed from outside. The experience of oppression and humiliation provides the raw material for the oppressed to develop awareness of their condition. In the Kurdish rural areas, men's power to appropriate is the source of masculine prestige and masculine status. Masculine prestige is acquired through men's domination and control over women. The appropriation of the labor of women by men⁶⁷, which Scott defines as the main motivation behind domination, was the lived experience through which Kurdish women attached meaning to their oppression.

Scott argues that systems of domination engender resistance from within.⁶⁸ He sees indignities that are personally experienced in the process of exploitation as an important source of resistance.⁶⁹ When faced with oppression, internally displaced

⁶⁴ Susan Carol Rogers, "Female Forms of Power and the Myth of Male Dominance: A Model of Female/Male Interaction in Peasant Society," *American Ethnologist* 2, no. 4 (1975) : 728.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 729.

⁶⁶ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 113.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 111.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 45.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 112.

Kurdish women have developed some strategies to resist against patriarchal control and oppression in the rural setting. They narrated the encounter with the Kurdish female fighters as a transformative experience. As Handan Çağlayan argues, through the image of female guerilla, Kurdish women felt themselves as capable⁷⁰, which was a recurring theme in the narratives of internally displaced women. The encounter with Kurdish women guerilla in the rural Kurdish areas led them to question the patriarchal norms and practices imposed upon them.

However, these resistance patterns have gone under transformation as a result of the conflict induced displacement of Kurdish women in the 1990s. In this study, it is argued that forced displacement created the fertile ground for the emergence of the hidden transcript which Scott defines as those facial expressions, statements and practices occurring far beyond the surveillance capabilities of the dominant.⁷¹ Rural to urban migration created an opportunity for Kurdish women to create sheltered social spaces in which they could come together and share their experiences of state oppression and male dominance. In the urban setting, those secluded social spaces appeared to be Kurdish political party buildings and houses of Kurdish families. Internally displaced Kurdish women nurtured dissent in their unauthorized and uncontrolled gatherings in unmonitored spaces and negated masculine discourses and practices employed by men and the Turkish state.

⁷⁰ Handan Çağlayan, *Analar, Yoldaşlar, Tanrıçalar: Kürt Hareketinde Kadınlar ve Kadın Kimliğinin Oluşumu*, 4th ed. (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013), 206.

⁷¹ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 5.

CHAPTER III

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Rural Patriarchal Gender Order

As stated in Chapter II, Deniz Kandiyoti classifies the Muslim Middle East including Turkey as a region which is characterized by a system of classic patriarchy. The term ‘patriarchal bargains’ lies at the heart of her discussion of classic patriarchy which she defines as the strategies that women develop to negotiate their conditions and maximize their security in a context of constraints.⁷² Kandiyoti suggests that when faced with oppression, women do not overtly resist patriarchal domination; rather they comply with and internalize patriarchal norms to enhance their life options.⁷³ However, this process of internalization leads to the reproduction of rural patriarchal gender order which rests upon women’s subordination of other women, and by men. The life stories narrated by the Kurdish women I interviewed testify to the fact that they were experienced this kind of patriarchal oppression in their villages and were subjugated to the will of the eldest male member of the family and of their mother-in-laws.

Patriarchal domination rested upon a patrilocal-patrilineal complex that was characteristic of rural Kurdish areas in southeastern Turkey. As suggested by Kandiyoti in her discussion of classic patriarchy, kinship system is marked by patrilineality and patrilocality. In a patrilocal extended family system, new brides move to the house of their husband’s family and their contact with their natal families are lost to a great extent.⁷⁴ The oldest male member of the household has ultimate authority and control over other members of both sexes. Women’s status in the family is defined by age and their reproductive power and they are placed at the bottom of the hierarchy based on gender and age.⁷⁵ Giving birth to a male offspring is considered as the source of women’s prestige. New bride attains a higher status when she gets old and gives birth to sons. Women attain respectability and higher status through marriage of their sons.

⁷² Kandiyoti, “Bargaining with Patriarchy,” 274.

⁷³ Ibid., 278-279.

⁷⁴ Deniz Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar: Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Dönüşümler*, trans. Aksu Bora et al. (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1997), 29.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 58.

Son's loyalty to and affection for their mothers is considered as the source of security for women in old ages.⁷⁶ Entry of the new bride into her father-in-law's house through the marriage of sons provides elderly women with a sense of security and social support. This is very much in line with Nira Yuval Davis' argument when she points out that in the absence of welfare structures, the number of offspring a woman gives birth to become even more crucial as a means to provide care for the older and ill people.⁷⁷ The absence of formal social security mechanisms leads to reliance on sons for security in old age. Apart from that, the young bride's entry places elderly women at the top of the hierarchy based on age. As women age, they take the responsibility for management and allocation of intra-household tasks among younger women.⁷⁸ Marriage of sons implies that the daughter-in-law will take over the tasks that are previously performed by her mother-in-law. The assurance that new bride will be respected and cared when she grows old serves as an incentive for her to provide care and support for the elderly voluntarily. In this sense, elderly women reproduce classic patriarchy through the internalization of patriarchal norms as argued by Kandiyoti.

Under classic patriarchy, not only relations between men and women, but also women's intra-gender relations are hierarchically organized. Exploitative and hierarchical gender relations manifest themselves in the spatial and social segregation of the sexes. The story narrated by Hatice illustrates how women and men were spatially segregated in their daily lives:

"This might sound funny, but in our villages many girls and women do not sit and eat with their fathers. However everybody in the village and in our family was saying that our father did not start eating before we joined him. We always sat down to a meal together regardless of whether that person was a girl, a man or a woman. But many in our village cannot talk to their fathers and cannot sit together at the table. For instance a married woman in her mature years cannot eat with her husband."⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler*, 29.

⁷⁷ Davis, "Nationalist Projects," 14.

⁷⁸ Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler*, 58-59.

⁷⁹ Mesela şimdi desem belki komik gelebilir bizim köylerde çoğu insan sofraya oturup babasıyla yemek yemez kadın olarak kız olarak. Ama mesela bizde bizim ailede hatta köyde herkes de söylüyordu, babam biz gitmeden yemiyordu yani sofraya yere geldiği zaman. Mutlaka biz de kadın kız erkek fark etmiyor beraber otururduk. Ama çoğu bizim köyün içinde çoğu insan gidip doğru düzgün babasıyla konuşmıyor. Doğru düzgün sofrasına gidemiyor. Mesela kaç yaşında evli olan kadın gidip eşiyle oturup yemek yemiyor...

Women enter into marriage at younger ages. In the rural setting, first cousin marriage and marriage below the age of 15 is very common among Kurdish communities.⁸⁰ Women experience oppression, subordination and exploitation of their labor in patrilocal extended households.⁸¹ Although the principal authority is vested with the father-in-law, it is the mother-in-law who controls younger women in their daily lives. Younger women who have lower social status are allotted the most difficult household tasks. They actively participate in agricultural production and do the heaviest household chores such as carrying water.⁸² It is those menopause women who control and dominate daughter-in-laws in the household, have the lowest labor force participation rates in agricultural production. In the years between 1988 and 1999, the data gathered from Turkish Statistical Institute database on rural female labor force participation rates points to a downward trend in labor force participation by older women. The data shows that rural labor force participation rate for women aged 20-24 drops from % 55.6 to % 19 for women aged over 65 on the average.⁸³

Participation rate of women in agricultural production is not only determined by the age variable, but also varies across sex. According to results of Labor Force Survey on labor force status by non-institutional population and sex, in Turkey the proportion of female unpaid family workers in rural areas outweighed that of males. Whereas the number of rural women aged above fifteen who participated in agricultural production as unpaid family workers was 6.756 between 1988 and 1999, the number of rural men was only 2.769 on average.⁸⁴ Although the proportion of women participating in agricultural production prevails over that of men, women do not have any control over their productive activities and reproductive powers which are subject to the control of male heads of patrilocal and patrilineal households.⁸⁵

⁸⁰ Handan Çağlayan, "Analar, Yoldaşlar, Tanrıçalar," 53.

⁸¹ Ibid., 44-45.

⁸² Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler*, 58.

⁸³ Source: TURKSTAT (Turkish Statistical Institute), Labor Force Statistics 1988 – 1999.

⁸⁴ Source: TURKSTAT (Turkish Statistical Institute), The Results of Household Labor Force Survey for 1988-1999 terms.

⁸⁵ Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler*, 50.

In a classic patriarchal system, women do not have the right to own and inherit property.⁸⁶ Land is inherited through the male line. Kin marriage is a very common practice and Kurdish women lose their right to inherit property through marriage. In his investigation of farming households in Ak village of Iğdır district, Behrooz Morvaridi explores intra-household gender dynamics. He argues that his findings represent the property relations and cultivation patterns which are typical of the entire Eastern Anatolia region. Morvaridi defines farming households as a unit of economic production.⁸⁷ He contends that the privilege of ownership of the means of production and of property belongs to the senior male member in the household. He also adds that although women have a legal right to claim property, it is not common for women to inherit land which is the exclusive domain of men.

According to observations of Morvaridi, men have a monopoly over access to physical and financial capital and they strictly control women's labor within and beyond the household. Control over labor power becomes a key factor in the organization of production and accumulation of wealth which is ensured by gendered organization of labor power reproduction.⁸⁸ In this sense, the appropriation of women's reproductive capacity and labor power by the male head of the household becomes a pre-condition for the maintenance of subsistence agriculture. Referring to İsmail Beşikçi's findings on the role of women in a nomadic Kurdish tribe, known as the Alikan, and touches upon the importance of women's fertility for the process of production.⁸⁹ She contends that an economic value is attached to each child labor and concomitantly women are expected to have as many children as they can. However, despite the economic value of women's productive and reproductive labor, their domestic and agricultural labor is rendered invisible and remains socially unrecognized. In her study on Kurdish tribes in the southeastern province of Hakkari, Lale Yalçın Heckmann suggests that high

⁸⁶ Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," 279.

⁸⁷ Behrooz Morvaridi, "Gender and Household Resource Management in Agriculture: Cash Crops in Kars," in *Culture and Economy: Changes in Turkish Villages*, ed. Paul Stirling, (England: The Eothen Press, 1993), 83.

⁸⁸ Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler*, 58.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

participation rates in agricultural production do not bring prestige and respectability to women.⁹⁰

This intra-household gender dynamics and gendered organization of household production can be better understood when they are embedded into a structural framework explaining the characteristics of the village economies in Anatolia from a historical perspective. Keyder provides a brief history of the structural transformations which paved the way for the penetration of capital into the rural economy in Turkey and concomitant transformation of social relations. In the first place, Keyder elaborates the defining features of rural society in which the dominant mode of production was subsistence agriculture. Thereafter, he explores the transition from subsistence agriculture to petty commodity production with a specific focus on the role of the state in shaping property and class relations. In his discussion, Keyder specifically focuses on the socio-economic changes that Turkish agriculture has undergone in the process of economic modernization, but only briefly elaborates the trajectory of this economic change in rural Kurdish areas where large land ownership prevails. Since gender is the primary organizing principle that configures production relations, it is important to capture the structure and transformation of production relations in the southeast Turkey that significantly affects social relations organized along gender lines. After gaining insight into socio-economic changes that rural areas have undergone in the process of economic modernization, in the next discussion, the attention will be directed towards the effect of these changes on gender relations prevalent in rural patriarchal order.

3.2 Structure and Transformation of Production Relations in the Kurdish Southeastern Region of Turkey

Keyder asserts that in the 1940s village community was composed of peasant households whose production system was subsistence farming.⁹¹ Peasant household functioned as an economic unit which was maintained through social networks created among community members. Keyder argues that social networks which are based on the

⁹⁰ Lale Yalçın Heckmann, "Aşiretli Kadın: Göçer ve Yarı-Göçer Toplumlarda Cinsiyet Roller ve Kadın Stratejileri," in *Kadın Bakış Açısından 1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadınlar*, comp. Şirin Tekeli (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1995), 283.

⁹¹ Çağlar Keyder, "The Genesis of Petty Commodity Production in Agriculture: The Case of Turkey," in *Culture and Economy: Changes in Turkish Villages*, ed. Paul Stirling (England: The Eothen Press, 1993), 171.

principle of reciprocity played a critical role in the reproduction of labor power and in the provision of necessary inputs into the production process.⁹² In such a self-sufficient system, outputs were produced for self-consumption of the household and/or they were exchanged in the local market. Contacts and economic exchanges with the outside world were not common. Whereas Keyder carries out an analysis of Turkish agrarian structures, Sönmez calls attention to how the structure of property relations in Kurdish inhabited eastern and southeastern Turkey deviated from their Turkish counterparts and how they evolved differently.⁹³ Sönmez contends that whereas patrimonialism was characteristic of Turkish agrarian structures before the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey were characterized by both patrimonial and prebendal property relations under Ottoman rule.

In his discussion of patrimonialism under the rule of Ottoman Empire, Sönmez underlines the allotment of land by the ruler to a chieftain, and persons in return for the military service they provided. Sönmez argues that they could hold the patrimony as long as a tribute was paid to the ruler or certain duties are performed at the ruler's request.⁹⁴ In the patrimonial estates within eastern and southeastern regions, individuals and the state had a joint ownership. The peasants who labored in the prebendal estates were legally entitled to be de facto holder of the land which they cultivated and transferred to their descendants. Such rights were also afforded to peasants laboring on the patrimonial estates. Sönmez argues that the 1858 Land Code signaled the loss of above-mentioned rights of the peasantry working in patrimonial estates on the grounds that the right to private ownership was granted to the owners of estates. To put it another way, the initiation of the 1858 Land Code led to a shift in the status of peasantry from proprietors to sharecroppers working on large-scale privately-owned farms. In contrast, peasants laboring on prebendal estates acquired the status of 'simple commodity producers' since they were entitled the right to private ownership in 1926 which turned their de facto claims of property under Ottoman rule into legal rights to own property.

⁹² Ibid., 175.

⁹³ Abdülkerim Sönmez, "The Effects of Violence and Internal Displacement on Rural-Agrarian Change in Turkey," *Rural Sociology* 73, no. 3 (2008) : 379.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 379-380.

Max Weber makes an analogy between patrimonial and patriarchal domination and presents patrimonial domination as an impersonal form of domination which centered on households organized along patriarchal lines.⁹⁵ Weber argues that abidance by norms lie at the root of both forms of domination. However, the meaning attached to them varies. Whereas Weber defines the legal order as the source of legitimacy under patrimonial domination, he contends that patriarchal domination is legitimated by individual subjugation naturalized by a belief in the superiority of the master over other members of the household⁹⁶ Weber argues that in a primitive patriarchal structure, to be related by blood is not the source of ‘paternal power’ and ‘filial piety’.⁹⁷ Instead, he claims that even those women and children who are not related by blood to the household authority are seen as property which is all at the disposal of the household authority.

According to Weber, the institutionalization of slavery heralded the differentiation of household. Weber contends that the master had unrestrained authority to decide whether a slave and his biological child could become his heir. However, most of the time the power of disposition started to be transferred on the basis of blood relationships. Upon the death of a master, in most cases the right of disposition was transferred to his biological son. For Weber, patrimonial domination reflected the domestic functioning of the household on a larger scale. He defines patrimonial domination as “domestic authority decentralized through assignment of land and sometimes of equipment to sons of the house or other dependents.”⁹⁸

Following Weber’s discussion of patrimonial domination as a form of patriarchal domination, it can be argued that sharecropping peasant families organized along patriarchal lines formed the nucleus of patrimonial estates owned by tribal leaders which had great influence in the eastern and southeastern parts of Turkey.

⁹⁵ Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1010.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 1006-1007.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 1011.

In his discussion of Ottoman land regime and peasant families, İnalçık draws attention to the preservation of the socio-economic fabric which revolved around the peasant family that emerged under Ottoman rule until the initiation of agrarian reform in the 1950s in Turkey.⁹⁹ The 1950s, Keyder argues, was characterized by the introduction of new technologies in agriculture, urbanization, penetration of capital into rural areas and commercialization of peasant's labor.¹⁰⁰ During this period, increasing agricultural productivity became the major concern of the Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) which was the ruling party back then. In 1945 under the rule of the Republican People's Party, the Ministry of Agriculture proposed a bill to the assembly concerning land distribution.¹⁰¹ This legislation called for the transfer of lands to landless farmers or farmers with small holdings. However, the legislation did not envisage any reform concerning the transformation of property relations and tenancy agreements. As Keyder argues, the legislation proposed by the RPP aimed to preserve a socio-economic structure based on the predominance of small property in order to rule out capitalization of agriculture.¹⁰² Yet, the law was implemented to a limited extent due to the strong objection raised by the landlords. Thus, after the legislation has been passed, the land redistributed to farmers was state land and most of the big landowners were not dispossessed of their holdings.¹⁰³

However, after the transition from one party regime to a multi-party system, the rise of the Democrat Party to power in the 1950s heralded a dedication to agrarian reform in Turkey.¹⁰⁴ The number of tractors increased from 3200 in 1939 to 42.000 by 1959.¹⁰⁵ This period was marked by an increase in the size of land on which agricultural production is carried. Between 1950 and 1963, the number of land occupied by small owners rose from 2.3 million to 3.1 million¹⁰⁶ which was instrumental in increasing agricultural productivity. However, the economic structure in the southeastern region of

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Keyder, "Petty Commodity Production in Agriculture," 172.

¹⁰¹ Reşat Aktan, "Problems of Land Reform in Turkey," *Middle East Journal* 20, no. 3 (1966): 320.

¹⁰² Keyder, "Petty Commodity Production in Agriculture," 179.

¹⁰³ Aktan, "Land Reform in Turkey," 321.

¹⁰⁴ Keyder, "Petty Commodity Production," 173.

¹⁰⁵ Halil İnalçık, *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire: Essays on Economy and Society*, vol 9 of *Indiana University Turkish Studies and Turkish Ministry of Culture Series*, ed. İlhan Başgöz (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 141.

¹⁰⁶ Keyder, "Petty Commodity Production in Agriculture," 179.

