

HONOR CRIMES  
AND THE EMBODIMENT OF TURKISH NATIONALISM, 1926-2016

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HONOR CRIMES

AND THE EMBODIMENT OF TURKISH NATIONALISM, 1926-2016

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## ABSTRACT

My dissertation is a world history project that offers an historical perspective for understanding the existence and meaning of honor crimes. I focus on the history of honor-related violence in Turkey, which I contend can only be understood within the international context of twentieth-century modernization, state-formation, and nationalist projects. The Turkish nationalist state initiated an intensive process of modernization beginning in the late 1920s and lasting through the majority of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. My project examines the impact the nationalist modernization project had on the culture of honor and the existence of honor-related gendered violence, and argues against the ahistorical portrayal of Middle Eastern societies as “backward” bastions of patriarchy. Instead, I propose that honor-related violence has a very specific, yet complex recent history that has as much to do with “modernization” as it does with tradition. Although my project focuses on Turkey, I include a case study of honor crimes as discussed in Brazilian legal codes that were created or preserved by nationalist “modernizing” regimes. This study offers a nuanced historical explanation, on the one hand, of the ways in which the culture of honor and the nationalist state overlapped and often supported one another, and on the other hand, of how nationalist modernizing projects created the environments in which honor crimes tended to proliferate, such as during periods of civil war and in communities that are marginalized due to institutionalized racial, gendered, and ethno-nationalist discrimination.

DEDICATION

For Damian

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project found inspiration and support in rather far flung places and time periods in my life. Coming of age in the 1990s in the wake of the Cold War, I was at once wrapped up with my individual experience with the honor-shame continuum associated with feminine sexuality in the United States and the international focus on ethno-nationalist conflict and the unique experiences of women in war in the Balkans, Guatemala, and the Middle East. I studied electronic media as an undergraduate at the University of Cincinnati at the turn of the twenty-first century. The potential of the internet and new media was just beginning to be tapped, and the faculty and students engaged in lively discussions of the possibilities and pitfalls of what certainly promised to be a new world. My first-hand experience writing and editing pop-culture news as an entertainment editor for the University of Cincinnati's student run newspaper, *The News Record*, gave me a glimpse into the politics of media production. The design editor, then fellow student, now Professor Bill Whetzel, deserves special thanks for broadening my understanding of the importance of artistic representation and responsibility. I saw things more sharply thanks to working with Bill. Charles Little and Carol Helmick: you are a superb humans and I thank you for teaching me. I must thank my oldest friends, Brandy Borden, Lesley Bucey, Kim Caravella, Melissa Corbett, Julie Fitzgerald, Justin Landry Hall, Micah Highfill, Kathleen King, Trisha Linley, Jessica Salfiti, and Amy Schneider.

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I studied modernity, nationalism, fascism, foreign relations and race at Kent State University. I would like to sincerely thank Drs. Jennifer Nalmpantis, Kyriakos Nalmpantis, Agyrios Pisiotis, Victor Papacosma, Nikki Brown, Carol Harrison, and member of this dissertation committee, Richard Steigmann-Gall. He along with Drs. Nikki Brown, Jennifer Nalmpantis and Kyri Nalmpantis were very important mentors.

The consortium between Kent State and the University of Akron proved to be significant for my intellectual development. While I was finishing my MA at Kent, I learned of a new faculty hire in Middle East history at The University of Akron--Dr. Janet Klein. I read a book chapter of hers concerning nationalism, women, and the late-Ottoman Kurdish press, and I immediately applied to study with her. She continued to be a source for inspiration and intellectual growth throughout my doctoral studies in Akron. She and Drs. TJ Boisseau and Martha Santos were excellent mentors. The impact they have had on my intellectual development cannot be overstated. I would also like to extend my sincere appreciation to Drs. Martin Wainwright, Shelley Baranowski, Greg Wilson, Constance Bouchard, Steve Harp, Zachery Williams, Lesley Gordon, Michael Graham, Walter Hixson, and Maria Alejandra Zanetta. Dr. Zanetta served as an integral interdisciplinary voice on my dissertation committee. I must make special mention of my friend, the late Sharon Hays. I was privileged to know her. I must additionally thank Kym Rohrbach and Wade Wilcox.

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During my doctoral studies I lost two very important women--my grandmothers, Phyllis Marie Cook and Mary Sharon "Slick" Nutt. Their various feminisms shaped me. They implicitly taught me that everything was political- despite never reading Carol Hansich's essay themselves. My world was bigger because of them.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

From the mid-1990s through the first decade of the twenty-first century if you were to open the newspaper in any city in Turkey, or listen in to a conversation on the bus you would certainly read or hear people discussing the “third page.” This is the spot in the daily papers reserved for crime stories, and the hottest news on the page always revolved around a sordid, tragic tale of honor-related gendered violence. A scorned husband murdered his wife. A brother strangled his sister for coming home too late at night and making the neighbors “talk.” A man shot his wife and mother of three children. A male, gay rights activist was shot, sniper style, in a café on the Bosphorus and his family is implicated in his death. All these, and various other accounts of interpersonal, gendered, honor-related violence gripped the country on a daily basis. The headlines and the interviewees were clear in their explanation of the events: the victim in some way offended, or compromised the perpetrator’s *honor*.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For this study I examined five different Turkish newspapers, *Sabah*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Turkish Daily News*, *Vakit*, and *Hürriyet* from 1980-2008. Throughout this time period the papers would report on domestic violence or violent crimes against women by family members from time to time, but only beginning in 1995 did the papers fill with stories concerning “namus cinayeti” [honor killings] or “töre” [custom--often synonymous with honor or morality]. Before 1995, the role of honor in murders or abuse cases was not analyzed, but nearly every paper contained articles where women, victims or accused, were pictured with their eyes covered/censored with a black bar. This reflected public recognition of honor/shame during the time period. For a contemporary reference to the vast number of articles concerning honor killings during this time period, see the Kurdish feminist journal *Roza* that started publishing in Istanbul in 1996.

In a state consumed with civil war, ongoing threats of terrorist attacks, economic instability, and the continued anxiety over European Union ascension, what was it about these sad stories that kept the attention of the masses for nearly two decades? Yes, it was possible that simply the drama, intrigue, and tragedy offered entertainment and distraction, and certainly that was true for many people, at least part of the time. However, there has never been a shortage of celebrity gossip and other topics of news and entertainment. Yet, I would contend that nothing other than *futbol* occupied as much ongoing attention in the daily Turkish press as honor killings-- and it was certainly not just Turkey that the “drama” of honor-violence enveloped. By the beginning of the twenty-first century honor killings entered the discourse of women’s rights, an essential part of the hegemonic discourse of modernity, as a subject of human rights activism and an international spectacle of popular culture and mass media. This dissertation examines the local and global history of honor crimes. In so doing, my research opens a window to re-examine the gendered history of nationalist, modern state-formation--- through the lens of honor. After researching honor killings in Turkey, it is clear that honor violence in the twentieth and twenty-first century was as much a product of “modernity” as it was a “traditional” backlash to it. Honor killings and the competing discourses around it were wrapped up with and related to political, social, racial, military, and cultural tensions. In the specific case of Turkey, that context is nationalist civil war, European Union Ascension, and Turkish and Kurdish identity projects.

This process took different forms in other places. Turkey is the central focus of this project, but in order to understand the relationship between nationalist modernist state-

formation and honor violence throughout the world, I compare the Turkish case with Brazil. In Brazil the context for understanding honor violence in the twentieth century and twenty-first century is the adaptation of a nationalist, statist promotion of a middle class, “modern” whitening process and the negotiation of that process by Afro-Brazilians, indigenous, and working people of various “races” and genders. In both cases, the twentieth and twenty-first century international discourse of women’s rights and its unique role in post-colonial nationalist projects played a significant role in both combatting honor violence and its entrenchment in different sectors of society. I explore these diverse, overlapping, and at times diverging factors for understanding honor crimes in this dissertation.

American and European hegemonic media and popular culture shaped the way the world reads and understands honor crimes, and there have been transnational political and gendered consequences to those narratives. During the last decades of the twentieth century and through to the present, violence against women in the Middle East was strategically linked to the global war on terror in the European and American press and in popular culture. This became even more explicit after September 11, 2001 and the months that led up to 2003 U.S invasion of Iraq.

Reminiscent of the crudest orientalist endeavors, scholars and average Americans set out to learn as much as possible about “Islamic” cultural beliefs and practices in order to explain September 11, 2001 and protect the “Western” hegemonic power that these

attacks and the possibility of future conflicts threatened.<sup>1</sup> As the “Western” microscope zeroed-in on “Islamic” culture, honor crimes surfaced as a congenital disease that provided evidence for its “sickness.” The position of women in Islamic(ate)<sup>2</sup> societies, characterized by honor crimes, appeared as an important theme in American popular culture in the post 9/11 world. In November of 2001 the images of a truck hauling three terrified women in blue *burqas* into an Afghanistan soccer stadium for a public execution were plastered on the television and in newspapers.<sup>3</sup> Echoing the sentiments of the “clash

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Said’s contribution to the study of colonialism and post-colonialism, beginning with *Orientalism* (1978), cannot be overstated. His hermeneutic analysis of the methods that the “West” used to dominate the “East/Orient” through the production of knowledge about the colonial world sparked a paradigm shift for understanding power relations implicit in imperial forms of knowledge. His analysis of the meanings and production of the “West” and “East” remain significant for understanding hegemonic culture and its link to foreign relations in a global society. Said’s work explains the binary construction of the “West” as force for “progress” and the “East” as “backward.” His work insists that scholars account for the implicit or explicit power dynamics at play in orientalist knowledge. As Andrew Rotter explained in 2000, Said’s work demands that we, scholars, “heed the voices when the subaltern talks back to power.” Andrew Rotter, “Saidism Without Said: Orientalism and U.S. Diplomatic History,” *American Historical Review* 105, 4 (October 2000): 1207 and 1215. This dissertation is an attempt to hear those voices and bring them to bear on the history of honor violence and its relationship to modern, nationalist state-formation as well as analyzing the way Orientalist knowledge continues to influence the study of honor crimes. I use quotation marks around “Western,” “West,” “East,” and “Eastern” to acknowledge Said’s contribution to the understanding that both the “West” and the “East” are mutually constituted in their power laden relationship with one another. Neither exists as an ontological reality on their own.

<sup>2</sup> I am distinguishing the religion and specifically religious institutions in society from the wider societies and cultures that exist in different world regions, but particularly in the Middle East/Southwest Asia, where Islam is the dominant religion. Marshall Hodgson coined the term “Islamicate” in the 1970s in response to other world histories that he contended were essentialist and Eurocentric. This term is still used and useful for noting regions where Islam is the dominant religion and for noting the work, art, ideas, and culture of Muslims that may not be related to Islam. See Marshall G.S. Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam: Conscience and History in a World Civilization*, ed. Reuben W. Smith, 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 1974. And *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam and World History*, ed. Edmund Burke III, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press), 1993.

<sup>3</sup> The Taliban convicted a woman named Zarmina of murdering her husband and shot her in close range in November 16, 1999 at the infamous Kabul stadium. The Taliban used this soccer facility as the main location to shoot, stone, and sever limbs of men and women for public display. Rawa.org leaked footage of this particular execution directly after it occurred, and the Associated Press wrote an article on November 17, 1999. The American media rebroadcast that footage and ran stories about the position of women under Taliban rule after September 11, 2001. The American and British press linked the revenge for 9/11 terrorism and the prevention of future terrorist attacks to a civilizational struggle between the U.S. and NATO allies and Islamist terrorism and the Taliban. The position of women in society as discussed

of civilizations” thesis<sup>4</sup> this type of media coverage fueled the already burgeoning market for information on the Middle East.

In March of 2006 the American medical drama, *ER*, worked honor killings into its storyline for the episode “Lost in America.” In this episode Emmy-winning Iranian-American actress Shohreh Aghdashloo portrays a Turkish mother who brings her dying daughter into the emergency room. The patient’s brother admits to killing his sister in the name of familial honor and Islam after she refused to stop dating her non-Muslim American boyfriend.<sup>5</sup> The writers and producers of *ER* bought into and contributed to a culturalist interpretation of Islamic gender roles and honor crimes in Turkey and in Islamic societies in general.

The line that connects popular culture and imperial endeavors is not as easily identified as a flag planted on a beach, but the power to study, create, and then broadcast hegemonic narratives of both the dominant culture and its others is far-reaching. A body of literature exists that explains the very significant role culture played in imperial projects- most notably the work of Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978) and his essays in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). In the later work Said explained, "The power to narrate,

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later in this work was a key marker of modern civilization. See Anton Antonowicz. “Zarmina’s Story” *The Mirror*, June 20, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> This references Samuel P. Huntington’s 1993 essay that argues that the “West” is embroiled in conflict for civilizational dominance and existence with the rest of the world, but namely the Islamic and Confucian “civilizations.” These civilizations are defined by religion and culture. For a recent discussion of the legacy and merits of this work see “The Clash of Civilizations? The Debate: 20th Anniversary Edition” in *Foreign Affairs*, 2013

<sup>5</sup> *ER*. “Lost in America.” Episode 17. Directed by Stephen Craig. Written by Lisa Zwerling, and Karen Maser. March 23, 2006. Information about this episode is available from, tv.com <http://www.tv.com/er/lost-in-america/episode/627302/summary.html>; IMBD.com, [http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0759003/?ref\\_=ttep\\_ep17](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0759003/?ref_=ttep_ep17). (accessed February 22, 2016).

or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them."<sup>6</sup> The power of the American media to narrate and manufacture the history and culture of the Middle East for both American and global audiences shapes notions and knowledge of the Other.<sup>7</sup> Said's thesis concerning the relationship between knowledge and imperialism is easily continued through an analysis of American popular culture and its fixation on Middle Eastern honor violence.<sup>8</sup> The American and global preoccupation with honor killings contributed to a discourse of who was "modern" and "civilized," and therefore possessed the right to legitimate authority and domination, and who was "backward," superstitious, "unmodern," and subsequently colonized--either with military occupation or through the imperialism of culture and imagination.<sup>9</sup>

According to the post 9-11 media, honor killings were an Islamic cultural practice that explained interpersonal violence among immigrant families from the Middle East. Sara and Emina Yasar Said, two American-Muslim sisters of Egyptian descent, were murdered by their physically and sexually abusive father in Dallas in 2008. According to

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<sup>6</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*. (New York: Vintage Books, 1993). Xiii. See also, Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Random House, 1978) and John Mackenzie, *Imperialism and Popular Culture*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1987); Calvin F. Exoo, *The Pen and the Sword: Press, War, and Terror in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century* (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, Washington D.C.: Sage Publications, Inc. 2010).

<sup>7</sup> I capitalized Other noting that in this context Other means someone or a group that is in subordinate position in a mutually constitutive power relationship. See Stuart Hall, "The West and the Rest: Discourse and Power." In *Race and Racialization: Essential Readings*. Das Gupta, T. et al (eds). Toronto: Canadian Scholars Press. 2007.

<sup>8</sup> See Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and the Middle East since 1945*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002) and *Planet of the Arabs*. Directed by Jacqueline Salloum. (January 2005).

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the processes of cultural imperialism that prolonged after colonial sovereignty see Maurice Jr. Labelle "Empire by Association: The Arab-Israeli Conflict and the United States in Lebanese Imaginations," *Diplomacy & Statecraft* 23, 1 (March 2012): 44-65.

the extensive American media coverage including an in-depth documentary, honor killings had come to America. Pundits analyzed the Said sisters' murder as if it was something highly exceptional and foreign in the United States, disregarding the gross numbers of Americans who are shot to death every year by people whom they know.<sup>10</sup> After 9-11 and in the context of ongoing American military operations in Iraq, honor killings exemplified the extreme difference between the supposedly modern, secular and/or Christian "West" and the "medieval" Islamic Middle East. The power of this narrative was used to promote hawkish responses to Middle Eastern political crises on the right and left of the political spectrum with little historical and comparative understanding of gender-related honor violence, or the ways political violence--global wars and nationalist conflict--contribute to violence against women and its many manifestations.

Before honor killings made it into 21<sup>st</sup>-century American prime-time television, women and men from around the world challenged the notion that violence in the name of honor is essential or exclusive to Islamic and Middle Eastern societies or that Islam and "modernity" are somehow mutually exclusive.<sup>11</sup> These two related topics come up time and again in the ongoing conversation concerning the relationship between the Middle East and the "West."

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<sup>10</sup> David Schoetz, "Honor Killing Motive for Slain Sisters?" *ABC News*, (January 8, 2008). <http://abcnews.go.com/US/story?id=4102781&page=1>. (accessed October, 14, 2010) Bill Hemmer, "Fox News Reporting: Honor Killing in America" *Fox News*, (August 13, 2010), <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,598689,00.html>. (accessed October 14, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> See Sara Hossain and Lynn Welchman, eds. *Honour: Crimes, Paradigms, and Violence Against Women* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005).

The concept of modernity spans the disciplines. Understanding the ways scholars, politicians, and hegemonic culture discursively used “modern” and put it into praxis in recent centuries is central to this study of honor violence. Modernity is at once a periodization and a destination. As periodization, for historical thinkers, it deals with the beginning of Enlightenment scholarship in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Britain and continental Europe and continues to the present. The central tenets of Enlightenment thinking, exemplified by philosophers such as Voltaire, Rousseau, and Locke, emphasized a break from tradition, particularly religious explanations for why things happen, and replacing them with reason. Associated with a re-birth of scientific reasoning, Enlightenment intellectuals argued that human relations and institutions could improve with rational action. This new way of organizing society based on reason characterized the period, and the central emphasis on “progress” made “modernity” a destination for the social engineers of the last 400 years.

Progress could be made in almost all aspects of human life and interaction—particularly social organization. Modernist thinkers declared individual autonomy and constitutionalism over serfdom and absolutism, and outlined a path to “modernity.” Scholars like Karl Marx and Émile Durkheim examined the implication of the shift from feudal societies to industrialized economies and states. Industrialization became a key marker of modernity, and the social problems associated with industrialization endured as an essential arena for progressive reform. According to the modernists, economies, societies, governments, and individuals were perfectible.

Nationalism, the ideology of the “people,” --predominately articulated until the late twentieth century as a culturally homogenous, primordial community with a shared history and homeland-- became the dominant force for agitating for self-determination and state power.<sup>12</sup> By the French Revolution the notion that the nation—not monarchs-- held sovereignty dominated modern political discourse. The modern ideals of constitutional government, state-centralized bureaucratic institutions, industrialization, and nationalism sprang from Europe, though they were certainly incubated in the context of imperialism. Europeans first defined and institutionalized modernity and its principle political marker, the nation-state, and this project became the model for political, social, economic, cultural, and military reform around the world for many people.<sup>13</sup>

In the context of European imperial threat and the outcome of World War 1, ethnically and culturally diverse empires like the Ottoman State adopted the European model for “modern” national state-formation to various degrees of success and disaster.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell. 1983, 2009); Ümit Özkirimli, *Theories of Nationalism* (London: Palgrave Macmillan. 2010); Alain Dieckhoff, ed. *The Politics of Belonging: Nationalism, Liberalism, and Pluralism* (Lanham: Lexington. 2004); H.E. Hale, *The Foundations of Ethnic Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition ed. (London and New York: Verso, 1991). Jacqueline Hogan, *Gender, Race and nation* (London: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>13</sup> See David C. Engerman, et al., eds. *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War*. (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2003); Lee, Raymond. "Modernization, Postmodernism, and Development." *Current Sociology* 42, no. 2 (1994); Dean Tipps, "Modernization Theory and the Comparative Study of Society: A Critical Perspective." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 15, no. 2 (1973), 199–226.

<sup>14</sup> See Prasenjit Duara, ed *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Mark Philip Bradley, *Imagining Vietnam and America: The Making of Postcolonial Vietnam, 1919-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Greg Brazinsky, *Nation Building in South Korea: Koreans, Americans, and the Making of a Democracy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Sibel Bozdoğan, Reşat Kasaba, eds. *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1997).

The gendered implications of modernity in colonial and post-colonial societies exemplified this mixed legacy.<sup>15</sup>

It was also in Europe and the Americas that women and men first agitated for the recognition of women's individual rights within the context of the modern discourse of social progress. In the seventeenth century Enlightenment thinkers like John Locke argued to change the status of women in existing European legal codes that made wives essentially property of their husbands. Still, married women could not retain personal property in the United Kingdom until 1870.<sup>16</sup>

It was in the last half of the nineteenth century during the context of imperialism that the campaign for women's rights became part of a global hegemonic discourse of modernity. Leila Ahmed explains that "those proposing an improvement in the status of women from early on couched their advocacy in terms of the need to abandon the (implicitly) "innately" and "irreparably" misogynist practices of the native culture in favor of the customs and beliefs of another culture--the European."<sup>17</sup> The position of women in society became part of the imperial project. Victorian men (and some women) agitated for reform of culture and society as it pertained to women in the colonial world, and Islamic customs of veiling and gender segregation were held up as symbols of an innate Muslim inferiority. Like in the context of the war on terror in the twenty-first

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<sup>15</sup> Suad Joseph and Susan Slyomovics, eds. *Women and Power in the Middle East* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu Osa, "Gender and Good Governance in John Locke" in *American Journal of Social Issues and Humanities*, vol. 4 (July 2012), 252-257.

<sup>17</sup> Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press) 1992.

century, the position of women in Islamic societies was used to legitimize imperialism. The Europeans and the indigenous people who internalized this discourse agitated for reforms to match nineteenth-century European standards, no more and no less. In turn, the discourse of women's rights was viewed by some in colonial societies as a suspect agent of imperialism.<sup>18</sup>

At the turn of the twentieth century and through to the present, the position of women in any given society represented a marker of modernity. The "woman question," referring to the nineteenth century discussion and activism concerning new "modern" roles for women in changing societies, occupied the minds of modernists, imperialists, colonialists, and nationalists.<sup>19</sup> This was true for the mandate and independent states and fledgling nations of the former Ottoman Empire, including the Turkish Republic, founded on October 29, 1923.

There are many reasons for Turkey's "modern" characterization, including its long standing membership in NATO, Kemalist<sup>20</sup> policies of secular statism, and application to the European Union. Since the Kurdish uprising of 1925 in response to Ataturk's nationalist policies the Turks and the Kurds developed competing, bloody nationalist projects that continue to the present. Honor crimes must be considered among

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<sup>18</sup> Ibid., 125-168.

<sup>19</sup> Janine Utelle, "The Woman Question" in *The Modernist Journal Project* (2005), [http://modjournal.org/render.php?view=mjp\\_object&id=mjp.2005.00.088](http://modjournal.org/render.php?view=mjp_object&id=mjp.2005.00.088) (accessed March 14, 2016). Janet Klein, "En-Gendering Nationalism: The 'Woman Question' in Kurdish Nationalist Discourse of the Late Ottoman Period." in *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, Shahrazad Mojab, ed. (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2001) 38-39.

<sup>20</sup> Mustafa Kemal "Ataturk" led the independence movement against British, French, and Greek military occupation of Anatolia and Thrace after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire. He was the first Prime Minister of Turkey and led a radical statist modernization project known as Kemalism. His ideas and legacy remain an important political force in Turkey. His supporters are known as Kemalists.

the gendered violence committed due to nationalist conflict in the region. Paradoxically, the stigma of honor crimes tarnishes the human rights records for both groups and undermines Turkish and Kurdish nationalist claims on “modernity.” My research illuminates the links between the discourse of modernity, nationalism, state-formation, statelessness in the case of the Kurds, and honor crimes in Turkey in the context of similar processes worldwide.

This study explains the significant role that ethno-nationalist conflicts and social development, particularly the socio-economic conditions and dynamic political processes related to ongoing nationalist campaigns, played into the factors that contribute to the prevalence of honor crimes in Turkey. Nationalist conflict contributed to honor-related violence in Turkey and it also plays a significant role in how honor crimes have been characterized by Kurds and Turks, and in “Western” popular media and politics.

Understanding the discourse surrounding honor crimes from both inside and outside of the region helps to dispel stereotypes about Turkish, Kurdish, and Islamic culture and society in general. Rather than evidencing honor crimes in the most “Westernized,” secular countries in the Middle East as evidence of the ultimate “backwardness” of these cultures and societies, it is important to understand how specific socio-economic and political factors combined with cultural practices that are comparable to many societies around the world create an environment ripe for honor-related, gendered violence. Moreover, this study also contributes to scholarship aimed at dispelling the firmly held belief that masculine violence in the Middle East, in particular, but also in Latin America and in general, is either “timeless” or “natural.”

Over the past thirty or so years a body of scholarship has been building concerning masculinity, honor, and war in the Americas and Europe.<sup>21</sup> More recently, scholars and activists, such as Shahrzad Mojab and the Kurdish Women's Rights Watch organization have brought increased attention to the occurrence of honor crimes in Kurdish communities around the world.<sup>22</sup> Informed by this scholarship and anthropological notions of honor culture,<sup>23</sup> particularly studies concerning honor in Mediterranean and Middle Eastern societies, but also the American South, and postcolonial theory, the present study extends a historically specific perspective to understand the links between gendered inter-personal violence and national "honor." I focus on the connections between nationalism and the creation of the nation-state, honor, and gendered honor crimes, which can only benefit from increased comparative research concerning the historical and international patriarchal system that regards women as commodities rather than partners.

First, it is important to define the term "honor crime." I specifically use the term "honor crime" instead of the more notorious "honor killing." Like the contributors to

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<sup>21</sup> See Geoffrey Best, *Honour among Men and Nations: The Transformation of an Idea* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982); Pieter Spierenburg, ed. *Men and Violence: Gender, Honor, and Rituals in Modern Europe and America* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 1998).

<sup>22</sup> Professor and Director of the Women and Gender Studies Institute at the University of Toronto, Dr. Shahrzad Mojab is a leading authority concerning Kurdish women, honor-related violence, and Kurdish nationalism. This study and many others frequently cite Dr. Mojab's work on gendered violence and nationalism in the Kurdish context as the germinal work in the field.

<sup>23</sup> This refers to the importance placed on reputation and status of the family and community often, but not always associated with policing female sexuality as a symbol of familial honor. For more on honor culture see Sandra Busatta, "Honor and Shame in the Mediterranean" in *Antropologia Culturale*, 2-2 (2006) 75-78; Julienne Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem, or the Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (New York and Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); D. Gilmore, ed. *Honour and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean* (Washington DC: American Ethnological Association, 1987). Richard E. Nisbett and Dov Cohen. *Culture of honor: The psychology of violence in the South*. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996).

Shahrazad Mojab's anthology, *Violence in the Name of Honor: Theoretical and Political Challenges*, I view honor killings as only the most extreme version of a multitude of different types of gendered violence carried out in the name of honor, such as rape; various forms of physical disfigurement including acid burning and cutting off limbs, ears or noses; depression-induced suicide; forced suicide; female genital mutilation (FGM); virginity examinations, banishment; infanticide; and others.<sup>24</sup> All of these crimes amount to "punishment" overwhelmingly, but not exclusively, of women. The attacks are carried out by families who act under social pressure to maintain their familial and community-based notion of honor. Communities around the world hold different conceptions of honor; however, most frequently, male honor is linked to the ability to control female sexuality.<sup>25</sup> This is particularly important in impoverished regions where men have limited resources, and "woman" and her sexuality, usually defined by virginity, is the most, and at times only, valuable piece of property.<sup>26</sup>

In Turkey, a familiar phrase exists that epitomizes the role of women in Turkish national-identity and national honor, "My horse, my gun, and my woman are sacred to me." This is a popular saying that is frequently used by male Turks and Kurds alike, and

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<sup>24</sup> Shahrazad Mojab, ed. *Violence in the Name of Honor: Theoretical and Political Challenges*. (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> See for a Mediterranean world perspective Julian Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem or The Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean*. (Cambridge, London, New York, and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp.vii-xii. For a study of the sociology of honor killings in Turkey see Filiz Kardam, et al., "Dynamics of Honour Killing in Turkey: Prospects for Action" United Nations Development Program and United Nations Population Fund, 2005.

<sup>26</sup> Andrea Parro and Nina Cummings. *Forsaken Females: The Global Brutalization of Women*. (New York and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), pp.175.

commonly referred to as a national motto.<sup>27</sup> It suggests the masculinization of Turkish national identity, the entrenched idea of “woman” as a possessed commodity, and the “sacredness” of women- specifically controlled, honorable women. However, invoking this phrase to explain the significance of patriarchy in Turkey should not be used to suggest that Turkey is somehow exceptionally sexist or violent. The notion of “woman” as commodity is a common feature of patriarchy, and is no more evident in Turkish and Kurdish culture than in European, Asian, African, and American societies where the female sex-trade and various other types of gendered violence flourish. The historical, yet international, culture of patriarchy fails to explain why Turkey, and to be more precise--specific regions of Turkey, are particularly associated with inter-personal gendered violence in the past three decades. Paradoxically, according to a 2007,<sup>28</sup> study honor crimes continued unabated in the region after a decade of increased feminist activism, augmented state-sponsored criminalization for honor killings, and international pressure to end the practice. Important recent sociological work on honor killing in Turkey must be situated within the history of Turkish and Kurdish nationalist agendas and state-building projects from the foundation of the Republic in 1923 to the present. This gives meaningful context for understanding current political, economic, and social conditions in the Kurdish regions of Turkey and among internally displaced Kurdish communities living in cities such as Istanbul and Izmir. Sociologists Mazhar Bağlı and Özensel Ertan conducted a 2011 comprehensive study that concluded that though the

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<sup>27</sup> “Turkish Honor Killings: A dishonorable practice” *The Economist*, April 12, 2007, available from, [http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=9009023](http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=9009023); Internet.

<sup>28</sup> Hasan Tahsin Fendoğlu, PM Human Rights Presidency 2007 Honour Killings Report. Ankara, 2008.

majority of honor killings occur in major cities like Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara--not Batman or Diyarbakır in the Kurdish regions--the majority of the perpetrators are from the Kurdish regions.<sup>29</sup> The history of migration, socioeconomic development, nationalist conflict and militarization of the Kurdish regions is critical to understanding the prevalence of honor violence in Kurdish communities, particularly when popular notions of masculine and feminine honor and national honor are quite similar across ethnic lines in Turkey.

During the early years of state-formation in the 1920s and 30s, according to Kemalist discourse, the honor and viability of the new Turkish nation relied on a top-down, patriarchal, hetero-normative concept of feminine honor for the “modern” Turkish woman. Like in the case of Ba’athist Iraq, Franco’s Spain, Vargas’s Brazil, and many others, state-sponsored feminism tended to curtail and exclude other types of feminist organizing.<sup>30</sup>

Women’s “modern” identity became a key characteristic of “Turkification,” the process of constructing an entirely Turkish national identity out of the former Ottoman Empire. Another particularly salient example of Turkification has been the dominant, nationalist discourse on the Kurds. Throughout the second half of the twentieth century

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<sup>29</sup> Mazhar Bağlı and Özensel Ertan, *Türkiye’de Töre ve Namus Cinayetleri. Töre ve Namus Cinayeti İşleyen Kişiler Üzerine Sosyolojik Bir Araştırma* [Custom and Honor Killings in Turkey. A Sociological Research on Custom and Honor Killers] (Istanbul: Destek Press, 2011) 88-93.

<sup>30</sup> See Marion Farouk-Sluglett, “Liberation or Repression: Pan-Arab Nationalism and the Women’s Movement in Iraq,” in *Iraq, Power and Society*, ed by Derek Hopwood, Habib Ishow, and Thomas Koszinski (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1993), 51-73; “Elite Strategies for State Building: Women, Family, Religion and the State in Iraq and Lebanon,” in Deniz Kaniyoti, ed., *Women, Islam & the State*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991) 176-200; Deniz Kaniyoti, ed., *Women, Islam & the State*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 267-273. Helen Graham, *Gender and the State: Women in the 1940s in Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction*, Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995) 182-195.

and to the present the Turkish state as well as the “Western” media have described the Kurdish reaction to Turkey’s nationalist campaign, which amounted to genocide according to many scholars, as “backward” resistance to education and religious fanaticism.<sup>31</sup> Kurdish women participate in many aspects of the PKK’s (Kurdistan Workers Party) guerilla war against the state, including in party leadership roles and as combat soldiers. Still, Turkish nationalists continue to blame the persistence of honor crimes in Turkey on the religiosity and “backwardness” of the “east” and the Kurds in regards to women’s rights.<sup>32</sup>

The eastern and southeastern provinces are the home of most of Turkey’s Kurdish population and the Kurdish resistance movement. Not all, but many cases of honor killings and female suicide reported in Turkey occur in the Kurdish provinces or among Kurdish families living in the diaspora.<sup>33</sup> The region has been the battleground for civil war on and off throughout the past century. Countless Kurds have died and continue to live in poverty due to war and inadequate social services in this region. Despite Turkey’s persistent policy of ignoring the ethnic or nationalist character of the

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<sup>31</sup> Shahrzad Mojab, *Women of a Non-State Nation*, Shahrzad Mojab, Ed. (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2001) 2-6.