Turkey was predominantly based on 'large-scale capitalist farming' which is the defining characteristic of 2304 out of 7200 villages in the region.¹⁰⁷ Landlordism is a distinguishing feature of the region where much of the arable land is owned by a few wealthy families.¹⁰⁸ In the rural Kurdish regions of Turkey, the Democrat Party co-opted with tribal leaders as an extension of its policy of political clientelism¹⁰⁹ which can be explained by the prevalence of landlordism in the region. In this sense, in return for keeping their privileged position and provision of resources, the tribal leaders and their followers secured their political commitment to the ruling party.

The origins of the patron-client relationship in the southeast of Turkey can be traced back to the patrimonial state system of the Ottoman Empire which was sustained by a patriarchal logic. In the Southeastern Anatolia region, %42 of the land is being cultivated for crop production.¹¹⁰ More than %90 percent of farmers depends on animal husbandry and production of crops for their livelihood. Yet, farmers were either sharecroppers or wage laborers in case when landlords became successful to commoditize agriculture. As mentioned above, the southeast of Turkey was characterized by the predominance of the patrimonial estates owned by Kurdish tribal leaders which relied on sharecropping peasant families as the basic unit of production. Sharecropping is the prevalent mode of production in the region with the second highest ratio of %14.¹¹¹ In this parcellary mode of production¹¹², the land on which small peasants labored is the possession of large owners. Since property is inherited through patrilineal kin and since number of male off-springs tends to be a considerable number,

¹⁰⁷ Çağlar Keyder, "The Cycle of Sharecropping and the Consolidation of Small Peasant Ownership in Turkey," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 10 (1983) : 34-49, quoted in Behrooz Morvaridi, "Agrarian Reform and Land Use Policy in Turkey: Implications for the Southeast Anatolia Project," *Land Use Policy* 7, no. 4 (1990): 308.

¹⁰⁸ Behrooz Morvaridi, "Agrarian Reform and Land Use Policy in Turkey: Implications for the Southeast Anatolia Project," *Land Use Policy* 7, no. 4 (1990): 309.

¹⁰⁹ David Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement: Opportunity, Mobilization and Identity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 40.

¹¹⁰ Morvaridi, "Agrarian Reform," 308.

¹¹¹ Fatma Gül Ünal, *Land Ownership Inequality and Rural Factor Markets in Turkey : A Study for Critically Evaluating Market Friendly Reforms* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 70.

¹¹² In his discussion of sharecropping and small peasant ownership, Çağlar Keyder discusses the characteristics of 'parcellary mode of production,' a term coined by the Belgian Marxist scholar Michel Gutelman. For detailed information see Çağlar Keyder, *The Cycle of Sharecropping and the Consolidation of Small Peasant Ownership in Turkey*, in *Sharecropping and Sharecroppers*, ed. T. J. Byres (London: Frank Cass and Company Limited, 1983), 132.

the property needs to be allocated among male descendants. This clearly implies that women do not have a right to inherit property as also suggested by Kandiyoti.¹¹³

The division of land into smaller units in accordance with inheritance customs which confer the right of ownership on male offspring made it difficult for small peasants to make a living at a subsistence level.¹¹⁴ With regard to the distribution of land to each male offspring, two different options become available. In the first scenario, one of the sons lays a claim to the property in which case he makes a payment to his brothers to compensate for renouncing control of their lands. In the second scenario, the landlord sells a sufficient amount of land to the peasant family which is distributed among each offspring. Throughout the generations, the purchase of land from the landlord becomes a viable option that can be resorted to. A certain amount of the yields is given to the landlord which substitutes for land payment. This results in a vicious cycle of debt which keeps sharecroppers in debt since peasants are not allowed to overproduce in order not to terminate tenancy. Thus, due to heavy indebtedness, sharecroppers cannot produce enough to subsist.

Within these sharecropping households which are characterized by patrilinearity, the senior male head of the household has uncontested control over means of production such as land, animals and farming equipment. In line with the classification of livelihood assets by Chambers and Conway¹¹⁵, land and livestock can be seen as tangible assets required for subsistence farming. Since the male head of the household is the owner of means of production which is inherited by his male offsprings upon his death, it follows that women in sharecropping households do not have any access to tangible assets although they actively participate in agricultural production. In a study on family farming systems conducted by Magdalena Leon and Carmen Diana Deere, it is stressed that in patriarchal family farmings, whereas men dominate and shape decision-making processes related to production and agricultural

¹¹³ Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," 279.

¹¹⁴ In the book entitled *Sharecropping and Sharecroppers* edited by T. J. Byres, a chapter is devoted to the cycle of sharecropping in Turkey. In an attempt to explore the history of agrarian structures in Turkey, Çağlar Keyder draws on the discussions of political economists such as Michel Gutelman, Harriet Friedmann and Amit Bhaduri to discuss the characteristics of sharecropping. Relying on this argument, I attempt to provide brief information about the nature of sharecropping to understand how sharecropping families in rural Kurdish areas make their living.

¹¹⁵ Chambers and Conway, "Sustainable Rural Livelihoods," 8.

yields, women labor on the farm and raise animals.¹¹⁶ Results of Household Labor Force Survey in 2011 demonstrate that in the Southeast Anatolia region, out of 89 rural unpaid family workers in the agricultural sector, 56 are female.¹¹⁷ Yet, women's active participation in agricultural production does not imply that they will have control over agricultural yields that are produced collectively by the peasant family.

In such patriarchal peasant households, agricultural production is sustained by the gendered division of labor within the household. According to the information gathered from Quantitative Household Survey conducted in 2002, Fatma Gül Ünal contends that the Southeast Anatolia region has the highest rural household size (8.1 members) and the highest dependency ratio (1.80 mouths per pair of hands) across the country.¹¹⁸ The World Bank defines the dependency ratio as "the ratio of dependents - people younger than 15 or older than 64 - to the working-age population - those ages 15-64."¹¹⁹ Traditional view of gender roles assumes that provision of care to the dependent population is considered to be the task of women.¹²⁰ Thus, women in this region bear the double burden of household chores and agricultural production as is the case in other parts of the country.

3.3 The Impact of Economic Change on Gender Relations

The transformation of agrarian structures in the 1950s in Turkey deteriorated the effective functioning of household economy based on subsistence farming. These transformative changes had profoundly affected the structure and intra-household dynamics of peasant families. The 1950s were marked by the mechanization of agriculture, as a result of which sharecroppers in some areas were driven out of their lands.¹²¹ Another characteristic of this period was the increasing growth rate of the population. According to the results of population censuses 1927-2000, annual growth

¹¹⁶ Carmen Diana Deere, "What Difference Does Gender Make? Rethinking Peasant Studies," *Feminist Economics* 1, no. 1 (1995): 56.

¹¹⁷ "Household Labour Force Statistics 2011," TURKSTAT (Turkish Statistical Institute) Database, accessed June 11, 2016, http://www.tuik.gov.tr/IcerikGetir.do?istab_id=25

¹¹⁸ Ünal, *Land Ownership Inequality*, 47.

¹¹⁹ "Age dependency ratio (% of working-age population)," World Bank, accessed July 18, 2016. <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.POP.DPND>.

¹²⁰ Ünal, *Land Ownership Inequality*, 116.

¹²¹ Aktan, "Land Reform in Turkey," 325.

rate of population was ‰ 28.5 in 1960.¹²² As a result of rapid population growth, the size of households started to increase which eliminated the need for all male members of the household to labor on land.¹²³ This surplus labor in the countryside which cannot be used in agricultural production acted as a push factor that precipitated rural-to-urban migration. Supply of rural surplus labor overlapped with the demand for labor in newly emerging industrial sectors in major urban areas.¹²⁴ Shantytowns located on the periphery of the city centers were the settlement areas of newly arrived migrants who have been integrated into the informal sector. As a result of increasing job opportunities in non-agricultural sector and development of informal housing, rural to urban migration has broadened options for individuals to make a living.¹²⁵ These transformations not only led to the diversification of livelihood strategies, but also to the dissolution of hierarchical relations among rural men.¹²⁶

Rural transformation in Turkey has deepened the social stratification among men which also affected intra-household relations in rural areas. Changes related to women's status were complementary to the changes in relations between men.¹²⁷ Even under conditions of subsistence farming, fragmentation of land in accordance with inheritance customs and lack of arable land may result in a surplus labor in rural areas.¹²⁸ Capitalization of agriculture which results in concentration of land and wealth in the hands of the few leads to a process of dispossession of the peasantry, and creates more surplus labor. It is commonly acknowledged that there is a positive association between the size of the land owned by farmers and the size of the family which is the main unit of production and reproduction of labor power. As a result of dispossession of the peasantry and the shrinking size of land, extension of the family no longer becomes

¹²² "Turkey in Statistics 2014," Turkish Statistical Institute, accessed June 2, 2016, http://www.turkstat.gov.tr/Kitap.do?metod=KitapDetay&KT_ID=o&KITAP_ID=5.

¹²³ Ferhunde Özbay, Kadınların Eviçi ve Evdişi Uğraşlarındaki Değişme, in *Kadın Bakış Açısından 1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadınlar*, comp. Şirin Tekeli (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1995), 143.

¹²⁴ Adaman and Çağlar, "Poverty and Social Exclusion," 18.

¹²⁵ Keyder, "Petty Commodity Production," 173.

¹²⁶ Özbay, "Kadınların Eviçi ve Evdişi Uğraşlarındaki Değişme," 143.

¹²⁷ Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler*, 50.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 60-61.

a viable option. Young men can no longer achieve status through taking over their father's job and having as many children as they can.¹²⁹

For peasant families who rely on family labor to make their living, education of the children and their employment in non-agricultural sectors became vital for maintaining household livelihood.¹³⁰ Sons escape the control of their fathers through receiving education and rural to urban migration.¹³¹ Son's decision to leave the parental household earlier than before created an opportunity for women to run their own households at younger ages.¹³² Yet, women's status was still defined by age and their reproductive capacity. Rural to urban migration resulted in women's withdrawal from agricultural production. Abundance of male labor and limited job opportunities in non-agricultural sectors eliminated the ideological basis for women's participation in production.¹³³ Since women's participation in agricultural production is not a signifier of prestige and status in a system of classic patriarchy, women in such villages who were freed from doing the heaviest household chores in the rural setting, felt that their conditions had been improved.¹³⁴ In this sense, dissolution of patrilineal family structure which is established upon land ownership could have a potential to liberate women, but it did not. This is due to the fact that the decision about women's withdrawal from agricultural production is not made by women themselves, but by their families organized along patriarchal lines.¹³⁵

The Kurdish women I interviewed stated that they were denied access to land as a result of the conflict-induced internal displacement in the 1990s. In his study on displaced persons in Mindanao, Philippines, Rufa Cagoco-Guiam states that denial to forcibly displaced persons of their access to land is a major source of deprivation¹³⁶. When asked about her life in Istanbul, the feeling of captivity has revealed itself in the story narrated by Zilan:

¹²⁹ Özbay, "Kadınların Eviçi ve Evdışı Uğraşlarındaki Değişme," 143,

¹³⁰ Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler*, 62.

¹³¹ Özbay, "Kadınların Eviçi ve Evdışı Uğraşlarındaki Değişme," 144.

¹³² Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler*, 32.

¹³³ Özbay, "Kadınların Eviçi ve Evdışı Uğraşlarındaki Değişme," 145.

¹³⁴ Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler*, 64; Ibid., 146.

¹³⁵ Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler*, 63.

¹³⁶ Cagoco-Guiam, "Gender and Livelihoods," 6.

“It feels like if I were in prison. It was... We were free. We were on the mountains; we were in the farms and gardens. We could go wherever we wanted. We came here, we feel like we were in prison. Besides we were living in the basement. We could not go outside. We do not know the language; we are not literate...”¹³⁷

Out of 16 Kurdish women who were forced to migrate, fourteen are currently housewives who used to actively participate in agricultural production in their rural settlements. Thus, it was not the process of economic modernization that Turkey had undergone in the 1950s and 1960s, but forced migration of the 1990s which led to women’s withdrawal from production that I interviewed.

The 1980’s were marked by a shift from an inward looking economic development model based on import-substitution to an outward looking export-oriented economic growth model. This change in the economic growth policy brought with it liberalization of the market economy which paved the way for privatization of state enterprises, outsourcing, subcontracting, and informalization of production relations.¹³⁸ This period was characterized by the monetization of household economy. In such a context, the internal displacement of Kurds took place in the 1990’s which culminated in the de-population of the Kurdish country side and which further enlarged the pool of unemployed. This wave of migration was different from previous in that forced Kurdish migrants were dispossessed. Since they were devoid of their means of livelihood, they were left with no choice other than selling their labour to make a living. This basically implied that they had lost control over productive forces and relations of production.

When asked about her ideas on village life and city life, the story narrated by Berfu illustrated how self-sufficient village life has been praised and how life in the metropolis has been negated:

“Everything was natural and nice. Some people do not understand us and say that these people (Kurdish people) were hungry back there and they were satiated here. We ate whatever we wanted. When we felt like eating meat, we slaughtered a sheep. We did not know how to buy milk. We had milk, yoghurt, honey, cream and

¹³⁷ Sanki cezaevine düşmüş gibisin yani. Öyleydi biz orada özgürdük dağdaydık, tarladaydık, bahçedeydik. Canımız ne isterse oradaydık. Buraya geldik insan kendini cezaevinde gibi hissediyor. Bir de bodrum kata düştük. Biz dışarı da çıkamıyorduk dil bilmiyoruz, okuma yazma yok.

¹³⁸ Ayşe Buğra and Çağlar Keyder, “The Turkish Welfare Regime in Transformation,” *Journal of European Social Policy* 16, no. 3 (2006): 219-220 ; Erdem Yörük, “Welfare Provision as Political Containment: The Politics of Social Assistance and the Kurdish Conflict in Turkey,” *Politics and Society* 40, no. 4 (2012): 521.

butter. We did not buy anything. All we ate was natural food from animal sources. We did not buy potatoes. We planted them in soil which we consumed fresh during the winter season. When we came here, I was confused by the fact that we needed to buy potatoes.”¹³⁹

These transformations have also been reflected in intra-household relations. The need to earn income for the maintenance of livelihood on the part of men led women to take more family responsibilities. Women replaced men in undertaking daily activities such as shopping.¹⁴⁰ Women spend more time to do extra-household activities even though they do not work outside the home.¹⁴¹ This process was marked by increasing visibility of women within public space, which I will further elaborate in the next chapter. Women assume the responsibility to arrange kin relationships. Women attach importance to the maintenance of kin ties which they see as a social support mechanism with regard to household activities. The most common area of cooperation among women is child care. In her study on Kurdish women’s experience of forced migration, Çağlayan notes, that women transfer familial responsibilities to other women in order to spend that much time outside the house¹⁴² which sustains and reproduces the hierarchical relations among women.

¹³⁹ ... Her şey doğaldı her şey hoştu. Mesela yeri geldi mi bazıları bizi anlamıyor; diyor bunlar buraya geldi dünyayı gördü veyahut da açtılar, buraya toktu. Biz hayatta her şeyi yedik. Canımız et isterdi koyunumuzu keserdik yedik süt nasıl alınır bilmezdik sütümüz vardı yoğurdumuz vardı balımız vardı kaymağımız vardı tereyağımız vardı. Hiçbir şey almıyorduk hepsi doğal kendi hayvanlarımızdan yiyorduk bunu. Mesela hayatta kilo işi patates almazdık. Kışın gömerdik toprağa hepsini tarlada. Kış boyunca patates mesela taze yedik. Burda biz geldik ben bir kilo patates nasıl alıcam şaşırıyordum...

¹⁴⁰ Özbay, “Kadınların Eviçi ve Evdişi Uğraşlarındaki Değişme,” 151.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 153-154.

¹⁴² Handan Çağlayan, *Ne Değişti : Kürt Kadınların Zorunlu Göç Deneyimi* (Ankara: Ayizi Kitap, 2011), 155.

CHAPTER IV

AN OVERVIEW OF KURDISH FORCED MIGRATION IN TURKEY

In order to grasp the root causes of the conflict between the PKK and the TAF in the late 1980s, resulting in the forced migration of Kurds and politicization of their ethnic identity, it is important to briefly analyze the social and political context in which a centralized and modern Turkish Republic was created on Turkish ethno-nationalist identity. The roots of the modernizing cadre of the Turkish Republic can be traced back to the Young Turks in the late Ottoman period who attempted to centralize and turkify the population of the empire. It was the development of such centralizing tendencies that gave rise to resistance of the Kurdish people and politicized Kurdish ethnicity.

In this section, I will give a historical background of the process of nation building in Turkey which has its origins in the social engineering of the Young Turks who committed themselves to the modernization and centralization of the country. Second, I will try to provide insights into the dynamics of Kurdish resistance that emerged as a reaction to the state-building project of homogenization and of centralization from the early 1920s and the early 1980s. In this part, I will briefly analyze the deportation process of Kurds by taking into consideration the geographic scope and scale of the deportations, and the social strata of deported population. A spatial and demographic analysis of Kurdish migrations starting from the late Ottoman era and through the history of the Turkish Republic will give significant hints of how the Kurdish mass migration in the 1990s differed from the earlier migratory movements in scope and scale. Such an analysis will help us better understand the socio-economic impact of such a large-scale influx of displaced people on the socio-spatial structure of the urban fabric, and the processes of marginalization and of social exclusion.

Lastly, I will outline how Kurdish people's experience of state violence in the 1990s and long-standing practices of denying and othering Kurdish identity led to the politicization of ethnicity among Kurds. This process of politicization is very significant, because it has been instrumental in raising awareness among Kurdish women, who personally experienced state-induced-violence, of their ethnic and gender

identity. PKK-led mobilization of Kurdish women as guerilla fighters, and in the later phases of the Kurdish movement, their visibility in urban space as protestors of state violence and as human rights and ethnicity rights advocates created a space for them to liberate themselves from the bondage of patriarchally organized traditional Kurdish society.¹⁴³

4.1 The Kurds and Centralization Attempts in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republican Era

The fall of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the Turkish Republic on the basis of the nation-state model have shifted the emphasis from religion to ethnicity as the source of identification which was instrumental in politicizing Kurdish identity.¹⁴⁴ The Ottoman Empire contained within its borders distinct ethnic and religious groups.¹⁴⁵ The *millet* system, which was defined as the coexistence of diverse communities formed along religious lines, was the defining characteristic of the political structure of the empire. In this sense, millet did not possess an ethnic connotation. The structure of hierarchy in the empire was established on the basis of religious identity. Muslim communities were the highest ranking groups within religion-based hierarchy.