<sup>32</sup> See Paul Schemm, “Kurdish Fighters Offer Guerilla Feminism” in *Middle East Times*, November 28, 2006 for a short article concerning how Kurdish women fighters describe their nationalist and feminist activism. However, scholars and activists have questioned the feminist characterization of the PKK, and suggest that the organization has appropriated women’s rights and female combatants for the national campaign; however, the actual record for activism toward gender equality and women’s rights remains dismal. See, Hama Karim, “The farce of the Sixth conference of Kurdistan women’s union,” No. 23 of the “Kurds cry out for change” on [kurdishmedia.com](http://kurdishmedia.com) (March 16, 2007). Translated by Kamal Mirawdeli. Originally posted on [kurdistanet.org](http://kurdistanet.org) on (March 14, 2007) and republished on [http://www.iraqupdates.com/p\\_articles.php/article/15618](http://www.iraqupdates.com/p_articles.php/article/15618) (August 6, 2007), (accessed March 8, 2009).

<sup>33</sup> İntihar istatistikleri [Suicide Statistics] Başbakanlık, Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, [Prime Ministry, State Institute of Statistics] Ankara: 1983; Aysan Sev’er and Rüstem Erkan, “The Dark Faces of Poverty, Patriarchal Oppression, and Social Change: Female Suicides in Batman, Turkey” (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State Press, 1996).

Kurdish resistance movement by referring to Kurds as “mountain Turks” or “tribal easterners,”<sup>34</sup> recent debates over admission into the European Union saw the “Western” press and Turkish state emphasizing the “Kurdishness” of the problem of honor crimes as opposed to the “Turkishness” of the Kurds. It is rather ironic that official recognition of Kurdish distinctiveness has only come through the Turkish nationalist discourse on modernity, and its characterization of Kurdish society as backwards, and indeed barbaric.

Democracy in Turkey has been tenuous at best since Atatürk’s “modernization,” Turkification campaign. The military has had a heavy hand in civil and political life, reserving the right to intervene in the form of a military coup when the Kemalist generals deemed that the country was straying away from “modern,” secular statist policies. People living in Turkey have challenged “Turkification” and anti-democratic state policies throughout the last century. The Kurdish resistance movement, described as a “terrorist” campaign by the state, remains one of the most active movements against Kemalist and the current Islamist, populist state policies. However, Kurds and their human rights advocates utilize more than physical force in the form of guerilla war to assert their cause. Human rights activism has increased in Turkey over the past thirty years, but since the military coup in 1980 the state has put up many obstacles against activism.<sup>35</sup> In the 1990s Kurdish activists faced prosecution and imprisonment under the

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<sup>34</sup> Mesut Yeğen. “The Kurdish Question in Turkish State Discourse” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 34, No. 4. (Oct., 1999), 555-568.

<sup>35</sup> Ömer Ezeren. “The Long March” *Amnesty International Journal*. (Germany. December 2004/January 2005) Trans. by Michael Lawton, available from [http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show\\_article.php/\\_c-301/\\_nr-50/\\_p-1/i.html](http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-301/_nr-50/_p-1/i.html); (accessed March 14, 2015).

1991 Anti-Terror Law that punished “terrorist propaganda.”<sup>36</sup> Into the present criticizing the government is a very risky endeavor. Article 301 of the 2005 Turkish Penal Code, which states that “Public denigration of Turkishness, the Republic or the Grand National Assembly of Turkey shall be punishable by imprisonment of between six months and three years,” inhibit activism; however, many organizers refuse to remain silent.<sup>37</sup>

Eren Keskin, an Istanbul-based attorney and member of the human rights association, İnsan Hakları Derneği (İHD), received a ten-month prison sentence for “denigrating” the military. Amnesty International listed her as a prisoner of conscience in 1995.<sup>38</sup> Keskin spoke out against the rape of Kurdish female prisoners, as well as the use of virginity exams as a form of torture in state-operated prisons. She reported in 2002 that torture of Kurdish women in Turkish prisons is systematic, and linked these concerns with the overall plight of Kurdish women in war-torn provinces, where honor crimes most frequently occur. She is well known in Turkey for her legal representation of Kurdish women against government soldiers as well as for defending the famous jailed Kurdish PKK leader, Abdullah Öcalan. She earned recognition for humanitarian activism in the international community; however, at home she faces imprisonment, death threats, and ridicule by the government, rightwing intellectuals, and even women’s groups. In March of 2007 an organization describing itself as a “women’s group” published a statement

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<sup>36</sup> Amnesty International Public Statement, “Turkey: Further Information on Prisoner of Conscience/Fear of Torture/Fear for Safety: Eren Keskin” May 31, 1995, AI Index: EUR 44/063/1995; available from file:///C:/Users/Sevin/Downloads/eur440631995en%20(1).pdf (accessed March 14, 2015).

<sup>37</sup> Amnesty International Public Statement, AI Index: EUR 44/035/2005 (Public) News Service No: 324, 1 December 2005; available from <http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?lang=e&id=ENGEUR440352005> (accessed March 14, 2015).

condemning Keskin's efforts to draw attention to human rights violations in Turkey as an effort to destabilize the country. They alleged that she based her information on the "claims" of known "Kurdish terrorists."<sup>39</sup> The ultranationalist clandestine group, The Turkish Brigade, threatened to kill her in April 2007.

The trials of Eren Keskin exemplified the unstable character of Turkish national identity, and how nationalism impedes women's rights activism. Turkish nationalists have worked hard to silence people like Keskin, who publicize gendered human rights violations in Turkey. They allege that Keskin and others dishonor the Turkish nation and threaten Turkey's candidacy for entrance in the European Union. To combat claims of human rights violations in Turkey--particularly honor crimes--the press, popular culture, and the state describe domestic violence and honor killing as an "eastern," "rural," or "Kurdish" problem. This historical policy of ascribing the internal enemy "Other" as "backward" allowed Kemalist and now the ruling populist, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi [Justice and Development party] (AKP), to assert a "modern," identity for Turkey.<sup>40</sup>

The modern state-formation project and Turkish identity-formation project throughout the twentieth century relied on a negative and anti-modern characterization of the Kurds. Instead of taking for granted the "real" national character of either Turks or Kurds, and in fact refuting their independent existence, this study examines the identity

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<sup>39</sup> See "Eren Keskin'e Dayanışmaya" available from, [http://www.erenkeskinedestek.org/en\\_court.php](http://www.erenkeskinedestek.org/en_court.php); <http://www.info-turk.be/320.htm>; "Press Statement," Human Rights Association, available from, <http://www.ihd.org.tr/press/press20060607.html> (accessed March 13, 2015).

<sup>40</sup> See Doğu Ergil, "Turkey is under Attack, Can't you see?" in Turkish Daily News, February 26, 2007, available from, <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=66974>; Elif Şafil. "One Honor Killing is a Tragedy Many others are just Statistics" in the Turkish Daily News, April 7, 2007, available from, <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=70191>; Internet.

projects of both groups. In the case of the Turks, the creation of a “modern” national identity relied on constructing the Kurds and other internal minorities as enemies of the nation—a dangerous security threat to both national identity and territorial integrity. The ongoing danger of the Other continuously affirmed the oppositional identity of the group, and insisted that the group required constant protection from the outsider threat. The identity project is never complete and always unstable.<sup>41</sup> The Kemalists initiated this process in the 1920s and 1930s, and it continued in the context of international women’s rights activism and European Union ascension in 1980 through to 2016. Nationalists, modernists, press, and popular culture in Turkey emphasized the “backwardness” of Kurdish culture, and, according to this discourse, religious extremism and medieval tribalism explained the presence of honor killing and connected it to the discourse of terrorism that surrounds the eastern and southern parts of Turkey.

This perspective did not account for the past ninety years of war and poverty that plagued the region due to fascist, state development and ethno-nationalist conflict that affected the Kurdish regions differently than the rest of the country. The roots of Turkish and Kurdish national identity and national conflict continue to be important, contested, and unfortunately remain outside of the scope of this project. However, it is safe to contend that the Turkish nationalist campaign launched in the 1920s radicalized the Kurdish nationalist movement that began in the late-Ottoman period largely in response to state efforts to centralize and usurp power from local Kurdish leaders in the eastern

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<sup>41</sup> For a discussion of the theoretical underpinnings of identity politics and national security see David Campbell, *Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and Politics of Identity* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1998).

provinces.<sup>42</sup> Certainly it was not inevitable that “Turkification” would lead to ethno-nationalist conflict; however, these policies combined with other sweeping socio-economic changes continuing from the late nineteenth-century contributed to the present radicalization of the Kurdish nationalist movement. Moreover, it is within this context and directly due to these historical circumstances that honor crimes occur more frequently in the Kurdish provinces and particularly in Kurdish migrant families living in impoverished neighborhoods in large cities such as Istanbul, Bursa, Izmir and Diyarbakır, not due to Islamic religious fervor or pre-Islamic Kurdish practices.

“Modern” Turkish discourse and “western” media and popular representation of honor crimes often turn to Islamic religious and cultural laws and values to explain the practice of honor killings. However, many scholars and feminist activists contend that the Qur’an, *hadiths*, and Islamic law never sanctioned honor killings. Since 2004, in Turkey imams regularly preach that honor killings are sinful.<sup>43</sup> Moreover, the fact that honor crimes are reported to occur and continue in societies that are not characterized as Islamic, such as Brazil and the United States, should be enough to reject this label.<sup>44</sup> The emphasis on Islam and cultural relativist arguments still find audiences in scholarly work and popular culture in both Turkey and the U.S. Both tend to demonize those populations within their borders that are considered anti-modern and threatening.

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<sup>42</sup> Janet Klein, “En-Gendering Nationalism: The Woman Question in Kurdish Nationalist Discourse of the Late Ottoman Period” in *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, ed, Shahrzad Mojab. (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, Inc, 2001) 27.

<sup>43</sup> “Turkish Honor Killings: A dishonorable practice” *The Economist*, April 12, 2007, available from, [http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=9009023](http://www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm?story_id=9009023); (accessed November 9, 2009).

<sup>44</sup> Welchman and Hossain, ‘*Honour: Crimes, Paradigms, and Violence Against Women*, 10-12.

Feminist scholars and activists insist that honor crimes in Turkey as well as in other areas of the Middle East including Iraqi Kurdistan have little to do with religion, and explain the phenomenon by looking at pre-Islamic patriarchal systems in the region. According to Professor of Gender Studies at Haliç University in Istanbul, Leylâ Pervizat, explaining that honor crimes are not religiously sanctioned had little effect on reducing their occurrence. Pervizat studied the work of KA-MER (Kadın Merkezi) [Women's Center], an organization that originated in Diyarbakır that aids victims of honor crimes and develops community education programs to prevent them. After reading Pervizat's article, I contacted KA-MER and traveled to their centers in Diyarbakır and Mardin in order to better understand their methodology and the socioeconomic and cultural history of both the organization and the women and communities they service in eastern and southeastern Turkey in 2012. My interview with the KA-MER director, Nebahat Akkoç, confirmed that the organization continues the policy not to cite imams or Islam as reason to denounce honor crimes. For the activists and the communities in which they work, masculine and feminine honor are related but somewhat separate from religion. According to a Muslim tribal leader in Urfa, "Men's honour [sic] comes before the Book."<sup>45</sup> This reflects the immense cultural importance of honor. Honor is popularly believed to influence religious traditions, but religious appeals to reform honor practices are not successful, because honor culture is believed to be natural and primordial. Honor

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<sup>45</sup> Leylâ Pervizat, "In the Name of Honour" in *Violence in the Name of Honour: Theoretical and Political Challenges*, edited by Shahrzad Mojab (Istanbul: Istanbul Bilgi University Press, 2004) 139.

culture, like patriarchy, is more difficult to transform because it has been institutionalized as part of the “common sense.”<sup>46</sup>

The patriarchal context within which honor crimes take place should not be overlooked, and its significance cannot be over-emphasized. Most scholars have moved past the notion of cultural relativism to explain or somehow allow for violence in the name of honor; however, culture is significant to understanding the currently constructed international system of patriarchy. In that regard the above-cited tribal leader was correct, and this helps to explain why honor crimes exist, if in different terms, all over the world. However, as mentioned before, it does not account for the historic specificities that make one region or group particularly identified with honor killings compared to other communities where women and men are likewise murdered for the sake of honor. The history of nationalist state-formation and nationalist conflict between Turks and Kurds in Turkey must be accounted for when discussing honor crimes in Turkey and understanding why certain groups are identified with honor violence.

But what does honor culture have to do with nationalism? It is not too difficult to explain the centrality of nationalism to violent conflict between the Kurds and Turkish state (and between Kurds agitating for civil rights and/or self-determination in Iraq, Syria, and Iran), but how does this explain the imbalance in the number of honor crimes among the Kurds compared to their Turkish neighbors? The socioeconomic conditions created

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<sup>46</sup> My use of “common sense” refers to Antonio Gramsci’s understanding of cultural hegemony. Gramsci asserted that domination relies on reproducing culture--the way people think, believe, and act--through coercion and consent. This is done through by appealing to and reproducing “common sense:” the uncritical and unconscious way people think. See Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*. Edited and translated by Quentin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smitt (New York and London: International Publishers, 1971) 404-460.

by continuous war help us understand why honor crimes occur in Kurdish regions and among Kurds living in diasporic communities. However, it is also important to specifically address why gendered violence is often particular to nationalist, post-colonial conflict. As previously mentioned, honor crimes are not exclusively carried out against women, but most honor killing victims are women. This begs the question, why “women?” Why do women’s rights, women’s bodies, and women’s lives become the battleground for nationalist conflict? Postcolonial theory offers insight into the answers to these questions.

Partha Chatterjee, a founding member of the Subaltern Studies Group, dedicates much of his work to understanding nationalism and its connections to colonialism. Though he bases his theories on his research concerning India, while acknowledging some historical particularities, his work speaks to colonial and post-colonial nationalist movements in general. He argues that nationalist groups in India and elsewhere, in their attempts to overthrow colonial repression, instituted social systems that continued to oppress people who were not part of the governing elite. Chatterjee contends that nationalist revolts were in many ways continuations of colonialism for the poor, women, and minorities. Moreover, in “Whose Imagined Community,” he contests the notion that all forms of nationalism in Asia and Africa are based on colonial models. He asserts that by dividing society into two domains, “the inner” and “the outer,” or the “spiritual” and the “material” allowed nationalists to construct an identity that did not simply reflect European models.<sup>47</sup> According to Chatterjee, nationalists linked their identity to what

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<sup>47</sup> For additional scholarship concerning identity construction see William Connolly, *Identity/Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox, Expanded Edition* (Minneapolis, MN:

they characterized as the superior spiritual, internal domain, not the material outer domain which represented colonial dominance and westernization. He suggests that nationalists imitated the colonists in the material domain, but worked hard to preserve and distinguish their spiritual and cultural identity.<sup>48</sup> Further, women symbolized the inner, spiritual domain in Chatterjee's analysis. In "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women Question," he explains that two distinct realms were divided spatially in colonial societies. The inner domain became the space of the home, where the inferior material domain was relegated to the outside world. With this symbolic spatial division, it became essential for nationalists to protect their inner domain from "Western" encroachment. This placed increased pressure on defining and controlling women's activities. Chatterjee explains that this process did not call for rejecting change or modernization for women. Instead, reform-minded nationalists worked to define a middle-class, moral, modern identity for women that would make "Eastern" women superior to "Western" women, and therefore, "Eastern" nationalist identity superior as well.<sup>49</sup> This process allowed nationalists to assimilate "Western" technological methods and deal with Europeans in the material world without corrupting their "true" identity. However, as Chatterjee describes the importance of the nationalist, modern woman, "true" identity did not always mean a static, essential identity. Chatterjee explains that modernity demanded that women be literate and educated in the national agenda due to their unique function of

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University of Minnesota Press, 2002); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, (New York: Routledge 1990).

<sup>48</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993) 1-33.

<sup>49</sup> Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women Question," in Kumkum Sangari and Sudesh Vaid, eds. *Recasting Women: Essays in Colonial History*, (New Delhi: 1997) 233-253.

preserving and producing authentic identity in the colonial and postcolonial context. Chatterjee's binary has come under criticism for excluding the existence of advocates for women's education that did not simply focus on literacy for reproducing an authentic Indian identity in the context of "Western" imperialism and colonialism.<sup>50</sup> There is certainly validity in taking exceptions to the binary constructions of self/other in a colonial and imperial context. Still, the dominant model of identity construction holds up in many different postcolonial locations. The hegemony of the binary relationship between "East" and "West" and its centrality to identity formations speaks to the importance of listening very carefully to the humanist voices that rejected it, as well as historicizing the processes of domination.<sup>51</sup> People agitating outside of the binary existed in colonial and postcolonial societies, but remained marginal and divergent throughout the twentieth century. The discourse concerning women as embodying the vehicle to represent and reproduce a "modern," yet authentic national identity in a binary, oppositional relationship with the "West" or other internal and external enemies remains central to understanding national identity formation and its relationship to honor crimes.

Though the Turks and Kurds living in Turkey have a less direct experience with "Western" domination than India, for example, Chatterjee's theory can be applied to Turks and perhaps doubly to the Kurds. Kurdish nationalists consider their identity as

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<sup>50</sup> See Himani Bannerji, Sharzad Mojab, and Judith Whitehead, *Of Property and Propriety: The Role of Gender and Class in Imperialism and Nationalism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001) 37. See this entire work for an argument against the binaries produced by Edward Said and Partha Chatterjee as well as Homi K. Bhabha's discussion of hybrid identity in *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

<sup>51</sup> Bhabha, Homi. "Adagio." *Edward Said: Continuing the Conversation*. Edited by Bhabha, Homi and W.J.T. Mitchell (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) 371-379.

not only threatened by the “West,” but also by repressive state-mandated policies in Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq that present themselves as representing “modernity.” Further, in communities with little material wealth or links to “modern” industry or socioeconomic structures, the “inner domain” becomes even more sacred. Honor crimes become a way of communicating the importance of control over national identity. “Woman” represents the spiritual, authentic identity of the nationalist group in which the patriarchal system demands the maintenance of sharp control in order to protect both familial honor and national honor simultaneously.

The relationship between nationalism, modernity, and honor crimes remain complex, and under particular circumstances nationalists may choose to denounce the practices, claim them, or even elevate them as examples of “cultural authenticity.”<sup>52</sup> Though the peculiarities of individual honor crimes that lead a certain family to make the ultimate decision remain significant to understanding the phenomenon, teasing out the connection between nationalism, national identity, honor, and gendered violence, help explain how particular groups and regions can become associated with these crimes without falling into the often racialized trap of cultural relativism. This study provides anecdotes to simplistic culturalist arguments constructed to explain the events of September 11, 2001 and justify pre-emptive war in Iraq. Proponents of this discourse, including President of the United States, George W. Bush, attempted to explain why “they” attacked “us” in

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<sup>52</sup> Shahrzad Mojab, “Honor Killing”: Culture, Politics, and Theory” in the *MEWS Review*, xvii:1/2 Spring/Summer (2002), available from, <http://www.amews.org/review/reviewarticles/mojabfinal.htm> (accessed January 8, 2012); See also, Shahrzad Mojab, “No ‘Safe Haven’: Violence against Women in Iraqi Kurdistan,” in W. Giles and J. Hundman, eds., *Sites of Violence: Gender and Identity in Conflict Zones*, (Berkeley: the University of California Press, 2004) 119-128.

rhetoric such as, “they hate our freedoms.”<sup>53</sup> As in postcolonial nationalist movements, women’s rights became the symbol or measure of modernization, and for many remain at the top of the list that marks the cultural divide between “East” and “West.” Examining the connections between nationalism and the problem of honor crimes in Turkey, the Middle East, and throughout the world challenges this imbalanced discourse.

Each honor crime has its own history. In the context of Turkey, however, nationalist state-formation, and statelessness in the case of the Kurds remain the key factors for explaining how honor crimes are characterized in public and scholarly discourses, and also understanding how nationalism and modernity play a significant role in maintaining the physical environment and the cultural space to commit these violent gendered crimes. Many scholars examine the construction and meaning of nationalism, and over the past two centuries many lives have been lost in its name. Women killed or otherwise victimized in the name of honor drive this body count. As nationalism and “modern” nation-building projects continue to draw blood, not only on battlefields but also in homes, this topic remains as salient today as it has been throughout the history of the nation-state.

Combating this violence requires historical understanding of complex processes and overlapping and at times diverging ideologies. This historical approach to explaining honor crimes begins with the different ways the new Turkish Republics institutionalized gendered notions of honor. Chapter 2, “Engendering Modernity: Women’s Bodies and

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<sup>53</sup> George W. Bush. “Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People”, September 20, 2001, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> (accessed February 12, 2007).

State-sponsored Modernization Projects” is an overview of the history of the intersection between twentieth-century modernization projects, the notion of “Westernization,” nationalism-- here specifically Turkification--and the ways these ideologies were drawn out on women’s bodies. I examine how and why modernist states focused on what women did with their bodies, what those bodies looked like, and what spaces they occupied. I explain how and why women’s bodies became vehicles for modern national identity projects. As modernization and state-formation processes are critical to my overall thesis it is important to establish a basic understanding beyond my introductory remarks concerning the significance of these ideologies on women’s bodies and nationalist agendas. This section synthesizes the large body of scholarship concerning nationalist state-formation, feminist activism, and modernity. I include a discussion of virginity testing in Turkey and situate it within the international history of this honor-related, violent practice in Europe and Latin America. Ayşe Parla wrote the groundbreaking work on virginity exams in Turkey and their relationship to the “woman question” in 2001. My research concerning honor crimes confirms Parla’s thesis concerning virginity exams. In her analysis of the debates over virginity exams in the Turkish press the discussion centered on the way the practice exemplified the most anti-modern, traditional customs of the country, she explained how these debates reflected how virginity exams were not simply a holdover from traditional cultures but rather a combination of tradition and modernization programs.<sup>54</sup> In 2002 Chante Lasco published

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<sup>54</sup> Ayşe Parla, “The Honor of the State: Virginity Exams in Turkey,” *Feminist Studies* Vol. 27, No. 1 (Spring, 2001) 65-88.

a human rights report focused on the legality of virginity testing in Turkey and how it impedes Turkey's ascension into the European Union.<sup>55</sup> This chapter situates virginity exams within the more comprehensive context of honor violence, nation-state formation, and the longer, global history of the practice. I explain how virginity exams epitomize the degree to which the state institutionalized honor culture.

In Chapter 3, "Family Honor and the Law," I analyze legal codes concerning male and female honor and honor-related violence. Teasing out the Mediterranean, Islamic, Ottoman, and modern European roots to Turkish legal codes, this chapter examines the status of women and the importance of familial notions of "honor" in the Turkish Penal Codes, Civil Codes, and the Law on Police Duty and Authority, explained in law school textbooks, and expressed in court decisions. Taking into consideration Ruth A. Miller's contribution on the discursive changes in Ottoman and Turkish laws, my examination of the important role of honor culture confirms that the modern legal codes constructed or adopted in Turkey were purposefully fascist. Honor culture supported a fascist legal system where the ultimate victim of crimes was not the individual, but the nationalist state. Finally, I turn to the liberalizing reform of the Turkish Penal Code in 2005. I evaluate these changes within the context of internal and international pressures for increased recognition of human rights and the domestic struggle for gender equity in the law and criminalization of honor crimes throughout the twentieth century.

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<sup>55</sup> Chante Lasco, "Virginity Testing in Turkey: A Violation of Women's Human Rights," *Human Rights Brief*, Vol. 9, Issue 3 (2002), 10-13; <http://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1457&context=hrbrief>. (accessed May 7, 2014).

Chapter 4, “Nationalist Conflict, Development, and Honor Violence in the Kurdish Regions of Turkey,” focuses on the history of development and conflict in the Kurdish regions, and the effects that these two related experiences have on the lives of Kurdish women and proliferation of honor-culture and honor-violence. This chapter is based on my interviews with the founder of KA-MER in Diyarbakir, KA-MER’s project reports from their work in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, and my analysis of the Kurdish feminist perspective on ethno-nationalist conflict, development projects, health policy, domestic violence, and familial honor as printed in the Kurdish feminist journal *Roza*. This chapter places sociological data concerning honor killings and domestic violence in Turkey in its historical context.

Chapter 5, “Honor, Identity, and Popular Culture,” is an examination of honor violence in popular culture in Turkey, which I situate within the context of “modernization” and “Westernization” and the unstable, always in question, “modern” image of Turkey within the international community. In this section I analyze the ways in which Turkish popular culture, film and television series, and the popular press treat honor-related violence and how the popular theme of family honor is associated with Kurdish culture and coded as “backward” or anti-modern in mass media. This chapter relies on theories of hegemony in mass media and how it contributes to structural violence.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Most of the research for the chapter was presented at MESA in 2009, and then updated and reworked for the conference at the ANU and GRAD Crow Symposium at the University of Akron in 2011.

Chapter 6, “Honor in the Case of Brazil: A Comparative Perspective,” explains why honor violence perpetuated in Brazil in the context of nationalist modernization reforms similarly to the Turkish case but with important distinctions. Both the Turkish and Brazilian nationalist states initiated intensive modernization projects beginning in the late 1920s, which lasted through the majority of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Turkey, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, and Brazil, under Getúlio Vargas, initiated far-reaching statist policies focused on rapid industrialization and modernization of the economy and citizenry. In both countries the state heralded the family as the basic unit of society and the workshop for creating modern, nationalist Turks and Brazilians respectively. Further, into the present, not only have both states been cited by international human rights organizations and domestic activists for the persistence of ongoing honor-related violence, both countries have incorporated loopholes for men who kill or otherwise victimize their wives, sisters, and other family members in the name of honor into their legal systems. Therefore, my final chapter will focus on honor killings in Brazil and the feminist struggle to amend the civil and penal codes to criminalize honor-related violence in Brazil that mirrored their Turkish counterparts. Both cases require important international contextualization.

In Chapter 7, the conclusion, I bring the discussion of honor violence in Turkey up to date and focus on gender-related honor violence against the LGBTQ community in Turkey. The section is based on my analysis of social media and international activism in the context of twenty-first century political and social protests.

## CHAPTER II

### ENGENDERING MODERNITY: WOMEN'S BODIES AND STATE-SPONSORED MODERNIZATION PROJECTS

“The Turkish woman should be the most enlightened, most virtuous, and most reserved woman of the world... The duty of the Turkish woman is raising generations that are capable of preserving and protecting the Turk with his/her mentality, strength, and determination. The woman who is the source and social foundation of the nation can fulfil her duty if she is virtuous.”

Mustafa Kemal, 1925<sup>1</sup>

Abdullah bin Amr bin Al-as reported that Muhammed, Messenger of Allah said,  
"The world is but a (quick passing) enjoyment; and the best enjoyment of the world is a pious and virtuous woman.....When her husband looks at her, she pleases him; when he orders her, she obeys him; and when he is absent, she guards herself (chastity) and the property of her husband.”

Sahih Muslim 1467<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Zehra f. Arat, *Deconstructing Images of the 'Turkish Woman.'* New York: Palgrave, 1999. Op. cit., p. 1. Arat cites Ataturk's famous words on the ideal Turkish woman in the introduction of this germinal work on women, the state, and identity in Turkey that this thesis relies so much. After going back to the original source I changed her translation from “protecting the Turk with “his”... to his/her because the original Turkish is gender neutral in the possessive pronoun. As, tempting as it is to analyze the ways that the “Turk” as citizen is certainly gendered masculine in this speech from 1925, even within this context the specifically masculine identity of Mustafa Kemal's “Turk” still remains a bit too ambiguous from this particular speech. For this study on honor my analysis focuses on the founding father's emphasis on “virtue,” and duties.

<sup>1</sup> “The Daily Hadith Online: The Messages of the Prophet in Arabic and English, Hadith on Women: The best provision in life is a pious woman;”

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.”

Proverbs 31:10-31<sup>2</sup>

What did Mustafa Kemal, the accepted father of the modern, Turkish nation-state mean when he called the new Turkish woman citizen to be “virtuous?” These religious scriptures may seem oddly and ahistorically placed next to the words of the undeniably secularist founder of Turkey. Examining the character and duties of the ideal woman and their relationship to honor culture suggests that modern Turkish notions of “virtue” and the related concept of honor did not change so radically from much older patriarchal honor mandates that were institutionalized throughout the Mediterranean, colonial, and post-colonial world. Virtue by definition pertains to a high moral character, and in medieval and modern European and Arabic literature it signifies chastity and sexual integrity for women and masculine virility for men.<sup>3</sup> Honor is intrinsically connected to these same symbols of virtue. How well a woman or man performs and polices her/his virtue coincides with the communal concept of honor. Virtue is a characteristic of an individual, and honor is the respect that that person, her/his family, community, and in the modern period, their nation both gives and receives according to their members’ display of virtue. A discussion of virtue belongs in texts concerned with sacred morality,

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<http://dailyhadith.abuaminaelias.com/2013/05/13/hadith-on-women-the-best-provision-in-this-life-is-a-pious-woman/>. (accessed August 18, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Proverbs, Bible Gateway, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+31%3A10-31&version=KJV>; (accessed August 18, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Waldron, M.A. (1912). Virtue. In *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved September 5, 2015 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/15472a.htm>

and Mustafa Kemal and his supporters in state-building and national identity production delved into this discourse, particularly in the context of the “new” Turkish woman. Atatürk embraced the sacredness of the “virtue” of women in Turkish culture, but instead of emphasizing the religious obligation for women to protect and perform “virtue” and for men to police it, he co-opted this familiar, well-established, discourse for his secular, nationalist agenda. In so doing, he elevated nationalism from the realm of the profane to the sacred. Emphasizing the importance of virtuous, honorable women in nationalist agendas became the dominant, modern method to express the magnitude of modernism to Turkish state-formation in a familiar language that affirmed rather than rejected traditional patriarchal sensibilities.<sup>4</sup>

Kemalism or Atatürkism are the common names for the combined ideologies that formed the platform of Mustafa Kemal “Atatürk’s” political revolution focused on republicanism, secularism, nationalism, populism, statism, and reform from the early 1920s to the present.<sup>5</sup> The people who supported his ideas to various degrees are known as Kemalists. In the early years of the Republic this group formed a middle-class, western vision of the “new” Turkish woman and launched a campaign to create her out of a diverse, predominately rural and Islamic former Ottoman population. The “new” Turkish woman was an educated professional who worked outside of the home, yet publically displayed her virtue with her actions and dress, and remained conscious of her feminine

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<sup>4</sup> For an understanding of the relational dichotomy of the sacred and the profane see Émile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, (1912, English translation by Joseph Swain: 1915) (New York: The Free Press, 1965. New translation by Karen E. Fields 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (New York and London: I.B. Tauris, 1993, 1997, 2004) 176-181.

role as Republican mother and daughter. Her virginity if unmarried and her fidelity if married were central markers of virtue and honor. This ideal amounted to what Şirin Tekeli identified as “state-feminism” in her 1986 analysis of the top-down invocation of women’s rights in Turkey.<sup>6</sup>

During this period of ‘state-feminism’ women were constantly reminded that their actions and dress represented both their familial and national honor. As the scholarship demonstrates, women contributed to and internalized this nationalist discourse. Hamide Topçuoğlu, a member of the Kemalist elite, declared that being a professional woman “was not to earn ones’ living. It was to be of use, to fulfill a service, to be a success. Atatürk liberated woman by making her responsible.”<sup>7</sup> Regardless of whether or not most working women were willing or capable of living up to these new ideals within the existing and transforming young Republic, many middle-class and elite women saw their role as the symbol of the modern nation as bestowed by the paternalistic state as an honored duty.<sup>8</sup> These women supported the populist, statist mission of Kemalism that put the interest of the whole nation ahead of any group or faction. This included women’s rights. The state granted women the right to vote and be elected in national offices in 1934. This, along with equal access to education, marked an important achievement according to Kemalism. Women’s rights supported the national cause—secularism,

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<sup>6</sup> Tekeli, Şirin. “Emergence of the New Feminist Movement in Turkey,” in *The New Women’s Movement*, ed. D. Dahlerup (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1986) 179-199.