The ruling elite of the empire was preponderantly Sunna-Muslim.¹⁴⁶ However, the political regime of the empire was defined by multi-confessionalism and the centre-periphery relations are defined in terms of ‘lines of articulation.’ In one of the chapters of the book with the title “Oxford Textbook of Old Age Psychiatry,” the authors mention the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari who use the rhizome metaphor to explain the relationship between the center and the periphery, in their discussion of self and ethics. The authors borrow the terms ‘lines of articulation’ and ‘lines of flight’ from Deleuze and Guattari who argue that the rhizomes are produced out of the struggle

¹⁴³ Eva Bernard, “Women and the Kurdish Movement in Turkey: “There will be no turning back,” The WVoice, August 5, 2016, <http://thewvoice.com/Volume-2/Kurdish-Women-No-Way-Back>

¹⁴⁴ Hakan Yavuz, “Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey,” *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 7, no. 3 (2001) : 1.

¹⁴⁵ Mesut Yeğen, “The Kurdish Question in Turkish State Discourse,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 34, no. 4 (1999) : 557.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

between these two lines. They define ‘lines of articulation’ as forces that ‘*seek to establish unity, coherence, and stability through the setting of rules, establishing explanations, ordering and categorizing, and defining centre–periphery relations.*’¹⁴⁷ As analogous to the process of rhizomatic formations, I believe that the Ottoman Empire promoted lines of articulation through categorization of her population on the basis of religious affiliation regardless of ethnic differences.

The millet system was the mechanism through which pluralism was established as a norm for managing the internal affairs of the empire. This multi-ethnic structure of the empire which did not pursue a policy of assimilation¹⁴⁸ allowed a variety of ethnic, religious and cultural groups, including Muslim Kurds, to co-exist autonomously. It was not until the second half of the nineteenth century when Kurdish principalities lost their autonomy as a result of the Ottoman centralization policy under the pressures from great powers of Europe¹⁴⁹, Kurds started revolting against the central authority.

Before, the Kurdish emirs acted as arbitrators who have the capacity and authority to solve tribal conflicts. When the Kurdish emirates lost their power and faded away as semi-independent entities, there emerged a number of conflicting tribes. In such a political context, the tariqat sheiks started to fill the political vacuum created by the absence of the Kurdish emirates.¹⁵⁰ Especially the sheiks of the Naqshbandiyya and the Qadiriyya tariqats took on leadership roles in the process of resistance of Kurds against the centralization processes which resulted in the politicization of Islamic identity.¹⁵¹

Another reason behind the politicization of Islamic identity amongst Kurds was the abolition of the institution of the Caliphate in 1924 as an extension of the major steps taken towards secularization in the second half of the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries.¹⁵² The institution of the Caliphate was the cement which bound the

¹⁴⁷ Clive Baldwin and Brandi Estey-Burt, “The Ethics of Caring,” in *Oxford Textbook of Old Age Psychiatry*, ed. Tom Denning and Alan Thomas, 2nd. ed (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 771.

¹⁴⁸ Yeğen, “The Kurdish Question,” 557.

¹⁴⁹ Martin Van Bruinessen, “Religion in Kurdistan,” *Kurdish Times*, 1991, 12, http://www.hum.uu.nl/medewerkers/m.vanbruinessen/publications/Bruinessen_Religion_in_Kurdistan.pdf.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

¹⁵¹ Van Bruinessen, “Religion in Kurdistan,” 11 ; Yavuz, “Five Stages of the Construction of Kurdish Nationalism,” 5.

¹⁵² Yeğen, “The Kurdish Question,” 559.

community of Sunni Muslims together, be they Kurds, Turks or Arabs, regardless of linguistic and ethnic differences among members.¹⁵³ This religious loyalty to the person of the Caliph was also discernible in the case of the members of Kurdish tribes, which they prioritized over their national allegiance.

Faced with the threat of rising nationalism in Europe, a diverse array of ideologies mushroomed within the boundaries of the empire in the late 19th century. These ideological concerns found expression in the Young Turk movement whose origins can be traced back to the 1880s. The movement recruited its partisans from well-educated military officers and civil administrators.¹⁵⁴ The Young Turks envisaged a political order based on liberal ideals, and on the principles of Ottomanism and constitutionalism. However, in time the founding cadres of the movement fell under the influence of Pan-Turkism and became strong advocates of Turkish nationalism. It is this cadre of military and civil officials, who had such centralizing and homogenizing tendencies, formed the nucleus of the elite who founded the Turkish Republic in 1923.

Although the Kurds were regarded by the Young Turks as the constitutive elements of the new political order, the cordial relations between the Committee of Union and Progress and the Kurds started to deteriorate on the eve of World War I.¹⁵⁵ The underlying reason behind holding such suspicions of Kurdish intentions was the lack of trust between two parties which was accompanied by a social engineering project of Turkification and centralization suppressing the diversity of the 'other.' This implied that Turkishness started to be defined through ethnic, cultural and linguistic otherness of non Turkish citizens. The Kurds were perceived as the 'ethnic other' which posed a big threat to national integration, as is the case with other cultural and linguistic communities. For this very reason, they needed to be integrated into the wider Turkish society through their assimilation to acquire full rights of citizenship.¹⁵⁶ This process of

¹⁵³ Martin Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London : Zed Books Ltd, 1992), 268.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 270.

¹⁵⁵ Uğur Ümit Üngör, "Young Turk Social Engineering: Mass Violence and the Nation State in Eastern Turkey, 1913--1950" (PhD diss. University of Amsterdam, 2009), 215-217, <http://hdl.handle.net/11245/2.65687>.

¹⁵⁶ Anna Secor, " "There is an Istanbul that belongs to me" ": Citizenship, Space, and Identity in the City," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, no. 2 (2004): 355.

homogenization that aimed to create a monolithic culture further revealed an ethnic dimension of an already politicized Kurdish identity.

4.2 Kurdish Resistance Movements from the Early 1920s until the Mid-1980s

Mesut Yeğen argues that, after the declaration of the republic in 1923, the Turkish state ignored the ethnic dimension of the Kurdish question for nearly six decades.¹⁵⁷ In his examination of the way the Kurdish issue has been mentioned in Turkish state discourse, Mesut Yeğen reveals how, in the official state discourse, the Kurdish resisters were constituted as ‘the evils of Turkey's pre-modern past’ who were not motivated by ethno-nationalist beliefs.¹⁵⁸ Although the Turkish state discourse portrayed the Kurdish resistance as ‘banditry’, ‘tribal resistance’ or ‘political reaction’, it would not be wrong to argue that the Kurdish rebellions has been motivated by a nationalist sentiment of varying degrees.

As I stated above, starting from the late 19th century, the sheiks took on leadership roles and became powerful political actors in Kurdistan. The Kurdish rebellions of the late 19th century and early 20th century were led by influential sheiks. Although the uprisings were thought to be religiously motivated, they carried national elements. The Kurdish rebellion in 1880 which was led by a Naqshbandi sheikh, Ubeydullah of Nehri, constitutes a good example of such a nationalist rebellion.¹⁵⁹ However, Martin van Bruinessen underlines that it was not the idea of national belonging, but religious or tribal loyalty that motivated many Kurds to participate in the uprising.¹⁶⁰ The reason behind the outbreak of the rebellion was a reaction to the aspiration of Sultan Abdulhamid II to centralize the empire.¹⁶¹

It was not until Turkish Republic was proclaimed in 1923 that a united Kurdish national movement did not exist due to a lack of ethnic awareness among the Kurds.

¹⁵⁷ Yeğen, “The Kurdish Question,” 555.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Van Bruinessen, “Religion in Kurdistan,” 12.; Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 185.

¹⁶⁰ Martin Van Bruinessen, “Shifting National and Ethnic Identities: The Kurds in Turkey and the European Diaspora,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 18, no. 1 (1998): 39.

¹⁶¹ Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, *Kürt Sorunu Kökeni ve Gelişimi*, trans. Ahmet Fethi, 5th ed. (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2007), 93-94.

After the declaration of Turkey as a republic, a series of reforms aimed at creating a modern and secular nation state had been initiated by the republican founding elite. Some measures were taken that implied a break with the Ottoman/Islamic past.¹⁶² The early republican era witnessed the abolition of the institution of the Caliphate in 1924, the closing of religious schools and the outlawing of Sufi brotherhoods. The modernization of the education system was given outmost importance.

Efforts were made to purify the Turkish language from foreign elements. The creation of a common language was the key to the establishment of a political entity united by a common culture.¹⁶³ In this sense, linguistic unity of the nation became a top priority issue for Kemalist reformers of the early republican era. The Kurds as the 'largest linguistic minority'¹⁶⁴ in the country posed a direct threat to national unity and integrity. In line with the populist ideology, the Turkish state imposed a ban on the use of Kurdish language in the public.¹⁶⁵ Apart from that, the Turkish state attempted to ideologically justify that the Kurds were Turkish in origin. This was another way of saying that the Kurds have never existed as a separate ethnic group.

In theory, the Turkish identity was defined on the basis of civic-territorial attachments and the word 'Turk' was used as an umbrella term including all those who were attached to the Turkish state by the bond of citizenship regardless of ethnic origin.¹⁶⁶ However, in practice, the project of civic-nation building in Turkey was not put into effect and the word 'Turk' took on an ethnic connotation.¹⁶⁷ In this sense, by the late 1930s, it was not civic integration but ethnicity that informed the logic of nation-building in Turkey.¹⁶⁸

By the 1920s and 1930s, the reforms of the young republic aimed to modernize, centralize and secularize the country led to the outbreak of rebellions in the

¹⁶² Binnaz Toprak, "Secularism and Islam: The Building of Modern Turkey," *Macalester International* 15, no.1 (2005): 30-32. accessed July 8, 2016, <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/macintl/vol15/iss1/9>.

¹⁶³ Senem Aslan, "Everyday Forms of State Power and the Kurds in the Early Turkish Republic," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 43 (2011): 79.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

¹⁶⁵ Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 281.

¹⁶⁶ Secor, " "There Is an Istanbul that belongs to me," 355.

¹⁶⁷ Kirişçi and Winrow, *Kürt Sorunu Kökeni ve Gelişimi*, 115-116.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 123.

Kurdish-populated eastern parts of the country. Between 1924 and 1938, there were 18 uprisings in the country of which 17 broke out in the Eastern Anatolia region, and the participants in 16 of them were of Kurdish origin.¹⁶⁹

The Sheik Said Revolt which broke out on February 13, 1925 was the first and most important Kurdish resistance in the early republican era. There have been controversies over whether Islamic or nationalist motives played a role in the eruption of the rebellion as has been the case with other Kurdish uprisings. For instance, according to Van Bruinessen, the Sheik Said rebellion was motivated by both religious and nationalist sentiments.¹⁷⁰ He asserted that there were some practical reasons for the sheiks to led the rebellions. Since one of the significant markers of the Kurdish identity was their commitment to Islam, the sheiks as respected religious figures could appeal to a much wider segment of Kurdish society and mobilize them. However, separatism was a likely prospect that remained on the political agenda.

On the other hand, Kirişçi and Winrow viewed the Sheik Said rebellion as a rebellion, which was led by a charismatic leader with religious credentials with the power to bring together Kurdish tribal elements, as a reaction to the centralization attempts of the Ankara government.¹⁷¹ They argue that the Kurds were lacking a mature sense of ethnic identity when the rebellion broke out in 1925. Although the motives behind the Sheik Said Rebellion is open to discussion, it was obvious that the rebellion was a resistance to centralizing and homogenizing policies of the republic which aimed to create a monolithic Turkish culture through assimilation of the Kurds.

The rebellion was suppressed by the Turkish forces violently. After the suppression of the revolt, the Law on The Maintenance of Order was adopted and two Independence Tribunals were re-formed in order to put those who instigated the rebellion on trial.¹⁷² A wave of violence was unleashed by the Turkish forces in the eastern provinces following the capture of Sheik Said on April 27.¹⁷³ This period

¹⁶⁹ The figures are provided by Kirişçi and Winrow on the basis of the data gathered from the book with the title of "Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Ayaklanmalar (1924-1938); see Kirişçi and Winrow, *Kürt Sorunu Kökeni ve Gelişimi*, 118.

¹⁷⁰ Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 280-283.

¹⁷¹ Kirişçi and Winrow, *Kürt Sorunu Kökeni ve Gelişimi*, 125.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 119.

¹⁷³ Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 290.

witnessed the razing and destruction of villages and indiscriminate killing of civilians. Human and material losses caused by the brutal suppression of the uprising were very high.

After the trial, Sheik Said was executed by hanging together with other 47 Kurdish leaders of the revolt. Also, in different districts of Diyarbekir, influential sheiks that were suspected of collaborating with the rebels were pointed as a target, and they were slaughtered.¹⁷⁴ The families and tribes who took the lead in the uprising were deported to western Anatolia¹⁷⁵, because the rebellion was perceived as a threat that would undermine the very foundation of the republic.

Although only “sheiks, chieftains and lords” should have been deported as asserted by İsmet İnönü, the social composition of those deported in 1925 consisted of members of the local elite, who were suspected and accused of disloyalty to the government, and of government loyalists.¹⁷⁶ There were two more waves of deportations that took place in 1926 and 1927 when those who were considered ethnically and culturally non-Turkish and those rebel families were deported to the western parts of the country. As stated by Kurdish sources, the period between 1925 and 1928 saw the razing of 10.000 Kurdish dwellings, the killing of more than 15.000 and the deportation of more than 500.000 Kurds. Of 500.000 Kurds who were deported, 200.00 were believed to have died.¹⁷⁷

As Senem Aslan argues, the brutal suppression of the revolt and increased bureaucratic and military presence of the Turkish state in Kurdish-inhabited areas did not imply that the state was able to effectively dominate and control these areas. On the contrary, it further bred nationalist sentiments among Kurds and did not prevent them from resisting to the assimilationist and nationalizing policies of the state.¹⁷⁸ The Mount

¹⁷⁴ For a full discussion of this point see Kolektif, *Genelkurmay Belgelerinde Kürt İsyanları*, vol. 1, bk. 6, *Cumhuriyet'in Gözüyle Kürt Tarihi* (Istanbul: Kaynak, 1992), 313, quoted in Uğur Ümit Üngör, “Young Turk Social Engineering,” 238.

¹⁷⁵ Yeğen, “The Kurdish Question,” 561.

¹⁷⁶ Üngör, “Young Turk Social Engineering,” 248.

¹⁷⁷ Sureya Bedr Khan, *The Case of Kurdistan against Turkey* (Philadelphia, 1929), 63; Bletch Chirguh, *La Question Kurde: ses origines et ses causes* (Cairo: Paul Barbey, 1930), 33, quoted in David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, rev. ed. (London: LB. Tauris, 1997), 200.

¹⁷⁸ Aslan, “Everyday Forms of State Power,” 90.

Ararat revolt of 1930 and the Dersim rebellion of 1937 were such acts of resistance proving that Kurdish dissidence was mounting.

Some of the rebels who played important roles in rebellion led by the Sheik Said were able to survive state-inflicted atrocities in eastern Anatolia.¹⁷⁹ Some of them formed guerilla bands and engaged in a military confrontation with the Turkish forces. After the proclamation of amnesty in 1928, some guerillas surrendered to the authorities and some fled to the Mount Ararat region, an area which was not fully controlled by the Ankara government. By that time, tribes of the region were in a state of rebellion against the Turkish authority.¹⁸⁰ Geographically speaking, the region was hard to invade due to its mountainous terrain.

The combination of all these factors made Ararat a suitable location for 'Khoybun' (the Kurdish National League), a nationalist organization founded in 1927 by Kurdish nationalists in exile outside Turkey to initiate a liberation movement, to send its army which would start a revolution. The army sent by Khoybun was under the command of İhsan Nuri. The army and the rebellious local tribes in Ararat joined their forces and took up arms against the Turkish forces. By the late 1930, the Kurdish insurrection was brutally crushed as a result of aerial bombardment carried out by Turkish aircrafts.¹⁸¹

Van Bruinessen's evaluation of the character of the Kurdish rebellions unmasks how uprisings that broke out in Turkish Kurdistan had been fueled by pure nationalist sentiments in the aftermath of Sheik Said Rebellion. As Van Bruinessen writes,

After Shaikh Said and other leading shaikhs had either been killed or captured or had escaped, nothing of the messianistic appearance of the movement remained. Neither the guerrilla bands that continued the war against the government

¹⁷⁹ Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 291.

¹⁸⁰ David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: LB. Tauris, 1997), 202-203.

¹⁸¹ For a detailed discussion of this point see Robert Olson, "The Kurdish Rebellions of Sheikh Said (1925), Mt. Ararat (1930), and Dersim (1937-8): Their Impact on the Development of the Turkish Air Force and on Kurdish and Turkish Nationalism," *Die Welt des Islams, New Series* 40, no. 1 (2000): 67-94.

and its troops, nor the leaders of the Ararat revolt that followed, used religious phraseology. Nationalism seemed undiluted, then.¹⁸²

Resistance shown by the Kurds to their assimilation into Turkishness would lead the Turkish state, in its pursuit of creating a modern and secular society united by a sense of national identity, to take harsher ‘pacification’ measures in Kurdish-populated regions. In the 1920s and 1930s, consolidation of central authority was an integral part of the country’s civilizing mission.¹⁸³ In such a political climate, the Kurdish uprisings were seen by the republican regime as acts of resistance to the pervasive intrusion of a centralized state into everyday socio-spatial life. From the vantage point of the Turkish state, the Kurds as they were resisting not only the centralizing tendencies of the regime, but also the civilizing process. The question was how to “civilize” these ‘pre-modern people’ bounded by tribal and religious loyalties. For the ruling elites of the republic, the answer lay in changing the ethnic and religious composition of the society through population transfers.