<sup>7</sup> As quoted by Yesim Arat in “The Project of Modernity and Women in Turkey” in Sibel Bozdoğan and Resat Kasaba, eds. *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1997) 100.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. 99.

statism, and industrialization--not for the sake of women themselves, but because these advances amounted to progress toward “Western” style modernity.<sup>9</sup>

The RPP (Republican People’s Party), the only legal party from 1925 to 1945 in Turkey’s one-party state, encouraged women’s participation, but not feminist organization.<sup>10</sup> In 1930 women attempted to organize a demonstration to support suffrage, but were dissuaded from campaigning by the local Istanbul branch of the RPP. Instead they were told to have faith in the party and that the right to vote would be granted to them by the state.<sup>11</sup> What women did and how they looked, according to the official discourse, reflected on the entire nation and could and should be scrutinized by women themselves and society at large. Pressure to conform to patriarchal ideals were certainly not new for women, but the modern nation-state institutionalized honor culture in different ways than had ever been experienced by women in the past. The massive state-building project took on the task of defining and policing modern dress and sexual practices. Veiling, honor killings, and virginity exams, situated within their related historical contexts, exemplify the relationship between honor culture and modernity in Turkey.

Bahar Davary in her analysis of the 1924 Austrian novel, *Fräulein Else*, confirmed one of the most important themes of this dissertation, which is that honor and shame, though historical and performed differently across various contexts, shape identity

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid. 99-102.

<sup>10</sup> See Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*. (New York and London: I.B. Tauris, 1993, 1997, 2004) 176-217.

<sup>11</sup> Şirin Tekeli, *Kadınlar ve Siyasal Toplumsal Hayat* [Women and Social/Political Life], Birikim, Istanbul, 1982, pp. 284 as cited by Pembenez Yorgun in “The Women’s Question and Difficulties of Feminism in Turkey” *Khamsin, Modern Turkey: Development and Crisis*, Vol 11, (1984), .85.

and the position of women in society throughout the world. There are several important works that focus on the relationship between honor and shame and veiling in Muslim and Hindu societies. Davary explained that European texts reveal the similar relationship between discourses of honor and virtue and women's bodies and dress in the context of modernity. Disproportionately for women rather than men, honor and shame are reflected in the way one dresses or wears her hair. Davary wrote, "Indeed, whether we are covered or not, as women, we are still defined by our bodies."<sup>12</sup> Read any middle- or high-school dress code in the United States today and notice that the burden of displaying respect and honor is shouldered by young girls and women, not boys and men.

Though honor crimes and sexist honor culture are well studied in the Muslim world, it is inaccurate to consider honor culture and its symbols worn by women as Islamic phenomena. Still, veiling remains the most analyzed aspect of women's dress and honor/shame in Middle Eastern societies, often by non-Muslims. In the pre-Republican Anatolian case, debates over veiling and the adaptation of western-style dress emerged internally alongside discourses concerning European imperialism, women's rights, and constitutionalism in the late Ottoman Period. Women and what they wore on their bodies symbolized the Ottoman struggle to reform along European lines. Women in western clothing signaled the anxiety over European cultural and economic imperialism, and were often criticized as both immoral and ridiculous in the post-1908 Ottoman press.<sup>13</sup> According to Palmira Brummett, faced with European economic and territorial

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<sup>12</sup> Bahar Davary, "Miss Elsa and the Veil: Honor, Shame, and Identity Negotiations" *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, Vol. 25, No. 2 (Fall 2009). 48.

<sup>13</sup> Palmira Brummett, "New Woman and Old Nag: Images of Women in the Ottoman Cartoon Space," in *Political Cartoons in the Middle East*, ed. Fatma Müge Göçek (Princeton, NJ: Marcus Wiener

dominance many Ottomans attempted to find power and control in the familiar realm of the family and “cultural superiority in the purity of their women.”<sup>14</sup> Partha Chatterjee’s thesis concerning the important role of women as representative of the “authentic” and superior “internal domain” supports Brummett’s scholarship. Emphasizing the moral superiority of Turkish women allowed nationalists to construct an identity that did not simply reflect European models. Kemalists constructed new civic identities for women that did not conflict with traditional feminine roles that were predicated on gendered notions of honor: the dutiful daughter and wife, the virgin, the nurturing care-giver. All of these characteristics were described as essentially feminine and particularly Turkish. This made Turkish women the ideal figure to give birth to and foster Republican Turkish citizens in the home and display these virtues in public.

Mustafa Kemal and the elite men and women who supported him attempted to tamp down on stress over westernization by declaring many aspects of western modernity at once the antithesis of Ottomanness and yet authentically Turkish. This is particularly evident in the presentation of the powerful, pre-Islamic, unveiled “Turkish woman.” Mustafa Kemal endorsed European fashion as the new look of the modern Turkish citizen, claiming Ottoman Islamic dress as an outdated imposition on the practical, hardworking Turk.<sup>15</sup> This culminated in the official ban of the fez, a small un-

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Publishers, 1998), 14. See also Palmira Brummett, “Dogs, Women, Cholera, and Other Menaces in the Streets: Cartoon Satire in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908–11,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. 27: 04 (November 1995). 433-460.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 29.

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Deniz Kandiyoti, “Women and the Turkish State: Political Actors or Symbolic Pawns?” in Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias, eds., *Woman-Nation-State*, (London: Macmillan, 1988).

brimmed hat that had previously symbolized a new Ottoman modernity in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the adaptation of the western brimmed hat for men. Yet, there was no official edict on women's clothes. Atatürk judiciously outlawed the one article of men's dress that signaled the old Ottoman and Islamic identity that he insisted must be rejected, but women's bodies seemed at once more personal and problematic. Women still represented the inner cultural superiority over non-Turkish and even European women, but still needed reform, particularly as women's suffrage and equality under the law were increasingly seen as markers of the most progressive democratic states.

The Republicans opted to legislate citizenship and suffrage for women and ban former Ottoman laws that permitted polygamy, one-sided divorce that favored the husband, religious-unregistered marriages, and unequal consideration of women's testimony in court.<sup>16</sup> Concurrently, the ruling elite promoted European-dressed and unveiled public female figures in the media, as described in speeches, in radio shows, and later in television and film. Hinging on the honor of the Turkish woman, the Republic could be both secular and virtuous, and therefore, modern. It would match, and exceed, the western ideal for the modern, industrial nation-state.<sup>17</sup>

Secularism, and the secular presentation of women played a key role in this process. Deniz Kandiyoti explained, "Turkey needed to break away from Islam which was the basis for solidarity of the many ethnic groups within the Ottoman Empire in

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<sup>16</sup> Çakir, Serpil and Gülbahar Hülya. "Kadın Hareketinin Yüzyıl Kronolojisi" [A Century Chronology of the Women's Movement] in Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Vakfı 2000 (Istanbul: Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi and Cindioğlu, Dilek. 2000).

<sup>17</sup> Nüket Sirman, "Turkish Feminism: A Short History" *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 3. (Fall 1989). 1-34.

order to emerge as an independent nation-state.”<sup>18</sup> Secularism was not simply part of Atatürk’s westernization fascination, but also strategic to breaking away from the Ottoman plural ethnic identity that was supported by the privileged status of Islamic identity, particularly in its final decades. The position of women in Turkish society was directly linked to the Kemalist national-identity project that focused on secularization. This was seen as essential to the success of the new nationalist state, as well as a signal of modernity to the outside world. The secluded, veiled woman represented the Orientalist fantasies of the Islamic Ottoman past. Mustafa Kemal pushed against these stereotypes in many cases, but also confirmed and internalized Orientalist discourses by labeling anything that was characteristic of Ottoman state and society as “backward” and “un-modern.” Instead, he endorsed western notions of modernity, particularly secular constitutionalism, industrialization, and ethnic nationalism. Turkishness had to be manufactured and privileged over Islamic identity.

The new Turkish Republican identity required quite the overhaul of state institutions, and the Kemalist elites aimed at changing the culture of the people in the post-Ottoman era. The Republican regime changed everything. Kemalists abolished the Caliphate that had been under the realm of the Ottoman Sultan since 1571. Voicing any opposition to these ideas was illegal and punishable by imprisonment and death.<sup>19</sup> They changed the system for weights and measurements and the official language as well. The Kemalists abandoned Ottoman Turkish, which was a Turkish language infused with Arabic and Persian vocabulary and written in Arabic script, and created a new Turkish

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<sup>18</sup> Deniz Kandiyoti, *Women, Islam, and the State*, 1991.

<sup>19</sup> See Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey*, pp. 165-218.

language written with the Latin alphabet. The “modernized” Turkish language cemented the new state’s connection to the West. Turkishness had to signify modernism, secularism, and, during the first half of the twentieth century these were largely synonymous with westernization. The new one-party regime adopted the Swiss civil code almost in total, and borrowed heavily from Italian penal code in 1926. The state’s interest in the way its new citizens dressed were characteristic of the privileged position that Europe held for the dominant, elite culture.

Secularism and the new legal codes and statuses did not change the burden of proof of familial honor and personal choices from women to men or social institutions. Institutionalized secularism, symbolized by removing the veil for women in public spaces, made performing honor and policing women’s activities in public spaces more important. Veiling’s outward display of religiosity formerly signaled piety, virtue, and honor. Women had to find other ways to demonstrate their honor since the new state did not reject honor culture as a “backward” symbol of Ottoman culture like religious dress. In contrast, the state elevated honor culture’s status in Turkish society. Women’s honor did not simply reflect on their families. Women carried the weight of the whole nation on their bodies. The virtue of Turkish women symbolized national honor.

Most women, particularly urban poor and rural women were alienated from this “Western” ideal. These women chose to continue to veil (or not veil) due to religious beliefs or simply could neither afford to buy new clothes nor had time to keep up with the middle-class trends. They stayed home and worked, like they did during the Ottoman period, and though they inherited increased political and legal rights under the new Republican regime they did not have opportunities to exercise their political will and

were largely left out of Republican civil society.<sup>20</sup> According to Jenny B. White, “The Republican state determined the characteristics of the ideal woman and set up a monopolistic system to propagate this ideal in a population that held often quite different values and perceptions of ideal women’s behavior.”<sup>21</sup>

In poor neighborhoods and rural villages far removed from cosmopolitan Istanbul or the bureaucracy in Ankara the new unveiled, public ideal represented challenges to older symbols of feminine honor. According to the secular nationalist elite, unveiling equaled women’s liberation and was a sure marker of modernity.<sup>22</sup> The traditional headscarf remained in place for many women despite the state’s attempts to abolish it. Years of cultural-religious notions of the ideal woman could not simply be washed away and completely re-invented, nor did the dominant culture attempt to do so. Removing the headscarf and stepping into the public sphere required new methods to display virtue and honor, and this required de-sexualizing the Turkish woman citizen.<sup>23</sup> Culture insisted that the public space of work and civil society remained fraught with menacing men and potential to lose one’s virtue and dishonor her family and nation.<sup>24</sup> Women in public had to mitigate their feminine sexuality and potential for disturbing the masculine public space. This meant strictly limiting interactions with men outside of the family. The modern Turkish woman’s primary function in society was that of obedient wife and

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<sup>20</sup> See Jenny B. White, “State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman,” *NWSA Journal* Vol. 15, No. 3, *Gender and Modernism between the Wars, 1918-1939* (Autumn, 2003). 145.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>22</sup> Deniz Kandiyoti, “Bargaining with Patriarchy,” *Gender and Society* 2(3): 1988, 274-290.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 274-290.

<sup>24</sup> Fatima Mernissi was the first person to fully flesh-out the problems associated with male-female interaction in Islamic society. See *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*. (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1987).

mother, though implored to participate in civil society, remove the veil, and go to work, only if her husband or father desired.<sup>25</sup>

“State-sponsored feminism” failed to change the lives of the majority of women in Turkey. Socio-anthropologist Paul Stirling conducted in-depth case studies of rural life in central Anatolian villages in the 1950s. He found life for women particularly hard. Despite new laws regarding education opportunities, women and girls did not often go to school. Though, under the law, women could get a divorce, women, even when physically abused, did not petition for a divorce due to cultural stigmas.<sup>26</sup> Further, though illegal, polygamy and non-state-registered or strictly religious marriages were still commonly practiced in the villages of the 1950s and 60s. This practice continues in some rural areas in the present.

Sociologists and historians of the early 1980s uncovered a very bleak existence for working-class women in Turkey in proceeding decades. Studies showed low overall participation in paid labor. Over ninety percent of rural women classified their work as un-paid family help. Low literacy rates in rural areas, and few to no rights in regards to family planning defined many women’s lives. Motherhood remained the ideal role and identity for Turkish women. Culture and family economics favored many children. The gendered, rural economy, in particular, emphasized the importance of having sons to carry out and manage agricultural work. Women were expected to have at least one son,

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<sup>25</sup> See the discussion of women’s right to work and legal status compared to men in Turkey in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, “Honor and the Law.”

<sup>26</sup> Paul Stirling, *Turkish Village*, Canterbury: University of Kent, 1965, 1994, pp. 215. Digital copy available at [http://era.anthropology.ac.uk/Era\\_Resources/Era/Stirling/StirlingC9.html#Table9](http://era.anthropology.ac.uk/Era_Resources/Era/Stirling/StirlingC9.html#Table9). (accessed May 22, 2015).

but preferably more. This amounted to more sons for unpaid labor and culturally a higher status in society. This, of course, illustrated some of the material components of honor culture. Sons became a commodity that equaled prestige and wealth, while daughters were considered liabilities, despite their participation in unpaid household labor.

Masculine honor, as explained in chapter one, related to a man's ability to control the sexuality of the women of the family. More daughters meant greater obligations. In poor families, a daughter could be simply another mouth to feed until she was married and her family received a dowry or bride price. If her chastity was in question, then she could be unmarriageable. This could represent an economic crisis for the family. Honor culture, allowed, in the case that a daughter's virginity or virtue was compromised through sex--consensual or rape--or if a wife's fidelity was in question, for murder. The family and at times the whole community came together and determined to kill the girl and possibly the offending male too. Women participated in this culture and established their own honorable identity by representing the ideal, Turkish mother who raised many virile, wage-earning male children and virgin daughters who would grow up to be obedient wives. How well mothers/wives performed this role reflected on the entire family, and particularly their husbands. Sex in marriage was an unquestioned right for men under the law, as discussed in chapter three. Despite concerns over the financial ability to care for many children, Turkish women in the 20<sup>th</sup> century had more children than they desired. In a 1978 study of fertility Turkish women between the ages of 45 and 49 had on average 6.8 children, and 45% of Turkish women had more than 7 children. In contrast to this

reality, the majority of women surveyed said ideally they would have liked to have 2-3 and at most 4 children.<sup>27</sup>

Abortion was illegal in Turkey until 1983 and stigmatized. Studies from the early 80s showed that despite difficulties at least 200,000 women had induced miscarriages or abortions. Access to abortions were limited and many women were forced to perform them themselves or by non-trained confidantes, resulting in at least 50,000 women dying from abortion-related complications per year.<sup>28</sup> Women in Turkey did not have control over their reproductive rights, and patriarchal honor culture restricted their movement. Working-class women were the property of the men in their families and relegated to the role of mother, wife, and daughter. The Kemalist ideal was an urban middle-class dream for most.

Still, by the 1980s a generation of predominately middle-class feminist thinkers who had undoubtedly benefitted from Kemalism in regards to women's education and civil rights launched the second and third wave feminist critique of the status of women in Turkey. These voices emerged in the context of the military dictatorship established on September 12, 1980 and lasting until November 1989.

The left and the right struggled for dominance in Turkey throughout the 1970s. In the context of the Cold War far left-wing and right-wing paramilitary societies carried out extra-judicial assassinations that resulted in political instability and the institution of martial law at various points throughout the decade. In 1980 the generals seized power,

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<sup>27</sup> *Turkish Fertility Survey*, Hacettepe Institute of Population Studies, (1978). 102-108.

<sup>28</sup> Pembenez Yorgun, "The Women's Question and the Difficulties of Feminism in Turkey" *Khamsin*, Vol. 11 (London: Ithace Press, 1984). 73.

declared that the organs of society had stopped functioning, and did not hand over the government to civil society until 1989. The junta banned all parties and regularly arrested anyone associated with leftist parties and some far-right organizations. Abdullah Öcalan founded the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in 1978 with the stated intent to establish a socialist state in the Kurdish regions of Turkey. Suppression of Kurdish identity became a key focus of the dictatorship's agenda, and will be discussed in greater detail in chapter four.

Feminist politics flourished during this period of enforced de-politicization, and began to challenge the dictates of Kemalist "state-sponsored feminism." In the first year of the dictatorship over one hundred thousand people were arrested, and two years later in 1982 over eighty thousand political prisoners remained behind bars or missing. In this oppressive climate where no political expression was tolerated, women's issues were not considered "political" by the military regime. Women's rights had been established and instituted by the Kemalist state, and discussing the position of women in society did not threaten the junta; in fact it was heralded as essentially Kemalist. Well before 1980, modernists established women's rights to be fundamental to the overlapping hegemonic discourses of modernity and nationalism. The generals did not see feminist organizing as representative of the major political threats of the time--socialist and leftist, religious conservatism, and/or Kurdish nationalism--but instead viewed feminism as mainly Kemalist.

In 1986 an organization that called itself "Women's Circle" organized a petition that obtained over seven thousand signatures asking the Turkish government to sign the United Nations Declaration of Women's Rights. Turkey signed the document the next

year, and women continued to organize. In 1987 three thousand women marched in Istanbul to protest domestic violence. A divorce case in Çankırı made national headlines when a woman who had been repeatedly beaten by her husband miscarried a baby. She went to court to ask for a divorce from her abusive husband who wished to remain married. The judge sparked outrage throughout the country and launched the feminist movement of the era by refusing to grant the divorce and stating a Turkish proverb in his reasoning, “no woman should be without a child in her womb and a stick on her back.”<sup>29</sup> Two feminist organizations formed in 1987 focused on combatting domestic violence-- The Purple Door in Istanbul and Women’s Solidarity Foundation (KADAV) in Ankara. Abuse in the family and violence against women became the unifying issue that feminists organized around throughout the late 1980s and 1990s.<sup>30</sup> The 1998 Law on Protection of the Family was the first legal, national achievement of this movement and made domestic abuse a criminal offense.<sup>31</sup>

During this time period feminists who worked together to combat domestic violence diverged along ideological lines when young women began to enter the universities and high schools wearing their head-scarves. The veil or headscarf was never completely banned in Turkey like under the Shah’s regime in Iran; however, it was outlawed for women in public service in 1978. The veil or head-scarf, seen by many to signal piety and virtue, simultaneously signified an allegiance to Islam over the

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<sup>29</sup> Fatmagul Bertay, et al. *The Position of Women in Turkey and in the European Union: Achievements, Problems, Prospects*. (Istanbul, KA-DER Press, 2004) 65.

<sup>30</sup> Nüket Sirman. 1-3.

<sup>31</sup> Fatmagul Bertay, et al. pp 79 and Evren Savci, “Virginity Exams, Honor Crimes, and Other Tales from the Father-State of Turkey: A Cultural Look at the Turkish Women’s Movement” Unpublished Paper, 2002.

nationalist state and Atatürk. That could not be tolerated in a young country. There were isolated incidences of women being dismissed or discriminated against in regards to employment for wearing the headscarf. The state dismissed Emine Aykendar, an attorney, from the Lawyers Bar Association of Ankara in 1974 for wearing the headscarf. It was not until the late 1970s when more women went to college and into the work force that the politics of the headscarf erupted.<sup>32</sup> This led to the official blanket ban for women public employees in 1978. Then the state banned the headscarf in all education institutions, even private schools, in 1982. The dictatorship of the 1980s lifted these bans on veiling in 1984, only to re-instate them 1987. This began the near every other year policy shift concerning whether or not the headscarf was permitted in public service and education.<sup>33</sup> The tension between “state-sponsored feminism” as characterized by top-down dictates in regards to women in society and grass-roots and international feminism emerged in these debates of veiling.

Many of the leaders of the early and mid-1980s feminist movement considered Islamism the root of domestic tyranny and abuse and strictly revered Mustafa Kemal’s insistence on secularism, represented by head-scarf bans, as the best and only hope for progress for women.<sup>34</sup> Islamic feminists, drawing inspiration from postcolonial and black feminist theory, declared Kemalism and “state-feminism” another form of imperialism. They protested for their right to choose what to do with their hair and bodies in public

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<sup>32</sup> Davary, 51.

<sup>33</sup> Carol Delaney, “Untangling the Meaning of Hair in Turkish Society,” in *Off with Her Head! The Denial of Women’s Identity in Myth, Religion, and Culture*, ed. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995) 65-69.

<sup>34</sup> Sirman, 1989, <http://www.wluml.org/node/260>.

places on the grounds of religious and personal freedom.<sup>35</sup> In 2009 and until the present the state determined that women are free to wear a headscarf in public service and educational institutions.

Honor-crimes, a principal subject of this dissertation and discussed in greater length in the following chapters, emerged in the mid-1990s as a women's rights issue in Turkey. In a town square in Urfa, fourteen-year-old Mehmet Tamer killed his cousin, Sevda Gök. Relatives watched as two men held Sevda down while Tamer cut her throat. The prosecutor brought charges against Mehmet, and he was sentenced to 24 years in prison. Due to his age the judge reduced his sentence. Mehmet Tamer served a little over 2 years in prison. The two men who held Sevda down while Mehmet cut her were never identified, despite there being a crowd present.<sup>36</sup> Upon release from prison, when asked if he regretted killing his cousin Mehmet notoriously responded, "Why should I be regretful? I have *cleaned* my honor."<sup>37</sup>

This case brought to light the methods in which men and families used the existing Turkish laws to escape punishment for murder. Until the campaign to reform the penal code succeeded in fundamentally changing the way honor crimes were prosecuted, families regularly assigned the duty of killing the offending girl/woman to minor children who would receive mitigated sentences. Further, sentences for husbands and fathers could be reduced if they stated "provocation" known popularly as the "defense of honor"

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<sup>35</sup> Davary, pp. 51.

<sup>36</sup> U.S. Department of State, "Turkey Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996" Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor January 30, 1997; <http://www.hri.org/docs/USSD-Rights/96/Turkey96.html>, (accessed May 15, 2015).

<sup>37</sup> Evren Savci, pp. 35.

as the cause of the crime. The media uncovered hundreds of cases of honor violence and honor killings. This launched a nationwide discourse on honor crimes in which the majority of academic and journalistic accounts described the practice as “rural,” “southeastern,” or “Kurdish” custom, not a modern, Turkish problem. Chapter four discusses this aspect of the relationship between honor culture and national identity construction in Turkey.

In the middle of the debates and activism concerning honor killings, feminists struggled to draw attention to another problem plaguing women in Turkey--virginity exams. The significance of virginity to feminine identity and familial honor has been well established, and this chapter along with the legal analysis in chapter three confirms that the modern state declared a woman’s virginity to be a matter that reflected on the honor of the entire nation.<sup>38</sup> The institutionalized, pervasive practice of virginity exams destabilized the narrative that honor culture only maintained importance in “backward” pockets of society that refuse to “modernize.” Virginity exams, enforced by state agencies and administered by medical professionals, represent a very “modern” form of honor-related violence that the Turkish state endorsed until the twenty-first century.

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<sup>38</sup> See Purna Sen, “‘Crimes of Honor,’ Value and Meaning,” Nazan Begikhani, “Honour-based violence among the Kurds: The Case of Iraqi Kurdistan,” and Aida Touma-Sliman, “Culture, National Minority and the State: Working Against the ‘Crime of Family Honour’ within the Palestinian Community in Israel” in *‘Honour:’ Crimes, Paradigms, and Violence Against Women*, Sara Hossain and Lynn Welchman, Eds (London and New York: Zed Books) 2005.

The test, usually a physical examination of the hymen, was considered a “modern” method for testing feminine honor by the 1850s.<sup>39</sup> Using a scientific, medical procedure endorsed by the state to test honor did not offend modern sensibilities. Instead, the Kemalist state prioritized policing virginity as a method to defend and construct “modern” honorable Turkish women.

Virginity testing was not a “modern” invention. Kathleen Coyne Kelly chronicled diverse methods of proving and performing chastity in medieval Christian Europe, and Liat Kozma identified the prevalence and importance of the practice in late Ottoman Egypt.<sup>40</sup> Kozma described a transition in the practice from provincial midwives and elder women in the family to police departments in municipalities hiring a physician, hakim (male) and hakima (female) to perform a documented, medical examination. This change can be understood as part of nineteenth-century modernizing reforms that occurred throughout the empire. The Turkish state continued that process, only emphasizing the importance of ethno-nationalist identity to modernist state-building.

The importance of honor culture did not subside in Turkey during the twentieth century. The methods of policing it changed. Ideal, middle-class, “modern” women spent part of their lives mingling with men at school and at work in spaces potentially void of the protection of relatives’ surveilling eyes. Virginity exams and/or the threat of a test provided a “modern,” scientific solution to the problem. Women policed themselves and

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<sup>39</sup> Liat Kozma, *Policing Egyptian Women: Sex, Law, and Medicine in Khedival Egypt* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011) 36-44.

<sup>40</sup> Kathleen Coyne Kelly, *Performing Virginity and Testing Chastity in the Middle Ages* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2002). Liat Kozma, *Policing Egyptian Women: Sex, Law, and Medicine in Khedival Egypt* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

one another, but the concern over honor penetrated society to the extent that women, subordinated by culture and in the law, could not ultimately be trusted to protect it. In the family, masculine honor relied on men's abilities to police feminine sexuality. Likewise, national honor, predicated on the morality of Turkish women, relied on the patriarchal state's ability to police feminine sexuality and raise honorable, modern Turkish daughters.

State officials and practitioners believed the threat of virginity exams kept many people from carrying out immoral acts and preserved the honor of professional disciplines associated with modern state-formation, such as education, healthcare, and federal, provincial, and municipal bureaucracy.<sup>41</sup> Turkey protected the importance and value of virgin women under the 1926 penal code, as discussed in the following chapter. Distinguishing "good" women from "bad" women and girls, particularly in spaces where they had the power to influence other Turkish citizens, demanded public resources and scrutiny. Therefore, women in public institutions, schools, orphanages, and in police custody were subjected to the threat of an exam.<sup>42</sup>

In addition to being a condition of employment and of protection by the state, virginity also determined whether or not a women could be viewed as marriageable.

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<sup>41</sup> In July of 1993 Human Rights Watch sent a team to investigate virginity testing in Turkey. They interviewed doctors, government official, police officers, and women's rights activists. They also surveyed medical records and police records. This statement is my analysis of Human Rights Watch research and report. Human Rights Watch "A Matter of Power: State Control of Women's Virginity in Turkey" 6, 7 (June, 1994).

<sup>42</sup> See, Çakir, Serpil and Gülbahar Hülya. "Kadın Hareketinin Yüzyıl Kronolojisi" [A Century Chronology of the Women's Movement] in Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Vakfı 2000 (Istanbul: Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi and Cindioğlu, Dilek. 2000); Virginity Tests and Artificial Virginity in Modern Turkish Medicine," in *Women and Sexuality in Muslim Societies*. (Istanbul: *Women for Women's Human Rights*), 215-228.

Families used the legitimacy of the test in Turkish society to coerce young women and men to do their will. If a parent wanted a daughter to marry someone with whom they suspected she had sexual relations, the test could be used to force her to marry. Women did not want word to get out that their virginity was in question. Men, presented with the medical “evidence,” could be persuaded to marry a girl/woman or face criminal charges of rape, statutory rape, or seduction of a “virgin,” which was criminalized in Turkey as a “Felony Against Public Decency and Family Order” from 1926 to 2005.<sup>43</sup> Men could avoid rape charges if they married their victim, and families often forced their daughters to wed either abusers or consensual sexual partners in order to cleanse the stain of honor. Unmarried, non-virgin daughters offended familial and national honor, no matter the circumstance. Families and the state conspired to protect “family order” and “public decency” through state-sanctioned virginity exams and supporting legal codes that violated women’s individual rights and bodily autonomy.

The military dictatorship’s revision of the Laws on Police Duty of 1985 gave broad authority to officers of law in regards to performing searches of people’s bodies and detention. This law mandated that the police could detain and search people who infringed on “public morality and rules of modesty,” whose actions were “not approved by the social order,” and/or “shameful.”<sup>44</sup> Virginity exams were among the practices unwritten in the laws, but regularly practiced authoritarian customs of police during the military regime. Doctors hired by the police regularly administered virginity exams to

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<sup>43</sup> Chanté Lasco, “Virginity Testing in Turkey: A Violation of Women’s Human Rights” Human Rights Brief, 9, 3 (2002), 11. See also chapter three of this dissertation.

<sup>44</sup> Polis Vazife Ve Selahiyet Kanunu, Law No. 2559 (Turkey), [Laws on the Duties and Authority of the Police].

women suspected of illegal prostitution. Any woman could be a target based on an officer's interpretation of "public morality and the rules of modesty." Women have reported being forced to undergo a vaginal exam for walking alone with a man in a park or sharing a hotel room with a man to whom they were not married.<sup>45</sup>

Police and gendarmes raped and assaulted Kurdish women in police custody under the guise of virginity testing. Eren Keskin, a tireless lawyer, formed the organization Legal Aid for Women Who Were Raped or Otherwise Sexually Abused by National Security Forces. She identified the use of virginity exams as a form of torture in state-operated prisons. Virginity exams continued to be a major problem for political prisoners, because the test is seen as a legitimate interrogation tactic. Police and prison guards consider virginity exams a convenient form of torture that do not leave visible, prosecutable marks. It is an inmate's word against the state.<sup>46</sup>

Though Turkish Civil and Penal Codes or even the broad mandates of the Laws on Policy Duty did not directly sanction virginity exams, the practice took place legally and regularly in Turkey until 2005. An employer, school, organization, potential marriage partner, hospital, or the police could request this "proof" of honor. In the early 1990s in context of the feminist organizing previously discussed, women began to protest virginity exams. The practice became the center of public debate in 1992 when three female high

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<sup>45</sup> Human Rights Watch, "Police Duty and Prostitution Detainees" (1993).

<sup>46</sup> See "Eren Keskin'li Dayanışmaya" available from, [http://www.erenkeskinedestek.org/en\\_court.php](http://www.erenkeskinedestek.org/en_court.php); <http://www.info-turk.be/320.htm>; "Press Statement," Human Rights Association, available from, <http://www.ihd.org.tr/press/press20060607.html>; Internet. Petra Tabeling, "Interview with Eren Keskin: 'The Turkish Military had too much Power.'" *Qantara*, 2005, <http://en.qantara.de/content/interview-eren-keskin-the-turkish-military-has-too-much-power>, (accessed June 15, 2015).

school students from different regions killed themselves within four days in May. They had been threatened with a virginity exam. After this tragedy, women's rights activists in Turkey organized against virginity exams and urged the Ministry of Education, Women's Ministry, and Ministry of Justice to end the practice. Eventually, in 1999 the state responded by limiting tests for all reasons outside of criminal investigations. The debate re-opened in 2001 and the Health Minister Osman Durmuş issued a decree requiring midwives and nursing students to be virgins and undergo the medical test before being admitted into schools. The head of the Turkish Nurses Association protested. The media in Turkey and the international press ridiculed the Minister, who fired back, "Should our schools become places for prostitution?"<sup>47</sup> The minister argued that the tests insured the morality of the students and protected them from falling into prostitution. Under domestic and international pressure the Ministry of Health rescinded Osman Durmuş's decree, and banned testing.