During the second and third decade of the 20th century in Turkey, resettlement was seen as an instrument for the reordering of social relations within the borders of the Turkish state.¹⁸⁴ The main reason behind population transfers that took place in this period was not only to nationalize geographical space, but also to create national subjects through the process of identity formation. The 1934 Settlement Act No. 2510 constituted as a good example of how the spatial reorganization of territory was deployed as an instrument of the Turkish state to construct a unified national subjectivity which subsumes other identities defined along ethno-cultural and religious lines.

The 1934 Settlement Law was initially intended to handle the Kurdish question through dispersion of the Kurds in order for them to get assimilated among Turks. On the other hand, it aimed to settle and assimilate Muslim population which used to settle in Ottoman territories before the portioning of the empire.¹⁸⁵ The law ordered the

¹⁸² Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 299.

¹⁸³ Yeğen, “The Kurdish Question,” 563.

¹⁸⁴ Joost Jongerden, *The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds : An Analysis of Spatial Policies, Modernity and War*, ed. Dale F. Eickelman (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2007), 216.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

categorization of Turkey into three zones¹⁸⁶ and authorized the Ministry of Internal Affairs for managing the spatial distribution of settlements. This era witnessed the forced deportation of the Kurds from Sason, Zeylan, Ağrı and Dersim to western parts of the country after the issuing of the Settlement Law in 1934. Legal recognition accorded to the tribal leaders, sheiks and tribes was abrogated. Their properties were confiscated by the state and they were deported to areas where their number was not supposed to exceed 5% of the population.¹⁸⁷ It follows from this that the target of the Settlement law was the dissolution of Kurdish tribes and of tribal loyalties.

Another major Kurdish uprising that emerged as a reaction to the oppressive state policies designed to suppress and assimilate the Kurdish population was Dersim Rebellion of 1937. From the early 1930s on, the Turkish government experienced difficulties to bring Dersim under its control and used forced deportations and resettlement as an instrument to reach that goal.¹⁸⁸ In 1937, the Turkish forces launched a military operation in Dersim and the rebellion was crushed violently. Many Kurds lost their lives as a result of state-inflicted violence and many had been deported to the west. Estimates of the number of deportees and of the scope of state violence are revealed by David McDowall in his evaluation of the Dersim Rebellion of 1938. As McDowall argues, “it was estimated, possibly with exaggeration, that some 40,000 Kurds perished. Three thousand notables and others were deported. The remainder of the surviving population was put under the supervision of local garrisons.”¹⁸⁹

As stated before, the Kurdish rebellions of 1925, 1930 and 1937 erupted as a reaction to the inroads of a modernizing state into the social fabric of traditional Kurdish society, but as Van Bruinessen indicates, there was a nationalist element discernible in them.¹⁹⁰ The driving force behind these rebellions was the socio-economic and cultural grievances the Kurdish population suffered. In the 1920s and

¹⁸⁶ For a full discussion of this point see *ibid.*, 175-178,

¹⁸⁷ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 207.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁹⁰ Martin van Bruinessen, “Genocide of Kurds”, in *The Widening Circle of Genocide*, vol. 3 of *Genocide: A Critical Bibliographic Review*, ed. Israel W. Charny (New Brunswick, NY: Transaction Publishers, 1994).

1930s, the Turkish state took some measures aimed at consolidate and centralize state power in order to strengthen the very foundation of the republic.

As stated before, a ban was imposed on the official use of Kurdish in education and in courts.¹⁹¹ The institution of the Caliphate in 1924 was abolished in 1924. Madrasas and kuttabs as the only institutions through where the Kurds accessed to education were closed. These measures were regarded by Kurds as attacks on their way of life and identity, and alienated the Kurdish population. In order to be accorded recognition within the new political system, the Kurds had to forget their Kurdishness and embrace Turkishness.¹⁹²

There existed a vicious cycle which further differentiated and polarized Turkish and Kurdish national identities. The Kemalist project of nation-building aimed at the creation of Turkish national identity based on a common language and shared culture. This project caused dissent among the Kurdish population which refused to be assimilated into Turkishness and they revolted against the centralizing Turkish state throughout the 1920s and 1930s.¹⁹³

The Turkish state responded to these acts of resistance unleashed a wave of violence which included killing of innocents, declaration of martial law in Kurdish regions and forced expatriations especially after the suppression of the Sheik Said Rebellion. As Robert Olson argues, from 1925 onwards, the suppression of the Kurdish rebellions by the Turkish forces further enhanced state capacity to consolidate its power.¹⁹⁴ A ruthless military campaign of repression was conducted by the Turkish state against the Kurdish population. The Kurds responded by revolting against the authoritarian state in the face of humiliations they suffered at the hands of the Turkish

¹⁹¹ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 191-192.

¹⁹² Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement*, 32.

¹⁹³ Amir Hassanpour, "The Kurdish Experience," *MERIP Reports*, No. 189, accessed June 13, 2016, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer189/kurdish-experience>.

¹⁹⁴ Robert Olson specifically analyzes the role Turkey's air force played in the consolidation of Turkish nationalism through the suppression of Kurdish rebellions starting from the second half of the 1920s. The capabilities of Turkish air forces measured by the number of aircrafts and the quality of armaments is irrelevant to this discussion. However, Olson's analysis is worthy of consideration for revealing the scope of destruction inflicted by the Turkish army on the Kurdish population, for a detailed discussion see Olson, "The Kurdish Rebellions."

military forces.¹⁹⁵ To use David McDowall's terms, this genocidal mentality of the Turkish state inciting animosity and hatred towards the Kurds also found expression in the views of the foreign minister of the time, Tawfiq Rushdi Saracoglu as he argued that:

in their [Kurdish] case, their cultural level is so low, their mentality so backward, that *they cannot be simply in the general Turkish body politic* ... they will die out, economically unfitted for the struggle for life in competition with the more advanced and cultured Turks ... as many as can will emigrate into Persia and Iraq, while the rest will simply undergo the elimination of the unfit (emphasis added).¹⁹⁶

This statement clearly indicates that due to the closed nature of Turkish political system, the Kurds were not able to articulate their demands through legal channels. The Kurds were left with no option but to articulate their aspirations through violent means.¹⁹⁷ However, this situation started to change along with the drafting of the 1961 constitution which led to the emergence of a more liberal political context opening space for the political participation of diverse groups. The 1961 constitution brought along with it freedoms and rights that provided fertile ground for the proliferation of the leftist movement in Turkey which has been highly participated by Kurds.¹⁹⁸

The 1960s and 1970s saw the mushrooming of left-wing political parties and of organizations that appealed to Kurds. The era's most important turning point was the foundation of the Turkish Workers' Party (*Türkiye İşçi Partisi*, TWP) in 1961 which advocated socialist values and which, for this very reason, appealed to a considerable number of Kurds. For Chris Kutschera, the TWP appeared as the other channel through which Kurds have become politicized. Alevis and Kurds were included among the party's chief support groups although the party did not publicly acknowledge the Kurdish issue at least not until the party's Fourth Congress in 1970.¹⁹⁹ For the adherents of the party, main points of attraction were its leftist ideology and the organizational means it provided for the masses. Having established close relationships with a diverse array of unions and cultural clubs, the TWP emerged as a central organizing platform

¹⁹⁵ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 198.

¹⁹⁶ FO 371/12255 Clerk to Chamberlain, Ankara, 4 January 1927, quoted in *ibid.*, 200.

¹⁹⁷ Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement*, 37.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁹⁹ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 409.

for those, especially for Kurds, who felt discontent with the policies of the Ankara government.²⁰⁰

The Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Kürdistanı Demokrat Partisi*, KDPT) which was established in 1965²⁰¹ emerged as the first Kurdish party in this relatively liberal atmosphere.²⁰² As Kutschera argues, the foundation of the KDPT represented one of the two forms of organized Kurdish activism in the late 1950s and early 1960s.²⁰³ The party program envisaged the establishment of a separate Kurdistan ruled by bureaucrats of Kurdish origin where Kurdish would be the official language.

However, the party did not live long due to its adoption of conservative ideology and concomitantly attracted a conservative audience which pledged their allegiance to aghas. Thus, the KDPT failed in its effort to appeal to a wider audience. The point that needs to be stressed here is that this decade witnessed the foundation of a Kurdish party claiming to represent nationalist demands.

The TWP was dissolved in 1971 in the aftermath of the military intervention, but other leftist groups and the party itself had a profound impact on the distinctive nature of the Kurdish movement and on the ideology embraced by the PKK.²⁰⁴ The acknowledgment of the Kurdish question by a legal party was instrumental in raising the awareness of Kurdish youth, especially university students, who would later lead the Kurdish national movement.²⁰⁵ In the late 1960s, Kurds in TWP, subsequently joined by those in other leftist organizations such as the Confederation of Revolutionary Workers Union (*Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu*, DISK) and the Federation of Revolutionary Youth (*Devrimci Gençlik Federasyonu*, DEV-GENÇ), took part in the organization of mass rallies to cry out against the injustices and repression that the Kurds have endured, and to call for democracy. These demonstrations did not only represent the first open resistance to the Turkish state since 1938, but also signaled the

²⁰⁰ Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement*, 43.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 47.

²⁰² McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 408.

²⁰³ Chris-Kutschera, "Mad Dreams of Independence: The Kurds of Turkey and the PKK," *MERIP Reports*, No. 189 (1994), accessed June 16, 2016, <http://www.chris-kutschera.com/A/Mad%20Dreams.htm>.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 174.

²⁰⁵ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 409-410.

changing social composition of the Kurdish national elite and the formation of an urban, educated and bourgeois leadership.

The year 1969 saw the formation of Revolutionary Eastern Cultural Hearths (*Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları*, the DDKO) which organized leftist rallies in the eastern Turkey in order to call attention to the cultural and political rights that the Kurds have been deprived of, and to the economic deprivations that the eastern region of Turkey have suffered.²⁰⁶ As Kutschera states, the formation of these cultural clubs heralded that the Kurdish nationalist leftists had begun to be separated from Turkish leftists.²⁰⁷

Following the military intervention of 1971, the DDKO, the TWP, Dev-Genç were declared illegal and their leaders were arrested and put on a trial. However, prisons have become schools and this process culminated in the radicalization and proliferation of Kurdish organizations, even though fractioned among them, in the period after the restoration of the parliamentary democracy in 1973.²⁰⁸ The 1970s witnessed a shift in Kurdish demands from economic development of deprived eastern regions to cultural recognition and separatism. As Van Bruinessen stated, one of the reasons behind such a shift was that although Turkish leftists acknowledged the Kurdish question, they prioritized the struggle to achieve a socialist revolution over the national dimension of the Kurdish issue. Second reason behind this shift in Kurdish demands was the ability of Kurdish organizations to propagate their ideological message and organize due to the lack of a strong, central government.

As a result of the aforementioned reasons, the 1970s witnessed the formation of clandestine Kurdish parties such as the Socialist Party of Kurdistan, founded in 1974. Through the publication of their bilingual journal known as *Riya Azadi / Özgürlük Yolu* (Road of Liberty) and of *Roja Welat* (Sun of the Homeland), the party members tried to mobilize the intelligentsia and the masses.²⁰⁹ There were many other Kurdish organizations that emerged in this period along with the Socialist Party of Kurdistan.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 411.

²⁰⁷ Kutschera, "Mad Dreams of Independence."

²⁰⁸ Ibid. ; Van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 32-33.

²⁰⁹ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 414.

The second half of the 1970s saw the revival of the DDKO of the late 1960s as Revolutionary Democratic Cultural Associations (*Doğu Devrimci Kültür Dernekleri*, the DDKD) which were first established in Ankara and then spread to different cities. Many other Kurdish organizations such as the Maoist Kawa, Ala Rizgari, and Şivan's KDP²¹⁰, emerged in this period along with the DDKO and the Socialist Party of Kurdistan. Among all these organizations, the PKK which emerged as a small group in Ankara in 1974 under the leadership of Abdullah Öcalan with the motive to create a separate Kurdish state²¹¹, has distinguished itself as the only Kurdish organization that survived the repression of the 1980s because of its appeal to different societal segments.²¹² 1984 represented the year that the PKK has recommenced a guerilla warfare campaign in the Kurdish regions of Turkey and armed resistance appeared as a means for continuing the Kurdish national struggle on a different platform.

4.3 The Emergence of the PKK and the Internal Displacement of Kurds in the 1990s

The PKK's resumption of the guerilla war in 1984 marked a critical turning point, shaping the trajectory of the politicization of Kurdish nationalism in Turkey. As Ayşe Betül Çelik states, "the conflict became distinctly "Kurdish" after 1984 with the emergence of the PKK as a separatist group within Turkey, when it first attacked Turkey's state apparatus."²¹³

As stated above, the PKK was founded by Abdullah Öcalan who, along with his six colleagues, adopted Marxism – Leninism as their ideological frame and aimed to start a national liberation movement.²¹⁴ Öcalan and his six colleagues formed the core cadre of the PKK – the name that the group adopted in 1978 – and they were known as *Apocus* (followers of Abdullah Öcalan). In the pre-1980 coup period, they fled Turkey and moved to neighboring countries such as Syria and Lebanon to organize themselves

²¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of these Kurdish organizations please see Martin Van Bruinessen, "The Kurds in Turkey," *MERIP Reports*, No. 121 (1984) : 10-11.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Van Bruinessen, "Shifting National and Ethnic Identities," 44.

²¹³ Ayşe Betül Çelik, "Turkey: The Kurdish Question and the Coercive State," in *Civil Society and Peacebuilding: A Critical Assessment*, ed. Thania Paffenholz (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010): 153.

²¹⁴ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 420.

for the armed insurgence²¹⁵ in their quest to recruit supporters in the Kurdish regions. One of the features that distinguished the PKK from other Kurdish organizations was that it recruited among the lowest social classes.²¹⁶ The rationale behind it was that the PKK merged class struggle with the national struggle.²¹⁷ As Van Bruinessen puts it, “in the name of the “anti-colonial liberation struggle” it (*the PKK*) carried out actions not only against the Turkish state but also against the various classes of “collaborators,” “liquidationists,” “social-chauvinists” and other opponents of its own brand of “revolution.”²¹⁸

The PKK’s emergence in the late 1970s and the introduction of the martial law after the 1980 coup occurred simultaneously.²¹⁹ In the post-1980 coup period, Kurdish nationalism has come to be seen as a vital threat to national integrity, as were the case with radical Islam and the Left, and the rights for cultural expression were denied to the Kurds.²²⁰ While the Turkish state was fighting against the PKK, repressive methods were employed by the state systematically and continuously in order to suppress the growing Kurdish insurgency.²²¹

The 1990s were marked by forced disappearances, illegal and arbitrary executions, forced displacement of populations and torture as a result of which the Kurds have had their bodily integrity violated. According to the data gathered from the International League of Human Rights, throughout the two year period from 1980 to 1982, 81,000 Kurds had been kept in official custody.²²² Most of these Kurdish prisoners have been exposed to inhumane treatment and torture when they were under custody. In this period, Diyarbakır Military Prison which was built in 1980 left its mark on the prisoners many of whom were Kurds as an infamous site of torture and repression. In his book with the title “Kürtler”, Hasan Cemal documents the testimony

²¹⁵ İsmet G., İmset, *The PKK: A Report on Separatist Violence in Turkey* (Ankara: Turkish Daily News Yayınları, 1993), 31, quoted in Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement*, 50.

²¹⁶ Martin Van Bruinessen, “Between Guerrilla Warfare and Political Murder: The Workers’ Party of Kurdistan,” *MERIP Reports*, No. 153, accessed July 27, 2016, <http://www.merip.org/mer/mer153/between-guerrilla-warfare-political-murder>.

²¹⁷ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 421.

²¹⁸ Van Bruinessen, “Between Guerrilla Warfare and Political Murder.”

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Yavuz, “Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey,” 10.

²²¹ Özgür Sevgi Göral, “Devlet Terörünü Açığa Çıkarmak,” *Birikim*, no. 289-290 (May - June 2013): 153-154.

²²² McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 416.

of a Kurdish prisoner who spent eight months in Diyarbakır prison. In his testimony, the prisoner reveals the ruthless and ferocious treatment of the prisoners when he talks about how he was forced to eat his excrement.²²³

However, the Kurdish population was not only subjected to physical violence, but also it has been exposed to symbolic violence. The Kurdish language, cultural practices and way of life also became the target of state repression.²²⁴ The public use of Kurdish was declared illegal by the Turkish state in 1983²²⁵ and the ban on the use of Kurdish was not lifted until the early 1990s. In this era, it was not allowed to sing folk songs in the Kurdish language, because the Turkish state harbored suspicions that it could be political act aimed at promoting ethnic separation. The mid 1980s also saw the renaming of Kurdish children and of Kurdish provinces when Kurdish names were changed to Turkish ones in an attempt to destroy Kurdish ethnic identity.²²⁶

As Hakan Yavuz argues, the 1980 coup brought with it the military and cultural repression of the Kurds and generated strong feelings of insecurity and distrust among them. As the repression became more and more violent, the popularity of the PKK has increased among the Kurdish population.²²⁷ As stated by Büşra Ersanlı and Günay Göksu Özdoğan, the existence of the legal, constitutional and cognitive barriers in terms of understanding of national identity, restrictions on the cultural and linguistic expression of Kurdish identity, the state reflexes towards centralization have further securitized the Kurdish issue and radicalized the PKK, and thwarted meaningful political representation and participation of Kurds in Turkey.²²⁸ As stated in a 1990 report by Human Rights Watch, sympathy and support for the PKK have grown in time as abuse of and violence against the Kurds became pervasive in the Kurdish provinces²²⁹, although it is not possible to gauge to what extent the PKK has become

²²³ Hasan Cemal, *Kürtler* (İstanbul: Doğan Kitapçılık, 2003), 33.