The legacy of the authority of virginity testing persists in Turkish society. In May of 2014 a high school PTA president allegedly performed virginity exams on 19 students. He told the girls that it was a state requirement and that they would either have to go to the hospital or he could do it for them. He claimed to save them from the embarrassment of having to go to the hospital or inform their parents. Young women are sexually abused by people in authority position all over the world, but this alleged perpetrator's methods of luring the girls reveals a lot about the history and common

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<sup>47</sup> Susan Frasier, "Virginity Testing for Student Nurses Causes Outrage," *Hürriyet Daily News*, July 20, 2001, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/virginity-tests-for-student-nurses-causes-outrage.aspx?pageID=438&n=virginity-tests-for-student-nurses-causes-outrage-2001-07-20> (accessed March 17, 2016).

beliefs about the capabilities of the patriarchal state in Turkey. <sup>48</sup> Fatih G., the alleged perpetrator of the 2014 abuse cases, said in his defense, “I have daughters at that school.” “I made this sacrifice for them.” “I did nothing that was not halal (permissible by Islamic custom/law).”<sup>49</sup> His rationale is quite telling. He is couching his defense against the crime of child sexual abuse in religious and cultural terms, which as the newspaper headline states, it is interesting in that he thinks that cultural tradition excuses his behavior, and in many ways he is not wrong. There is a long standing precedent that subjected women to virginity testing by various representatives of authority from the government, public or private schools, parents, and spouses. The girls believed Fatih G’s claim that the state was going to require the exam, and this fact reinforces just how common and pervasive the practice of virginity testing or threat of the administration of virginity exams has been in Turkish society. Virginity testing is deeply rooted in a patriarchal state that is particularly concerned with the role and position of women in nation-building. In Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s “virtuous” woman was, and still is, the ideal behind the policing of women’s sexuality and the restriction of her movement in society just as much if not more than state-sponsored feminism improved (some) women’s lives since 1926.

The role of Islam surfaces in the debates over honor violence, in which virginity testing certainly qualifies, and this most recent case of abuse couched in the discourses of

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<sup>48</sup> “‘19 Kız öğrenciye taciz’ Davasında İlgiç Ifade: Fedakarlıkta Bulundum” (Man charged with abusing 19 girl students made an interesting statement: I made sacrifices), *Milliyet*, February 16, 2015; <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/-19-kiz-ogrenciye-taciz-davasinda-gundem-2014817/> (accessed May 7, 2015)

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/-19-kiz-ogrenciye-taciz-davasinda-gundem-2014817/> (accessed May 7, 2015).

virtue and honor exemplify this. Fatih G.'s argument that he "sacrificed" for the girls, the school, and community by carrying out the virginity test and that he did nothing that was not "helal/halal," are curious words in front of a state court in a country whose Republican national identity was predicated on a secular civil society. However, it was the Kemalist, secular state that instituted virginity testing. The state and the dominant political classes constructed the new, "modern" Turkish woman in ways that failed to contradict the gender inequities of religion and other aspects of patriarchal culture. In fact, pre-existing notions of feminine and masculine honor and virtue that mark honor culture around the world were codified and institutionalized throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Turkey under the guise of modern state-formation.

Yet, Turkey is not entirely exceptional in this exhibition of institutionalized, honor-related violence. The United Kingdom forced migrant women to undergo virginity exams in the 1970s.<sup>50</sup> Egyptian police forced women detainees to undergo virginity exams during the Arab Spring protests, and even more recently Brazil made international news by re-issuing the policy of requiring virginity exams of unmarried women in public service. The Brazilian Ministry of Education in São Paulo enacted a new policy in 2012 requiring unmarried women under 25 years old to submit proof of their virginity in the form of a written doctor's note with their application for employment. Women applying to work for the police force in Bahia were asked to provide the results of their virginity exam.<sup>51</sup> Brazil went through a process of statist, national identity construction and

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<sup>50</sup> Alan Travis, "Virginity Testing of Immigrants Reflects Dark Age Prejudices of 1970s Britain" *Guardian*, May 8, 2011.

<sup>51</sup> Roque Planas, "Brazil's Appalling 'Virginity Test' For Women Sparks Outrage" Huffington Post, August 12, 2014. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/12/brazil-virgin\\_n\\_5672158.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/12/brazil-virgin_n_5672158.html);

modernization project in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that mirrored Turkey, and these points of comparison and possible explanations for the historical and cultural similarities will be discussed further in chapter six.

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“Memuriyet için bekaret testi,” (Virginity Testing for Civil Service) *Milliyet*, August 13, 2014, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/memuriyet-icin-bekaret-testi/dunya/detay/1925024/default.htm>.

CHAPTER III  
HONOR AND THE LAW: ANCIENT ROOTS, MODERN LEGITIMACY, AND  
POSTMODERN REFORM

This chapter is a rather long history of the intersection of law and honor culture and how the two changed, or in some cases did not change too much, in different historical and political contexts. A close examination of the relevant legal texts from the ancient world to the present reveals that the construction of the modern nation-state institutionalized honor violence in new, systematic, and in some cases reactionary ways. Despite a vocal concern over the “woman question,” the creation of a modern, fascist<sup>1</sup> nation-state in Turkey only reified patriarchal materialism and honor culture in new more explicit and penetrating ways.

In order to understand those processes, it is important to trace what came before. Honor culture and related legal discourse pre-dated the construction of the modern Turkish nation-state, and in order to examine the ways statism and other notions of modernity affect honor-related, gendered violence it is vital to identify the way honor

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<sup>1</sup> For a discussion of fascism in Turkey see Fikret Adanır, “Kemalist Authoritarianism and Fascist Trends in Turkey During the Interwar Period” in Stein Ugelvik Larsen, ed. *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse Against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001).

influenced earlier societies and the way culture interacted with legal institutions and texts in the pre-nation-state world.

For the case of modern Turkey, the long-durée approach to comprehending the laws associated with the discourses of sex, honor, and shame in the twentieth century require digging into the legal records concerning marriage, divorce, adultery, inheritance, property rights, modesty, and murder from the ancient Mediterranean world to the present. It is paramount to examine Ottoman laws in regards to the empire's female subjects and punishment for sex crimes, but it is possible to go back even further to investigate the Roman/Byzantine and pre-Ottoman *sharia* laws and customs of medieval Muslim empires that influenced honor culture in Ottoman and Turkish societies.<sup>1</sup>

Ottoman laws that affected women and supported honor culture derived largely from Roman landholding laws and the Islamic sharia. The leash of the law pulled in different ways for wealthy or poor women; married, single, or widowed; slave or free, and the sharia laws regarding inheritance, dress, divorce, and adultery/fornication could be interpreted differently from mufti<sup>2</sup> to mufti. The role of gendered notions of family honor is certainly prominent in these policies, but after examining ancient, medieval, and early modern family law in the Mediterranean world, it is clear that the roots of the relationship between honor and the law was not particularly Islamic.

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<sup>1</sup> Note on transliteration, while discussing medieval Islamic law I use the Arabic transliteration of Islamic family and personal law, *sharia*. When referring to Ottoman law, I use the Ottoman and Turkish transliteration *şeriat* and the common Arabic transliteration *sharia* to emphasize the Ottoman dominated, but multilingual characterization of Ottoman society, particularly when discussing the law in provinces where many subjects used Arabic, like Aleppo and Aintab/Ayntab/Gaziantep.

<sup>2</sup> A mufti is an Islamic legal scholar.

Roman land laws supported an agrarian economy where small farms were held by individual free families that grew enough food for subsistence and paid their taxes. The Ottoman state adopted a similar landholding system. The Ottomans kept extensive records of landholding and the responsibility of maintaining the land registries fell to the elected *muhtar* or “headman” of the village. There is no known record of this position being held by a woman. Lands were recorded by family and the head of the family was responsible for paying the land taxes. This role under Ottoman law could be held by a woman, but this was unusual. Women could be head of household and pay taxes on rare occasions, such as if a woman was widowed. Suraiya Faroqhi, Donald Quataert, Halil İnalcık, and others outlined the different ways that Ottoman women owned property, bought and sold it, and used the Ottoman court system.<sup>3</sup> There were certainly honorable ways for women in the Ottoman Empire to use the law and hold property. The system was intrinsically patriarchal, and property laws and sharia law both favored the family over the individual, particularly in the case of women.

In Ottoman law and society, like that of their Roman and Byzantine predecessors, the social ideals of class and economic stability depended on patriarchal control of the family, particularly inheritance laws. Though Roman and Ottoman women alike could inherit and hold property in their own name and they did, this was never the ideal situation. In the Roman world women were always tied to their father’s household through name and in regards to control of dowry, even after they married. Islamic sharia

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<sup>3</sup> See Suraiya Faroqhi, Bruce McGowan, Donald Quataert, Sevket Pamuk, Halil İnalcık, *An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914*, Vol. 1 and 2, (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press), 1997.

law, the basis for much of the Ottoman family legal codes, never conflicted with Roman land holding and inheritance policies in regards to women and their children. The Qur'an confirmed that paternity is paramount and like the Romans, children are the property of their fathers. A woman could ask for and receive a divorce, but her children remained with their father. The husband and the woman's father could legally ask for a medical exam to confirm whether or not the woman seeking a divorce was pregnant. This practice was also codified in the Roman civil codes: "Where a woman denies that she is pregnant by her husband, the latter is permitted to make an examination and appoint persons to watch her. The physical examination of the woman is made by five midwives and the decision of the majority shall be held to be true."<sup>4</sup> The determination of paternity was extremely important for husbands and fathers.<sup>5</sup>

Many of the customs and laws regarding women that are commonly understood as something that is particularly Islamic, particularly in regards to the oppression of women, have ancient Mediterranean historical roots. For example, Roman women were compelled to cover their heads and bodies. The second-century BCE Roman orator and military leader Gaius Sulpicius Gallus divorced his wife for leaving the house with her head uncovered. He wrote, "The law prescribes you for my eyes alone to which you may prove your beauty. For these eyes you should provide the ornaments of beauty, for these

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<sup>4</sup> Consul in 268 BC, The Legal Status of Women in the Roman World; <http://www.stoa.org/diotima/anthology/wlgr/wglr-romanlegal120.shtmlu#pass123>). Cited in Tahira S. Khan, *Beyond Honor: A Historical Materialist Explanation of Honour Related Violence*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006). 112.

<sup>5</sup> See Jane F. Gardner, *Women in Roman law and society* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986).

be lovely; entrust yourself to their more certain knowledge. If you, with needless provocation, invite the look of anyone else, you must be suspected of wrongdoing.”<sup>6</sup>

The sexism in Ottoman sharia law in regards to adultery was not at all particularly Islamic either. The Roman codes plainly stated the uneven penalty, “If you catch your wife in adultery, you can kill her with impunity; she, however, cannot dare to lay a finger on you if you commit adultery.”<sup>7</sup> Many of the practices of honor culture that are often coded as essentially Islamic are in fact, historical and relational to Islamic conquest and transculturation over periods of hundreds of years. For example, veiling emerged in Muslim societies during the late Umayyad period, but only in elite families, but it was an established practice in Jewish and Christian communities that were incorporated under Muslim rule beginning in the seventh century.<sup>8</sup> Stoning of adulterers is well documented in the Hebrew Scriptures.

By the Abbasid period after one-hundred years of rapid conquest throughout the Mediterranean and Mesopotamian world, veiling and the harem were institutionalized, and the ideal image of women as public figures and heroines, such as battle-leading Aisha, was replaced by the secluded woman.<sup>9</sup> As the empire expanded and more slaves and concubines were available to elite men, “the marketing of people and particularly of women, as commodities and as objects for sexual use was an everyday reality in Abbasid

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<sup>6</sup> Source mentioned at Consul in 166 BCE (<http://www.stoa.org/diotima/anthology/wlgr/wglr-romanlegal120.shtml#pass123>) Cited in Tahira S. Khan, *Beyond Honor: A Historical Materialist Explanation of Honour Related Violence*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006) 110.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>8</sup> See Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987, 1993) for a comprehensive, historical analysis of the gendered practices such as veiling, seclusion, marriage, dowries and inheritance in the early years of Muslim expansion.

<sup>9</sup> Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), pp. 79.

society.”<sup>10</sup> Veiling and confinement became a must for families of any means in order to “protect” their women from either literally being captured or forced into sex slavery and prostitution or the idea that they could be vulnerable to such accusations.

The history of women’s bodies as sites of war is long. Rape as an act of war and conquest has a long history, and it is a mistake to only examine the “woman” as commodity in a Mediterranean world, or universal patriarchal culture as the *raison d’être*. Capturing, enslaving, and raping women was, even in the classical world, a strategic act in the context of territorial conflict. Impregnating or capturing women in conquest destabilized the indigenous communities’ claim to a group identity that was oppositional to the conquering army.<sup>11</sup> The very essence of patriarchy is wrapped up in women’s bodies as sites to proliferate familial and communal material property and group identity. The establishment of patrilineal and patriarchal society was certainly a pre-Islamic historical process in the region.<sup>12</sup> Rape was a tactic used to destabilize pre-conquest group identities either through changing the ethnic make-up of the community

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 84.

<sup>11</sup> See S. Brownmiller, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1975); Claudia Card, “The Paradox of Genocidal Rape Aimed at Enforced Pregnancy,” *The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, 46 (1) (2008) 176-189; Çiğdem Akgül, Milliyetçi Söylemin Her Dem “Poine:” Savaş Tecavüzleri”*Alternatif Politika*, Cilt. 5, Sayı. 1, 91-113, Nisan 2013; Nicola Henry, *War and Rape: Law, Memory, and Justice* (New York: Routledge), 2011; Chile Eboe-Osuji. *International Law and Sexual Violence in Armed Conflicts* (Leiden; Boston: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> W.M. Watt asserted that patriarchy developed in the Middle East due to a rise of individualism in *Jahilia*. This hinged on effort to accumulate property; and therefore, paternity became significant. According to Fazlur Rahman, pre-Islamic Arabia already shifted to patrilinealism and the Qur’an simply codified it. Moreover, according to this author and frequently cited by Islamist feminist and others, the Qur’an attempted to improve the status of *Jahilia* women by guarantee property and inheritance rights. Leila Ahmed, in her important work *Women and Gender in Islam* also weighs in on the importance of pre-Islamic cultural practices and social conditions on the position of women in the Modern Middle East. According to Ahmed, both matrilineal and patrilineal societies existed simultaneously in *Jahilia* Arabia. Islam codified patriarchy, but it was largely due to the incorporation of Christian and Jewish cultural practices into Islam as the religion expanded.

(conquering armies raping and impregnating local “enemy” women with their children) and, simultaneously, invalidating the masculine honor of the conquered group. The defeated society could not protect its women from conquering infantries.

Leila Ahmed describes the literature written during the early centuries of Islamic rule and conquest, when the most ancient sources for sharia law were written, as being wrought with men concerned with the fate of their daughters and wives. “One wrote to another on the death of his young daughter that after all, this was the best of fates for daughters: ‘We live in an age... when he who weds his daughter to the grave has found the best of bridegrooms.’”<sup>13</sup> Traditional marriage, where a daughter left her parents household and became a ward of her new husband, was no longer a safe bet in world fraught with conquest. Dead women were safer and less troublesome.

The world of conquest and plunder in the form of women’s bodies created a demand for elite men to prove their ability to ensure that the women in their own families were not vulnerable to enemy or outsider threat. Men’s honor resided in their ability to protect and control the bodies of the women in their families, but also in the context of war, “implant” “enemy” women with their own children. The Qur’an regulates sex with war captives and many interpretations of the hadiths<sup>14</sup> contend that Muhammed implored his armies not to use “coitus interruptus” when having sex with captives. Further, the hadiths narrate the concerns of soldiers who felt uncomfortable having sex with “enemy” women in front of their husbands. According to the hadiths, the men were encouraged to

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<sup>13</sup> Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 85.

<sup>14</sup> Hadiths are accounts of the words and actions of the Prophet Muhammed that along with the Qur’an make up the bulk of literature associated with Islamic jurisprudence.

have sex with the married women, in the presence of their husbands during war campaigns and not restrain from impregnating their victims.<sup>15</sup>

By the late Abbasid period (750- 1258 CE) the elite practices of seclusion, unrestricted polygamy, and veiling trickled down the social hierarchies. Working men in cities and villages felt the pressure to control the women in their households in order to defend their own masculine honor. The practice of veiling or seclusion always varied, but by the end of the medieval Abbasid period, culturally, these institutions that restricted women's movements and public voices were viewed as the ideal. The cultural practices of limiting women's participation in society were codified in the family law sections of the sharia over the next fourteen hundred years and varied considerably from place to place and time to time.

The Turkish societies of central Asia and Anatolia had pre-Islamic, patriarchal notions of honor that were not dependent on seclusion. According to Mazhar ul Haq Khan, during Islamification and urbanization in the eleventh century Turkish tribal notions of honor changed dramatically. Khan explained, "*Izzat* (honor) now meant not respect for others, but more wealth and women, by violence and warfare and also more *purdah* or exclusion of harem-women from all outdoor activities or work."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> See Qur'an 4:24 concerning sex with slaves and war captives and see Translation of Sahih Bukhari Hadiths, M. Muhsin Khan (trans) Military Expeditions led by the Prophet Volume 5, Book 59, Number 459 for discussions of al-azl or coitus interruptus as contraceptive methods in warfare and how enemy women should be treated in war in general. The University of Southern California Center for Jewish-Muslim Engagement hosts an online archive important religious scriptures including the ones used here, <http://www.usc.edu/org/cmje/religious-texts/hadith/bukhari/059-sbt.php> (accessed June 15, 2015).

<sup>16</sup> Mazhar Ul Haq Khan, *Purdah and Polygamy: A Study in the Social Pathology of the Muslim Society*, (Peshawar: Nashiran-e-Ilm-o-Taraqiyetp, 1972) 90.

Ottoman women inherited these various bodies of law and custom. Imperial *kanunnames*, collections of laws and orders sent to local courts throughout the empire, contained laws and proscriptions for punishment in regards to illegal, immoral sexual activity. Dror Ze'evi explained the significance of the *kanunnames* for contextualizing and “producing desire” for the Ottoman elite.

.. the two main systems şeriat [sharia] and kanun [Ottoman imperial, sultanic decrees] .. created a kind of synergy to produce a manifestation of power, which, as Foucault rightly observes, did not merely repress sex, but through its various mechanisms--courts, legal formulas, judges, punishments--also produced and constituted desires. In other words, by creating the binary oppositions of right and wrong, licit and illicit, law has a major influence on definitions of sexual mores.<sup>17</sup>

This process of defining sexual mores not only sheds light on how the Ottoman legal texts “produced desire” but also allows us to read Ottoman gendered notions of honor. As much as honor culture is a product of the establishment of private property and patrilineal inheritance rights in the Mediterranean world, it is also a discourse of sexual morality that has different meanings and implications depending on the temporal, spatial, and social (historical) context.

Elyse Semerdjian conducted a comprehensive study of Ottoman court cases involving *zina* (sexual misconduct) in the province of Aleppo.<sup>18</sup> The important finding for our discussion of honor violence in the twentieth and twenty-first century is Semerdjian’s conclusions concerning the “will of the community,” domestic violence,

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<sup>17</sup> Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire: Changing Sexual Discourse in the Ottoman Middle East, 1500-1900*, (Berkeley; Los Angeles; London: University of California Press, 2006), 13.

<sup>18</sup> Zina is a legal term that refers to unlawful sexual relations between Muslims.

and rape. Contrasting Orientalists' thesis that the "gates of *ijtihad*," legal reasoning, have been closed for Islamic legal scholars and judges since the ninth century, Semerdjian explains that in Aleppo for different reasons in different situations during the 359 years that she studied, Allepine *kadis*, Ottoman judges, were beholden to the local communities in ways that were not codified in the sharia or kanunnames. They permitted testimonies from whole communities or proscribed banishment for zina crimes like prostitution if that was what the community asked from the court. The courts also allowed hearsay and gossip to stand as testimony in zina crimes, which ran contradictory to the *sharia* law's strict guidelines for the number of first person witness testimony in order to give a zina conviction. Further, the courts used a combination of local custom (hearsay testimony or entering the testimony against a defendant as coming from a whole neighborhood), kanun, and sharia for decisions and sentencing, revealing a complex, layered process for interpreting the law and establishing jurisprudence for zina cases. The "gates of *ijtihad*" swung back and forth, nearly off their hinges in the Ottoman courts.

The importance of the community as a moral authority, even when it contradicted sacred law, is significant for our understanding of the communal aspect of honor violence. In Semerdjian's cases of prostitution in Aleppo neighborhoods, individual prostitutes were charged with zina against whole communities. The *şeriat/sharia* demanded four eye-witnesses of penetration to convict someone--man or woman--of the crime of adultery. The communities complained of zina against individual women prostitutes with euphemistic language such as, "she lets strange men into her house," without explicitly citing adultery or claiming to have witnessed illegal penetration. The prostitute was not charged with *hadd*, a crime against God which required a severe

punishment to match its gravity, but instead the local *kadı* (judge) listened to the demands of the community, which was almost always banishment. If convicted of the hadd crime of adultery under the strict guidelines of the *şeriat/sharia*, the woman could have been stoned, flogged, or beheaded, depending on a her age, marital status, slave condition, or religion. This suggested an Ottoman provincial honor culture that restricted the practice of prostitution and punished women for this form of human commerce, but mitigated the punishment for perpetrators.

Supporting or allowing zina was a public offense and policing it was a communal responsibility. Men and whole families were charged with pimping or brothel owning by their neighbors. Semerdjian found that married couples and/or whole family households were brought to court by their neighbors in over 42 percent of the prostitution cases in Ottoman Aleppo.<sup>19</sup> Having a prostitute doing business in your neighborhood dis-honored the whole community. It was the responsibility of the community to get rid of the woman who sold sex and the families that supported it. However, Semerdjian did not find one case of stoning, beheading, or any other form of capital punishment for prostitution in over three hundred years of Ottoman court records in Aleppo. The communities initiated and then accepted the kadıs' banishment sentences.<sup>20</sup>

The other aspect of most relevance for understanding honor crimes in Sermedjian's work is her study of what we can anachronistically call domestic violence and rape. Aleppine women went to the courts and charged their husbands with physical

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<sup>19</sup> Elyse Semerdjian, *'Off the Straight Path' : Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008). 159.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* pp. xxiv.

and psychological abuse. The Qur'an, like the Judeo-Christian scriptures the Islamic sacred text supersedes, demanded that wives obey their husbands. Strict interpretations of şeriat/sharia and those who wanted to justify domestic violence or scholars and activists who argue that Islamic culture is essentially violent toward women find evidence for their claims in the Quranic verse 4:34, *Surat al-Nisa'* (Verse on Women) which states, "As to those women on whose part ye fear disloyalty and ill-conduct, admonish them (first), (next), refuse to share their beds, (and last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience, seek not against them means (of annoyance)"<sup>21</sup>

Despite the scriptures and the fact that domestic violence is a universal problem in patriarchal societies, the kadı judges in şeriat/sharia courts in Aleppo and local muftis throughout the Ottoman Empire issued *fatwas*<sup>22</sup> against abusing wives and women. The Ottoman state and the religious community concerned itself with the proper treatment of women under Ottoman rule. Ottoman women--Muslims, Christians, and Jews--went to the courts to charge their husbands with abuse. They cited hadiths and fatwas that agreed that if a man beats his wife after promising not to do it on the condition of the abuse counting as the third, and final, legal request for divorce then the couple was, in fact, divorced. Women who wanted to leave their husbands were able to do so by using this method in court. In the majority of these cases, the judge found in favor of the woman under the legal category of "harm" suffered by the wife. The courts awarded compensation and marriage annulments or divorce for the wives.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> As quoted in Elyse Sermerdjian, *'Off the Straight Path': Illicit Sex, Law, and Community in Ottoman Aleppo*, 139.

<sup>22</sup> A fatwa is an Islamic religious ruling.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., pp.139.

In the case of rape, women had a much more difficult time convincing the courts to punish the accused. The courts were more likely to demand eye-witness testimony for rape or “forced zina” accusations. The punishment for forced zina according to the şariat/sharia could be death, which may explain, like in the case of all adultery/fornication/zina charges that could be proved by the nearly impossible applications of şariat/sharia guidelines, why the kadis overwhelmingly dismissed the cases. The marked inequality in the way Ottoman law applied to women went further to explain why the vast majority of rape cases were dismissed. Women were not allowed to swear an oath in court, which carried great weight in the arbitration of disputes. A woman’s testimony only counted as half that of a man’s, so the burden of proof in rape cases, much like in the present, was nearly insurmountable for Ottoman women. Knowing this, fewer women went to the courts for rape than for abuse or divorce. Yet some women did, even though honor culture demanded that the woman herself and her family carry a certain amount of shame. Throughout the Ottoman Empire, a husband could divorce his wife if she was raped as long as he agreed to give the wife the entire amount of her *sadaq* (dowry).<sup>24</sup> The kanun and şariat/sharia both emphasized that in cases of rape, the victim was not to be punished under the law.

In recent scholarly studies of honor crimes in the Middle East and popular culture representations of honor killings in Turkey, rape is such a terrible stain against the victim’s and his/her family’s honor that she/he hides the rape if possible, and if the community finds out through gossip or pregnancy victims may be killed by their family

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<sup>24</sup> Dror Ze’evi, *Producing Desire*, 55-66.

or forced to kill themselves. This, along with no direct mention of a translation of the word rape in Islamic or kanun legal texts, led some scholars to conclude that rape is/was such a shameful act for the victims' family, not the perpetrator, that it went unpunished under the law in Islamic societies. The Ottoman court records in Aleppo and other regions countered that narrative. Individual women charged men with "forced zina." Many of these women were in advanced stages of pregnancy when they went to trial. The women were no doubt in a vulnerable situation. Muslim culture, like Judeo-Christian culture, condemned children born out of wedlock, and the child would have suffered the stigma of their mother's zina throughout his/her life. The woman could be banished or worse.

The Aleppo court records suggested that women used the courts to not only punish their rapists and gain some restitution, but also that women felt that having been raped and admitting it in public proved to be a better alternative than concealing the rape, particularly in the case that a pregnancy made it impossible to hide it. This seemed to be the case for the women of Aintab in the sixteenth century too.

Leslie Peirce studied the ways women used the Ottoman courts of Aintab, a southeastern Anatolian city just 60 miles north of Aleppo, renamed Gaziantep in the 1920s by the new Turkish Republic. Peirce studied the court records of the city from September 1540 to October of 1541, a generation after the city was incorporated into the Empire and during a period of rapid expansion of Ottoman bureaucracy there and throughout the freshly conquered regions of the Arab, North African, and Balkan world. Aintab was an ethnically and religiously diverse regional city center much like Aleppo.

Peirce found that the Muslim and dhimmi communities of Aintab and its surrounding villages had various local systems of rule. Powerful local men--heads of important families or muftis and clerics--adjudicated clients' disputes and served as alternatives to the Ottoman kadı courts. During this period of increased state presence and pressures in Aintab, the new, recently state appointed kadı worked with local leaders to bring criminal and civil cases increasingly under Ottoman legal authority.

The women of Aintab used the courts with frequency in the sixteenth century. Peirce argued that, "By allying themselves to [the court's] legal structure and culture, they may hope to escape a harsher local legal culture. The most extreme form of local practice concerning zina was the custom of honor killing: that is, the right of an individual to kill a female member of the family and her lover if they were caught in the sex act."<sup>25</sup> Semerdjian's study of Aleppo agreed that this "custom was embedded in the legal culture of the Ottomans, as evidenced by Ebu's Su'ud's fatwa endorsing the custom and dismissing any claims that may appear in court concerning such murders."<sup>26</sup> Yet in the study of domestic violence and rape cases in Aleppo and in all the various zina cases including rape and out-of-wedlock pregnancy in Aintab, references to or fear of honor killings were absent. Evidence of honor killings surfaced in the religious fatwas and European travel journals,<sup>27</sup> but not in the Ottoman court records.

In Bursa, an Anatolian town just east of Konstantina/Istanbul, in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century şariat/sharia law influenced the rulings of the local kadıs in the many cases that

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<sup>25</sup> Leslie Pierce, *Morality Tales: Law and Gender in the Ottoman Court of Aintab*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), pp. 365.

<sup>26</sup> Elyse Sermedjian, *Off the Straight Path*. Pp. 155.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 153.

involved local women. Many women used the Ottoman courts to obtain a divorce from their husbands, and they exercised their rights to initiate divorce without public ridicule. Haim Gerber discussed multiple cases of *khul* divorce (wife-initiated divorce) in the kadi records in Bursa. Women waived their right to a maintenance payment, which would have been required if the man asked for the divorce, according to *şeriat*. In some cases the women paid their former husbands a fee for the divorce. Gerber did not find a single case where the kadi attempted to dissuade the woman from asking for a divorce. There was no language in the court proceedings that suggested that a woman initiating a divorce, for any reason, was in some way immoral or dishonorable.<sup>28</sup> In fact, centuries earlier in Aintab, according to Peirce, the courts represented a method for women and men, often of little means, to assert their personal honor. Women and men, charged in the court of public opinion of dishonorable behavior, went to the Ottoman courts to restore their honor and reputation.<sup>29</sup>

Başak Tuğ in “Gendered Subjects of Ottoman Constitutional Agreements” contended that one method that the state used to establish its legitimacy in the provinces was to proclaim itself as the defender of its subjects’ honor. The kanunnames’ concert of *şeriat/sharia* and sultanic decree commanded a moral authority throughout the empire. Tuğ’s analysis of petitions for the Imperial court in Istanbul to hear criminal cases often focused on *hetk-i ırz*, “violations of honor.” Families, men, and women petitioned the

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<sup>28</sup> Haim Gerber, *State, Society and Law in Islam: Ottoman Law in Comparative Perspective*, (SUNY Press, 1994), 32.

<sup>29</sup> Pierce, *Morality Tales*, pp. 177-79.

high court to adjudicate cases involving many kinds of “violations of honor” including rape and seduction of minors.<sup>30</sup>

The Ottoman legal system, characterized by a combination of kanun, şariat, and the will of the local community, was certainly profoundly patriarchal and unequal in regards to gender, social status, and religion. Gendered culture of honor seeped into it from these various sources. The very first chapter in Suleiman the Magnificent’s greatest triumph, the kanunnames, is devoted to adjudicating zina crimes. This suggested importance of a gendered culture hinged on relegating sexual morality and honor. Yet the most extreme outcome of honor culture--honor killings--was notoriously absent from the vast Ottoman legal archive. Though fatwas sanctioned honor killings for *zina* crimes such as adultery and fornication, the kanun demanded only fines for *zina* crimes, to be paid on a scale based on the severity of the crime and the convict’s socio-economic status. The Ottoman courts only sentenced the convicted to the harsher şariat/sharia penalties of capital punishment such as flogging, stoning, or beheading for forced *zina* crimes, pederasty, or *zina* crimes accompanying other charges such as abduction and violent physical assaults.<sup>31</sup>

Haim Gerber noted but did not elaborate on a related conspicuous curiosity in his 1994 study of the seventeenth and eighteenth century Ottoman legal climate regarding the relative ease with which women accessed the courts, and compared it with the

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<sup>30</sup> Başak Tuğ, in “Gendered Subjects of Ottoman Constitutional Agreements, c.a. 1740-1860.” *European Journal of Turkish Studies, (Hi)Stories of Honor in Ottoman Societies*, Issue 14, 2014, <http://ejts.revues.org/4786>. (accessed June 24, 2015).

<sup>31</sup> See the tables “Punishments for Male Sexual Offenses in the Kanun” and Punishments for Female Sexual Offenses in the Kanun” in Dror Ze’ev’s *Producing Desire*, 61-63.

ethnographer Paul Stirling's findings in his 1950s anthropological and sociological study of two central Anatolian villages. The women in villages near Kayseri in Stirling's study could not initiate a divorce, even if there was evidence of abuse, due to cultural stigmas. Does this suggest that honor culture was somehow more important or pervasive in the Turkish Republic period than it was during the Ottoman era? From the perspective of the Ottoman courts, one could draw that conclusion. Since honor trials happened in the closed-off spaces of the household, perhaps families and communities policed honor with the threat of murder and sometimes made good on the threat outside of the Ottoman legal system, much like 21<sup>st</sup>-century honor-killings that continue despite the 2005 revisions of the penal code that prohibited reduced sentencing for people who kill "in defense of their honor." Honor culture did not change as fast as the law. The prevalence of forced suicide or families delegating minors with the act of carrying out the honor killing in order to benefit from a shortened murder sentence for juvenile offenders demonstrate the methods and lengths that people will go to repair their honor up to the present.

Ottoman women lived in a culture much like their European, Safavid, and Ming/Qing contemporaries where sexual morality mattered a great deal. Yet they went to the courts to gain material recompense, punish wrongs against them, free themselves of abusive or unwanted husbands, and restore their personal honor. Honor is always a public entity. It is dependent on other people's perception, not necessarily on the reality of a person's actions or circumstance. The Ottoman courts represented one among several public forums to perform and receive honor. The legitimacy of the courts mattered in regards to the weight their verdict held in the public honor court. Moreover, the confidence that women and their societies placed in the Ottoman courts determined

whether or not women took their cases to the court. As historians such as Peirce, Semerdjian, Tuğ, and Ze'evi established, the people of the provinces had legal options to settle their disputes. Women still came to court and discussed their most sensitive, personal, sexual matters. What changed for the women of Anatolia from Gerber's eighteenth-century legal study to Stirling's twentieth century subjects, or again to the "suicide girls" of the 1990s? Social pressure to adhere to a socio-religio-politically constructed honor code that rested on controlling and disciplining the sexuality of women remained, but the socio-economic, political, and religious institutions that supported it changed dramatically in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In short, modern state-formation altered a malleable, dynamic Ottoman legal system. The honor culture of the Empire that the courts both reflected and shaped transformed into a more rigid, in part foreign, legal system for subjects to use or reject depending on the legitimacy that the legal system held from community to community.

Institutionalism is one of the most evident markers of modernity. Wherever studies locate modernity in time and space, one of the most important signs of a transition from a "pre-modern" society to "modern" society is an intense expansion and regulation of institutions of the state--armies, education, legal systems, economic regulation, and state interventions. This process started as early as the fourteenth century in the Ottoman world, but the context for reform changed significantly in the nineteenth century and again in the twentieth century during the construction of the Turkish nation-state. According to Ruth A. Miller, late Ottomans and Kemalists were highly concerned with reform "for reform's sake" and this was evident in the heaps of documentation concerned

with various reforms from 1839 through the early Republican period.<sup>32</sup> What is most important for our study in regards to honor and the law is Miller's explanation of the transformation from legal scholarship focused on crimes that produced victims, such as murder or theft, to victimless crimes that policed moral boundaries. This shift started in the nineteenth century when kanun and şariat law functioned mainly to demonstrate reform and bolster a "modern" state, not to respond to societal problems that produced victims. By the late nineteenth century and then even more explicitly in the Republican period, the modern state became the implied victim of laws geared toward policing morality, such as adultery, defloration, and political crimes.<sup>33</sup>

Important changes in Ottoman and Republican Turkish state and society occurred between the time periods of Gerber's legal studies and Stirling's sociological findings, and the institutionalization of new legal codes reflected and shaped notions of modernity and the place of honor culture within it. The many ideologies and institutions of imperialism, nationalism, industrialization, political and economic liberalism, and statism influenced this very dynamic period of world history, and women's relationship with the Ottoman legal system and their status in the family and society changed too. If the meaning of honor, a signal of sexual obedience, did not change too much in the context of global socioeconomic and political flux, then the way it was performed did.

In the context of European great power geo-political intrigue, unequal free-trade agreements, nationalist uprisings, and European imperial threats, the Ottoman State

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<sup>32</sup> See Ruth A. Miller, *Legislating Authority: Sin and Crime in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey* (New York and London: Routledge) 2005.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 6-11.

moved toward increased central authority and modeled their new legal systems after liberalizing reforms in Europe. After the Ottoman military defeats during the Greek War for Independence (1821-1832) and against the Egyptian/Ottoman rebel Mehmet Ali in the Syrian provinces, Sultan Mahmut II took control of the janissaries<sup>34</sup> in 1826 and continued to initiate centralizing reforms in the military.<sup>35</sup> British, French, and Russian troops intervened in these conflicts against the Ottoman Empire making the administration hyper aware of Great Power threats to Ottoman territory integrity.

The Sultan created the new Ministry of Religion to subdue the *ulema*, Islamic religious authorities and communities in the Empire, and by 1837 Mahmud II created the new Ministry of Justice. After Mahmut II died of tuberculosis in 1839, his son, Sultan Abdülmecid, continued his centralizing reforms. The period of 1839-1876 is known in Turkish historiography as the period of *Tanzimat* reforms.<sup>36</sup> The new, more centralized legal system of the Tanzimat period subordinated the *şeriat/sharia* and older *kanun* in favor of more secular, new European modeled codes.<sup>37</sup> The older system of Ottoman judges and communities negotiating *kannunames*, *şeriat/sharia*, and local customs and politics were replaced by the *Ceza Kanunname-i Hümayun*, or Royal Criminal Code, in

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<sup>34</sup> Janissaries were Ottoman elite soldiers.

<sup>35</sup> For an overview of Ottoman military history see Gabor Agoston, *Guns for the Sultan: Military Power and the Weapons Industry in the Ottoman Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>36</sup> See Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, second edition (Cambridge University Press, 2005); Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqhi (eds.), *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography* (Leiden: Brill, 2002); Cemal Kafadar, "The Question of Ottoman Decline," *Harvard Middle Eastern & Islamic Review* 4 (1997-8), 30-75; Christine Philliou, "The Paradox of Perceptions: Interpreting the Ottoman Past through the National Present," *Middle Eastern Studies* 44 (2008), 661-75; Roderic Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire: 1856-1876* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963).

<sup>37</sup> Avi Rubin, *Ottoman Nizamiye Courts: Law and Modernity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005), 9-76.

1840. The laws focused on the conduct of state officials, eliminating corruption and bribery, equality under the law, and other bureaucratic procedures. Laws concerning sexual morality and penalties for zina were completely absent from the new kanunnames.

In 1858 under the supervision and initiative of the prestigious kadı of Mecca, Ahmed Cevdet Paşa, the Empire issued a more comprehensive *Kanunname-i Ceza*, Criminal Code. This new criminal code created three legal levels of crime: *cinayet*, crimes deserving harsh punishment, such as life in prison; *cunha*, felony offense where disciplinary punishment was required, such as one week in prison; and *kabahat*, misdemeanors, which could require imprisonment of up to one week or simply paying a fine. A subsection of the Criminal Code was titled “About Crimes Concerning the Violation of Honor,” and this is where crimes concerning sexual immorality were described and sentencing prescribed. The code is specific in punishment in regards to the victim and perpetrator’s age and sex. “If a *fi’l şani*, indecent act, is committed with a girl who is not yet married, in addition to a sentence of hard labor, the perpetrator will be forced to pay damages.”<sup>38</sup> Committing an “indecent act” with a virgin, either forced or consensual, meant the perpetrator could be forced to pay a higher *diya*, fine.<sup>39</sup>

Raping a virgin was codified in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ottoman Code and again in 20<sup>th</sup>-century Turkish Republican Criminal Codes as being particularly heinous, not because of the level of personal injury to the victim, but due to the supremacy of virginity in honor culture and the material wealth attached to it. This rule goes back to ancient Mesopotamia and the invention of patriarchal, patrilineal societies. In Hammurabi’s Code of Law,

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<sup>38</sup> Dror Ze’evi, *Producing Desire*, 74.

<sup>39</sup> Sermedjian, *Off the Straight Path*, 149.

“taking” a girl’s virginity through rape or with consent meant that the perpetrator was not charged with violent crime, but “usurping” another man’s property, i.e. stealing.<sup>40</sup>

Human history has been everything but static over the last five thousand years. One of the most profound curiosities of this study is how and why amongst countless cultural fads and political regimes, did the commodification of women’s bodies remain more or less intact for so long? Critical feminist theorist, bell hooks explains the importance of the institutionalization of patriarchy in society and the family for explaining why patriarchy persists. In “Understanding Patriarchy” she discusses the ways that people born into patriarchal societies internalize and reproduce the system. According to hooks, “Patriarchy has no gender.”<sup>41</sup> Patriarchy remains the supreme social organizer because both men and women are in “collective denial” about the ways their actions entrench patriarchy, principally in families and homes, but also in society at large.<sup>42</sup> Due to these ancient roots and centuries of state, religious, and familial institutionalization people “believe” patriarchy is natural, and unconsciously reproduce it. Acknowledging the power of culture is critical, but also historical. The whole sweep of the history of patriarchy is outside of the scope of this study, but a close examination of the ways the Turkish state legislated and institutionalized patriarchy in society and the family gives an important case study in this long history. As my legal analysis suggests, institutionalism of patriarchal materialism and honor-based culture that pre-dates yet infuses

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 146.

<sup>41</sup> bell hooks, *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

<sup>42</sup> bell hooks, “Understanding Patriarchy” No Borders Louisville Radical Lending Library, Louisville Anarchist Federation Federation, <http://imagineborders.org/zines/#UnderstandingPatriarchy> (accessed March 18, 2016).

Mediterranean/Southwest Asian religions in legal codes combined to steel one another against various political and economic storms. Despite a vocal concern over the “woman question,” the creation of a modern, liberal nation-state in Turkey only reified patriarchal materialism and honor culture in new more explicit and penetrating ways.

In response to the authoritarian policies of the Sultan, a group of European-educated Ottomans led a military coup, which became more commonly known as the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. This revolution eventually resulted in the reinstatement of a constitution, and the formation of the CUP, Committee of Union and Progress.

The CUP initiated a series of modernizing reforms intensely focused on maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman state.<sup>43</sup> At first the new governors couched all their reforms within the discourse of Ottomanism and modernity, particularly constitutional reform that privileged the educated elite and subordinate religious authorities.<sup>44</sup> The CUP pushed for secularization policies, bringing şeriat courts under the control of the new Ministry of Justice and bringing the *medreses* (Islamic schools) under the control of the Ministry of Education.<sup>45</sup> The top-down changes in government, education, and the military caused great rifts in Ottoman society between the middle class and popular masses who felt increasingly shut off from the benefits of reform. These tensions culminated in the Counterrevolution in 1909, in which the Young Turks cracked

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<sup>43</sup> Bedross Der Motossian, *Shattered Dream of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014) 3.

<sup>44</sup> Nader Sohrabi, *Revolution and Constitutionalism in the Ottoman Empire and Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 224.

<sup>45</sup> Zücher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 76-132.

down on the counterrevolutionaries with the support of various ethnic groups, including Arabs, Jews, Armenians, and Greeks. The non-Muslim population of the Empire saw the constitution as a realization and guarantee of civil liberties, and initially the CUP did not emphasize Turkish identity. This shifted in response to the tensions surrounding the 1909 Counterrevolution and the Armenian massacres in Adana.<sup>46</sup> Armenians and other nationalities criticized the CUP's response to the violence endured in Adana and the increasing chauvinistic Turkishness. In the context of counterrevolution and with the intent of saving the Empire the CUP launched a massive centralizing project modeled after the image of European-style nation-states, in which they made the Turkish language compulsory for government jobs and access to education. They continued centralizing positivist legal reforms whose main purpose was to subdue individual threats to the collective Ottoman social body--the Ottoman State.<sup>47</sup>

In 1911 the CUP made efforts to make all family law uniform and in support of Ottoman statism. The 1917 family law codes required all marriages to be performed by a magistrate of the state and specified the legal age of marriage for women as 16.<sup>48</sup> The 19<sup>th</sup>-century Ottoman Tanzimat kanunnames that penalized sex with minors mandated the age of consent to be 21. The new age of consent reflected the adaptation of European legal norms that were considered to be modern--empirical, yet natural.

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<sup>46</sup> Der Matossian, *Shattered Dreams of Revolution: From Liberty to Violence in the Late Ottoman Empire*, 163-172.

<sup>47</sup> Miller, *Legislating Authority*, 81-94.

<sup>48</sup> Zücher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 122.

After the Ottoman loss in World War 1 and the Turkish War for Independence, the newly established Turkish nation-state made haste to transform what was left of the imperial systems into a fully modern, secular nationalist state. Beginning in the 1920s and throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century the Turkish state under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal and his successors initiated far-reaching statist policies focused on rapid industrialization and modernization of the economy and citizenry. Not unlike many other societies in the world at the time, the new Turkish state heralded the family as the basic unit of society and the workshop for creating modern, nationalist Turks.<sup>49</sup>

Internal socio-political pressures, economic crisis, and war went far to explain the impetus for these drastic changes; however, late-Ottoman elites read the travel journals and articles written by Europeans who traveled (or claimed to travel) through the Empire. These European opinions affected middle-class and elite plans and anxieties about modernization. They were well aware of the negative characterization of Ottoman culture, particularly the position of women in society and the condemnation of rampant homosexuality in the Empire. These Orientalist travel journals, “othered” the Ottomans in a way that the elite found most offensive.

Elites negotiated their notions of the modern woman within this dialectic of Orientalist condemnation of their culture, their own critique of Ottoman society, and their experiences with the European Other. Turks traveled throughout Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> and

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<sup>49</sup> This emphasis on the role of the family and its subordination by the state was a prominent component of nationalist regimes. See Kevin Passmore, ed. *Women, Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919-45*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003; Victoria De Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992); Deniz Kandiyoti ed. *Women, Islam, and the State*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press (1991). June E. Hahner, *Emancipating the Female Sex: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Brazil, 1850-1940* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990).

20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Increasingly by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Ottoman travelers frequently commented on the condition and character of European women in cities like London, Paris, and Vienna. They were outraged by the prevalence of prostitution, and reported that liberal women in Europe were abandoning their children by the thousands. Travelers and the bureaucrats admonished Europe for their crisis in family values, and heralded the Turkish woman as the symbol of national honor.<sup>50</sup> A good Ottoman/Turkish woman was first and foremost a good wife and mother. These concerns, combined with both a real and imagined threat to nationalist integrity lent themselves well to a preference for fascist law codes in Republican Turkey. Ruth A. Miller makes a convincing comparative argument concerning the fascist character of Republican Turkish law. Like the Italian case, Kemalists saw the law as a vehicle for radical modern nation-state formation. They similarly insisted on the subordination of individual rights to national responsibilities. Women and families had important social obligations in fascist legal systems aimed at protecting and exalting the nationalist state, not protecting individual rights and bodily autonomy of citizens.<sup>51</sup>

The extent to which the state penetrated the realm of the family in its efforts to protect the infant country becomes evident through examining Republican Turkish criminal and civil law codes that emphasize the culture of honor in family law, particularly in regards to the position of women in society and gendered violence, including rape, domestic abuse, and murder. In the constitution, the Penal Code, Civil

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<sup>50</sup> Dror Ze'evi, *Producing Desire*, 169.

<sup>51</sup> Miller, *Legislating Authority*, 95-118.

Code, The Law on Police Duty and Authority, and in court decisions women's honor, most often symbolized by her virginity or obedience to her husband if married, was a matter of the state, and a direct reflection of the "moral" state of the nation. It is important to note that throughout the twentieth century Turkish women were simultaneously the bearers of what has been described as traditional family mores as well as symbols of modernity itself. The two were hardly mutually exclusive.<sup>52</sup> According to Atatürk himself, the success of the nation hinged on Turkish women being both honorable and modern in their ultimate obedience to the fascist state.<sup>53</sup>

The early years of the new Turkish Republic have been heralded as "pro-woman," and not without merit considering the framers, Mustafa Kemal *et al* went much further than previous liberal reformers in banning polygamy and divorce by repudiation. They gave women the right to full inheritance, not the şeriat/sharia half, and handed women the right to vote in municipal elections by 1930 and full suffrage by constitutional amendment in 1934. By comparison their Swiss contemporaries from whom the state based the 1926 Civil Code did not gain the right to vote until 1971.<sup>54</sup>

Still the new regime adopted much of their 1926 Civil Code from the Swiss Code, including much of the sexism embedded in the European code. The Civil Code codified

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<sup>52</sup> For a comprehensive understanding of the role of women in the Kemalist modernization project see, Deniz Kandiyoti, "End of Empire: Islam, Nationalism and Women in Turkey" in Deniz Kandiyoti, ed., *Women, Islam & the State*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991). Also, see Aysel Durakbaşı, "Kemalism as Identity Politics in Turkey." In *Deconstructing Images of "the Turkish Woman,"* ed. Zehra F. Arat, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998) 130-156.

<sup>53</sup> Mustafa Kemal's Speech at Kastamonu, 1925, quoted in Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, 164.

<sup>54</sup> United Nations press release of a meeting of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), issued on 14 January 2003, Un.org, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2003/WOM1373.doc.htm> (accessed November 9, 2011).

the role of mother and wife as the ideal Turkish woman. Women were required to take their husband's name when they married.<sup>55</sup> The new code amended *kanun* and *şeriat/sharia* law and tradition by allowing women to have custody of their children, but only if there was no dispute from the husband. If so, the children went to the husband.<sup>56</sup> Women could not work outside of the home without the permission of their husband.<sup>57</sup> The primary role of the wife was to take care of the home. She was to be an “assistant” and “consultant” to her husband, all in the effort to maintain a “happy home.”<sup>58</sup> The modern Turkish woman's primary function in society was that of obedient wife and mother, though implored to participate in civil society, remove the veil, and go to work, if her husband desired.

The Civil Code prescribed rigid gender ideals that adhered to traditional notions of masculine honor for men too. Men were charged with providing for their families.<sup>59</sup> Men were the heads of household under the law and represented their wives and children in front of the law.<sup>60</sup> These codified notions of masculine honor proved to be heavy

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<sup>55</sup> Article 153.1, Turkish Civil Code, *Türk Kanunu Medenisi*, available at <http://www.hukuki.net/kanun/743.13.text>. (accessed November 8, 2011).

<sup>56</sup> Article 263, Turkish Civil Code, *Türk Kanunu Medenisi*, available at <http://www.hukuki.net/kanun/743.13.text>. (accessed November 8, 2011).

<sup>57</sup> Article 159.I, Turkish Civil Code, *Türk Kanunu Medenisi*, available at <http://www.hukuki.net/kanun/743.13.text>. (accessed November 8, 2011).

<sup>58</sup> Article 153.I and II, Turkish Civil Code, *Türk Kanunu Medenisi*, available at <http://www.hukuki.net/kanun/743.13.text>. (accessed November 8, 2011).

<sup>59</sup> Article 152.II, Turkish Civil Code, *Türk Kanunu Medenisi*, available at <http://www.hukuki.net/kanun/743.13.text>. (accessed November 8, 2011).

<sup>60</sup> Article 152.I, Turkish Civil Code, *Türk Kanunu Medenisi*, available at <http://www.hukuki.net/kanun/743.13.text>. (accessed November 8, 2011).

burdens in period of economic instability and political and civil disruptions, and I contend contributed to husbands and fathers emphasizing other means of establishing male hegemony in society and in the household when these ideals could not be met.

The 1926 Penal Code, heavily borrowed from the fascist Italian code, particularly reflected the significance of honor culture in Mediterranean societies and how modern nation-states interpreted and solidified the legality and cultural importance of these older, largely unwritten, honor codes. Adultery was criminalized in the Turkish penal code like its Italian predecessor, and the punishment for adultery differed according to gender and marital status. Women could be convicted of adultery for one account, while men could only be convicted of adultery if they were in a “continuous relationship that resembled that of husband and wife” with another woman. Men could only be imprisoned for adultery if they committed it with an unmarried woman. Women could face the harshest penalty of the law regardless of circumstances.<sup>61</sup>

Adultery was a grave sin and prosecutable crime for women, but not necessarily and only in certain circumstances for men. The law acknowledged and supported the masculine ideal of virile sexuality that only qualified as a social problem if it infringed on the property of other men-- unmarried, ideally virgin daughters. Further, women were denied reproductive rights in order to suffer the outcomes of their “immoral” choices. Abortions were banned altogether in the 1926 Penal Code. Women seeking to terminate a pregnancy and people assisting them could be imprisoned.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Zehra F. Arat, “Religion, the State, and Family in Turkey” in *Family, Gender, & Law in a Globalizing Middle East & South Asia*, eds. Kenneth M. Cuno and Manisha Desai. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009). 83.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 84.

Crimes against women, such as rape or the seduction of a minor (statutory rape) were considered crimes against society, not individual women. Sexual violence against women was charged under “Felonies against public decency and family order,” while all other violent assaults were “Felonies against individuals.”<sup>63</sup> The Penal Code prescribed punishment for perpetrators of rape depending on the marital status and virginity of the victim.<sup>64</sup> The judicial system produced a sliding scale of years in prison depending on the honor of the victim, such as whether or not she was a virgin, and the impact that the shame of rape would have on her/his family. If a woman’s virginity or fidelity to her family’s honor prior to the rape was in question, then the perpetrator’s crime was not punished or not punished as severely as in the case of a known virgin or married woman whose reputation for obedience to her husband was well known. Raping an unmarried virgin ruined the woman in the eyes of her family, potential husbands, and the law. The legal system confirmed and institutionalized this cultural belief. The Law on Policy Duty and Authority enacted in 1934 charged the police with protecting “*ırz*” (chastity) and upholding the ‘public morality and rules of modesty’ of the public.”<sup>65</sup>

From the perspective of the Kemalists in the first half of the twentieth century and re-affirmed by the 1980 military coup and the constitution it produced in 1982, codified notions of familial honor did not conflict with modernity, but instead according to statist ideals, gendered notions of honor signaled modernity. According to the fascist state there

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid, 84.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. 84-85.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 84.

was no contradiction. The law protected the state, not individuals. Women's honor functioned in society to support the state.

Being an honorable woman in Turkey in the twentieth century, from the vantage of the state, meant being educated, working outside of the home for at least a portion of her adult life, and dressing like a "modern," "Western" woman, meaning no religious symbols in public (i.e., no head-scarves), while maintaining one's virginity, or avoiding gossip that would suggest otherwise until marriage. For married women, being honorable, according to the law, meant obeying one's husband's demands in regards to children, employment, housing, and sex.<sup>66</sup> Law school textbooks concerning family and criminal law re-iterated the penal code's prescription for "moral" law-abiding women. In an examination of the accusation of rape in marriage, a 1988 textbook explained that according to the penal code there are no grounds for a wife to charge her husband with rape, since it is her obligation to have sex with her husband at his request. Under Turkish law, once a woman married, her body essentially became the property of her husband. Having the weight of the law on her back meant that if she was an honorable Turkish woman she would not refuse her husband his right.<sup>67</sup>

These laws regarding women and family were not particularly Turkish; rather, they were mostly carried over from the European legal codes from which they were

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<sup>66</sup> For a brief description and list of relevant articles in the Turkish Civil and Penal Codes of 1926 see Zehra F. Arat, "Religion, the State, and Family in Turkey" in *Family, Gender, & Law in a Globalizing Middle East & South Asia*, eds. Kenneth M. Cuno and Manisha Desai. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2009. Also, Until the 2005 Penal Code, there was no legal repercussions for rape in marriage. For an interesting legal opinion concerning women's "duty" to have intercourse with their husbands according to Turkish law. Doğan Soyaslan, *Ceza Hukuku Özel Hükümler B. II*, (Ankara: Savaş Yayınevi), 1988, 8,9.

<sup>67</sup> Doğan Soyaslan, *Ceza Hukuku Özel Hükümler B. II*, (Ankara: Savaş Yayınevi), 1988, 8,9.

derived, specifically the Swiss Civil Code and the Italian Penal Code. These laws, which made men the head of the household and required women to have their husbands' permission to work outside of the home, obviously made it difficult for women who experienced abuse or threats of abuse by their family members or husbands extremely difficult. Though examples of women and men challenging these nationalist, patriarchal laws and ideals certainly existed throughout the late Ottoman and early republican period,<sup>68</sup> it was feminists, organizing with and against the military dictatorship of the 1980s, who pushed for protection under the law for women against their husbands and families. Women's centers and shelters, along with state funding for these programs and increased emphasis on women's education emerged from this long struggle. The state granted equal status in the law and suffrage from the early days of Turkish Republic, but the late 20<sup>th</sup>-century feminist activists brought national and international attention to the de-facto subjugation of millions of female citizens of Turkey.<sup>69</sup>

The history of this struggle and its relationship to honor culture converged in the campaign to stop honor killings in Turkey. These thirty plus years of feminist consciousness and intense activism brought a broad coalition of twenty-six different non-governmental organizations (NGO's) made up citizens from nearly all eighty-one Turkish provinces together to push for massive reform of first the Civil Code in 2001, and then, even more comprehensively, the Penal Code in 2002-2005.

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<sup>68</sup> Leila Ahmed, 138. Sönmez, Emel. "The Novelist Halide Edib Adivar and Turkish Feminism." *Die Welt des Islams*, vol. 14, 1.4, (1973) 81-115.

<sup>69</sup> See Yeşim Arat, "Feminist, Islamist, and Political Change" in *Political Psychology*, Vol. 19, Issue 1, Oct. 2003, pp. 117-131, for a short, but thorough discussion of late 20<sup>th</sup> century feminist activism in Turkey and its relationship with the state.

These movements for legal reform occurred in the context of European Union membership. In 1999 the European Union announced that Turkey had advanced to candidacy, and subsequently released a report addressing the measures that the Turkish government must meet to become a full member. Turkey had a long list of human rights concerns in the 2001 report, but gender inequity in Turkey's legal codes were not a concern of the Europeans. Instead, they focused on insisting that Turkey remove the death penalty, pre-trial detentions, and concerns over freedom of expression.<sup>70</sup>

This coalition, "The Platform for the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code," (The Platform) battled the state over popular notions of familial honor and feminine morality as expressed in the law. This proved to be a considerable challenge due to the political dominance of the conservative-leaning AKP (Justice and Development Party) who had just formed a new government with over a sixty percent majority in Parliament. The AKP-dominated government insisted on affirming the supposed special virtue of Turkish women and Turkish family values in the law. The AKP's revised draft penal code copied almost all of the laws focused on women and honor directly from the previous fascist code. Someone leaked a copy of the draft to The Platform, and the coalition began protesting. They particularly insisted on removing the laws that focused on virginity, honor, and adultery. This drew harsh criticism from both religious and nationalist right. The religious oriented right wing paper, *Vakit*, denounced The Platform's protest in a

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<sup>70</sup> Alex Frye, "Turkish Feminist and LGBT Groups Campaign to Reform the Penal Code, 2002-2004" *Global Nonviolent Action Database* (May 15, 2011), <https://nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu/content/turkish-feminist-and-lgbt-groups-campaign-reform-penal-code-2002-2004> (accessed November 8, 2013).

May 2003 headline, “The Shameless Proposal.”<sup>71</sup> According to that journalist, “The Platform” did not represent the values of “real” Turkish women. As the debates continued that same paper alleged that, “belonged to high society and radical leftist organizations, whose sexual instincts have become out of control.”<sup>72</sup> According to this rightwing paper “radical leftists” in Turkey were influenced by “Jews” and Europeans.<sup>73</sup> In the rightwing press, women’s rights were articulated as an imperialist project aimed at robbing Turkey of its national values.

Like the previous century’s debate concerning the “Woman Question” in colonial and postcolonial society and to what extent women’s rights were simply another imperial project inflicted on the world by the “West,” gender equality was again cast as something foreign and oppressive to indigenous ways by conservatives.<sup>74</sup> The rightwing press failed to note that the European Union left women’s issues off of Turkey’s “to do” list. That detail did not matter, because conservative segments of society found a new source to champion and validate their concerns over patriarchal notions of honor--the populist AKP. In contrast, The Platform represented a broad spectrum of interests, but its members were predominately part of an educated elite that questioned religious, nationalist, and patriarchal authoritarianism all at once. The Platform’s understanding of liberalism challenged many different sections of Turkish society in ways that the

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<sup>71</sup> M. Yılmaz. “Edep’siz Teklif” [The Shameless Proposal] *Vakit*, May 28, 2003. Cited by Pınar İlkkaracan, in “How Adultery Almost Derailed Turkey’s Aspirations to Join the European Union.”

<sup>72</sup> A. Karakoç, *Vakit*, October 6, 2003. Quoted by Pınar İlkkaracan, in “How Adultery Almost Derailed Turkey’s Aspirations to Join the European Union,” 259.

<sup>73</sup> Pınar İlkkaracan, in “How Adultery Almost Derailed Turkey’s Aspirations to Join the European Union,” 259-260.

<sup>74</sup> See Leila Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam*, (1992), 136-248.

Kemalist fascist, “modern” reforms never upset, such as challenging the authority of state and nation over women’s lives. The concerns of the religious and/or nationalist, rightwing press did not represent the views of fringe dissidents, but found legitimacy and support in the highest office.

The Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, became a vocal critic of The Platform and challenged the feminist insistence on the importance of individual rights over the preservation of national ideals. He expressed public resentment toward human rights and feminist protestors who fought to mandate gender equality in the law. For example, Erdoğan, under pressure from the EU, eventually withdrew the government’s demands to continue to criminalize adultery in the new penal codes; however, he did so reluctantly. Shortly after withdrawing the petition to criminalize adultery in the new code, Erdoğan, referring to a group of women and men from a variety of human rights groups who marched on the capital in support of the new reforms in the penal code and removing the criminalization of adultery, was quoted, “I cannot applaud behavior that does not suit our moral values and traditions... A marginal group cannot represent the Turkish woman.”<sup>75</sup> As this evidenced, honor culture was not something promoted by marginal, “traditional” pockets of society, but represented the views of prominent politicians and mainstream, dominant, masculine culture. The Prime Minister and his party were particularly invested in reproducing a patriarchal notion of national morality or actively defining what it meant to be a “moral”/ “honorable” woman.

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<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Pınar İlkkaracan, “How Adultery Almost Derailed Turkey’s Aspirations to Join the European Union,” In “Türk Kadını, Marginal Bir Kesim Temsil Edemez,” *Zaman*, 25 September 2003.

However, perhaps ironically, during the campaign to change the penal code at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a provocative representative of the AKP changed the course of the debate in favor of the human rights coalition. Dr. Doğan Soyaslan, professor of law and advisor to the Ministry of Justice (and author of aforementioned law school textbook), shocked the country by publically supporting the 1926 Penal Codes regulation which stated that rape charges could be dropped if the rapist agreed to marry the victim. In a sub-commission meeting, Soyaslan claimed,

This draft law is prepared according to realities in Turkey. No man would like to marry a woman who is not a virgin. Marrying the rapist after a rape is a reality of Turkey. The girl's brother, the father of a girl who was raped, wants her to marry the rapist. Those who are opposing this here (at this meeting) would also like to marry virgins. If they claim the opposite, it is forgery.<sup>76</sup>

Proceeding Professor Soyaslan's comments, the Turkish press went wild accusing him of being crazy and outdated. For days, headlines such as "Minister's Consultant Obsessed with 'Virginity'" focused on the professor's views concerning the ongoing debate over women, virginity, honor, and rape.<sup>77</sup> The media questioned his role in the government. After the media backlash in response to the sensational remarks of Dr. Soyaslan, the feminist Platform to Reform the Turkish Penal Code gained support from

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<sup>76</sup> Pinar İlkkaracan, "Reforming the Penal Code in Turkey: The Campaign for the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code from a Gender Perspective" Webversion, September 2007, 18-19, <http://iasscs.org/resource/reforming-penal-code-turkey-campaign-reform-turkish-penal-code-gender-perspective> (accessed April 3, 2016).

<sup>77</sup> Zübeyde Yalçın, 'Bakan Danışmanının 'Bekaret' Takıntısı', *Sabah*, October 23, 2003; Günseli Önal, 'Kimse Bakire Olmayan Biriyle Evlenmek İstemez [Nobody Wants to Marry a Woman who is Not a Virgin]', *Milliyet*, October 23, 2003; and Saffet Korkmaz, 'Herkes Bakire İster [Everybody Wants a Virgin]', *Hürriyet*, October 23, 2003.

moderate Turks and Kurds. In the context of domestic organization and popular pressure alongside international pressure surrounding Turkey's human rights violations and publication of its draconian, sexist penal code, a post-modern, feminist penal code emerged. The new 2005 code eliminated all gendered biases in punitive actions of the state. Most importantly for our study, the law banned reduced sentencing for convicts who claimed to have murdered someone "in defense of their honor."<sup>78</sup>

"The Platform" struggled against conservative elements of the state that hoped to protect honor culture traditions and the state's monopoly as the aggrieved party in nearly all crimes, but particularly crimes against women. Women symbolized national honor, and any attack against a woman was an attack against both her family and her nation. The central idea that society depended on the ultimate subordination of women to men, families, nation, and state permeated Turkish national identity. Only after 2005, according to the law in Turkey, did women gain bodily autonomy and ownership of both their own agency and victimhood in society. It was not that honor was necessarily more important in individual's lives in the twentieth or twenty-first-century than it had been in the imperial period, but that honor culture was institutionalized by the "modern" fascist state in new ways that proved very difficult to unseat.

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<sup>78</sup> Pinar İlkcaracan, "Reforming the Penal Code in Turkey: The Campaign for the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code from a Gender Perspective," September 2007, 18-19, <http://iasscs.org/resource/reforming-penal-code-turkey-campaign-reform-turkish-penal-code-gender-perspective> (accessed April 3, 2016).