²²⁴ Göral, "Devlet Terörünü Açığa Çıkarmak," 153-154.

²²⁵ Romano, *The Kurdish Nationalist Movement*, 51.

²²⁶ McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 427.

²²⁷ Yavuz, "Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey," 12.

²²⁸ For detailed information see Büşra Ersanlı and Günay Göksu Özdoğan, "Obstacles and Opportunities: Recent Kurdish Struggles for Political Representation and Participation in Turkey," *Southeastern Europe* 35, no.1 (2011): 62-94.

²²⁹ Human Rights Watch, *Destroying Ethnic Identity: The Kurds of Turkey*, accessed June 17, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/reports/pdfs/t/turkey/turkey907.pdf>.

entrenched in Kurdish society due to its adoption of violence as a means to achieve its goals as argued by Van Bruinessen.²³⁰ As Yavuz argues, “the PKK failed to generate popular support among many Kurds yet politicized their consciousness.”²³¹

The PKK launched its first raids on gendarme forts in Şemdinli and Erüh on 15 August 1984²³² which marked the beginning of the guerilla war waged against what they defined as the PKK’s chief enemies – the Turkish security forces and the “comprador” landlords. The period between 1987 and 1989 witnessed the destruction of 137 schools which the PKK viewed as schools as political instruments of the Turkish state that would be utilized to assimilate Kurds into Turkishness.²³³ The PKK has seen education as one of the channels through which Kurds would be integrated into mainstream Turkish society, resulting in the destruction of their national identity.²³⁴ A great emphasis was placed on the national character of the revolution envisioned by the PKK. In this sense, those feudal landlords who were branded as collaborators by the PKK, were also declared as enemies betraying the national revolution.

The PKK made a distinction between “patriotic” landlords, to use Van Bruinessen’s terminology, and collaborator landlords. In the summer of 1979, the PKK attempted to assassinate Mehmet Celal Bucak, a feudal landlord having considerable power and influence in Siverek and parliamentary representative of the moderate right-wing Justice Party, who was being co-opted by the central government and charged with exploiting and terrorizing the peasantry.²³⁵

The Turkish state responded to these attacks by setting up the “temporary village guard” system in 1985 with an amendment in the Village Law. Local peasants were armed and given salaries by the Turkish state to fight against the PKK.²³⁶ The paramilitary structure established on the basis of the village guard system did not only

²³⁰ Van Bruinessen, “Between Guerrilla Warfare and Political Murder.”

²³¹ Yavuz, “Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey,” 13.

²³² Özgür Sevgi Göral, Ayhan Işık and Özlem Kaya, *The Unspoken Truth: Enforced Disappearances* (İstanbul: The Truth Justice Memory Center, 2013), accessed June 18, 2016, http://yeni.hafiza-merkezi.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Konusulmayan-Gercek_ENG.pdf.

²³³ Kutschera, “Mad Dreams of Independence.”

²³⁴ Van Bruinessen, “Between Guerrilla Warfare and Political Murder.”

²³⁵ Ibid. ; also see McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 421.

²³⁶ Göral, Işık and Kaya, *The Unspoken Truth*, 17.

consist of temporary village guards but also the state also recruited voluntary village guards from within the Kurdish provinces. As opposed to temporary village guards, those who volunteered to become village guards were not paid monthly salaries and they assumed responsibility for securing their own villages. In the 1990s, at the peak of the conflict, more than 90,000 paramilitary forces of this kind were operating in the affected regions.²³⁷ The institution of village guards continues to exist in the present day, though the current number of village guards is less than it was in the 1990s.

Another measure that was taken by the Turkish government to counter the PKK insurgency was the declaration of state of emergency (*Olağanüstü Hâl*, OHAL) in the region after the abolition of martial law in 1987. Initially, it was eight Kurdish provinces, including Bingöl, Diyarbakir, Elazig, Hakkari, Mardin, Siirt, Tunceli and Van, that had been placed under a state of emergency.²³⁸ In the later phases, other three provinces, Adıyaman, Bitlis and Muş, became part of the OHAL region as ‘neighboring provinces.’ When the OHAL region expanded to include Batman and Şırnak as they acquired the status of province, the total number of provinces covered OHAL rose to 13 until the termination of regional authority in 2002.

The governor of the OHAL region was vested with extraordinary powers with special decrees issued by the Council of Ministers in 1990. The OHAL governor was given authority to exercise censorship on the press which seeks to prohibit and penalize publications which were deemed to be spreading misinformation about the incidents occurring in the OHAL region, to evacuate and relocate settlements, to impose a ban on union activities, to restrict the movement of animals and foodstuffs.²³⁹

During the 1990s, the Kurdish southeast was home to a humanitarian crisis characterized by extrajudicial killings, disappearances and forced displacement. In this period, according to the tentative list, prepared by the Truth Justice Memory Center, of the disappeared persons, the total number of the persons that have disappeared since the

²³⁷ Şemsa Özar, Nesrin Uçarlar and Osman Aytar, *From Past to Present A Paramilitary Organization in Turkey: Village Guard System*, trans. Sedef Çakmak (İstanbul: DISA Publications, 2013), 10.

²³⁸ Göral, Işık and Kaya, *The Unspoken Truth*, 16.

²³⁹ Ibid. ; *Destroying Ethnic Identity*, 13.

1980 coup is put around 1,353.²⁴⁰ According to a 2002 report of Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (*Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı*, TIHV), of 1,774 unidentified political murders recorded between 1990 and 2002, 1,650 were committed in the OHAL region.²⁴¹

Along with extrajudicial killings and disappearances, many atrocities were committed in the region, including the burning of villages and pastures, the raping of women and the forced displacement of many Kurds from their hometowns. In the 1998 report by the Turkish Parliament Investigation, as of 1997 November, 905 villages and 2,523 hamlets that were located in the OHAL region were depopulated and 378.335 persons were forced to leave their place of origin.²⁴² However, according to a 2001 report prepared by GÖÇ-DER, the number of displaced Kurdish people is estimated to be much more higher standing at 4 – 4,5 million.²⁴³

This current wave of migration that began in the early 1990s was different from the earlier migration waves in many respects which had, and still has, significant political and socio-economic implications for both the displaced and receiving populations. Along with these differences, this last wave of migration also exhibits characteristics that are similar to previous waves in some respects. To start with similarities, the Kurdish deportations that took place in the second and third decades of the 20th century were politically motivated acts that aimed to forcibly dislocate Kurdish populations against their will²⁴⁴, as was the case with the migration wave of the 1990s. Although these two waves of migration were products of a deliberate state policy of suppressing and assimilating Kurdish identity, they differed in scope. The geographical scope of the migration that took place in the 1990s has broadened in comparison with

²⁴⁰ The tentative list is a compilation of reports on the disappeared persons by various institutions and organizations such as the Organization of Human Rights and Solidarity for Oppressed People (*İnsan Hakları ve Mazlumlar için Dayanışma Derneği* - MAZLUM-DER), Human Rights Foundation of Turkey (*Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı* – TIHV) and Human Rights Association (*İnsan Hakları Derneği* - İHD).

²⁴¹ Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı, *2002 Türkiye İnsan Hakları Raporu*, Ankara: Türkiye İnsan Hakları Vakfı Yayınları, 2003, accessed July 27, 2016, <http://tihv.org.tr/2002-insan-haklari-raporu/>

²⁴² Ibid.

²⁴³ Mehmet Barut, *Zorunlu Göçe Maruz Kalan Kürt Kökenli T.C. Vatandaşlarının Göç Öncesi ve Göç Sonrası Sosyo Ekonomik, Sosyo Kültürel Durumları, Askeri Çatışma ve Gerginlik Politikaları Sonucu Meydana Gelen Göçün Ortaya Çıkardığı Sorunlar ve Göç Mağduru Ailelerin Geriye Dönüş Eğilimlerinin Araştırılması ve Çözüm Önerileri* (İstanbul: Göç-Der, 1999).

²⁴⁴ Dilek Kurban et.al, *Coming to Terms with Forced Migration: Post-Displacement Restitution of Citizenship Rights in Turkey* (İstanbul: TESEV Publications, 2007).

migratory waves in the early republican era. In the 1920s and 1930s, it appears that the so-called Kurdish rebels were deported from those districts that became the main centre of the rebellions. On the contrary, the area that fell under the state of emergency in the 1990s had been expanded to include thirteen Kurdish provinces at a time when the violence was rampant.

Another difference is related to the scale of deportations. Whereas, in the 1920s and 1930s, the number of Kurdish deportees was in the thousands, in the 1990s, their numbers rose to such a high level that is believed to be in the millions. The migration wave of the 1990s also differs from the earlier ones in terms of the social status of the displaced persons. As stated before, those Kurds who were forced to flee within the borders of the republic in the early 1920s and 1930s were the Kurdish tribal elites and sheiks who played leading roles in the Kurdish rebellions of the time. These tribal elites and sheiks belonged to a higher stratum in the social ladder. The Kurdish internal displacement of the 1990s was closer in nature to sudden mass migration which has been distinguished by its forced nature.

In this wave of migration, people from different segments of society have been displaced from places of origin. In her article titled “Köysüz Köylü Göçü,” Sema Erder stresses the importance of the village as an economic asset which increases survival prospects of migrants in the urban space in the absence of formal social security mechanisms.²⁴⁵ The destruction of its physical infrastructure and of the social fabric of village life, as a result of the conflict between the TAF and the PKK, and the resulting forced displacement broke economic ties between migrants and their village of origin.²⁴⁶ This significantly affected the lives of both those who left behind and those who migrated to urban centers. The loss of livelihood assets implied that the subsistence needs of both the dependent population in the village (the elderly, children and sick people) and the rural migrants in the cities could not be met through subsistence agriculture. Thus, as Erder argues, the migration wave of the 1990s forced even this

²⁴⁵ Sema Erder, *İstanbul Bir Kervansaray (Mı?) – Göç Yazıları*, comp. Nesrin Uçarlar (İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2015), 32.

²⁴⁶ Buğra and Keyder, “The Turkish Welfare Regime,” 220.

dependent population and also poor, landless peasants to flee their homes.²⁴⁷ For this new wave of migrants, the “village” stopped being a safe haven to which they could return when they were not able to make a living in the urban space.

During the 1990s, Kurdish people’s experience of state violence, which manifested itself in the burning of their villages and animals, the kidnapping and the murder of their beloved ones and their forced uprooting from their homeland, resulted in the politicization of ethnic consciousness among the Kurds. The social exclusion processes that internally displaced Kurdish people went through in the urban slums have contributed to the further politicization of their ethnic identity.

This process of politicization coincided with women’s increasing visibility in the public sphere in the 1990s as protestors of state violence and as human rights defenders. In the post-1980 coup period, in the absence of Kurdish men thousands of whom were detained by the military or the police, Kurdish women assumed increased familial and social responsibilities. Kurdish women started to increasingly deal with the state institutions. However, they were ill treated by prison guards and the police in their encounter with the judicial and prisons system. This degrading treatment of Kurdish women by law-enforcement officials and their personal experiences as an eyewitness to violence that swept across the Kurdish southeast resulted in their further radicalization.²⁴⁸ This process pushed Kurdish women into the public sphere where they have sought justice for abuses and violations of basic rights and making a call for peace.

Following James Scott’s writings on resistance, this personal experience of humiliation and oppression, I argue, led internally displaced Kurdish women to develop awareness of their state of being oppressed²⁴⁹ as a result of which they have become more aware of their identity as a Kurd and as a woman. However, in their narratives, Kurdish women seem to indicate that the seeds for this process of politicization have been planted in the rural setting as they encountered Kurdish women who joined the ranks of the PKK as female guerilla fighters and as they personally experienced state

²⁴⁷ Erder, *İstanbul Bir Kervansaray (Mî?)*, 33.

²⁴⁸ Aliza Marcus, *The PKK and The Kurdish Fight for Independence: Blood and Belief* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 173.

²⁴⁹ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 113.

repression and violence. However, the encounter with the Kurdish female guerillas and being a witness to violence cannot be identified as the only sources of Kurdish women's politicization.

The armed conflict of the 1990s and the resulting rural to urban migration provided a context which enabled Kurdish women to make sense of and to find the agency to fight against their oppression. Loss of loved ones in the conflict and imprisonment and disappearances of family members and relatives have increased Kurdish women's visibility in the public space in the urban setting. Kurdish women's frequent interactions with state institutions in the urban centers as visitors of political prisoners, as claimants of human rights abuses, as defenders of the right to a dignified existence and of the right to cultural expression, and as applicants for social assistance has triggered and fashioned politicization of Kurdish women's gender and ethnic identity. Aforementioned points will be further elaborated in the next chapter through women's narratives of forced migration and of politicization of gender.

CHAPTER V

THE KURDISH WOMEN'S APPEARANCE IN THE PUBLIC SPACE AS GENDER CONCIOUS AND POLITICAL SUBJECTS

As Sema Erder argues, rural to urban migration signifies the dissolution of the peasantry. Thus, in order to have a better understanding of the dynamics of rural to urban migration, as Erder states, it becomes vital to elaborate on the organization of land ownership and the planning of rural agricultural structure.²⁵⁰ This is due to the fact that differences among the rural to urban migrant groups in terms of land relations and social status determines the socio-economic position of migrants in the urban setting.

Following this point of view, an analysis of the agricultural structure and of landownership patterns in the Kurdish southeast helps provide insight into how internally displaced Kurdish people are positioned in the urban space. However, given that landownership patterns in the region are gendered, I argue that adding a gender dimension to the analysis sheds light on the extent of Kurdish women's oppression back in their villages, against which they did not speak out. However, this does not mean that they were unaware of their state of being oppressed. Their experience of forced migration has been instrumental in raising awareness among displaced Kurdish women of their exploitation and subordination by men by creating a context in which women could articulate oppression qua oppression and develop resistance to it.

In this section, since the process of Kurdish women's politicization started in the rural setting, Kurdish women's narratives of the armed conflict and of their migration will be provided. Second, the economic and social conditions under which displaced Kurdish women struggled to survive will be outlined. Lastly, Kurdish women's socialization through their participation and its impact on the gender relations in the urban context will be evaluated.

5.1 Encounter with the Turkish Armed Forces and the Seeds of Politicization

²⁵⁰ Erder, *İstanbul Bir Kervansaray (Mi?)*, 37.

In 2001, GÖÇ-DER published a report based on a survey, conducted in the provinces of İzmir, İstanbul, Batman, Diyarbakır, Van and İçel, with the aim of investigating the economic, cultural and psychological effects of forced migration among displaced Kurdish people. With regard to the causes of migration, the findings of this study reveals that 71.4 percent of the survey respondents cited the State of Emergency provisions as the first priority reason behind migration which is followed by 53.2 percent the imposition of the village guard system, 46.9 percent 53.2 fear of threats to life, 44.1 percent the evacuation of villages, 29,6 percent the ban o pastures.²⁵¹ Only 0.8 percent of the respondents mentioned pressure from the PKK as a first priority reason for migrating. As inferred from these findings, the great bulk of respondents held the Turkish security forces responsible for forcing them to flee their homes. This manifested itself in the narratives of displaced Kurdish women I interviewed, who pointed to the role of violence inflicted upon local by state security forces and to the pressure from village guards in uprooting them from their homes. The story narrated by Hacer illustrates the extent of mistreatment by the Turkish soldiers of villagers:

One day, a helicopter landed in our village. At least a hundred soldiers stepped out of the helicopter... They evicted us from our house. Those soldiers had stayed in our house for two months. They evicted us. Where did we go? We lived with the animals. Most of us they sent to other houses, most of us they sent to the barns. Can human beings live among animals? Believe me, I remember, I could see the lice wandering on the skin of animals. They (those staying in the barn) did not take a bath for two months.²⁵²

Viyan narrated the story of how state violence cut off villagers from their sources of livelihood and how it (state violence) not only targeted people but also animals:

“When we woke up the next morning – our village is mountainous surrounded by hills – hills were being held by the soldiers and village guards. We even did not have breakfast. We care about ourselves as much as much as we do our animals. My brother who is 1-2 years older than me and I released our animals and went to our fields. Half of them we led out and half of them we could not... The state let neither people nor animals live and set

²⁵¹ Barut, *Zorunlu Göçe Maruz Kalan Kürt Kökenli T.C. Vatandaşlarının Göç Öncesi ve Göç Sonrası Sosyo Ekonomik, Sosyo Kültürel Durumları*.

²⁵² Bir gün askere bahsedecektim. Helikopter gelmiş en az 100 asker inmiş... Bizi çıkardılar. İki ay o asker öyle bizim evde yaşadılar. Bizi dışarı çıkartmışlar. Biz nereye gitmişiz. Hayvanın içine girmişler. Çoğumuzu evlere göndermişler, çoğumuzu da hayvanların yanına. Soğuk değil ama kötüydü. Hayvanın arasında insan yaşar mı? İnan ki ben hatırlıyorum, böyle hayvanların bitleri, böyle geziyordu, böyle karınca gibi. İki ay banyo yapmamışlar.

them on fire. My father said “While I was standing in front of the barn, animals were crying out just as people do...” Those animals did not live long because of smoke inhalation.”²⁵³

The narratives of displaced Kurdish women indicate that being a witness to violence played a key – but not the only – role in sowing the seeds for a process of their politicization. In their narratives, the state is equated with destruction and the cycle of death. As observed by Nazan Üstündağ during her fieldwork, the state’s arrival was being narrated by Kurdish women from a temporal perspective even though the state’s presence was experienced through schools, hospitals and elections.²⁵⁴ Referring to Dipesh Chakrabarty, Nazan Üstündağ states that a myth of golden past in the villages which has no place for violence and difference was observable in the narratives of Kurdish women until it was disturbed by the arrival of the Turkish armed forces. In their narratives, displaced Kurdish women idealized rural life and associated their life in the village with peace, happiness and tranquility. Hacer’s narration of village life exemplifies how she holds the state responsible for the disruption of their peaceful life in the village:

“We were very happy back in the village. For instance, when a wedding or a condolence meeting was organized, we were giving support to each other. When someone organized a wedding, money did not pose a problem for them... Food was one of the biggest expenses in the budget. However, ten to fifteen people brought with them lambs and cut them. They were cooking in a big cauldron. People from all surrounding villages attended the wedding. Nobody stayed at home. They lend their support. At the present time, if a wedding is organized – I mean your neighbor’s wedding – you are not informed about it. You do not attend it. These are such times... I mean whose fault is this? It is the state’s fault. The state tore us apart. They did...”²⁵⁵

²⁵³ Bir gece içinde, sabah biz uykudan kalktığımızda, (bizim köy dağlıktır, etrafta tepeler vardır), bütün tepeler askerler ve korucular tarafından tutulmuşlardı. Sabah kahvaltısı bile yapmadık. Her zamanki gibi biz kendimizi düşündüğümüz kadar hayvanlarımızı da düşünürüz. Benden 1-2 yaş büyük ağabeyimle gittik, hayvanlarımızı her sabah bıraktığımız gibi bıraktık, tarlaya gittik. Hayvanlarımız kalmassın diye. Yarısını çıkarttık yarısını çıkartamadık... Devlet hayvan da insan da bırakmıyordu. Ateşe veriyorlardı. Babam “Ben ahırın önüne gittiğimde hayvanlar insan gibi bağıyorlardı.” dedi. O hayvanlar duman nedeniyle fazla yaşayamadılar.