CHAPTER IV  
NATIONALIST CONFLICT, DEVELOPMENT, AND HONOR VIOLENCE IN  
THE KURDISH REGIONS OF TURKEY

Sociological studies in Turkey in the last ten years confirm that though all women, Turks, Kurds, Arabs, Christians, Jews, and other minorities in Turkey experience honor-related, gendered oppression some time in their lives, honor killings and honor related suicides occur more frequently in families whose origins lie in the Kurdish regions of Turkey.<sup>1</sup> What these studies do not do is explain why this is the case in any comprehensive way beyond a token emphasis on the importance of “tribal customs” to southeastern and eastern Turkish societies. “Modern,” nationalist state-formation and the important role carved out for women in those projects must be brought to bear on the

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<sup>1</sup> Esat Aktaş, Erdal Vural, Yüksel Çelik and Turan Köse, “Türkiye’de Töre ve Namus Cinayetleri” [Custom and Honor Killings in Turkey], EGM Raporu. [Report of Directorate General of Security]. Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü Asayiş Dairesi Başkanlığı [Directorate General of Security Department of Public Order], Asayiş Şube Müdürlüğü [Public Security Branch Office], Ankara (2006); Hasan Tahsin Fendoğlu, PM Human Rights Presidency 2007 Honour Killings Report (2008). Ankara; Mazhar Bağlı and Ertan Özensel, *Türkiye’de Töre ve Namus Cinayetleri. Töre ve Namus Cinayeti İşleyen Kişiler Üzerine Sosyolojik Bir Araştırma* [Custom and Honor Killings in Turkey. A Sociological Research on Custom and Honor Killers]. İstanbul: Destek Press, 2011); Zeynep Filiz Kardam, Alpar, Ilknur Yüksel and Ergül Ergün, “The Dynamics of Honor Killings in Turkey. Prospects for Action” United Nations Development Programme. Population Association. United Nations Population Fund. Ankara (2005).

history of honor violence among Kurds. The Turkification of the early Republic marginalized all minorities, but the Kurds who made up the majority of the population in many areas of the east and southeast after the genocide and ethnic cleansing of Armenians and Assyrians, became the subject of state disenfranchisement and cultural genocide in the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> The twentieth-century institutionalization of honor culture and nationalist state-formation in Turkey touched everyone living within the boundaries of the Republic, but it affected Kurdish women differently and more profoundly than it did their Turkish counterparts. Understanding the special circumstances that the Kurds have faced as “enemies of the state” is critical to explaining the relationship between honor violence and modern, nationalist state-formation. Again, this Republican history of Turkey begins in its Ottoman past.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Ottoman State privileged Kurds in the East, and at times used Kurdish militias to carry out the genocide of their Christian neighbors, due to Kurdish Muslim identity and geographic proximity to Armenian and Assyrian neighbors in the eastern borderlands.<sup>2</sup> However, many Kurds sheltered Christian neighbors from Ottoman forces—even by smuggling them into Russian territory to save Christians families from genocide. Still, during this time period Kurds were not singled out by the Ottoman regime for ethnic cleansing due to their Muslim identity. The importance of the Kurds’ Muslim-ness at the turn of the century

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<sup>1</sup> The most comprehensive analysis of this process to date is Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 50.

and through World War 1 can only be understood within the context of nationalist campaigns for independence in the Balkans and the Balkan Wars of 1912-13.

According to Uğur Ümit Üngör the expulsion of Ottoman Muslims from the Balkans during these wars created a sense of humiliation and shame throughout the Muslim population of Ottoman Empire, and contributed to the Empire emphasizing its Islamic identity and seeing non-Muslim inhabitants increasingly as internal enemies. Wars with new Balkan Christian states cast conflict in ethno-nationalist terms, and the once predominantly pluralist Ottoman Empire instituted a policy of revenge for territorial loss and embarrassment in the international arena that increasingly focused on the ethnic politics of first religion, and then, Turkish nationalism.<sup>3</sup>

The Turkish ruling powers of the Ottoman State enlisted some Kurdish regiments to carry out the Armenian pogrom in eastern provinces. Some Kurdish tribal leaders and soldiers materially benefited from their pogrom against their Armenian neighbors,<sup>4</sup> and entered World War 1 and the subsequent Turkish War for Independence from Greek, French, and British occupation loyal allies to their Turkish neighbors. Kurds who fought for independence were promised autonomy by Mustafa Kemal, but that never materialized. Instead the new Republic encompassed the Kurdish regions, and enacted policies that made it essentially illegal to be Kurdish. The new official language of the country, Turkish, made speaking Kurdish in public prosecutable. Kurdish newspapers

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<sup>3</sup> See Uğur Ümit Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey: Nation and State in Eastern Anatolia, 1913-1950*.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 136-152.

and presses were outlawed.<sup>5</sup> Kurdish extended kin political structures or tribes overlapped the new national boundaries between Turkey and Iran, Iraq, and Syria, and busting up those pre-existing socio-political structures became a target for the new state.<sup>6</sup> I use Mounira Charrad's understanding and articulation of patrimonial kinship networks in the Middle East and North Africa, where the kin group is a political entity, "bound by shared conceptions of patrilineal kinship serving as the basis for solidarity and oriented toward the collective defense of itself as a group."<sup>7</sup> Patrimonial kin groups or tribes were regularly supported by expanding empires to rule over peripheral or border regions around the world. Kurdish tribes played significant political and administrative roles in the border regions of the Ottoman Empire and Qajar Iran.<sup>8</sup> The history of the de-facto autonomy of Kurdish tribal groups in the border regions during the late Ottoman period haunted the Turkish nation-state's centralization campaign throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. State formation often created contests between the centralizing authority and the kin group or tribe, and this was certainly the case for the Kurds living in the nascent Turkish state who were promised and desired de-jure independence in the modern world of nation-states in the wake of the First World War.

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<sup>5</sup> Üngör, *The Making of Modern Turkey*, 107-212, Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (New York and London: I.B. Tauris, 1993, 1997, 2004) 170.

<sup>6</sup> David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1996, 2004) 87-213.

<sup>7</sup> Mounira Charrad, "Central and Local Patrimonialism: State-building in Kinship Based Societies" in *Patrimonial Powers in the Modern World*, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Julie Adams and Mounira M. Charrad, eds. Vol. 636, July 2011, pp. 53.

<sup>8</sup> See Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire*; Erdal Çiftçi, "A Tribal Confederacy between Two Empires," unpublished paper presented at Fourth Annual International Graduate Student Workshop Armenian Studies Program April 18-19, 2013, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

The importance and history of tribal independence and regional authority were apparent in the organized protest and uprising against Turkification in Dersim in 1937 and 1938. As Shahrzad Mojab explains in the introduction of the germinal anthology on Kurdish women, *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, the dominant culture described the uprising as a reaction to modernization. The relocations, forced Turkification, and ultimate bombings and massacres of the predominantly Kurdish people of Dersim were characterized as a necessary program of the modernization process. According to Kemalists, the people of Dersim rejected modernization and education, which the new centralizing Turkish state benevolently served them. The Kurds of Dersim, or as it was re-named in 1935 in Turkish, Tunceli, resisted the destabilization of the patrimonial kin polity, Kurdish cultural genocide, and linguicide. They protested for self-determination and the right to exist. In the same edition, Janet Klein's work on the "woman question" in the Ottoman Kurdish press at the end of the empire contextualizes the argument for nationhood for former, semi- autonomous Ottoman Kurds and the role of Kurdish women in nation construction.

The "woman question" operated in Kurdish nationalist discourse in the late Ottoman Empire similarly to its function for other national groups in far-flung places during the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. As the discourse of nationalism became the most widely accepted, legitimate platform to campaign for political rights in the context of modernity, the position of women in society became a marker of modernity. This was as true for the writers of the Ottoman Kurdish nationalist press as it was for the previously discussed framers of the new Turkish State. Like their Turkish counterparts, the campaign to raise the education level and participation of

Kurdish women in civil society emerged in the discourse of nationalism, and these rights were not lobbied for the benefit of individual women, but for the progress of the nation. Kurdish women had to be educated in order to bear and nurture good, Kurdish citizens. Like in the Turkish case, honor culture did not necessarily conflict with modern notions of Kurdish women. In fact, the discourse of honor partnered well with the ideologies of the patriarchal nation-state in regards to concepts of civilization, modernity, and the role of women in society.

In her study of the late Ottoman press, Janet Klein cites an important foundational story in regards to the discourse of Kurdish women and nationalist dreams in her 2001 book chapter, “Engendering Nationalism:”

*[One day] when the husband is not home, a stranger who is not a Kurd comes [to the house]. It is a summer day. The young Kurdish lady seats the guest under the tree in front of the house and in accordance with tradition, offers [him] a meal. While the guest is eating his meal, he fancies the young lady and wants to forget about his meal. The lady does not let her seriousness crack. The guest finishes his meal. Now wouldn't he raise his hopes a little more?! He loses his self-control. With arms as strong as her morals, the young lady immediately ties this ungrateful [man] to the tree next to him. The guest is made to wait there, [and] in the evening the master of the house comes and, surprised, asks:*

*- 'Who is this?'*

*-The lady: 'Someone who wants to steal your property.'*

*- 'Did he come to thieve? Who tied him up?'*

*-The lady: 'Yes, he wanted to steal your honor and I tied him up like that.'*

*The woman saves this thief's life in face of the event which makes a Kurd's feelings of honor boil over with these words: 'The*

*punishment that he has suffered since morning is enough, forgive me for the rest.’... This is one extraordinary example of the solidity of this high character. Examples such as this one are so prevalent in Kurdish society that it could be the rule [rather than the exception]... This is a social equilibrium and a feat of civilization, [and] can apparently be considered a valuable asset for the Kurdish nation.<sup>9</sup>*

Like the foundational myth of the Roman Republic, the rape of Lucretia, critical notions of gender-based honor codes exemplified by the actions of virtuous women convey the exceptionalism of Kurdish culture and their moral character compared to their non-Kurdish compatriots. When the Etruscan prince raped the virtuous Roman noble, Lucretia, she killed herself to cleanse her own honor as well as to re-establish the honor of her father and husband that had been compromised by Sextus, the Etruscan prince.<sup>10</sup> The virtue of Lucretia and the dishonorable, despotic actions of the foreign ruler gave the Romans the moral authority to rebel against their northern Etruscan kings. Similarly, in the late-Ottoman Kurdish press women signified the virtue of the Kurds in general, and specifically the initiative for self-determination with great moral authority in the age of nation-states due to the ferocity with which they protected family and national honor.

In this anecdote, the woman considers herself her husband’s property. It’s not her own, individual well-being for which she fights. She fends off sexual assault for her husband’s honor. It is her devotion to his honor that reflects her own. Such a strong

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<sup>9</sup> Vanlı M[emduh] C. Selîm Beg, ‘Kürd Hanımı, [The Kurdish Lady],’ *Jîn* 14 (Mart, 1335/March, 1919) 8-9. Translated and quoted by Janet Klein, “En-Gendering Nationalism: The ‘Woman Question’ in Kurdish Nationalist Discourse of the Late Ottoman Period.” In *Women of a Non-State Nation: The Kurds*, ed. Shahrzad Mojab. Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2001, 38, 39. Brackets in the original.

<sup>10</sup> Livy, *History of Rome, The Rape of Lucretia, Ancient History Sourcebook*, <http://legacy.fordham.edu/halsall/ancient/livy-rape.asp>; Internet, accessed December 9, 2015.

sense of honor lifts the Kurdish woman to the ranks of one of the most revered women in Mediterranean culture, the most virtuous Lucretia, the woman for which the Roman Republic was founded. The strength of character and feminine virtue exhibited by Kurdish women, according to the early twentieth century author, is a “feat of civilization.”<sup>11</sup>

Gender-based honor codes had been a marker of civilization in Mediterranean and Southwest Asian cultures for a very long time, and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries this classical notion signified modernity too. Nationalists who argued for women’s rights to education and participation in civil society couched their arguments within the discourse of honor. According to Kurdish nationalists, Kurdish women were particularly suited for full participation in society because of their strict adherence to honor codes; they did not require the symbol of a long black chador or segregation. Kurdish women could and did entertain foreign men in the absence of a male family member, not in spite of ancient honor code traditions, but because they were so honorable they did not require chaperones. The traditional, fuller participation of Kurdish women in society compared to their neighbors, according to nationalists, made them particularly suitable for modern nationhood as defined by the European measure where women participated in public life. The virtue of Kurdish women protected them and the men who were assigned to enforce it, and therefore they were uniquely suited in the region to adopt the “Western” model of “modern” womanhood that signified “modern” nationhood.

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<sup>11</sup> Vanlı M[emduh] C. Selim Beg, ‘Kürd Hanımı, [The Kurdish Lady] quoted in Janet Klein, “En-Gendering Nationalism,” 39.

The virtue of Kurdish women reflected the ability of the Kurdish regions to succeed as an independent nation. In an independent Kurdistan, women would be enfranchised and educated to serve the national cause and produce and groom their children into good citizens. It was a step toward civilization and nationhood that seemed rational and inevitable to modernist thinkers. This, of course, was part of a nationalist dream that did not materialize for Kurds in Turkey (or anywhere else). The reality of daily life for the millions of Kurdish women living under Turkish rule throughout the twentieth century proved to be stifling and repressive due to many competing and intersecting factors but particularly associated with Turkish assimilation campaigns.

During and after the Dersim massacres in the late 1930s, the Turkish state instituted massive “development” projects in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, which were aimed at the assimilation and subordination of the people and economies of the eastern borderlands.<sup>12</sup> The Turkish government, in its campaign to re-write the history and ethno-linguistic composition of the region, changed the names of towns and villages in eastern provinces to Turkish names. This served to tamp down on both the Kurdish identity of the region as well as the memory of its recent Armenian past. This is the history of how Dersim became Tunceli, along with thousands of other places that suddenly became Turkish after 1935. Economic and transportation development policies focused on agricultural technology and railroads to extract surplus crops, minerals, and oil from the

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<sup>12</sup> Azat Zana Gündoğan, “Space, state-making and contentious Kurdish politics in the East of Turkey: the Case of the Eastern Meetings, 1967,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies*, vol.13.4, (December 2011) 389-414.

east, and then, in turn, ship manufactured goods from the west to eastern commercial markets.

The state found partners in their development plan in local Kurdish elite landowners, the *ağas*, who benefited from state investment in the production of their land; however, the farmers and workers involved in non-conforming economic practices such as cross-border commerce along historic trade networks were marginalized and criminalized. Kurdish merchants became “smugglers” in the context of the new Turkish, nationalist economic program for the East as their old trade-networks crossed new, international borders. The state built up massive policing stations along the borders of Iran, Iraq, and Syria to prevent “smuggling” and to enforce national borders. Smugglers were arrested and killed. A formidable police and military presence in the non-Turkish borderlands of Turkey met with resistance and greatly contributed to very poor living conditions for the majority of Kurdish people in Turkey.<sup>13</sup>

Women’s rights advocates and newly enfranchised Turkish women played a crucial role in the assimilation project too. The centralizing agenda insisted that education--and particularly women’s education--was crucial to the nationalist modernization project in Turkey. In the 1930s the state launched an initiative to create boarding schools for girls and boys in the “East” to learn how to be Turks. Interior Minister Şükrü Kaya wrote to the Ministry of Culture on June 4, 1937:

Boarding schools for girls and boys need to be opened and girls and boys from the age of five need to be brought into these schools for education and upbringing.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 402.

These boys and girls need to be married to each other and settled dispersedly on property inherited from their parents where they can establish a Turkish Nest so that Turkish Culture [capitalization and emphasis in the original] can be thoroughly implanted.<sup>14</sup>

According to Üngör, the first boarding school in the East opened that same year, and Atatürk himself argued for their importance. The founder of the republic saw Kurdish mothers as particular obstacles in his crusade to create modern Turks. Kurdish mothers raised children hostile to the Turkish language and state. Driving a wedge between Kurdish families would promote Turkish identity in the eastern provinces.<sup>15</sup> The state had to intervene so Kurdish girls could become *Turkish* mothers with a special mission to raise up Turks to fill the east.

Combating Kurdishness and manufacturing Turkish identity was a vocation of great consequence. The director of this first girls' school wrote in her annual report to the Ministry of Education that her work was part of a "war for Turkishness," in which the communities where her students live do not "welcome us with good will but always perceives us with suspicion and hesitation... and therefore need to be indoctrinated with the Turkish ideal."<sup>16</sup>

For this same study, Üngör interviewed Kurdish women who graduated from state-run boarding schools. They described being beaten or deprived of food for speaking Kurdish. Long hair symbolized feminine beauty in Kurdish culture, and in an attempt to

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<sup>14</sup> Şükrü Kaya to Ministry of Culture, 4 June 1937, reproduced in, Nursen Mazici, Celal Bayar: Başbakanlık Dönemi 1937-1939 (Istanbul: Der. 1996), 233 appended document no. 3 and quoted by Üngör, 205.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>16</sup> Köyden Haber, 233. Quoted by Üngör on 208.

sever Kurdish cultural symbolism the staff of the school cut the girls' hair. Overall, the interviewees recalled the trauma in which Kurdish girls from Dersim were forced to become Turkish "ladies" from Tunceli.<sup>17</sup> Importantly, the familial notions of honor in Turkish and Kurdish culture operated similarly and did not conflict. Feminine honor, symbolized by virginity and obedience to fathers, brothers, and other male relatives until married, and fidelity and obedience to one's husband and his family once wed, characterized both societies.

Women were crucial incubators of either Kurdish or Turkish identity, according to official state discourse, and the success of the new state required the honorable participation and construction of Turkish women. Kurdish women were not the only women singled out as national threats. The Turkish Parliament invited Nakiye Elgün, a Kemalist and the first woman appointed to the Istanbul city council and a Director of a prestigious girl's school, to speak to the women of Hatay in 1939 during the celebration of the annexation of the province to Turkey. The territory resides on the Turkish-Syrian border and the majority of the population was Arab. Elgün implored the women of Hatay to remember to be "*Turkish* women" and "to stay faithful to the cause of the Turkish woman."<sup>18</sup> Manufacturing new, modern Turkish women out of the diverse former Ottoman population remained a constant component of twentieth-century state-building. As Ömer Çaha stated,

The subordination of some women in Turkey is directly related to the understanding of modernization itself. The Kemalist understanding of

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<sup>17</sup> Üngör, 209-210.

<sup>18</sup> Yeşim Arat in "The Project of Modernity and Women in Turkey" in Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, eds. *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press. 1997) 100, 101.

modernization oppresses religious women since it considers their choice of dress to be anti-modernist. Similarly, the nationalist understanding of modernization based on a single language and an official culture oppresses those women who belong to diverse ethnic groups and speak languages other than the official one, as in the case of Kurdish women. These women are, indeed, the victims of assimilation in the name of modernization or civilization.<sup>19</sup>

It is not hard to see how and why the Kurdish and leftist organizers of the 1960s and 1970s compared the Turkish state's policies in the Kurdish regions to the colonial and neo-imperial policies that subordinated Latin American economies and people. The left protested the ways in which the state worked hard to "open the veins" of the East as part of an internal, regional colonial agenda.<sup>20</sup> Concerned with uneven development in the Kurdish provinces compared to western and central Anatolian Turkish regions, leftist and Kurdish nationalist groups organized for increased funding for infrastructure and social services in the east. Education and healthcare for all people in the Kurdish regions suffered under Turkification policies. These policies along with the patriarchal honor culture that was shared by both Turks and Kurds affected Kurdish women differently than men.

Literacy rates into the twenty-first century in eastern and southeastern regions of Turkey reflect the disproportionate effects nationalist conflict has had on women. In the 2003 census, thirty to thirty-nine percent of women in the East and Southeast were illiterate (in Turkish and Kurdish) where just nine percent of men in the region were

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<sup>19</sup> Ömer Çaha. *Women and Civil Society in Turkey: Women's Movements in a Muslim Society*. (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2013) 155.

<sup>20</sup> See the classic *Open Veins of Latin America: Five Centuries of the Pillage of a Continent* by Eduardo Galeano originally published in 1971. This work influenced historical, material thinking throughout the post-colonial world.

illiterate.<sup>21</sup> This is the result of decades of uneven access to education and social services, and familial pressures for women to commit their lives to unpaid household labor instead of education in the poverty stricken war-torn regions. As previously discussed in this work, anti-colonial nationalist discourse often frames the nation as being in need of defense, as a feminine body that requires protection against enemy masculine penetration. The literal bodies of Kurdish women are viewed similarly in the context of day-to-day life in an embattled conflict zone and as members of a persecuted, threatened nation.

Kurdish women are much more likely to be segregated and absent from civil society whether they live in the Kurdish majority southeast or in internal diasporic communities in major western cities. In some cases their births are never registered, so according to the Turkish state they do not exist. When they marry, their families insist on only a religious ceremony, not the legal Turkish civil registration. These practices are legitimized doubly by anti-colonial, nationalist discourse and honor culture. Nationalist discourse and honor culture both demand that men protect and police women's sexuality, which is believed to be in constant question and under threat from men as well as the colonial Turkish state. Many poor and rural women never attend school or only finish primary school and lack access to social services or networks due to the intersectionality of their identity as poor, Kurdish women living under the masculine regimes of honor culture and the patriarchal Turkish state.

However, these oppressive regimes were contested from within Kurdish society once again in the 1980s. Kurdish intellectuals created a counter narrative that insisted on

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<sup>21</sup> "Gender Review in Education in Turkey, 2003," <http://www.unicef.org/turkey/gr/ge21ja.html> (accessed March 16, 2016).

full participation of all women in society, not based on their virtue but on their basic human rights. Acknowledging the education crisis and the need for Kurdish women to take part fully in society in economic terms, Kurdish leftist groups, particularly the Marxist PKK, pushed for gender equality in its ranks in a discourse that outlined a role for women in the Kurdish nationalist resistance movement. The writings of Abdullah Öcalan, a founder and leader of the PKK, insisted on the emancipation and inclusion of women in the Kurdish struggle. Öcalan even went so far as to denounce honor culture in Kurdish tradition more than twenty years ago as an obstacle for Kurdish emancipation and social development.<sup>22</sup> Women held leadership roles in PKK civil and military organizations and women left their families to join the Peshmerga guerillas to fight in the mountains by the early 1990s. Today, Kurdish women units fight against the Syrian regime and ISIS/Da‘esh in Iraq and Syria. In a current interview for the *Middle East Eye* a 22-year-old engineering student from Van, Turkey, Roserin Wan, explained why she joined the guerillas in Iraq, ““Why the PKK? Because Turkish society wouldn’t let women be as free as they wished.”<sup>23</sup> Still honor culture infuses the Peshmerga<sup>24</sup> forces that insist on women remaining in separate fighting units. Yet, the life work of PKK member and leaders, such as women’s rights advocate, guerilla, and PKK co-founder,

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<sup>22</sup> See Handan Çağlayan, “From Kawa the Blacksmith to Ishtar the Goddess: Gender Constructions in Ideological-Political Discourses of the Kurdish Movement in post-1980 Turkey,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* [Online], 2012, <http://ejts.revues.org/4657>. (accessed January 28, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> Kate West, “The Female Guerilla Fighters of the PKK” *Middle East Eye*, July 31, 2015, <http://www.middleeasteye.net/in-depth/features/female-guerrilla-fighters-pkk-2044198184#sthash.gxnGhDm2.dpuf>

<sup>24</sup> Peshmerga are Kurdish soldiers.

Sakine Cansız, who was assassinated in January of 2013 in Paris, certainly suggest that gender equality in the PKK, compared to the nation-state neighbors, was not simply lip-service.

However, not all Kurdish feminists and human rights advocates joined the PKK. Women and men chose political, non-violent resistance and advocacy. As the separatist movement intensified in the 1980s and throughout the 1990s, Kurdish intellectuals and women's rights activists felt shut out and marginalized in the hegemonic Turkish women's rights campaigns. They marched with feminists against domestic violence during the 1980s, but after years of destabilizing warfare between the PKK and the Turkish state, the realities of life for Kurdish women in Turkey seemed further and further from that of their Turkish feminist counterparts, and tension developed within the women's rights movement in Turkey.

Leading Kurdish feminists decided to organize around their marginal identity as not just women living in Turkey, but particularly Kurdish women living Turkey. These experiences led many Kurdish feminists to move away from the overarching feminist movement in Turkey that seemed to rely on racialized versions of Kurdish culture to explain domestic violence without serious acknowledgement or examination of complexities of life in-war torn provinces. According to Fatma Kayhan, editor the first Kurdish feminist journal, *Roza*, published in Turkey from 1996-2000, Kurdish feminists who began to separate themselves from their Turkish counterparts in the 1990s "were distinct from others who hope to impose emancipation and education on

‘ignorant women.’”<sup>25</sup> The feminist contributors of *Roza* drew attention to the particularities of the Kurdish women’s experience in Turkey, emphasizing state oppression, such as forced migration, the burning of Kurdish villages, and the rape of Kurdish women by the police or Turkish soldiers. *Roza* contributors wrote features concerning the conditions and torture of Kurdish political prisoners in the Diyarbakır Cezaevi [Girtêgeha Amedê, in Kurdish] a state penitentiary that operated under martial law from 1980-1988 and was known as “the hell of Diyarbakır.”<sup>26</sup> Each volume of the journal discussed the particularities of being both Kurdish and a woman in Turkey, and often connected these issues to the experiences of Kurdish women living under other Middle Eastern regimes and in the diaspora, as well as African American women and other postcolonial women throughout the world. They drew on black feminist theorists such as bell hooks and Audre Lorde and wrote broadly on how Kurdish women experienced racial discrimination comparable to African American women.<sup>27</sup>

Kurdish feminists linked the problems that women faced in Turkey to ethnic and racial discrimination and nationalist conflict. The writers and editors of *Roza* discussed their struggle with assimilation and why the vast majority of the articles in *Roza* were written in Turkish, not Kurdish, and though they wished to speak to a broad Kurdish female mass throughout Turkey in Kurdish, they examined the reality that due to assimilation and discrimination that was not possible.

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<sup>25</sup> Kayhan Fatma, “Publication of Roza” *Roza* <http://www.kurdishroza.co.uk/>. (accessed January 31, 2013).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., <http://kurdishroza.co.uk/posts/view/1>. (accessed February 1, 2013).

<sup>27</sup> See Z. Seda Özcan, “The Dual Identity of Roza Journal: Womanhood and Ethnicity in the Context of Kurdish Feminism” in *Turkish Journal of Politics* Vol. 2 No. 2 (Winter 2011) 46-51, for a discussion of the influence of black feminist theory on *Roza*.

We are subjected to despotism such that we learn your language at school.....  
We present our being to you every morning... Because of racist educational  
policy, many of us prefer Turkification which means civilization, instead of being  
uneducated and Kurdish. .... If we give up our Kurdishness, we can be lawyers,  
doctors, nurses, poets, authors and teachers.<sup>28</sup>

Women's rights activism and access to education for women in Turkey certainly  
increased during the period that *Roza* published, and in some cases that happened with  
the help of the Turkish State, but in many cases--in respect to the plight of Kurdish  
women--despite the state. It was illegal for women in the Kurdish regions to subscribe to  
*Roza*, and the staff was forbidden from opening an office in the southeast. The state  
stopped the publication of *Roza* altogether in June of 2000.<sup>29</sup>

Focusing on the multiple layers of oppression that Kurdish women faced in Turkey,  
the authors of *Roza* discussed honor culture periodically. According to *Roza* contributors,  
Kurdish men benefitted from women's free labor, and women were seen as a commodity  
in society. In a 1996 issue Hatice Yaşar discussed the practice of *berdel*, or bride  
exchange, where fathers or other male heads of household arrange to exchange daughters  
with another household to avoid paying a bride price or dowry. This is a type of forced  
marriage in which the often very young brides and sometimes the grooms have little or  
no say. If one of the grooms does not like his new wife, he may return her like something  
bought at a store. This is disastrous for the new wife, because if the marriage contract is

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<sup>28</sup> Ayşegül, "Ne Kadar Çok TÜRKsünüz?." *Roza*, Vol. 5, No. 1, p. 13. Cited and Translated by Z. Seda Özcan in "The Dual Identity of Roza Journal: Womanhood and Ethnicity in the Context of Kurdish Feminism" in *Turkish Journal of Politics*, vol. 2. 2 (Winter 2011) 51.

<sup>29</sup> Kayhan Fatma, <http://kurdishroza.co.uk/posts/view/1>. (accessed February 5, 2013).

broken both families blame the woman. Yaşar explains that this can result in the murder of the girl in an honor killing. The feminist author criticizes honor culture and argued that Kurdish women have to stand against these practices if they want to truly be free. She explains how it is not just the Turkish state that oppresses Kurdish women, but that *berdel* practices and honor killings exemplify how Kurdish men oppress Kurdish women too.<sup>30</sup> In these early years of Kurdish feminist organizing and as honor killings were just beginning to be examined in Turkey, Yaşar did not discuss the significant role Kurdish women play in the social and cultural hierarchies in honor culture. Often, mothers and mothers-in-law compel their daughters and sons to enter and remain in a forced marriage through the disciplinary forces of honor culture.

Though *Roza*'s feminist analysis of honor culture neglected to account for the role Kurdish women played in honor crimes, these Kurdish feminist activists were the first to document the Turkish obsession with honor killings in Kurdish communities. In 1996 Hacer Yıldırım in an article entitled "Over Here and Over There: Murder!" listed the numerous articles in Turkish newspapers that focused on Kurdish honor killings. Yıldırım contended that these newspapers gave the impression that Kurds were particularly savage and barbaric. She argued that women all over the world experience horrific domestic violence and murder, and that Kurds were not exceptional.<sup>31</sup> The Kurdish characterization of honor killings in Turkey would not change, despite Kurdish intellectual and activist rebuttals, for more than 15 years.

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<sup>30</sup> Hatice Yaşar, "Özgür Memleketim de Sevdalar Ölmesin: Sevdalar İnfaz Edilecek mi? [For My free homeland You kill Passions: Is it possible to Execute Passions?]" *Roza* vol. 2.1. (1996) 10-11.

<sup>31</sup> Hacer Yıldırım, *Oradaki ve Buradaki Cinayeti Gördük!* [Over Here and Over There: Murder!]" *Roza*, vol. 2.1 (1996) 7-9.

I experienced the pervasiveness of this narrative while presenting my research at the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) Annual Meetings in 2009 and 2010. The Kurdishness of honor killings and the attempt to paint Kurdish culture as barbaric was so pervasive that Kurdish intellectuals developed a defensive stance against it. Though I was analyzing and exposing the role of identity politics in this “backward” portrayal of Kurdishness and problematizing the way honor killings are identified as Kurdish in Turkey, a Kurdish scholar could not hear or see my nuance. Instead, he took a nationalist posture and assumed that I was repeating the Turkish narrative. This reflected how tired Kurdish intellectuals were of the hegemonic Turkish narrative of honor killings.

Still yet in this period, for many women and some men, feminist identity trumped ethnic or nationalist agendas. Kurdish and Turkish feminists worked alongside one another. Their solidarity reflected the strength of second-wave feminist thought that regarded women’s experience of abuse and inequality as systematic and universal despite the realization of suffrage and civil rights laws. They continued to foreground feminist organizing in the face of the important third-wave feminist critique by activists and scholars such as those associated with *Roza*.

Surrounded by the problems and promise of Kurdish politics in Diyarbakir, KA-MER (*Kadın Merkezi/Women’s Center*), an organization founded in 1997 by former public school teacher and labor organizer, Nebahat Akkoç, attempted to center the civil rights debates in Turkey on gender issues, not ethnic divisions. This understanding of feminism characterized many Kurdish feminist activists who allied with Turkish women to work on domestic violence and honor crimes in the 1980s and 1990s. The contributors of *Roza*

were somewhat of a radical vanguard. During that time and throughout much of the first decade of this century, claiming a Kurdish identity for any organization promised the potential for harassment, detention, arrest, or worse.<sup>32</sup> Hatice Yaşar wrote for *Roza* as a faculty member at Süleymaniye University in Iraq after leaving the country in 1980. She did not return to Turkey until 2013, and was immediately arrested for supporting the PKK.<sup>33</sup> The arrests of academics and journalists in recent years are reminiscent of the most tense and violent years of the Kurdish wars in Turkey.

Avoiding the Kurdishness of the problems that faced Kurdish women allowed many feminist organizers to escape state oppression. Still, Akkoç's husband and a friend were disappeared--picked up by an unmarked car and killed--in 1993 during a period of intense militarization and conflict. Despite these dangers and likely in part due to the trauma of losing a loved one to nationalist political conflict, Nebahat Akkoç, a teacher, started organizing and agitating for women's rights. She saw the subordination of women as key factor in all the social problems, including the war, in southeastern Turkey.