²⁵⁴ Nazan Üstündağ, “The Construction of Witnessing Voices and the Representation of Violence and Loss” (paper presented at symposium on The Stakes at Issue with Turkey’s Application for Membership of the European Union, Paris, October 2004).

²⁵⁵ Biz köyde daha önce çok mutluyduk. Mesela bir düğün oluyor, bir taziye oluyor, bir şey oluyordur, köy hep birbirimize destek veriyorduk. Mesela, birisi düğün yapıyordu, maddi duruma bakmıyordu...Yani yemekler büyük bir masraf oluyor ama 10-15 kişi kuzular, keçiler getiriyordu. Kesiyorlardı düğünlerde. Böyle büyük bir kazanla yemek yapıyorlardı. Bütün köyler geliyordu... Hiç kimse evde kalmıyordu... Destek veriyorlardı. Şu anda bakıyorsun, bir

However, past experiences of displaced Kurdish women are not only shaped by acts of violence inflicted upon them, but also by their relationship to Kurdish female guerillas. As Handan Çağlayan argues, the encounter with female guerillas led Kurdish women to experience a sense of self-actualization and triggered their politicization.²⁵⁶ In their narratives, the image of female guerilla symbolized emancipation for those women who are faced with oppression, male domination and forced marriage:

“We were awakened because we saw them. We realized that men with guns on their arms were fighting arm in arm with women for their freedom, identity and language. We saw that they were fighting and that they were women just like us! We asked ourselves “Why should not we stand on our own two feet? Why should not we express ourselves? For instance, women are not allowed to share the same room with men. They could not eat with men. Women were wearing scarves around their faces covering their nose. You could only see their eyes. However, after the PKK came to our village, women were very much emancipated. This is how it happened. They became free. We discovered our true selves. We are women and we exit...When I saw them, I felt self-confident. If I did not have kids, I would have joined them.”²⁵⁷ (Berfu)

“I saw too many of them (female guerillas)...You feel freedom within you. I wanted to join them too. I wanted it very much, but I had siblings, I could not leave them behind... My present-day father-in-law told me to marry his son. I told him that I will never marry his son. When he asked me why, I told him that I desire to become a soldier – a guerilla and that marriage does not suit me. Let’s say that this was fate.”²⁵⁸ (Zilan)

“The PKK started to come to villages. I do not know why but this was very attractive to us. For instance, when they came to our village, my mother locked the door on me so that I would not be able to go up to the roof.”²⁵⁹ (Hatice)

düğün olursa, yani senin komşunun düğünüdür, senin haberin yoktur. Gitmiyorsun. Zaman öyle bir zaman oldu ki, yani bu kimin suçudur, devletin suçudur. Herkesi birbirinden kopardı. Kopardılar...

²⁵⁶ Çağlayan, “*Analar, Yoldaşlar, Tanrıçalar*,” 206.

²⁵⁷ Bizim gözümüz açıldı. Çünkü biz onları gördük erkekler kolunda silah ,kadınlar da aynı onlarla kolunda silah ,kol kola kendi özgürlüğü için kimliği için dili için bunu gördük savaşıyorlar. Biz baktık onlar savaşıyorlar onlar da bayan biz niye burada kendi mücadelemize, kendi ayağımızın üstünde durmalıydık dedik. Kendimizi ifade etmeyelim? Mesela öyleydi ki erkeklerin olduğu odaya bayanlar giremiyordu. Onlarla yemek yiyemiyordu. Tülbentleniyordu burnunu kapatıyordu bir gözü görünüyordu. Ama PKK geldikten sonra kadınlar çok özgürleşti. Gerçekten böyle özgür oldu. Kendimizi artık bildik biz kadınız ve biz varız... Ben onları görünce ben o zaman kendime güvendim çok güvendim. Eğer çocuklarım olmasaydı ben onlarla gidecektim gerçekten.

²⁵⁸ Gördüm çok gördüm... İnsan özgürlük hissediyor. Mesela ben de gitmek istiyordum. Çok istiyordum. Kardeşlerim vardı onları bırakamadım... Sonra ben kayınbabam da dedim.Bana dedi benim oğlumu al. Dedim ben asla senin oğlunu alamam. Niye dedi ben dedim ben asker olacağım. Ben gerilla olacağım. Evlilikle işim yok dedim. Demek ki kader kısmet böyleydi.

²⁵⁹ Bizim köyümüz zaten ilk şey başladı, PKK hani köylere gelmeye başladı. Başladığında şey oldu çok cazip geldi bize, her nedense yani bilmiyorum çok çekici geldi. Mesela köye geliyordu benim annem üstüme kapıyı kapatıyordu kilitliyordu çıkmayayım diye ben çatılara...

“...Women everywhere were liberated. Before the PKK showed up, everybody was subjected to violence. Village women suffered at the hands of their husbands. They were exposed to violence from their father-in-laws, I mean their families. However the PKK came to our village, this ended. Everything has come to an end...”²⁶⁰ (Hacer)

“Who are they (female guerillas)? They are my sisters. They are your siblings. They are his/her child. There is no such thing as strangers. They defy humiliation and persecution and they sacrifice their own lives...”²⁶¹ (Hevin)

As can be inferred from these narratives, Kurdish women depicted the encounter with the Kurdish female fighters as a transformative and liberating experience. Building on women’s narratives, this encounter can be viewed as a starting point where Kurdish women began to question their gender identity, their capabilities and organizational abilities. However, it is important to be cautious of the fact that this process of becoming gender aware and political has not only stimulated by the encounter with female guerillas, but also by women’s increasing interactions with formal state institutions in the urban context. Through visits to municipalities to request benefits and social assistance, visits to prisons to see those detained for political reasons and visits to schools to attend parents’ meetings, Kurdish women have started to increasingly interact with the state officials, which had a great impact on the development of Kurdish women’s self awareness as political and gender conscious subjects. This awareness has been nurtured by women’s experience of discrimination and of “othering” on the basis of their gender and ethnic identity in their daily life struggle in the urban centers.

Such awareness was articulated in the context of forced displacement which created a fertile ground for the development of the hidden transcript, to use Scott’s terminology, whose audience has been internally displaced Kurdish women. Following Scott, one can argue that rural to urban migration provided an opportunity for Kurdish women to create sheltered social spaces in which they could come together and share their experiences of state oppression and male dominance.

²⁶⁰ ... Her yerde kadınlar özgür olmuşlar. PKK ortaya çıkmamış, herkes şiddet görüyordu. Köydeki kadınlar eşinin elinde çok şiddet görüyorlardı. Kayınperederi... yani ailesinden hep çok şiddet görüyordu. Ama PKK köye gelmişti... Bitti. Herşey bitti.

²⁶¹ Onlar kim ki? Benim kızım, senin kardeşin, onun evladı. Yabancı diye bir şey yok... Hakareti, zulmü kabul etmiyor ve kendi canını feda ediyor.

This growing awareness was most clearly reflected in the changing gender dynamics and social relations at the intra-household level in terms of decision-making with regard to the allocation of household budget and women's control over spending decisions. This implies that it was not only women, but also men whose roles and identities have undergone transformation in this process of displacement and of politicization.

5.2 Life in the Urban Space: A Story of Struggle

As stated above, during the 1990s, millions of Kurds from Southeastern Anatolia were forced to leave their hometowns against their will as a result of the armed conflict between the Turkish army and the PKK. The displaced Kurdish persons and families experienced trauma during the migration process. The migratory movement was sudden and unexpected. The displaced did not have the time to make the necessary preparations to flee their homes. The forced migration of Kurds is marked by sorrow and trauma caused by the loss of social relations, memories, burial places, sources of tangible and intangible assets. However the immediate effect of migration was the deprivation stemming from the loss of livelihoods based on subsistence farming and animal husbandry.

In their narratives, Kurdish women told that the armed forces not only burned down their houses, farm land and pastures but also their livestock. This clearly indicates that in order to destroy the popular support base of the PKK, the Turkish state initiated a deliberate policy to erode the livelihood assets of the Kurdish people which are vital to their survival. The destruction of assets would eventually leave them with no choice but to migrate. The suddenness and unexpectedness which was typical of the forced Kurdish migration has been highlighted by displaced Kurdish women in their narratives:

“Honestly, we did not bring any stuff with us... It happened so fast. I remember it was just like in the movies... We took our bed with us and some stuff that may be useful... we got into a car and we came overnight.”²⁶²
(Dilan)

²⁶² Valla yanımızda eşya getirmedik... Çok hızlı oldu. Yani hatırlıyorum böyle filmlerdeki gibi böyle yatak işte bizim o an kullanabileceğimiz eşyalar... Biz arabaya bindik geldik bir gecede.

“We sold our livestock. Let’s say they were sold at half the prices. Everything I mean, the flour, the animals. Whatever we had, we sold at very cheap prices...We barely saved our lives...Ten households came together and hired a car. We loaded our stuff on the car and we came here (Istanbul). We took our bed with us. We had some food but we did not bring anything else. We spent the money earned by selling animals for renting a house. We spent it to pay for the electricity... We just came (to the city). The children were not working yet back then. That is why we ran out of money...”²⁶³ (Felek)

Rural to urban migration altered the ways for the displaced Kurdish people to make a living. As a result of the loss of access to livelihood sources, they were obliged to sell their labor power to make a living. In the urban space, agricultural producers of yesterday became impoverished consumers of today.²⁶⁴ As they went through this process, they idealized traditional village life and negated established patterns of urban life. This romantic idealization of rural life which is associated with tranquility, health and happiness, a longing to return to the village and the negation of the life in the city (Istanbul) is evident in the narratives of displaced Kurdish women:

“According to what my mother and father told me, they were that kind of people who did not want to leave their village. People were happy to live on their own soil. My mother and father say “One day we will go back to our own land.” Even if they cannot be there, they always have that sense of belonging. They say “It is my land.”²⁶⁵ (Leyla)

“No matter how rich we are, no matter how much money we have, this place is not the same as our own land. Kurdistan is an entirely different kettle of fish. Our villages... that water... that greenness... those forests... Everything about it is different. In this place, no matter what you eat every day, it is not good.”²⁶⁶ (Dicle)

“We migrated after our village was burnt down. My childhood memories do not belong to this place. I did not play here. I entered textile employment, but still I have memories of the village life when I was with my brothers and siblings. I have never forgotten... Life back there and my childhood memories were beautiful. However, a ten year old child can never get over

²⁶³ Hayvanları sattık. Evet ama diyelim fiyatı on liraysa biz beşe verdik. Herşeyi yani unu, hayvanları...Ne varsa ucuza sattık... Canımızı zor kurtardık... Biz on ev araba tuttuk eşyaları da yükledik öyle geldik. Bizim yatak vardı onu getirdik, yiyecek vardı başka da bir şey getirmedik. Sattığımız hayvanların parası vardı onu da kiraya verdik, cereyana verdik,oraya buraya gittik, yani öyle bitti.Yeni gelmiştik çocuklar da daha çalışmıyordu o yüzden o para da bitti...

²⁶⁴ Kurban et.al, *Coming to Terms with Forced Migration*, 257-258.

²⁶⁵ Ama annemle babamın anlattıklarına göre babam da annem de kendi köylerinden gelmek istemeyen insanlar aslında. Gayet insanlar arasında mutlu; kendi topraklarında. Ya benim annem de babam da diyor ki; "Bir gün döneceğiz kendi topraklarımıza." Orada olmasalar da kendi topraklarına sahip çıkma hissi her zaman var onlarda. Benim toprağım diyor orası...

²⁶⁶ Ne kadar zengin olsak da, ne kadar paramız olsa da toprağımız gibi olmuyor burası. Kürdistan başka mesele. Bizim köylerimiz, o sular, o yeşilliği, ormanı. Her şeyi bir başka. Burada her gün ne yersen ye iyi değil.

that trauma. Thousands, even millions of children can never forget. So many massacres were committed; so many people were killed before our eyes.”²⁶⁷
(Viyan)

As Ayşe Betül Çelik argues, this longing for the past and the difficulty they have in situating themselves in relation to their present strengthened Kurdish sense of ethnic belonging among the displaced Kurdish women.²⁶⁸ The nature of the migration has greatly shaped their daily life experiences in their migration destination, Istanbul, and thus contributed to a heightened awareness of ethnic identity. Due to the forced nature of migration, some displaced families settled at different places before they continued their journey towards their final destination. For instance, six out of sixteen displaced Kurdish women I interviewed had to experience a second migration for whom Manisa, Hizan district of Bitlis, Adana, Diyarbakır, Muş and Van were their first destinations. Şilan and Dicle and their families even had to make three subsequent migration decisions. The first destination for the remaining eight Kurdish women was Istanbul. When we look at the timing of migration, we see that these 16 Kurdish women, with their final destination being Istanbul, were displaced between 1991 and 1998.

These Kurdish women had to start their lives all over again every time they migrated to a new destination and have encountered the same problems over and over again.

They suddenly found themselves in an insecure environment where they do not have knowledge of the local language and did not have the necessary skills to be employed. Given their conditions, they and their families had difficulty in finding employment, lacked access to social security and health care, and have faced discrimination and social marginalization.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁷ Biz köy yakıldıktan sonra göç ettik... orada...Buraya ait ben çocukluk hayali görmüyorum.Oynamadım. Tekstile girdim. Ama hala köyde yaşadığım, ağabeylerimle, kardeşlerimle yaşadığım köy hayatı hala aklımda. Hiç unutmadım yani... Oradaki hayat, oradaki çocukluk hayalim çok güzeldi.Her şey doğaldı. Ama o travmayı hiçbir zaman 10 yaşındaki bir çocuk atlatamaz. Binlerce, milyonlarca köy çocukları hiçbir zaman unutamaz. O kadar katliamlar oldu o kadar insan öldürüldü bizim gözümüzün önünde de.

²⁶⁸ Ayşe Betül Çelik, “ “I miss my village!”: Forced Kurdish migrants in Istanbul and Their Representation in Associations,” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 32 (2005): 149.

²⁶⁹ Kurban et.al, *Coming to Terms with Forced Migration*, 256.

One of the recurrent themes in the narratives of Kurdish women was the humiliating and degrading treatment faced by them in their daily lives in the urban setting:

“I was lonely out here without having any friends my own age just because I am a Kurd. I was supposed to be raised in an environment surrounded by friends. Ok, I have siblings, but when we go out to the streets, no one wants to have us in the game. They teased me about my Turkish accent. They say, “You are terrorists.” We do not know what a terrorist is yet back then, but they call us terrorists. You endeavor to attract their admiration...”²⁷⁰ (Dilan)

“... By the time we came here, there was lack of water. The municipality sent its water tankers... It (water) was neither clean nor did Turks let us fill our water bins. Pardon my language, but they said, “We do not give you water, we give you shit and piss. Fill your water bin with it and go away... I did not know Turkish at that time.. We learned some Turkish here.”²⁷¹ (Pervin)

“I remember one time we were going to the school. I was speaking Kurdish with a friend of mine. A woman, probably from Kars, said, “Why do you speak Kurdish? What kind of language is this meant to be? When we asked why, she said, “The most beautiful language is Turkish.” She said so... She went on to say, “Kurdish is not a real language. No body cares about it! No body cares about your language!” So you know what we did? We went together with that women, but we never talked. She asked us: “Why do not you speak? We said: “We do not know Turkish. We do not speak Turkish.” She said: “Ok ok. Speak whatever you like.”²⁷² (Hacer)

Displaced Kurdish women’s experience of having faced discrimination and social exclusion is often coupled with destabilizing economic conditions. Displaced Kurdish migrants had difficulty in accessing housing and they became slum dwellers in shantytowns in the peripheries of Istanbul. As argued by scholars in the related literature such as Ayşe Buğra, Çağlar Keyder and Sema Erder, during the 1990s,

²⁷⁰ Kürt olmanın zorluğu mesela ben arkadaşsız kaldım. Çocukken arkadaşlı bir ortamda yetişmem gerekirken. Yani tamam kardeşlerim var ama sokağa çıkıyoruz. Kimse bizi oyunlara dâhil etmiyor. Türkçemizle dalga geçiyorlar. İşte siz teröristsiniz diyorlar. Biz daha terörist nedir bilmiyoruz. Ama bize teröristsiniz diyorlar. İşte kendini onlara sevdirmeye çabasına giriyor insan...

²⁷¹ Biliyor musun biz buraya geldik gelmedik zaten su yoktur. Belediye tanker getiriyordu...

Temiz de değildir hem de Türkler bırakmıyordu biz dolduruyoruz. Affedersin diyor su biz size vermiyoruz, size bok veriyoruz. Çiş veriyoruz ona doldursun götürsün... Ben de hiçbir şey Türkçe de bilmiyordum o zaman... Burda biraz öğrenmisti biz.

²⁷² Bir kere biz okula gidiyoruz. Ben bir arkadaşımın Kürtçe konuşuyorum. O kadın -herhalde Kars’ lıdır- : Siz niye Kürtçe konuşuyorsunuz? Bu ne biçim dildir siz konuşuyorsunuz? Biz dedik niye? Dedi en güzel dil varsa Türkçedir. Öyle dedi... Dedi sizin diliniz dil değildir. Yani kimse umursamıyor. Kimse değer vermiyor sizin dilinize... Artık biz de ne yaptık biliyor musun? Biz de o kadınla geldik. Hiç konuşmadık. E dedi siz niye konuşmuyorsunuz? Dedik biz Türkçe bilmiyoruz. Türkçe konuşmuyoruz. Dedi tamam tamam konuşun. Ne konuşuyorsanız konuşun.

informal networks based on kinship or co-locality have remained inadequate to address the housing, employment, health and nutritional needs of the displaced Kurdish population.²⁷³

Since the economic and social links with the place of origin were broken due to the destruction of property and lives, they argue, it seemed unlikely for displaced Kurdish populations in urban areas to rely on in-kind or cash transfers received from those who stayed in their villages, if not burnt down by the armed forces. Whereas the narrative by Hacer reveals the severe economic conditions suffered by the displaced, the story narrated by Dilan illustrates that some of the displaced could still mobilize social capital through social networks:

“I rented a house. Believe me, there were snails everywhere in the house I rented. It was just like a barn. I lived in that house for fifteen days. I had a little son. He was a newborn. He was crying and crying because of the cold. There was no electricity, there was nothing... Everywhere you look, you could see insects and snails. Everything you could think of was in that house... Believe me, it was full of rats. My son is crying and crying until the morning...”²⁷⁴ (Hacer)

“We came directly to Istanbul... We did not go anywhere else. You know, relatives follow those who migrated before them... My father had colleagues in Istanbul... He came to Istanbul before we did. He arranged a house for us. You know, we brought a few stuff with us. We came here at a moment's notice...”²⁷⁵ (Dilan)

As can be inferred from the women's narratives discussed above, the reality of poverty is combined with the status of a “stranger” in the urban centers. It seemed unlikely for these Kurdish women, most of who have low levels education and no knowledge of Turkish, to be employed in the formal sector. In this sense, they either worked in the informal sector on an irregular and precarious basis or they were not employed at all.

²⁷³ For a full discussion of these points see Erder, *İstanbul Bir Kervansaray (Mı?)*, 26-27, Buğra and Keyder, “The Turkish Welfare Regime in Transformation,” 220-221.

²⁷⁴ Ben bir kiraya girdim. İnan ki ben bir eve girmişim var ya, hani salyangoz var ya, her yerde vardır. Ahır gibiydi. Ben 15 gün o evde yaşadım. Benim küçük oğlum vardı -hani o daha işe gitmiş- küçük oğlum vardır o ağlıyordu. Daha yeni doğmuş idi. Ağlıyordu, ağlıyordu soğuktan, yani elektrik de yoktur hiçbir şey yoktur... Bakıyorsun her yere böcek, o salyangoz ne varsa vardı evde. Fareler inan ki doludur. Benim oğlum ağlıyor, ağlıyor, ağlıyor sabaha kadar ağlıyor...

²⁷⁵ Yok direkt İstanbul. Başka yere gitmedik Hani şey oluyor ya akrabalar ilk göç nereye gittiye sonra köyler onları takip ediyor ya... İş arkadaşları vardı tabi. Babam önce konuştu gitti... Bizden önce geldi ev ayarladı. İşte birkaç eşya biz de getirebildiğimiz eşyaları getirebildik. Ondan sonra böyle apar topar geldik.

In order to relieve poverty and destitution suffered by them and their families, Kurdish women I interviewed also applied for social assistance which had the effect of strengthening the feelings of insecurity and mistrust towards the Turkish state. It was not their sons and husbands, but Kurdish women themselves who visited municipalities in their vicinities to request benefits and to apply for social assistance. As stated before, in this process, they started to increasingly interact with state officials in the municipalities which further politicized Kurdish women's ethnic identity and their gender identification.

Since, in many displaced households, male members of the family were detained by the police or imprisoned, women replaced men in carrying out daily activities from shopping and taking care of children's school to earning income for the maintenance of household economy. Imprisonment of male family members in the city centers cannot be identified as the only reason that pushed Kurdish women into the public sphere. In the urban setting, the displaced families needed to sell their labor to earn their living in a monetized economy which is a defining feature of urban way of life. In cases where they were not arrested or put in jail, it was male members of the household who worked outside the house to maintain household livelihood, and in many cases they could not take time off work. Building on the narratives of Kurdish women I interviewed, it can be argued that the earnings gained for such relentless work was not enough to meet the most basic needs of those families. In some cases, no one member of the displaced households did have the opportunity to be employed, even on a precarious basis. In such an impoverished situation, application for social services and benefits offered by municipalities have emerged as the only option for those in need that is supposed to enhance their socio-economic security and to end their social and economic exclusion.

As Sema Erder argues, one of the most immediate effects of displacement was women's withdrawal from agricultural production, and their spatial entrapment within the domestic sphere as housewives.²⁷⁶ Erder also claims that the involvement of men in

²⁷⁶ Sema Erder, "Changing Forms of "Visibility versus Invisibility" Concerning Women in Conservative Societies in the Urban Context," in *Emancipation in Exile: Perspectives on the Empowerment of Migrant Women*, ed. Nermin Abadan Unat and Gretty Mirdal (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2015), 58.

bread-winning activities and their spending long hours at work which entailed their absence from the domestic domain, leads to women's partial emancipation from male supervision and authority. However, it should be added that this male absence also led women to take more familial responsibilities. In such a context, Kurdish women replaced men in dealing with municipalities to request benefits that would help their household meet their basic needs.

Those women who applied for social assistance claimed that their application was rejected on the ground that they were of Kurdish origin which further bolstered their ethnic awareness:

"My husband was imprisoned for six months for aiding and abetting the PKK... At that time, I had two kids. I was here (in Istanbul) and I was a tenant. I did not own a house. Do you believe it? Nobody has taken care of me. I wiped stairs, did handicrafts at nights... I went to the municipality while my husband was in prison. My son was in first grade and the younger one was five years old. We went there with my neighbor. I asked her: "What am I going to say when we get to the municipality?" They were arrested for political reasons... My brother was put in prison too... We went to the municipality. And I said to them: "My son is a soldier. I have financial difficulties. I am a tenant and I cannot pay for it... And I want to get a green card." He replied me back and said, "I am fed up with people of Bitlis origin. God damn you! After I gave it to you, I hope you have your son's dead body wrapped in a shroud." I said: "I do not want your help. I do not want to have my child wrapped in a shroud. And I have never gone there again since that time."²⁷⁷ (Zilan)

"I did not apply for social assistance when I was living with my parents, but after I got married, I applied for assistance. They rejected my application on the ground that my father-in-law was covered by social security... This is so because I am a Kurd and because I do not deny my roots. I know so many families which receive social assistance, but they receive it because they denied themselves, forget their roots and origin, forgot what they had been through in their villages..."²⁷⁸ (Viyan)

²⁷⁷ Sonra eşim yardım ve yataklıktan 6 ay cezaevinde kaldı... O zaman yine iki çocuğum var. Buradayım ve kiradayım. Evim de yok. İnanır mısın hiç kimse bana bakmadı. Ben merdiven sildim, el işi örüyordum gece... Belediyeye gitmiştim, o zaman eşim cezaevindeydi. Oğlum birinci sınıftaydı, küçüğü ise 5 yaşındaydı. Komşumla beraber gittik... Belediyeye girdiğimizde ben ne diyeceğim dedim. Siyasetten tutuklanmışlardı... Abim de cezaevine düştü... Belediyeye gittik dedim "Benim oğlum askere gidiyor, benim durumum yok, kiradayım, ödeyemiyorum. Hani bir kömür olsa, başka bir yardım olsa... Bir de yeşil kart istiyorum." Bana "En çok bu Bitlisliler'den bıktım. Allah sizin belanızı versin. Verdiğimde çocuğunun kefeni olur inşallah." dedi. İstemiyorum dedim. Çocuğumun da kefeni olmasın. Daha da gitmedim zaten.

²⁷⁸ Baba evinde hiç yardıma başvurmamıştım ama evlendikten sonra başvurdum. Kayınbabam sigortalı olduğu için yardım vermiyorlar... Kürt olduğum için bir de kendimi inkar etmediğim için. Çok aile var, alıyor ama kendini bilmeyen, kendini unutmuş, özünü unutmuş, köyde yaşadığı şeyi unuttuğu için alıyorlar yani.

Şilan refused to give consent for tape recording, but her narration about social assistance is so striking that it needs to be shed light on. She narrates that she applied to the municipality to receive coal aid. However, she goes on to narrate how her application was refused on the ground that her daughter's name was Rozerîn, albeit being entitled to become a recipient. When asked if she thinks she was discriminated against on the basis of ethnic origin, she confirms it.

The fact that those who visited municipalities to request benefits were mostly Kurdish women instead of men implied a shift in gender roles not only for women, but also for men. Building on women's narratives of city life, this study argues that women's increasing visibility in the public sphere has been accompanied by men's loss of power and control in the urban setting.

The way Kurdish women framed their rural life in their narrations confirms and authenticates the findings of Sadaf and Siegmann on gender dynamics in rural Pakistan. Their study shows that rural Pakistani women's access to certain spaces in the village is restricted by gendered and unpaid tasks associated with the reproduction of domestic sphere and with agricultural work, which they perform either in the homestead or around it.²⁷⁹ Men's and women's domains are spatially segregated, with the central area of the village being men's domain, and the household women's. However, urban socio-economic context pushed many of these Kurdish women into the public sphere and concomitantly they have started to navigate the spaces to which they were denied access to, either out of necessity or choice based on awareness:

“We can leave the neighborhood here (Istanbul). Men are working here and they cannot take time off the work. In here, women, most of those migrant women, they do the shopping in the market place, go to children's school and attend parents' meetings. You see, women do all these things. (When asked if women have become more visible in the city, she confirms it.) Can we say that we overcame that thing (male domination)? Maybe, it is best not to put it that way, because it (women's visibility) is so out of necessity... It is not so because men are enlightened... Women are pushed

²⁷⁹ Sadaf and Siegmann, “Gendered Livelihood Assets,” 13-14.

into this. Women take responsibility because men desert the domestic domain.²⁸⁰ (Dilan)

“We came to Istanbul when my mother was 20. Until that time, she did not get out of the village on her own. She went out of the village for several times for wedding preparations, but she was always accompanied by somebody, be they her mother-in-law or her husband.

I am a young woman, but I cannot find the strength in me to be as mobile as my mother... When I open my eyes in the morning, I see that my mother has already left the house (She talks about their life in the city). I call her to ask where she is. She says: “Well, I am going to attend a meeting in Ataşehir. I am here right now for this reason.”²⁸¹ (Leyla)

Men’s loss of power manifested itself not only in the relatively higher spatial mobility of women in the urban setting, but also in the emerging male frustration and anxiety within the household. Dilan’s narration illustrates the level of frustration experienced by her husband as a result of the loss of the status of breadwinner while he was unemployed. When asked about if they refrained from letting others know they applied for social assistance, she replies as follows:

“I received coal aid while my husband was not working. You refrain from mentioning it. We did not make it public. Then (I realized) it was our right... It seems like you are begging for help, but even though it is called social assistance, it is your social right...”²⁸² (Dilan)

As can be inferred from Dilan’s narration, the process of displacement resulted in the disruption of intra-household gender hierarchies. Whereas, in the village, the household and domestic duties are defined as women’s domain, the loss of the status of bread-winner on the part of men led women to surpass the boundaries of spaces, which are socially constructed as men’s domain. Through application for social assistance or

²⁸⁰ Tabi burada çıkabiliyoruz. Burada da şehrin iş imkânı hani erkekler çalışıyor. Ona izin yok zaten. Burada şimdi kadınlar şimdi şehre gelen kadınlar, oradan buraya gelen kadınlar, göç edenlerin çoğu evin pazarıydı, alışverişiydi, okuluyla, toplantısıydı. İşte hepsini kadınlar yapıyor. Çünkü hani artık o şeyi aştık mı desek? Belki aştık dememiz belki çok doğru değil, hani biraz mecburiyetten... Yani erkeğin aydınlanıp da kadın da şunu yapabilir zihniyeti değil. Kadın mecbur kalıyor. Erkek yok evde, kadın üstleniyor hepsini.

²⁸¹ Mesela benim annem 20 yaşındayken biz İstanbul’a geldik. O zamana kadar doğru düzgün köyün dışından başka bir yere gitmedi... Sadece birkaç defa işte ne bileyim düğün zamanındaki gelin alışverişi için bir iki kere götürüp getirilmiş, ama yanında hep biri varmış. Kaynanası olur, eşi olur... Ben kendim bir genç kıyım. Ben kendim de görmüyorum o kadar gidip gelmeyi... Sabah gözümü açıyorum annem yok. Annemi arıyorum, diyorum neredesin. İşte karşıdayım toplantı var. Anne neredesin? İşte Ataşehir’deyim toplantı var. İşte şurdayım bu var.

²⁸² “Yani tabi ki mesela ben kömür aldım bir ara, eşim çalışmıyordu. İnsan çekiniyor söylemeye, Hani çok deklare etmiyorduk hani ama sonradan aslında o bizim hakkımız olduğunu, hatta bizi sömürerek verdiklerini, zaten ben elektrik su veriyorum. ... Sanki böyle bir dilencilik yapıyormuş gibi aslında o senin hani sosyal yardım aldı diyorlar ama o senin, sosyal hak...”

integration into employment, displaced Kurdish women started to participate in the economic provision of the household.

However, this does not mean that Kurdish women were not participating in agricultural production in their villages. On the contrary, as stated before, they had high rates of participation in productive activities as unpaid family laborers. Their economic participation in the urban context has varied spatially and quantitatively from their participation in production in their villages. The narratives of women illustrate that their participation in production in the metropolis implied that they physically moved out of the domestic sphere unless they did handcraft work from home. Nonetheless, this does not automatically translate into women's emancipation from male supervision as can be seen in the case of women working in textile ateliers located in their neighborhoods, with their co-workers being family members or neighbors.²⁸³

The qualitative difference is that they need to sell their labor in return for a livelihood in the cities they live, but in the rural context, they consumed what they produced meaning that their productive activity did not have a monetary value. In either case, women perform unpaid and/or underpaid labor which is rendered invisible. Hatice's experience in family-based atelier production in their neighborhood constitutes a good example for the invisibility of women's work and the degree of male supervision in the workplace:

“We owned a small-scale textile atelier, but it went bankrupt. My husband and my brother-in-law left the job. My older brother-in-law and three younger ones perform physical labor there for almost 24 hours. They start working at 08:30 in the morning and come back home at 23:00 at night... We took work home with us, but we did not receive any payment in return, because it was our own business.”²⁸⁴

The findings of the fieldwork suggest that seven of the interviewees have not involved in waged work since they arrived at their destination and performed unpaid

²⁸³ For detailed information see Saniye Dedeoğlu, “Working for Family: The Role of Women's Informal Labor in the Survival of Family-Owned Garment Ateliers in Istanbul, Turkey” (working paper, Women and International Development, Michigan State University, 2004).

²⁸⁴ Var küçük çapta. İflas ettiler. Benim eşim oradan ayrıldı, kaynım ayrıldı. Büyük kaynım üç tane, küçükleri sadece orada. Bedensel çalışıyorlar yirmi dört saat neredeyse. Yani kaçta saat sekiz buçukta iş başı yapıyorlar 22:00 - 23:00'te eve geliyorlar... Kendi iş yerimde yaptım. Ya bizim kendi iş yerimizde yani kendi eve getirip iş yapıyorduk ama o da para karşılığı değil kendi işimizdi.

domestic labor at home. At the time interviews were being conducted, thirteen interviewees were performing unpaid domestic labor in the family household. Only one out of the remaining three interviewees defined herself as a student while the other two are employed on an irregular and precarious basis.

The findings illustrate that those Kurdish women who can be categorized as unpaid domestic laborers exercise a considerable degree of control over household budget and decision-making regarding expenditure. Women's access to market place as consumers in the urban centers has provided a context in which they have become more visible in the public sphere. As mentioned before, since men could not take time off work in the city, it was women who have spent time on shopping as a component of unpaid care work. Thus, spaces that are socially constructed as women's domain have undergone a process of reconfiguration which has come to have implications for intra-household gender dynamics in terms of controlling household spending or participating in decision-making related to expenditure, as can be in the narratives below:

"I have been earning my money for years... I told you I am working at a bakery... It is not regular income, but I earn my pocket money. For instance, I earn 800 Turkish Liras (per month) and it is enough for me. I do not ask my husband for money... It is true and I repeat it: The things that I do in the house is of no small matter. Apart from this, I do earn my money and I do not want your (her husband) money. However, I labor more than you (her husband), I take care of the house and your children.... It is unpaid work, it is not easy to raise a kid..."²⁸⁵ (Hatice)

"You will not believe me but I have my husband's pay data card. I give him his pocket money. If I say that he does not give me money and he insult me, I would be insulting him. Here, I have his pay data card. There is no such thing in our family. Even when I spend all the money at once, he would not question it, because he trusts me..."²⁸⁶ (Hevin)

Apart from the socio-economic context in the metropolis of Istanbul that pushed displaced Kurdish women into the public sphere, as mothers of sons and

²⁸⁵ Ben kendi paramı kendim yıllardır kendim kazanıyorum... Çalışıyorum dedim ya bir fırında çalışıyorum... Düzenli değil ama yine de harçlığımı alıyorum. Mesela sekiz yüz milyon para (800 TL) alıyorum, bana yetiyor, ben gidip ondan para istemiyorum,.. Evet ama aynı zamanda bunu da söylüyorum evde yaptığım şeyler az buz şeyler değil... Hani bunun yanında kendimi paramı da kazanıyorum senin paranı istemiyorum ama bunun yanında ben senden daha çok emek veriyorum, çocuklarına bakıyorum evine bakıyorum ... Ücretsiz emek, bir çocuğu yetiştirmek kolay mı...