KA-MER opened and continues to operate with a pronounced anti-nationalist, feminist agenda. The center rejects any nationalist affiliations, due to the visceral

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<sup>32</sup> The effects of over thirty years of armed conflict between the Turkish state and the PKK blankets the region and the pervasiveness of the state can be felt throughout the Kurdish region where extrajudicial killings, disappearances, and imprisonment of politicians, journalists, scholars, and activists has a long history. See United Nations Economic and Social Council Commission on Human Rights Fifty-eighth Session, "Civil and Political Rights, Including the Question of Disappearances and Summary Executions: Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Report of the Special Rapporteur, Ms. Asma Jahangir, submitted pursuant to Commission on Human Rights resolution 2001/45, Addendum Mission to Turkey, December 18, 2011, [http://www.extrajudicialexecutions.org/application/media/2001%20omission%20report%20E\\_CN\\_4\\_2002\\_74\\_Add\\_1.pdf](http://www.extrajudicialexecutions.org/application/media/2001%20omission%20report%20E_CN_4_2002_74_Add_1.pdf). Accessed, January 14, 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Nilay Vardar, "33 Yıl Sonra Ülkeye Dönen Hatice Yaşar Tutuklandı [Returning to the Country after 33 Years, Hatice Yaşar Arrested," *Bianet*, May 9, 2013; <http://bianet.org/bianet/toplum/146466-33-yil-sonra-ulkeye-donen-hatice-yasar-tutuklandi> (accessed May 16, 2015).

connection nationalist conflict has with the living conditions of women in the Kurdish regions of Turkey. Beginning in 1997 KA-MER conducted surveys and produced research reports that identified and publicized the socioeconomic conditions that many of the women who applied for help from the center experienced. One of the facts that KA-MER stated was that many of the center's clients spoke Kurdish, not Turkish, and this reality kept women from accessing social services or contacting the police.<sup>34</sup> These reports conveyed a radical feminist and materialist perspective that pushed the world to recognize the effect that ethnic nationalist conflict had on women in Turkey while KA-MER activists themselves rejected nationalist affiliations. Akkoç and her associates were able to deflect the long arm of the state and gain international attention and support for the position of women in southeastern Turkey by emphasizing the feminist foundation of the group's mission that focused on serving all women and sufferers of gendered violence. Publicizing the Kurdishness of the problems that Kurdish women in Turkey face had been a dead end in many ways, because in Turkey "Kurd" had been discursively linked to "Terrorist" and "PKK" for decades, and the international community bought into this narrative.<sup>35</sup>

Akkoç and her partners reached out to allies in Turkey, particularly the Swedish Consulate General in Istanbul, including Anna Lindh, the Swedish Foreign Minister, who financially supported KA-MER's first in-depth study on honor killings in Diyarbakir and

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<sup>34</sup> KA-MER Kadın Merkezi (KAMER Women's Center), *İstersek Biter/We can Stop This* (Istanbul: Berdan Matbaacılık, 2011), pp. 48, 192.

<sup>35</sup> See *Good Kurds, Bad Kurds: No Friends but the Mountains* (2001), written and directed by Kevin McKiernan, for a documentary discussion concerning how and why the international community views and treats Kurds differently according to the relationship that their country has with the "West."

surrounding villages. Several high profile honor killings were carried out in Sweden by Kurdish families, and the Swedish government were under pressure by human rights organizers in Sweden and anti-immigration Swedish nationalists to explain and combat honor killings. Anna Lindh and Annika Svahnström, head of the Consulate's Section of Turkish Swedish Cooperation, and their offices in Turkey became important friends and partners with Akkoç and the KA-MER staff in studying and combating violence against women in the Kurdish and southeastern regions of Turkey. In 2003-2004, KA-MER launched a two-person case study funded largely by the Swedish government to understand the roots of honor violence and to develop strategies to end it.

This path-breaking study entitled *Alışmayacağız* [We Shall Not Get Used to It] went on to spur further research and investment from various NGOs, the Turkish state, and the Embassy of Switzerland. With this support KA-MER expanded its services and facilities throughout the 23 provinces in eastern and southeastern Turkey that KA-MER recognized as underserved. They created two permanent crisis teams, one in Diyarbakir and another in Mardin, which remain mobilized to work with the police or gendarmes to go into homes and intervene on behalf of women who have been sentenced to death by their families.

After corresponding with Nebahat Akkoç for about a year, in the spring of 2012, I traveled to Diyarbakir to interview her and her staff. KA-MER shared their published data, a copy of a documentary about their work made in Kurdish and aired on TRT-6, the Kurdish-language, state-owned broadcast television station, and I interviewed Akkoç about the history of the organization and the Kurdishness of the organization.

This study of KA-MER shaped my thesis concerning the centrality of the history of modern nationalist state-formation and nationalist conflict to the current crisis of honor-related violence in Turkey. The twentieth-century institutionalization of honor culture in Turkey touched everyone living within the boundaries of the Republic, but it affected Kurdish women, particularly those living in the rural areas or poor cities of the embattled east and southeast, differently than it did their Turkish counterparts. This was evident in the writings of the Kurdish Feminist intelligentsia in *Roza*. The workings of KA-MER exposed the significance that Kurdish identity and nationalist conflict has for understanding and combating honor violence in the region among the poorest, most underserved women in Turkey.

KA-MER defines the central problem for honor killings in their 2011 report,

Honor consists of standards of behavior that have been produced by the universally prevalent male-dominant system of thought in order to be able to maintain women's secondary status and to be able to hinder equality between women and men. Consequently, the main problem is women's 'failure' to abide by these standards which are imposed upon her.<sup>36</sup>

Honor and patriarchy are the same in the eyes of KA-MER's founder, Nebahat Akkoç. Honor crimes occur when women refuse to submit to the rules of capitalist patriarchy. As stated in Chapter 1, honor killings are the most extreme version of gender-related violence, but all forms of domestic violence and gender-based oppression exist on a spectrum that is inherent to patriarchy. The question becomes, if patriarchy is essentially universal, why are honor killings more prevalent in some societies than

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<sup>36</sup> KA-MER Vakfi, *İstersek Biter* [*We Can Stop This*], Istanbul: Aksu Bora, 2011, 183.

others? First, it is important to re-iterate that honor-related, gender-based violence (often called domestic violence in North America) is prevalent in all societies. Though pregnant women are among the most murdered segments of the U.S. population, honor killings, which often involve entire families and have the tacit approval of large segments of entire communities, is related, but still different. A 2008 broad study conducted by a team of researchers from the Institute of Population Studies at Hacettepe University concerning violence in the family in Turkey found that Kurdish women were no more likely to experience or expect abuse from their spouses than Turkish women, and the majority of all women in Turkey experienced some form of domestic violence in their lifetimes.<sup>37</sup> Yet, in the case of the most extreme versions of domestic abuse--honor killings--the numbers swell in Kurdish communities. There were over 200 honor killings reported in Turkey in 2007, and the majority of those murdered were women living in Kurdish migrant communities in major Turkish city centers such as Istanbul or Izmir.<sup>38</sup> Risk factors for women soar in migrant communities outside of Turkey too.

Performing honor and protecting “authentic” Kurdish identity becomes even more important in “foreign” territory where migrant communities feel the threat of losing their ethno-nationalist identity. The importance of honor culture is elevated in migrant communities, because increased contact with non-group men as well as living in communities with different traditions concerning women’s status in society. Urban

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<sup>37</sup> “National Research on Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey” *The Institute of Population Studies at Hacettepe University* (Ankara: Hacateppe University Press, 2009) <http://www.hips.hacettepe.edu.tr/eng/violence.shtml> (accessed May 14, 2015).

<sup>38</sup> “Aegean Region Fails Their Women” *Turkish Daily News*, November 29, 2005, <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=107834> (accessed May 14, 2015).

centers in Turkey with large populations of middle-class women working alongside men and European cities where liberal, “Western” notions of the position of women threaten to seduce Kurds away from traditional honor culture values. These perceptions of outside threats converge with the reality that poor migrant workers, both male and female, cannot afford to adhere to--and are systematically discriminated from--the dominant culture’s interpretation of masculine and feminine honor in the diaspora. Living outside of their war-torn homeland proves to be even more treacherous for Kurdish women who are charged with responsibility of protecting both familial and national honor in a neo-colonial, foreign environment.<sup>39</sup>

The reigning patriarchal state, religions, and society police the honor of all women in Turkey, but there is an imbalance when it comes to Kurdish women’s experience with honor killings. It is not that women in the Kurdish regions resist or “fail” to obey honor codes more than their Turkish counterparts, or even that Kurdish societies are more “traditional” or “backward,” as the dominant Turkish discourse asserts. Instead, the nearly 100 years of violent civil war and uneven economic development affects all people of the Kurdish regions in significant ways that Turks do not experience. Nationalist, anti-imperial, neo-colonial war affects women differently than it affects the men in their societies too.

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<sup>39</sup> See Cecilia Englund, “Migrants between Culture and Society: A Case Study of the Changing Social Climate after the Murder of Fadime Şahindal” *Swedish National Focal Point of the RAXEN Network* (Stockholm: The Expo Foundation, 2002); Unni Wikan, *In Honor of Fadime: Murder & Shame*. Translated by Anna Paterson. 2008 [2003]. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003, 2008); Barzoo Eliassi, *Contested Kurdish Identities in Sweden: Quest for Belonging among Middle Eastern Youth* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013).

KA-MER emphatically insisted in their 2010-2011 report, *We Can Stop This*, that honor killings are not just a Kurdish problem, which is without a doubt true. However, the center's records help explain why Kurdish women suffer from honor violence disproportionately. Forty-five percent of honor killings in all of Turkey occurred in families who either lived in or were from Diyarbakır, Şanlıurfa, Gaziantep, Adıyaman, Batman, Siirt, Bingöl, Malatya, Muş, Erzincan, Erzurum, Kars, Mardin and Şırnak.<sup>40</sup> All of these cities are in the southeast and eastern part of Turkey. They either have majority Kurdish populations, such as Batman and Diyarbakır, or they have very large Kurdish communities like Gaziantep and Mardin. The Turkish state makes identifying Kurdish ethnicity with precision very difficult, due to its long history of denying Kurdish identity.

Between 2003 and 2010 KA-MER reported that the centers active in these cities assisted 750 women under threat of falling victim to an honor killing. Among the seven hundred and fifty women, KA-MER staff members negotiated with their families on the woman's behalf, and provided counseling, economic recourses, shelter, and vocational training. Still three of the seven hundred and fifty were murdered by their families. Further, the 2010-2011 report included the data from a massive 2008 survey conducted by the center. KA-MER staff visited eighty thousand homes in all twenty three of the provinces that they serviced and spoke with over forty thousand women.<sup>41</sup>

One of the key findings of the study was that sixty percent of the women interviewed spoke Kurmanci Kurdish as their native language. Another twelve percent of

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<sup>40</sup> Seher Cesur Kılıçaslan, "Honour Killings in Turkey" in *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, vol. 7.3 (2013), 28.

<sup>41</sup> *Istersek Biter* [We Can Stop This] KA-MER Vakfi, 2011.

respondents spoke Zazaki. Though eighty-three percent of all women surveyed could speak Turkish, seventeen percent only knew their non-Turkish mother tongue. KA-MER noted that these women reported that language was a major obstacle for these women in regards to education and seeking benefits and support. Over half of the women surveyed did not attend elementary school, and forty percent of the women were completely illiterate. This is strikingly different from the official literacy data for the whole country, which reports over ninety percent literacy for women in Turkey (which accounts for literacy in Turkish only).<sup>42</sup> Assimilation campaigns and the banning of Kurdish languages dramatically affected women and men in the region KA-MER services, and it disproportionately affected women. Most Kurdish boys go to school and learn Turkish while fifty percent of Kurdish girls do not. Kurdish women remain largely isolated and cannot fully participate in the Turkish economy and society due to language and literacy barriers.

Marriage practices further alienated Kurdish women. One fourth of the married women surveyed only had religious marriages that were not registered. This means that they cannot access the Turkish courts regarding their marriage. They cannot petition for portions of their husband's benefits. It is nearly impossible for these women to initiate divorce. Divorce is stigmatized, and without the ability to seek assistance from the courts women have no recourse against their husbands and families who control the arrangements and coerce women to keep their religious vows, whether or not the

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<sup>42</sup> "Functional Adult Literacy and Women's Support Programme Country Profile: Turkey" UNESCO, 2011; <http://www.unesco.org/uil/litbase/?menu=4&programme=141> (accessed March 12, 2016).

marriage was arranged without her consent. Only five percent of the married or divorced women reported that they were victims of a forced marriage, but sixty-four percent of the marriages were arranged. Forty-five percent of married women were under 18 when they were first married, which is illegal in Turkey. Eighty-three percent of married women were married to a relative, and five percent of the women were in a *kuma*, or co-wife, polygamous relationship, and another five percent were married by a *berdel* exchange. Just over four percent of the women surveyed were forced to marry one of their husband's brothers after the husband's death.

Migration played a significant role in women's lives in the Kurdish regions. Economic hardship, security, and forced marriage were cited as reasons that many women migrated from their homes. Joost Jongerden documented the forced evacuations of over one thousand seven hundred and seventy Kurdish villages and over six thousand Kurdish settlements by Turkish security forces between the late 1980s and 2000.<sup>43</sup> Just under fifty percent of the women surveyed considered themselves to be migrants. Political violence resulted in thirty-five percent of the migrant women leaving their homes. Another thirty-five percent left so they or their family could find employment. Ninety percent of the women had no income generating job.<sup>44</sup>

While the government and the dominant Turkish culture contend that there is something particular about Kurdish interpretation of honor culture and "tribal customs" that contributes to the dismal position of Kurdish women in Turkey, Nebahat Akkoç

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<sup>43</sup> See Joost Jongerden, *The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds An Analysis of Spatial Policies, Modernity and War* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007).

<sup>44</sup> İstersek Biter, 192-215.

asserted that the government and newspapers oversimplified the problem and did not seriously address the roots and effects of honor violence. According to KA-MER's surveys, poverty and joblessness among men and women are key to understanding why women suffer from honor-related, gendered violence in Kurdish communities--factors that are linked to war.<sup>45</sup> The entire region is economically depressed due to ongoing war.

Akkoç discussed key meetings with officers from the government and local politicians, such as then mayor of Diyarbakır, Osman Baydemir, concerning women's rights. She admitted that politicians and even police were willing to support funding and programs for domestic violence shelters, counseling, and the crisis intervention that KA-MER specializes in regarding honor killings. Through 2012, the time of my interview, there was no political will in Turkey to make radical interventions with regards to funding for native-language education, non-native-speaker Turkish-language instruction, and vocational training for women. Akkoç explained that low employment rates for Kurdish men contribute to the problem too. The impoverished families of the east rely on the unpaid household labor of women. This was the key reason honor culture proliferated in the Kurdish regions. Women had no means of income and family economies needed women's unpaid work at home. Honor culture produced a society where women were enslaved to their families. Until the economics of the Kurdish region changed, then honor culture and honor killings would proliferate. The historical record supports KA-MER's findings. Extraction economic practices and nationalist conflict converge in the East of

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<sup>45</sup> Akkoç, Nebahat. Interviewed by Author and Ozgun Basmaz, March 15, 2012, Diyarbakir, Turkey.

Turkey, creating a society that depends on the economic subordination of half the population.

Just a few days before the Newroz festivities and protests began in 2012, Akkoç underscored the urgency of placing gender issues in the forefront of politics. The activist contended that the political climate in Turkey and throughout the world in the context of the Arab Spring opened up an opportunity for organizers to make the state and the masses focus on gender issues. Akkoç insisted, “We have to make changes for women now. There will never be a better time.”<sup>46</sup> She specifically mentioned language rights for Kurds, jobs, and partnering with other organizations and state institutions to do whatever it takes to help women during this period of international democratic protests.

Knowing the conservative and nationalist mindset of the ruling AKP, radical feminist organizing, particularly agitating on behalf of Kurds remains perilous. In defiance of European Union prescriptions, the 2005 Turkish Penal recriminalized “Public denigration of Turkishness.” Defaming public officials carries stiff penalties under the law. Between 2012 and 2013 Turkey imprisoned more members of the press than any other country. Erdoğan himself issued a complaint in court against Anadolu University student, Osman Garip, for continuously “insulting” him on Facebook. Garip received a one year prison sentence.<sup>47</sup> More recently three university professors were arrested for signing a petition in protest to the current state initiated military offensive against

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., Translated by Author.

<sup>47</sup> For a full report on recent Turkish state offenses against freedom of expression and the Turkish laws that permit the state silence dissent see, Joint Submission to the UN Universal Periodic Review of Turkey, <http://www.pe-international.org/newsitems/turkey-pen-international-submits-joint-report-to-the-united-nations/?print=print>, (accessed March 10, 2016).

Kurdish cities in Turkey.<sup>48</sup> Notwithstanding the threat of incarceration, Kurdish women's rights and other human rights organizers refused to remain silent about the oppression of Kurdish women in Turkey and the impact of nationalist conflict on women.<sup>49</sup> Eren Keskin, the Kurdish human rights lawyer is a prime example. She was arrested and imprisoned in Turkey for accusing the state and military of abusing Kurdish women in prison. She continues to receive death threats from various individual Turkish nationalists into the present; still, she maintains, "I will continue to express both verbally and in writing my thoughts, which are banned unlawfully by the ruling powers, because we are not the ones who should change; they are."<sup>50</sup>

Patriarchal religion and honor culture affect all people living in Turkey, but the intense control of women's bodies in the poorest regions and neighborhoods of Kurdish society can only be explained by understanding the overlapping historical, cultural, and economic factors associated with the state's violent relationship with the Kurds. The unique importance women and their bodies acquired in post-colonial nationalist projects intersects in Kurdistan with the economic and political hardship endured by all Kurds living through decades of war and oppression.

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<sup>48</sup> Ece Toksabay, "Turkey Arrests Three Academics on 'Terrorist Propoganda' Charges" *Reuters*, Mar 15, 2016.

<sup>49</sup> Amnesty International Public Statement, AI Index: EUR 44/035/2005 (Public) News Service No: 324, 1 December 2005; <http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?lang=e&id=ENGEUR440352005>; Accessed February 1, 2013.

<sup>50</sup> Biography, Eren Keskin, <http://www.betterworld.net/heroes/pages-k/keskin-links.htm>; Internet. See Dogu Ergil, "Turkey is under Attack, Can't you see?" in *Turkish Daily News*, February 26, 2007, available from, <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=66974>; Elif Shafil. "One Honor Killing is a Tragedy Many others are just Statistics" in the *Turkish Daily News*, April 7, 2007, available from, <http://www.turkishdailynews.com.tr/article.php?enewsid=70191>;

## CHAPTER V

### HONOR, IDENTITY, AND POPULAR CULTURE

Atatürk believed that his revolutionary state-building project hinged on his ability to win the culture war--the struggle between what his contemporaries deemed culture *alafranka*: Western/secular/modern, versus culture *alaturka*: Anatolian/religious/traditional.<sup>1</sup> Atatürk and his successors presided over a deliberate, state-initiated program to define and police a particularly “modern” Turkish identity that endorsed Enlightenment ideals such as science, progress, and industrialization. New technologies in mass communication, particularly the radio and the growing print industry and then later television, were seen as strategic vehicles for transmitting and indoctrinating the masses who remained predominantly rural and tied to an agricultural, village economy and culture. Throughout Republican Turkish history the dominant culture (re)produced the image of honor culture as a rural, village, and specifically Kurdish problem and juxtaposed it against the “modern” representation of urban Turkish women. Understanding the intersectionality of honor violence in Turkey requires an in-

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<sup>1</sup> Deniz Kandiyoti, “Gendering the Modern: On Missing Dimensions in the Study of Turkish Modernity.” In S. Bozdoğan and R. Kasaba, eds. *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 113-132.

depth examination of the history of the hegemonic media in Turkey's construction of honor crimes as a racialized Kurdish problem, not as a complex dialectic between competing national identities, families, communities, women, men, and the state.

Antonio Gramsci put forth the important explanation of the relationship between culture and capitalism with the concept of cultural hegemony. Cultural hegemony is the domination of a people's culture by those who own the means of producing culture or "idea factories."<sup>1</sup> The "idea factories" are media. In fascist Turkey the state outlined the rules for producing culture, and the most important agenda for Turkish media was to create and affirm Turkishness.

The role of the media in nation building is as old as the nation itself.<sup>2</sup> Radio broadcasting began in Turkey in 1927 and functioned along with print media as the "cultural arm of nation building."<sup>3</sup> The regime and the republican elites expected and pushed magazines and radio shows to teach the people living in Turkey how to dress, dance, and act like modern, "Western" citizens. This state took the important role of cultivating "Western" tastes and the role popular media played in sowing the seeds of modernity so seriously that Mustafa Kemal banned all Turkish music from commercial radio for twenty months in 1935, only allowing "Western" music to play. In 1936 the government took over the broadcasting industry altogether. Private, commercial

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<sup>1</sup> Calvin F. Exoo, *The Pen and the Sword: Press, War, and Terror in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 2.

<sup>2</sup> See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition, (London and New York: Verso, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> P. Schlesinger, "Wishful Thinking: Cultural Politics, Media, and Collective Identity in Europe" in *Journal of Communication*, 43 (2), 6-17, p. 10 and quoted in Ege Algan, "Privatization of Radio and Media Hegemony in Turkey" in Lee Artz, Yahya R. Kamalipour, eds. *The Globalization of Corporate Media Hegemony*, (Albany: SUNY Press, 2003), 172.

broadcasting became illegal and the state approved and selected the music that flowed into homes in Turkey. In the same year, the state lifted the ban on Turkish music and showcased it alongside European classical and popular music. During this time and for the following decades the state encouraged Turkish composers and musicians to write and perform western-style music. These mandates on music reflected the pervasiveness of the Kemalists' struggle to marry "Turkishness" with "Westernness," in order to fabricate this new "modern" Turkish identity. The 1948 ban on Arabic films and songs with Arabic lyrics that were very popular with working class and rural Turks further illustrated the lengths the state went to construct and discipline Turkish identity during the early republican period. The state mandated Turkish as the only legal language of a state-run and censored broadcast medium.<sup>4</sup>

In order to similarly control the television medium and to combat the continued popularity of "arabesk" music (Turkish music influenced by Arab style) and other non-Turkish or non-secular trends in popular culture, the state created Turkish Radio and Television (TRT) in 1964, and started broadcasting television programming on TRT-TV in 1968. The state-influenced print media promoted TRT as an independent media organization, but the government controlled its finances and the administrators, like other high-level education positions such as university rectors, were appointed by the President. With this new media entity, the state attempted to promote "Western contemporary styles" with a heavy dose of nationalist indoctrination. The law dictated that at least twenty-five percent of the network's programming focus on government-

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 172-73.

censored current events, and educational programming emphasis on the history of the new nation and Atatürk's reforms.<sup>5</sup> The majority of the rest of the programming centered on imported "Western" films and television series, all of which had to strictly adhere to the Kemalist world view.

The image of the Turkish woman in the state-run media and the Istanbulite elite-owned popular magazines conformed to Atatürk's "Western" fantasy. Fashion marked modernity as much or more than music and art. The way bodies were described or represented in television, film, and print mattered a great deal. Women's clothing was conspicuously absent from the 1925 resolution that required public servants to adopt Western-style hats and dress. However, women were encouraged by Mustafa Kemal in key speeches and through the media to abandon the veil and headscarf and wear "Western-style" dresses.<sup>6</sup>

Despite the totalitarian efforts of the Kemalist state, the citizenry of Turkey remained ethnically, culturally, and politically diverse. TRT never achieved the kind of hegemony that it was built to foster.<sup>7</sup> Intellectuals and the middle and working classes in general hardly saw the network as anything more than a propaganda machine of the state. The masses consumed the various music and arts of their choice through records, cassettes, VCR-tapes, and live performances that escaped the state's grip. During the sometimes violent, tumultuous years of late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, print media

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>6</sup> See Zara Arat, *Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Woman*, (Hampshire: Palgrave MacMillan) and Nilifür Göle, "The Quest for the Islamic Self within the Context of Modernity" in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press), 1997.

<sup>7</sup> Algan, 174-189.

remained the choice medium for promoting diverse political and cultural perspectives. The radical left and right operated multiple presses that ran despite government attempts to stifle and discipline public opinion and dissent. This came to a head with the last of three military coups in 1980. Turkish nationalists--both moderates and radicals--viewed the military as the paternalistic protector of Atatürk's modern vision for Turkey, and the military marched into power under the auspices of preserving that mission from either the radicalized left or right.

After the military coup of 1980, the media industry experienced an intense crackdown from the regime, who attempted to depoliticize the country. It was in this politically stifled context that the women's movement exploded in Turkey. The feminists did not frame their struggle against domestic violence and for equality in the law, economy, and family as leftist or conservative in the 1980s and therefore, the military regime did not view the movement as threatening. Feminists worked with and against the regime to place women's rights and women's issues into the foreground of public discourse, and this culturally radical topic seemed benign enough to the generals.

Eylem Atakav offers a historical and sociological analysis of the representation of women in Turkish cinema in the 1980s. She explains how the threat of arrest, disappearances, and the burning of books and presses succeeded in silencing the overtly political voices of the country, and in its place artists and writers focused on the individual and on developing more realistic characters. She analyzes four ground-breaking Turkish films, *Dünden Sonra Yarından Önce* (After Yesterday before Tomorrow) 1987; *Mine*, 1982; *Asiye Nasıl Kurtulur?* (How Can Asiye Be Saved?), 1986 and *Kurbağ*

*Zalar* (The Frogs), 1985. Atakav explains how the personal was clandestinely political in Turkish film in the 1980s, but she fails to fully discuss the complexities of Kurdish politics in her own analysis.<sup>8</sup>

Atakav demonstrates how these films show women in complex and provocative roles. The films explore the themes of women's rights and identity in a patriarchal society, sexuality, the struggle to balance careers and marriage, and the socioeconomic factors that limit the choices of women in a male-dominant society. The characters are human--not completely good or bad.<sup>9</sup> The films of the 1980s brought a critical eye to the subjectivity of the female experience, and this, not coincidentally, aligned with the simultaneously developing second- and third-wave feminist consciousness in Turkey.

This cultural and feminist political revolution overlapped with what is considered the beginning of the most recent and almost continuous Kurdish insurgency, as discussed in chapter four. The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) announced the onset of the uprising on April 15, 1984. The state and dominant, hegemonic Turkish culture united aggressively against Kurds on the frontlines and against all markers of Kurdish identity in society. The Kurds had been the other within, or as Mesut Yeğen articulated, "'pseudo citizen' or 'prospective Turk,'" since the beginning of Kemalist Turkish state-formation.<sup>10</sup> If not expressly before, by the 1980s through 1990s and into the present the Kurds were the enemy. As feminist activists in Turkey and around the world caught the attention of

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<sup>8</sup> Atakav, Eylem. *Women and Turkish Cinema : Gender Politics, Cultural Identity and Representation* (Florence, KY: Routledge, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 5-7, and in more depth pages 55-97.

<sup>10</sup> Mesut Yeğen, "'Prospective Turks' or 'Pseudo Citizens:' The Kurds in Turkey" *Middle East Journal*, vol. 63, No. 4 (Autumn, 2009), 597-615.

the masses by confronting honor-related gendered violence, suddenly honor culture that certainly infused many aspects of both Turkish, Kurdish, as well as global patriarchal society, became specifically Kurdish in Turkey.

As Mahmood Mamdani articulated in his famous and timely work, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim*, “Modernity in politics is about moving from exclusion to inclusion, from repression to incorporation.”<sup>11</sup> Mamdani’s explanation describes Mustafa Kemal’s ultimate desire and plan for his newly created, Turkish, nation-state: to be included as an equal partner in the “modern,” “civilized,” and, in the case of Turkey up to the present, specifically, “European” world. Turkey’s application for membership in the European Union in 1987, and the many political, social, legal, and economic changes that the state initiated to advance its candidacy up to the present echo those same early-twentieth-century goals. However, the publication of human rights violations, specifically honor crimes, impeded “progress” toward ascension and tarnished the image and status that the Kemalists and now liberal Islamists invested so much into creating. Still yet, the Turkish state and the dominant culture side-stepped these accusations by describing honor killings, the most extreme version of honor-based, gendered violence, as a “rural,” “eastern,” “tribal,” and “Kurdish” “tradition,” not a “modern,” *Turkish* problem.

Dicle Koğacıoğlu in “The Tradition Effect: Framing Honor Crimes in Turkey,” explained how the international media continuously ascribes honor-related violence in Turkey and Turkish and Kurdish diasporic communities by invoking the “tradition

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<sup>11</sup> This quote is from the article Mahmood Mamdani wrote, “Good Muslim, Bad Muslim, An African Perspective,” for the Social Science Research Council, <http://essays.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/mamdani.htm>. The argument is further articulated in, *Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War and the Roots of Terror*, Pantheon, New York, 2004.

effect,” which explains honor crimes as part of a normalized, age-old honor code.<sup>12</sup> I agree with Koğacıoğlu’s assertion that the international press’s description of Turkey as adhering to “age-old” customs (re-)produce Turkey in the minds of its readers as medieval, not modern. According to Koğacıoğlu, the international press uses the “tradition effect” to explain honor crimes in Turkey in order to simultaneously re-enforce the unity of the “West” and the “West’s” “modern” identity *vis-à-vis* the “exotic,” unfamiliar, Turkish other. However, this same “tradition effect” plays out *inside* Turkey. Turkish popular culture, the press, politicians, scholars, and the state continuously re-affirm Turkish identity as secular/modern or Islamic/modern by using the “tradition effect” to explain the existence of honor-related violence in Kurdish communities. Koğacıoğlu is careful to note that Islamists in Turkey, like their Kemalist secular counterparts, consider themselves and their agendas “modern.”

To combat the “tradition effect” in Koğacıoğlu’s international context, the state amended and eventually rewrote the 1926 legal codes in favor of gender equality. After a three-year battle fought by a united coalition of human rights organizations in Turkey, The Platform for the Reform of the Turkish Penal Code, the 2005 Penal Code eliminated gender discrimination under the law in most situations, including a reaffirmation of the 2002 ban on reduced sentencing for people who murdered or conspired to murder someone if they believed that tribal custom or tradition (*töre*) demanded it. According to the coalition government charged with creating and passing the new criminal code, honor

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<sup>12</sup> Dicle Koğacıoğlu, “The Tradition Effect: Framing Honor Crimes in Turkey,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 15: 2 (2004), 118-151, 138.

killings fell under this ban on custom killings, though many feminists argue that it still leaves interpretation of the law up to judges who may still mitigate sentences for perpetrators of honor-related gendered violence.<sup>13</sup> In addition to changing the laws on honor killings, the state responded to international condemnation and internal political pressures by funding research projects and launching a state-sponsored campaign to stop honor violence in Turkey. In an article published in *The L.A. Times* in 2007 titled, “Turkey, Under Pressure from Feminists and the European Union, Works at a Level Unheard of in the Islamic World to End the Ritualistic Violence,” writer Tracy Wilkinson reported on the massive campaign initiated by the state to combat honor killings, in which, like most reports coming from the state, the popular press in Turkey, many Turkish and international scholars, she emphasized the “Kurdishness” of honor crimes in Turkey. Writing about the predominately Kurdish southeast, Wilkinson interviewed a government official in Diyarbakir, Canan Hancer Başturk, who explained,

This is a part of the country where it is not accepted that women work or travel, where they are not valued as individuals. But girls see the other side, modern Turkey, on TV or in the media, and with the rise in literacy, people's expectations are rising....So they want to break out of their shells, and that's where the clash comes between girls and their families, and for some boys too.... 'Honor' is another way of clinging to values and resisting change.<sup>14</sup>

Here, Turkey is “modern,” and the Kurds are people who “resist change.” These are the same arguments that the Kemalists made from the very first Kurdish uprisings in

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<sup>13</sup> Pinar İlkaracan, “How Adultery Almost Derailed Turkey’s Aspirations to Join the European Union” in *Deconstructing Sexuality in the Middle East*, Pinar İlkaracan, Ed (New York: Routledge, 2008) 41-64.