²⁸⁶ İnlanmayacaksın ama eşimin maaş kartı şuan bende. Kendi harçlığını bile benden alıyor. Ben o adam bana para vermiyor, bana hakaret ediyor desem o adama hakaret etmiş olurum. İşte maaş kartı burada. Kesinlikle öyle bir şey bizim ailede yok. Hepsini bir defada harcasam o adam bana demez ki niye harcadın. Çünkü bana güveniyor...

daughters who seek justice for the lives lost to violence, as visitors of political prisoners, and as political detainees, they have gained public visibility. In the process, the frequency of interactions with state officials have increased which in turn further politicized their ethnic identity, as illustrated in the narratives of several Kurdish women below:

“One day, just after we left our village, there was a demonstration. This was a few years ago. We (Dicle and her mother-in-law) attended demonstration together. The security guard did the body check. A female security guard searched my mother-in-law. Because she had a belly, the female guard said: “Is this belly fat or baby?” My mother-in-law answered: “How can I bring a child into the world? I have already given birth to 24 children. The guard replied: “For God’s sake! Where are your children?” She really has 24 children. My mother-in-law answered back saying: “Five of them are on the mountains. The other five are in prison. Many of them participate in party activities.” The other male security guard said: “For God’s sake, let her pass. She herself established an organization. We are afraid of her.” They joked about it. Then after we entered the demonstration area.”²⁸⁷ (Dicle)

“My son went there (police station), but the police raided our house three or four times. My daughter went there too. The police raided the house again two times. They requested me to come and I went to the court. I said: “Why do not you let us go? What did I do? I did not do anything illegal. I am old and sick. Leave us and do not come back again.” After that, maybe you have heard of it, when our leader – Serok Öcalan – was captured and brought to Turkey, the police arrested and took us to the jail three times. They tortured me...It was winter, snowing and cold. I have never seen such harsh winter weather. They put three of us, the district head of the party, a woman from Diyarbakır, and me, in the same room. They trapped us in that room, locked the door, and filled it with water with the help of a hose. There was a stationary wood, like a pillar. A rope was tied around here. (She is showing her waist). We stayed in the icy water for three days... They did not give us food.”²⁸⁸ (Pervin)

²⁸⁷ Bir gün biz yeni köyden gelmişiz bir miting vardı. O zaman bir de kaç sene önce. Biz beraber gitmiştik mitinge. Gardiyan bizi arıyor. Bir kadın benim kaynanamı aradı, kaynanamın göbeği vardı. “Viyy teyze bu göbek mi yoksa bebek mi?” dedi. Kaynanam da “Ben bebeği nereden getireceğim. 24 tane doğurdum.” dedi. Gerçekten de 24 tane çocuk doğurdu. Kadın da “Teyze Allah aşkına hepsi nerede çocukların?” dedi. Kaynanam da “5 tane dağda, 5 tane cezaevinde, kaç tane çalışmada...” dedi. Oradaki erkek gardiyan da “Allah aşkına teyzeyi bırakın. Teyze tek başına örgüt kurmuş. Biz teyzedan korktuk.” diye şaka yaptılar. Ondan sonra biz mitinge geçtik.

²⁸⁸ Benim oğlum oraya gitti üç sefer dört sefer operasyon, bizim evimizi bastı. Kızım gitti iki sefer bastı. Ama sonra ben üç dört sefer bize çağırdı ben gittim mahkemeye. Niye bize bırakmıyorsun ben ne yaptım ? Ben kanunsuz hiçbir şeyi ben yapmamıştır. Ben hastayım yaşlıyım bırak bir daha bize gelme. Ondan sonra biz de ilk belki sen duymuştur ilk serok bizim başkanımız serok Öcalan Türkiye’ye götürmüştür yakalamıştır ya o zaman bizi üç sefer yakalamıştır hapse atmıştır. Bana işkence vermiştir... Kıştır, kardır, yağmurdur, buzdur. O zamana kadar ben öyle kış görmedim o kadar şiddetli. Bize bir odaya koymuştur, ilçe başkanı,biz, Diyarbakırlı bir kız. Üçü bir odaya hapsedmiştir , kapı kapatmıştır, bir hortum su bu oda doldurmuştur . Bir kolon gibi öyle şey odun oradadır. .O ip burada bağladı, burada bağlamış bize. O su öyle kaldı üç gün orada kaldım. Suyun içinde buzun içinde...Yemek de bize vermiyordu...

5.3 Re-Exploring the Self: Kurdish Women's Experiences of Politicization and the Re-Making of Gender Relations in the Urban Space

As stated above, displaced Kurdish women who were forced to flee their homes found themselves in an urban environment of insecurity and distrust where they have been exposed to acts of humiliation and degradation in their daily lives. In such a setting, they have struggled to survive both economically and emotionally. They were not able to eliminate risks and enhance their socio-economic position through traditional and informal mechanisms such as family ties and neighborhood.²⁸⁹ The forced migration of the 1990s, as also argued by Erder, implied their withdrawal from agricultural production which led to their becoming housewives.²⁹⁰ In such a context, engagement with political party becomes instrumental in giving an end to Kurdish women's isolation from the outside world, and significantly affects women's intra-position within the household.²⁹¹

Kurdish women I interviewed who are all members of the pro-Kurdish HDP also revealed in their narratives how participation in party activities positively affected their perception of the self and increased their self-esteem:

“... How can a woman go to work? There was no such thing in our village. Women could not work. They said: “A woman should stay at home in Istanbul, too...” The party (HDP) changed this situation. Even if she starves to death, a woman could not work. When I wiped the stairs, our Kurds talked about it. I evoked reaction from surrounding environment. My husband was in prison. Did my husband feel offended? Yes, he did, because his family was miserable. They oppress women. If you, as a woman, lose your resistance, they can do anything they want. If a woman trusts herself, she can overcome any obstacles.”²⁹² (Zilan)

As also argued by Çağlayan and Üstündağ, the party has become a space of socialization where people with similar experiences could come together.²⁹³ During my

²⁸⁹ Erder, *İstanbul Bir Kervansaray (Mı?)*, 26-27.

²⁹⁰ Erder, “Changing Forms of “Visibility versus Invisibility,” 58.

²⁹¹ Çağlayan, *Ne Değişti*, 112.

²⁹² Bir kadın nasıl işe gidecek? Bizim köyde öyle bir şey yoktu. Kadın işe gidemezdi. Kadın İstanbul’a geldiğinde de evinde oturacak diyorlardı... Parti değiştirdi. İster aç kal, kadın işe gidemezdi. Merdiven sildiğim zaman bizim Kürtler söylerdi. Çevre konuşuyordu. Eş de cezaevindeydi. Eşim beni görmüyordu. Heee eşimin zoruna gidiyor muydu? Gidiyordu. Çünkü ailesi perişan olmuş burada. Ama çevre söyler, her şeyi de yapar. Kadını çok eziyorlar. Hele kadın biraz dirençsiz kalırsa her şeyi de yapıyorlar. Ama kadın kendine güvense var ya her şeyin üstesinden gelir.

²⁹³ Çağlayan, *Ne Değişti*, 114 ; Üstündağ, “The Construction of Witnessing Voices.”

fieldwork, I observed that in the first years of life in the city, the interest in party membership among displaced Kurdish women was driven by a heightened sense of ethnic awareness. However in time, participation in party activities and the party's discourse on rights and gender equality²⁹⁴ enhanced their gender awareness and they have started to define themselves primarily as women and secondarily as Kurds.

To use Scott's terminology, party buildings have become secluded social spaces where women could negate masculine discourse and practices. Scott argues that for the hidden transcript to emerge, certain requirements need to be met. The existence of an audience to which the hidden transcript appeals is one of the necessary conditions for its creation.²⁹⁵ Subordinates should be able to communicate with each other and coordinate their actions. The pre-condition for effective and continuous communication is the existence of secluded social spaces that is not controlled and surveilled by the superiors. Thus, The mutuality of experiences of domination and the secludedness of the social sites are the two important conditions that prepare a fertile ground for the maintenance of the hidden transcript.

In the pre-displacement period, Kurdish women lived in extended households and were thus kept under strict surveillance. Rural women's mobility was constrained by men and these restrictions, as they describe in their narratives, have been relaxed or lifted after their encounter with female guerillas:

“Before the PKK came to the village, they did not let women be on their own. When they (PKK guerillas) came here, women could travel on their own and wandered around, because they had guards out there.”²⁹⁶
(Hacer)

However, in the urban setting, men started to spend long hours outside the domestic sphere to maintain household livelihood as male breadwinners. Thus, women, in their neighborhoods, are to some extent freed from male authority. They are relatively liberated socially in the urban context.²⁹⁷ In such secluded spaces, Kurdish

²⁹⁴ Ibid., 113.

²⁹⁵ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 118.

²⁹⁶ Mesela, daha PKK gelmemişse, hiçbir yere göndermiyorlardır. PKK köye gelmişler, o zaman da yani, kadınlar tek başına gidiyorlardı, geziyorlardı. Çünkü koruması dışarıda vardır.

²⁹⁷ Erder, “Changing Forms of “Visibility versus Invisibility,” 58.

women could come together beyond the surveillance and control of both men and the state. Scott underlines that domination is experienced personally. It is this domination that is experienced on the personal level, he argues, that injures one's dignity most.²⁹⁸ From this point of view, Kurdish women share their personal experience of indignation, humiliation and hardships in daily life and negate masculine discourses in secluded social spaces. Following Scott's resistance paradigm, they develop alternative conceptions of justice and restore their dignities in safe heavens and construct themselves as agents of change and gender conscious subjects.²⁹⁹ In doing so, they actualize their self and find their identity as a woman.

This act of negation and the construction of a political self manifest itself in Kurdish women's political narratives of gender:

“ I became a member of a party (HDP) and then joined its meetings. As I joined the meetings, I learned moer about women. I mean, I am a woman but how well do I know myself ? ... I learned the history of women....First comes the state, and then comes the man. They try to dominate each-other and then they try to dominate women. In time, I learned, got organized and developed self awareness.”³⁰⁰ (Dilan)

“I am a member of the party...My brother was going to the district branch of the party. I went there too. I worked in women's branches. There, I developed (gender) awareness.”³⁰¹ (Hatice)

“In the village, men exerted much more pressure on women. We cannot deny that. Women in the village were exposed to more violence. Either in the village or in here, women are exposed to double pressure. On the one hand, they are oppressed by the state and on the other they are oppressed by their husbands. After we came here, once we familiarized ourselves with this struggle, once we made such sacrifices, women overcame the oppression. You can see this today.”³⁰²

²⁹⁸ Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, 112- 113.

²⁹⁹ Ibid., 114.

³⁰⁰ Bir partiye üye oldum ondan sonra toplantılarına katıldım. Katıldıkça kadını tanıdım. Yani ben kadını ama kendimi ne kadar tanıyorum... Kadının geçmişini öğrendim... Sonra devlet, devletten sonra erkek, her biri birine tahakküm ediyor, en son kadına geliyor. İşte partiye gidip gele gele öyle öğrendim, örgütlendim, bilinçlendim.

³⁰¹ Partiye üyeyim zaten..Benim abim ilçeyle haşır neşir gidip geliyordu. Ben de gittim oraya kadın kollarında çalıştım. Zaten o farkındalığı orada yakaladım yani.

³⁰² Köydeki yaşamda erkek baskısı daha çoktu. Onu inkar edemeyiz. Köydeki kadınlar daha çok şiddet görüyorlardı. Köyde olsun burada olsun kadın zaten iki defa baskı görüyor. Bir devlet baskısı görüyor bir koca baskısı görüyor. Buraya geldikten sonra, bu mücadeleyi tanıdıktan sonra, bu kadar bedel ödedikten sonra kadın daha kendine dönüktür yani.Baskıları az çok da olsa biraz daha aşmış durumda. Zaten bugün baktığın zaman da görebiliyorsun yani.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Throughout this thesis, I have explained how forcibly displaced Kurdish women have developed a sense of political agency and of gender awareness in the context of internal displacement in the 1990s in Turkey. Recognizing gender as a socially constructed set of relations and practices which refers to both men and women, I have demonstrated the relational nature of gender and the fluidity of gender-based power relations which can be transformed through the construction of gendered subjectivities in politicization processes.

The aim of this thesis is to show that while displacement as a gendered process is experienced by men and women differently, thereby creating gender-specific vulnerabilities, it opens up new socio-spatial spaces for displaced Kurdish women's agency, allowing them to renegotiate their ethnic and gender identity in the light of new circumstances in the urban context. Displacement implies a shift in gender roles and power relations within changing family structures which in turn have increased the public visibility of Kurdish women in spaces which were regarded exclusively as men's domain.

This study explores the influence of forced migration on displaced Kurdish women's perception of gender roles. Relying on the narratives of Kurdish women, I argue that their encounter with the ethnic 'Other' (Turkish soldiers) and with the Kurdish female guerilla fighters played an important role in shaping the process of construction of resistant subjectivities defined by ethnicity and gender, which have been further politicized as they experience domination, exploitation and discrimination in their destinations as women and as Kurds. This thesis does not make a claim that the politicization of ethnicity and gender among displaced Kurdish women is only fashioned by their experience with violence and encounter with female guerillas in the rural settings. Instead, it points out the importance of adopting a broader perspective where the focus is on the Kurdish women's experiences of oppression at the intersection

of gender and race both in the rural and urban contexts, resulting in their increasing visibility in the public sphere as politically conscious and gender aware subjectivities.

This thesis is not about explaining the course of events in reality, but about how displaced Kurdish women, as subjects with the power to act and reflect upon the action, construct and attach meaning to their experience with oppression, domination and violence in their narratives. This thesis attempts to trace down the reconfiguration of gendered subjectivities in women's narratives as they develop political agency through their increasing interactions with state officials as visitors of political prisoners, as claimants of human rights, and as applicants for social assistance, and through their socialization in pro-Kurdish parties.

The findings of the fieldwork corroborate the view expressed by Handan Çağlayan that membership in pro-Kurdish political parties is a valuable asset for socialization of Kurdish women, irrespective of employment status and knowledge of Turkish.³⁰³ In the urban space, one of the most important channels through which Kurdish women have struggled against the oppressive state and patriarchy was the Peoples' Democratic Party (*Hakların Demokratik Partisi* – HDP), which has been the primary space of socialization at the time I did my fieldwork. In their narratives, they depict political party buildings as spaces in which they build solidarity through working together.

Building on women's narrations about their political engagement, I have concluded that gender sensitive approach of the pro-Kurdish political parties is instrumental in the development of gender awareness among displaced Kurdish women, providing them with leverage to resist patriarchal controls over their lives. The findings of this study suggest that in the process of political socialization, Kurdish women have actively engaged in reconfiguring their identities along gender lines as a result of which gender identity have assumed priority over their ethnic identity.

I observed that the immediate effects of such empowerment have been seen in the changes in gender role perceptions and gendered power dynamics at the intra-

³⁰³ Çağlayan, *Ne Değişti*, 73.

household level. Whereas women's mobility and labor were strictly controlled by men in their villages in the pre-displacement period, they have started to navigate the spaces that were considered to be men's domain in the urban context. I believe that women's and men's domain have become more flexible and blurred in the urban setting as displaced Kurdish women have become more visible as human rights defenders, protestors of state violence, political activists seeking justice for the oppressed. However, their public visibility cannot be explained solely by their political activism. Having forced to live as impoverished slum dwellers in the peripheries of Istanbul in a highly commoditized market economy, social and economic hardships and necessities of life pushed these women into the public sphere who gained visibility as consumers in the market place, as mothers taking their children to school or hospital, as laborers in the informal sector.

To conclude, this thesis argues that while such public visibility have brought some degree of liberation to their lives, it also played a role in their stigmatization as signifiers of ethnic difference which in turn further politicized their ethnic identity. In this process, their active engagement in party politics and socialization in party buildings enhanced their gender awareness, owing a great part to the party's discourse on gender equality, as they shared their experiences of male domination and oppression both in the household and public spaces, and developed resistance practices to negate masculine discourses and practices.

APPENDIX A: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

NAME	AGE	BIRTH PLACE	ETHNICITY	THE DATE OF INTERVIEWS	TYPE OF INTERVIEW	DURATION OF INTERVIEWS
Berfu	43	Bitlis	Kurdish	11 February 2015	Individual	00:59:28
Fatma	31	Bitlis	Kurdish	23 April 2015	Individual	00:37:39
Hatice	36	Bitlis	Kurdish	25 April 2015	Individual	01:08:28
Dilan	33	Mardin	Kurdish	25 April 2015	Individual	01:06:43
Sosin	46	Mardin	Kurdish	26 April 2015	Individual	00:38:49
Leyla	19	Mardin	Kurdish	26 April 2015	Individual	00:54:40
Hevin	39	Bitlis	Kurdish	25 April 2015	Individual	00:45:57
Pervin	54	Batman	Kurdish	25 April 2015	Individual	00:52:11
Felek	54	Bitlis	Kurdish	02 May 2015	Individual	00:39:44
Hacer	37	Batman	Kurdish	12 May 2015	Individual	01:13:39
Rojda	38	Bitlis	Kurdish	12 May 2015	Individual	00:34:00
Dicle	53	Muş	Kurdish	27 May 2015	Individual	01:17:55
Viyan	31	Bitlis	Kurdish	27 May 2015	Individual	00:51:03
Şilan	37	Mardin	Kurdish	03 June 2015	Individual	Not recorded; Almost One and a half Hour
Arin	38	Bitlis	Kurdish	03 June 2015	Individual	Not recorded; Almost One Hour
Zilan	38	Bitlis	Kurdish	16 June 2015	Individual	00:46:33

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