<sup>14</sup> Tracy Wilkinson, “Taking the ‘honor’ out of killing women,” *LA Times*, January 9, 2007. <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/jan/09/world/fg-honor9/2> (accessed October 4, 2009).

the 1920s when the state denied Kurdish identity altogether. Throughout the twentieth century the Turkish state described the Kurdish reaction to Turkey's nationalist campaign as "backward" resistance to education and a false religious fanaticism.<sup>15</sup>

This version of Kurdishness is re-iterated over and over again in Turkish popular culture. Analyzing the "third page" phenomenon and the image of "eastern"/"Kurdish" men, women, and family structures in film from the 1970s and in the immensely popular television series, *Sıla*, helps explain the role popular culture plays in national-identity formation and gendered, structural, and interpersonal violence. In Turkey, popular culture reaffirms the state's claim to "modernity" by characterizing the principle enemies of the state--the Kurds--as wrought with tribal corruption grounded in a backward culture of honor that is further marked by communal violence and the suppression and abuse of women.

In the case of honor-related violence, the media and the state affirm Kurdishness in the dominant Turkish culture's terms. Kurds have been systematically denied the means of producing their own version of Kurdish identity in the form of popular media; therefore, this imbalanced discourse goes on in Turkey without a mainstream counter narrative. Turks and the Kurds developed competing, bloody nationalist projects that continue to the present, and honor crimes are among the types of gendered violence committed due to postcolonial nationalist projects and uneven development the region. The importance placed on women's bodies as symbols of national honor elevate honor culture in sites of nationalist territorial conflict and threatened national identity.

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<sup>15</sup> Shahrzad Mojab, *Women of a Non-State Nation*, Shahrzad Mojab, Ed. (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, Inc., 2001),2-6.

Paradoxically, the stigma of honor crimes tarnishes the human rights records for both groups and undermines their claims to “modernity” and also works against arguments in favor of self-determination for the Kurds. There are deep socio-economic factors, such as civil war, the burning of over three thousand Kurdish villages and farmland,<sup>16</sup> and forced migration and refugee life that help to explain the high level of crime, particularly honor killings, in the Kurdish regions; however, popular culture plays a role in fanning the fires of ethno-nationalist conflict.

As explained in the previous chapter, conflict in the Kurdish regions for civil rights and/or autonomy for Kurds intensified in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s. During this period, the official state line on Kurdish identity remained pretty consistent. The only legal ethnic status for people who lived within the borders of Turkey remained Turkish. Kurds did not exist, legally speaking. They did not have the rights to express a non-Turkish ethnolinguistic identity. Yet, everyone--middle-class and elite Turks included--knew that Kurds existed despite the dementia of the state. Even if they had never visited a Kurdish neighborhood in Istanbul or made the “perilous” journey to Diyarbakır or Batman in the Kurdish regions, they “understood” Kurdishness through popular culture.

If the Kurds were not bloodthirsty killers of all sorts they were “backward,” ridiculous, irrational, superstitious, naïve, and simple. The films of Kemal Sunal in the 1970s and 80s exhibited and promoted this less threatening version of Kurdishness. In dozens of wildly popular comedic roles Sunal conveyed a simple, happy-go-lucky, naïve version of the working-class Kurdish community. Though Sunal’s characters were never

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<sup>16</sup> Zeynep Gambetti and Joost Jongerden, *The Kurdish Issue in Turkey, A Spatial Perspective* (London and New York: Routledge, 2015) 160.

called “Kurdish” they communicated and defined Kurdishness by strictly performing the racist stereotypes Turks held of Kurdish society. His most famous character, Şaban, which appeared in more than ten feature-film comedies, is coded Kurdish and commonly referred to as İnek Şaban after the popularity of the 1978 comedy of the same title, connoting the character’s anti-modern, backward foolishness, and painting that performance as representative of Kurds.<sup>17</sup> This version of Kurdishness in popular culture extends into the present.

The other version of Kurdishness was and continues to be presented in feature films and the increasingly popular television dramas of the 1990s and 2000s. Kurdishness is most frequently set in the rural southeast or the urban slum, and is focused on tribally sanctioned honor culture. Men are brutish husbands and unforgiving fathers who sanction honor killings and vendetta murders. Eylem Atakav’s examination of Turkish film ends with a chapter on “New Turkish Cinema,” in which she attests to the prevalence of the theme of honor crimes in popular films such as *Mutluluk* (Bliss) and the documentary, *Vendetta Song*, which follows a woman’s journey from Canada to Istanbul and then on to eastern Turkey, tracing the steps of an honor killing. Atakav never explicitly identifies honor killings with Kurds, but instead she uses language that marks Kurds, such as in her description of the contexts in which honor killings in Turkey occur, in general and in her endorsement of how *Vendetta Song* analyzes honor crimes. Atakav asserts, “It is a significant film that calls for an analysis of its exploration of honor killings, gender

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<sup>17</sup> İnek Şaban, 1978, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tvuUkLFH7eo>. Many of Kemal Sunal films, particularly films featuring the “Şaban” character are streaming on YouTube.

inequalities, the traditional practice of arranged marriages and the semi-feudal social structure in Eastern Turkey within the context of Islamic tradition.”<sup>18</sup>

This essentially sums up the way honor culture and honor killings are presented in the dominant Turkish discourse. From the late 1990s through the first decade of the twenty-first century the “third page” published countless images of disheveled, sad, poor, and dark women from the “southeast” and their mean, angry, poor, and dark-looking husbands, brothers, and fathers with bold headlines, “Töre” (custom or tradition) or “Namus” (honor), describing violent accounts of domestic abuse, murder, and attempted murder. This news became a spectacle and signified the depravity and backwardness of the “semi-feudal” southeast, while simultaneously comforting Kemalist, nationalist Turks with an affirmation of their contrasting modernity.<sup>19</sup>

By the late 1990s honor killings made their way into popular television in the United States (as mentioned in the Introduction), but it was the 2006 to 2008 Turkish telenovela, *Sıla*, that captured the attention of the masses in Turkey and the Turkish diaspora, bringing the orientalist fantasy of the “tribal” southeast into the hearts of millions of Turks. *Sıla* producers and viewers are not alone in their thirst for reaffirmation of Turkish “modern,” secular identity vis-à-vis the rural Kurdish other, but

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<sup>18</sup> Atakav, 109.

<sup>19</sup> “Adalet Fırat’ta Boğuldu” [Crap Justice on the Euphrates] *Sabah* (December 8, 1998); Nezih Gürol, “‘Töre’ Adaleti” [Tradition/Custom Justice] *Sabah* (1998); “Yaşamak için Polisten Yardım İstedi ama Töre Pınar’ın peşini bırakmadı” [Pınar Wanted Help from the Police Because Her Life was in Danger But Custom Did Not Let Her Go] *Posta*, April 2002; “Kürt Kökenli Fadime Yabancı Birine Kaçmanın Cezasını Canlıyla Ödedi” [Foreign Fadime of Kurdish Origin Paid Her Life to Escape Punishment] *Sabah* (January 23, 2002); Hacer Yıldırım, Ordaki ve Buradaki Cinayeti Gördük! [Over Here and Over There: Murder!] *Roza*, vol. 2.1 (1996) 7-9.

the series' popularity makes it a valid case study to help us understand the role of popular culture in structural violence.<sup>20</sup>

I was first introduced to the 2006 television drama by a fellow graduate student who watched it via YouTube. My friend, like millions of Turkish-speaking viewers around the world, connected with home through watching and discussing the drama and politics of *Sıla*. Just beginning my research concerning honor crimes and nationalism, I was instantly intrigued by the story. However, it is not simply the text or storyline that drives home the explanation of honor-related violence in Turkey as a Kurdish problem. The visual medium compounds with the dialogue and the daily discussions of the “third page” news to convey the understanding of what is “good” and “modern” in Turkey, and likewise, what is “bad,” “anti-modern,” and dangerous.

The story revolves around a downtrodden Kurdish family in Mardin that must give their young daughter, Sıla, away to be raised in Istanbul. Now an urban, “modern” Turkish woman, she is forced to return to her Kurdish family and marry an important tribal notable (*ağa*), Boran, to restore the tribe's honor and save her brother, Azat, who ran away with the *ağa*'s sister, Narin. The powerful and wealthy family hunted Azat and Narin down, and only refused to kill them if a *berdel* was made with one of Azat's sisters. Sıla is traded by her family to the *ağa* in exchange for the acceptance of Azat and Narin's marriage.

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<sup>20</sup> See Johan Galtung, “Cultural Violence.” In *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, Co. 3, 1990, for an explanation of the role of culture in structural violence.

She is physically abused by her new husband and mother-in-law, and her biological family did not change in the period of time between giving up their daughter and tricking her into coming back to save their son, who illegally married the ağa's sister. The biological family, particularly the father, Celil, is continuously portrayed as both corrupt and backward. Not only did he trap his oldest daughter, Sila, into a forced marriage with the ağa, but Celil is constantly scheming to gain wealth, verbally abusing his wife, while simultaneously speaking of his and his family's "honor." The writers and producers convey the ultimate ignorance and danger of Sila's father, and through him poor Kurdish men in general, in a scene where his youngest adolescent daughter walks home from school with a neighborhood boy. They share an apple, and the father witnesses this act of friendship. He goes into a rage and threatens to kill the girl for compromising her and more importantly *his* honor by committing a *sin*. From the perspective of the audience, the act between the two school friends is more than innocent; however, the writers portray Celil's reaction as if it was straight from the "third page." He screams at his wife and daughter about family honor and religion, while threatening that *she* is forcing him to do the unthinkable. Finally, the mother, Bedar, saves her daughter by begging Celil to find another way to punish her. He spares his young daughter's life, but continues on with his scheming and crudeness throughout the series. Through this character, the drama's producers convey the idea that Kurdishness equals ignorance, and worse yet, danger, due to an intolerable view of religion mixed with rigid tribal customs marked by rampant honor killings. The producers of *Sıla* blur the lines of Islam and Kurdish custom, suggesting that honor killings are somehow linked to religion. Overall, the entire series portrays life in the Kurdish east as full of corruption, honor-

related violence, forced marriage, and religious extremism, much like Orientalists characterized the entire Middle East region since the early years of imperialism.

One of the most striking methods of communicating who and what is “modern” and Turkish compared to “backward” and Kurdish is done through clothing and costuming in *Sıla*. The corrupt father, Celil, and his mischievous, foolish cohorts wear “Kurdish” pants and hats. Kurdish pants, sometimes called “harem” pants by the western fashion industry, are often worn by rural men and women in Kurdistan. Ironically, since the turn of the century “harem” pants have appeared in European haute-couture and have symbolized the buyer’s and designer’s cosmopolitanism or “worldliness.” This fashion trend acts as yet another colonial form of knowledge. Europeans or Americans wearing “harem” pants suggest knowledge of and perhaps an appreciation of Southwest Asian culture; however, the distance and difference between rural Kurdish workers and Parisian fashionistas are clearly marked by an imbalanced power dynamic. As Reina Lewis in her work on “cross-cultural dressing” explains, the “western” woman’s desire to wear “oriental” clothes is “predicated on an implicit reinvestment in the very boundaries they cross. Clothes operate as visible gatekeepers of those divisions and, even when worn against the grain, serve always to re-emphasize the existence of the dividing line.”<sup>21</sup>

In the beginning of the series, *Sıla*’s mother-in-law confronts her about her wardrobe. All the women in the ağa’s household and surrounding village, including the wealthy mother-in-law, cover their heads, arms, and legs wearing long dresses or skirts.

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<sup>21</sup> Reina Lewis, “On Veiling, Vision and Voyage: Cross Cultural Dressing and Narratives of Identity,” in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* edited by Reina Lewis and Sara Mills (New York: Routledge, 2003) 528.

Sıla sticks out with her flowing hair, bare shoulders, short dresses, jeans or otherwise tight pants. The conflict between Sıla and her mother-in-law comes to a head when the mother-in-law throws out Sıla's clothes and replaces them with a more "modest" wardrobe. Sıla rejects this intrusion and the mother-in-law literally slaps her in the face. She explains that she will not allow Sıla to disrespect their family by wearing inappropriate clothes. Sıla becomes exceedingly depressed and even attempts suicide after she is stripped of her "modern," sophisticated (Turkish?) identity symbolized by her clothing. However, over the first season Sıla warms up to her new husband, who pushes his mother to allow Sıla to dress the way she wants. Throughout the rest of the series Sıla is shown wearing "modern" clothing; however, she occasionally wears "harem" pants. The pants are always noticeable on Sıla, and act as a method of re-enforcing the notion that this modern woman from Istanbul does not belong in the static "east."<sup>22</sup> She is bizarrely urban and Kurdish. Ertuğ Altınay nicely documented the way the dominant culture in Turkey frames Kurdish women's bodies and how unsettling it is for nationalist Turks when the hegemonic discourse is destabilized in the 2011 article, "The Terrorists with Highlights: Kurdish Female Suicide Bombers in the Mainstream Turkish Media." Kurds should not look "modern," as Altınay demonstrates. Though Turkishness is adoptable by Kurds, they should still look like second-rate Turks. If Kurdish women "pass" convincingly (by having very expensive hairstyles) it is sinister and terrifying,

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<sup>22</sup> *Sıla*. Directed by Gül Oguz (2006-2008). <http://silatv.blogspot.com/search?updated-min=2005-01-01T00%3A00%3A00Z&updated-max=2006-01-01T00%3A00%3A00Z&max-results=9>, (accessed October 10, 2009).

particularly because it calls into question a Turkish, racialized modern identity predicated on the “anti-modern” identity of the internal enemy--the Kurd.

*Sıla* provides an opportunity to analyze yet another, less subtle, facet of honor violence in popular culture: rape. One of the key features of honor-killing stories that leaves many audiences gasping in disbelief is that women who are raped are sentenced to die by their families. Rape can be viewed as “dishonorable” to a family as consensual adultery, because the men in the victim’s family who are charged with protecting and policing feminine honor failed to perform this essential function of masculine honor. This, of course, explains why women do whatever they can to conceal rape--protecting their lives and enduring the fact that men get away with abuse. When it is impossible to hide a rape, or someone witnessed it, or the rape and beating is so violent that the victim must seek medical attention, or if there is a pregnancy, the family of victim becomes involved. Often the family will attempt to marry the victim to her rapist. This is considered the most humane solution. In the event a wedding is refused or impossible, such as in the common case of perpetrators running away, then the woman is unmarriageable, a non-entity in the community, a drain on the family resources, and a perpetual stain on the honor of her family. Honor culture requires the stain to be removed one way or the other.

*Sıla*’s husband, Boran, who develops into a romantic hero, rapes her. He is a Kurd, but his wealth, good looks, and sense of responsibility make him desirable. However, like in so many Turkish romances he is still a man who is turned into an animal by his lust for the ultimately desirable, beautiful *Sıla*. He is obsessed by her refusal and

fidelity to a Turkish fiancé before the forced marriage. Eventually, Boran, who develops into a protagonist male character, rapes Sila, but the violent sexual experience and his remorse somehow miraculously changes him into a loving partner. He is “civilized” like Enkido in *Gilgamesh*, becoming an ideal husband. Sila forgives him. They fall in love after the rape, and eventually have a baby. The prevalence and meaning of rape fantasies are outside of the scope of this project and beyond my expertise, yet the prominence of this scenario in Turkish romance stories is striking. It is connected to both feminine and masculine honor ideals. In popular culture the rape scenario unfolds in a discourse where women protect their virginity and their familial honor and men protect women’s honor by policing their bodies and abstaining from unmarried sex; however, masculine virility and the desirability of beautiful women make this ideal impossible. The rape scenes are traumatic, yet excusable in many cases such as in the romantic, repentant hero Boran, because of widespread acknowledgement of the impossibility of the ideal or the fantasy of subverting it. However, the violent, incestuous rape in films such as *Mutluluk* and *Vendetta Song* also get coded as Kurdish. A 2009 study attempted to combat the popular belief that incest and sexual molestation within the family only occur in poor families or in villages, all markers associated with Kurdishness in Turkey, by documenting eighty-nine cases of abuse in segments of society. Ethnicity is not taken into account in this study, reflecting the fact that discussing Kurdish identity remains a taboo in Turkey. A 2011 film, *Altıkarınca* [Merry Go Round]<sup>23</sup> depicted incest in a middle class Turkish family living in Istanbul and attempted to “turn a piece of conventional wisdom upside

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<sup>23</sup> *Altıkarınca* [Merry Go Round] Directed by İlksen Başarır, Written by İlksen Başarır and Mert Fırat, 2011.

down” referring to the belief that incest only happens in “low income families.”<sup>24</sup>

Though these studies represent a radical attempt to expose the discriminatory characterization of sexual violence in they do not explicitly confront the way sexual violence in “low income families” is coded as Kurdish. In Turkey, viewers get a frightening, destabilizing, yet at times romanticized version of Kurdish masculinity that can be compared to the racialized depiction of African American male sexuality in the United States.<sup>25</sup>

Turkish popular culture and the press continuously re-affirm Turkish identity as secular/modern by using the “tradition effect” to explain the existence of honor-related violence in Kurdish communities. In Turkey, the “dividing line” is not only the Orientalist discourse to which Reina Lewis refers, but also an ethnic line, here Turks and Kurds.

The racialized othering that the creators of this drama both reflect and contribute to are characteristic of a vulnerable constructed Turkish identity that requires constant reaffirming of its claim to a modernity grounded in civil liberties and republican values. This process became particularly important in the last decade when a coalition of feminist and human rights activists launched a campaign to reform the 1926 penal code that ultimately succeeded in 2004/2005--the same period that the producers and writers were busy interviewing sociologists and anthropologists in order to recreate Kurdish tribal life

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<sup>24</sup> Elif Ekinci, “A Hidden Secret in Turkey: Incest” *Hürriyet Daily News* (Istanbul), April 24, 2011, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=a-hidden-secret-in-turkey-incest-2011-04-22> (accessed, March 24, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> Juan Battle, Sandra L. Barnes, eds. *Black Sexualities: Probing Powers, Passions, Practices, and Policies* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010).

for the television series *Sıla*.<sup>26</sup> The campaign to reform the penal code pressed society to re-examine the historical position of women in Turkish law, and created a very public debate concerning women, modernity, and Turkishness.

The hegemonic popular culture in Turkey is difficult to subvert, but there have been notable attempts by Kurds to challenge the hegemonic, neo-colonial narrative of Kurdishness in popular culture. Kurdish actor and filmmaker, Yılmaz Güney, wrote scripts and made movies that nuanced the portrayal of Kurdish life in the 1970s and 1980s. In an interview in 1983, Güney explained his frustration about the compromises he had to make to appease the Turkish government and Turkish sensibilities. In the 1978 film, *Sürü* [The Herd], Güney wanted to tell the history of the Kurds, but he lamented, “I could not even use the Kurdish language in this film; if we had used the Kurdish language, all those who took part in this film would have been sent to jail.”<sup>27</sup> His 1982 classic, *Yol* [The Way], was filmed in secret by his protégé, Şerif Gören, in southeastern Turkey while Güney served a prison sentence for murder, which he evidently committed. The film follows the story of five Kurdish men released on furlough from prison. Through Güney’s script you understand how the Kurdish men and women in the southeast are doubly oppressed by the authoritarian Turkish state and honor culture. One of the five men “Yol” portrays, Seyit Ali, comes home from prison to find his wife, Zine, working as a prostitute to earn a living while he is jail. Her family demands that Seyit Ali kill his wife, but he struggles with the decision. He is angry with her for the betrayal, but also

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<sup>26</sup> Information based on an interview I conducted with Turkish actress, Özge Özkan, August 10, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Chris Kutschera, “Kurdistan Turkey: Yilmaz Guney's last Film” *The Middle East*, January 1983.

understands her difficult circumstance. Eventually, he decides not to disobey the family and refuses to kill Zine. They run away, but in their cold, snowy trek through the mountains Zine freezes to death. Seyit Ali is both heartbroken and relieved that the honor debt is paid. Güney and Gören illuminate the many hardships facing poor Kurds in Turkey, and critique “tradition” and Turkification. In a bold move, the two filmmakers used the Kurdish language and dared to write “Kurdistan” in Red letters on the screen. For this, military regime of the 1980s immediately banned *Yol*. Still, it won the Palme d’Or at the Cannes Film Festival in 1982. *Yol* was not released in Turkey until 1999.<sup>28</sup> Even then, the censors edited out “Kurdistan,” preferring to silence the political protest in the film and instead masked it with the same theme of “rural” “Turkish” life that white-washed *Sürü*. The state and hegemonic Turkish culture still could not handle Güney’s complex critique of both Kurdish and Turkish society.

Ten years later, indigenous Kurdish voices continued to be silenced in the media. In 2010, Selahattin Demirtaş, then chairman of the BDP (now HDP) filed a formal complaint to the Turkish state against Turkish soap operas, claiming that they are essentially “anti-Kurdish.” He reportedly said, “I guess the people who watch those series desire to go out to the street after the end of the episode and strangle the first Kurdish citizen to cross their path.”<sup>29</sup> The complaint brought some attention to the image of Kurds in Turkish popular media; however, the ill fate of the television series, *Ayrılık*

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<sup>28</sup> Stephen Kinzer, “Turkey, Relenting, Shows the Works Of a Kurd Patriot” *New York Times*, April 11, 1999.

<sup>29</sup> Jenna Krajeski, “Turkey Days of Their Lives” *Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting*, March 30, 2012, <http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/turkey-diyarbakir-kurdish-roles-soap-opera-politics-ayrilik-olmasaydi> (accessed March 20, 2016).

*Olmasaydı: Ben u Sen*, [No Separation: You and Me] showed how very little patience the dominant culture had for this kind of criticism.

The 2012 romantic comedy, *Ayrılık Olmasaydı: Ben-u Sen*, set in Diyarbakır, was celebrated by Kurdish leaders like Osman Baydemir as “very important” to show the normal lives of Kurds in the famous, historic city.<sup>30</sup> As filming started, conscientious of the way Kurds are portrayed in most Turkish media, Kurdish youth threw rocks at the Kanal D (Channel D) vans. However, after Baydemir and others’ affirmation that this show would be different, the city welcomed the production crew back to film. The show reportedly is a comedy with a non-stereotypical Kurdish love story. However, the script never mentions the words “Kurd” and Kurdish is not spoken in the film. This is a striking omission for a series advertised as showing the “real” Diyarbakır and “real” Kurds.

This television series continues to draw protests from Turkish nationalists on the internet. A quick YouTube search for the show turns up clips entitled “Şu Ayrılık Olmasaydı” [This is ‘No Separation’]. The videos mock the television shows attempt to broadcast an alternative narrative of Kurdish life. “Şu Ayrılık Olmasaydı” clips contain footage from nationalistic war films where Turkish soldiers are killed by Kurds. In one case, a YouTube video entitled “Şu Ayrılık Olmasaydı,” showed footage of another Turkish film in which a female PKK “terrorist” executed a Turkish man in civilian clothes. The comments of the video claim that this clip showed “gerçek Diyarbakır” (the real Diyarbakır).<sup>31</sup> The struggle to contest the image of Kurds in Turkish popular culture

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<sup>30</sup> Video clip of Osman Baydemir discussing *Ayrılık Olmasaydı: Ben-u Sen* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KzBmPUhlp3w>; (accessed October 8, 2015).

<sup>31</sup> Turkish nationalist re-interpretation of “Şu Ayrılık Olmasaydı” published to YouTube, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yV9yQvOoVUw>. (accessed October 8, 2015).

persists. As Edward Said explained, “There is incorporation; there is inclusion; there is direct rule; there is coercion. But there is only infrequently an acknowledgement that the colonized people should be heard from, their ideas known.”<sup>32</sup> The desire or willingness to hear the Kurdish perspective in the form of popular media and popular culture still remains negligible in Turkey.

Democracy in Turkey has been tenuous at best since Atatürk’s “modernization” campaign. The military has had a heavy hand in civil and political life, reserving the right to intervene in the form of a military coup when the Kemalists deemed that democratization or politicians were leading the country away from “modern,” secular policies. People living in Turkey have challenged “Turkification,” anti-democratic state policies, and the image of Kurds as conveyed through the dominant culture and portrayed in commercials, films, and television dramas like *Sıla*. The Kurdish resistance movement, described as a “terrorist” campaign by the state, remains one of the most active movements against Kemalist state policies. Kurds and their human rights advocates utilize more than physical force in the form of guerilla war to assert their cause. Human rights activism continues in the face of Article 301 of the 2005 Turkish Penal Code, and many organizers, activists, and now politicians like Selahettin Demirtaş refuse to remain silent.<sup>33</sup>

The state and the dominate culture push the image of *Sıla*’s violent and scheming father and her abusive, “traditional” mother-in-law as the face of Kurdishness, while

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<sup>32</sup> Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 50.

<sup>33</sup> The Turkish Penal Code, Amnesty International Public Statement, AI Index: EUR 44/035/2005 (Public) News Service No: 324, 1 December 2005, <http://www.amnestyusa.org/document.php?lang=e&id=ENGEUR440352005>; (accessed May 14, 2015).

always working to silence and hide the realities that activists threaten to expose and that government officials like Doğan Soyaslan inadvertently reveal. Currently, the conservative government in Ankara is claiming to reach out to the Kurds and to attempt to solve “the Kurdish question.” The state took a major step by lifting the restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language. This culminated in the January 2009 launch of the state-owned Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) Channel Six, which is the first Kurdish-language television channel in Turkey. The government and the proponents of TRT-6 claim that this is a major step in Turkish-Kurdish relations. Many Kurds see it as more of the same. For now, defining Kurdishness in Turkey remains in the hands of the state and the dominant culture.

CHAPTER VI  
HONOR IN THE CASE OF BRAZIL: A TRANSATLANTIC  
COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

*Our customs, may God preserve them, and our legislators' spirits allow us to recognize legitimate defense of honor when a wife is caught in the act (of adultery). To judge otherwise is to go against our moral values and the purity of our customs. To deny legitimate defense of honor means to make it impossible for an unfortunate husband whom fate caused to suffer great pain to defend himself, since this is his only argument.*

– 1958 Sao Paulo Supreme Court Judge commenting on why he acquitted a husband who murdered his wife and her lover.<sup>1</sup>

*It is very easy to plead that the outraged honor is the honor of the unfaithful spouse and that this attitude does not harm the honor of the other spouse. However, this point of view is written in books, far from reality, especially among us Latins, for whom this is not the popular concept of honor; the outraged honor is the honor of the innocent spouse*

[Attempted murderer].

-2002 Brazil Court of Appeals Judicial Opinion<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Mariza Correa, “Os Crimes da Paixão” [Crimes of Passion] *Tudo é História*, vol. 33 (Austin: University of Texas, 1981) 66.

<sup>2</sup> Cited in Silvia Pimentel, Valeria Pandjarian, and Juliana Belloque, “The ‘Legitimate Defense of Honor,’ or Murder with Impunity? A Critical Study of Legislation and Case Law in Latin America.” In *‘Honour’ Crimes, Paradigms, and Violence against Women*, Lynn Welchman and Sara Hossain, Eds. (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005) 259.

The largest country in the Americas, Brazil, had an imperial past that is quite different, but comparable to that of Turkey. The two countries were tied to the Mediterranean world in the realm of culture with regards to notions of honor, patriarchal religion, and the position of women in society. Turkey and Brazil shared a similar relationship with European imperial and neo-imperial economic, political, and cultural threats that influenced post-colonial modernization projects. Women's rights, familial honor, national honor, and discourses of racialized "backwardness" overlapped in Brazil quite comparably to the ways in which the Turkish and Kurdish examples I've described above have, despite different traditions of romantic love, pre-marital sexual relations, and the absence of ethno-nationalist civil war.

Invaded by the Napoleonic army in 1807 and occupied by the French military, the Portuguese monarchy moved the seat of the empire to its richest colony, Brazil, in 1808. Though the King returned to Portugal with the help of the British, Brazil gained independence from Portugal in 1822. The new Brazilian Empire was a constitutional monarchy. In 1888, the Golden Law, signed by Princess Isabel acting as regent for her father, Emperor Dom Pedro II, abolished slavery. Land- and slave-owning elites in the provinces resented what they saw as a drastic intervention in their livelihood and a usurpation of their traditional power by the monarchy. A reactionary coup overthrew the monarchy and turned Brazil into a Republic in 1889.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of this narrative see John Chasteen, *Born in Blood and Fire: A Concise History of Latin America*. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company) 2001, 2011; Stuart B. Schwartz. *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press), 1996.

Like for the Ottomans and Young Turks, the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were dynamic and difficult years. Brazil faced foreign intervention in its economy and politics, and worked to define its national identity and create “modern” political, economic, and social systems. The Empire and then fledgling republic faced climate disasters that were exasperated by the demands of the global market. Elite landowners allied with foreign investors to supply Europe and the United States with raw materials, particularly coffee. Outpacing rubber, sugar, and cotton exports, by the 1880s the coffee regions of Minas Gerais, Sao Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro supplied over half of the world’s coffee.<sup>2</sup> The coffee boom occurred at the same time Brazil completely abolished slavery. Though Afro-Brazilians made up over half of the coffee workers, the demands of production required new sources of labor. In this context, Brazil recruited Germans and Italians in the 1880s and 1890s, and then after the end of the coffee panic in 1906, Japanese immigrants.<sup>3</sup> The millions of workers in Brazil suffered greatly with changes in the global economy and industrialization in 1910s and 1920s. The labor movement organized strikes and protests during this period that the police met with brutal repression. In the context of the global depression that started in 1929, the 1930 Revolution ushered into power Getúlio Vargas, a former *caudillo*<sup>4</sup> governor of Rio Grande do Sul. Vargas ruled a provisional government until 1937 when faced with

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<sup>2</sup> Anne G. Hanley, “Financing Brazil’s Industrialization” in Smith, Merritt Roe, Leonard N. Rosenband, and Jeff Horn. Eds. *Reconceptualizing the Industrial Revolution*. (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2010) 253.

<sup>3</sup> See Jeffery Lesser, *Negotiating National Identity: Immigrants, Minorities, and the Struggle for Ethnicity in Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> A *caudillo* is a wealthy landowner that processed political and military power in Latin America.

having to leave office due to term limits set in the 1934 Constitution, Vargas declared himself dictator. He capitalized on the popular fear of leftist labor protests' ability to destabilize society and return to the political and economic turmoil of 1920s. He broadcast over the radio that the Communists were planning a coup, and declared himself dictator to save Brazil from leftist ruin. He declared the *Estado Novo* (New State), a statist plan for one party government and rapid industrialization of the economy very similar to that of the Kemalists.

Like leaders in Turkey, Vargas was influenced by European fascism. *Estado Novo* economic and legal reforms were inspired by Mussolini's Italy and Salazar's Portugal.<sup>5</sup> Vargas adopted a populist platform influenced and was supported by European and Brazilian Integralists who favored national unity supported by an authoritarian state. He outlawed all political parties and cracked down on any opposition.<sup>6</sup>

The *Estado Novo* was an economic and social plan for Brazilian modernization and political centralization that drew its momentum from a middle-class notion of progress and the virtue of the male head-of-household, nuclear family as the cornerstone of Brazilian national identity. Despite Vargas's initial alliance with the workers, his idea for Brazilian nationalist identity concentrated on conservative Christian mores mixed with a modernist obsession with industrialization and economic corporatism. According

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<sup>5</sup> Helgio Trindade, "Fascism and Authoritarianism in Brazil under Vargas (1930-1945)" in Stein Ugelvik Larsen, ed. *Fascism Outside Europe: The European Impulse Against Domestic Conditions in the Diffusion of Global Fascism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001) 469-528.

<sup>6</sup> See Jens Hentschke, eds. *Vargas and Brazil: New Perspectives* (New York : Palgrave Macmillan, 2006)

to Vargas's social policies, the all-important state could only be as strong as its basic building block--the family.

Like Atatürk's statism and national identity project in Turkey, this emphasis on family as the basic unit of society and workshop for modern citizenry put Brazilian families under the microscope of the state, whose leaders created policies and programs to construct the nationalist definition of the ideal Brazilian family. Working toward the well-being of the new corporatist state, women gained an important position within this system as the primary individuals responsible for creating this nationalist environment in the home and raising ideal young Brazilians that fit the Vargas mold.<sup>7</sup> Within this context Brazilian women and their bodies became the bastion of not only familial honor, but also national honor.

National honor now depended on the strict adherence to cultural, gendered notions of masculine and feminine honor. The ideal Vargas woman was modern with a new state-supported, social license to work in the public (though the majority of Brazilian women, people of color, working classes, poor, and former slaves, had been working outside of the home since the colonial period). This blended with the new nationalists' agenda for mothering focused on "modern" techniques for child rearing. This combination was the base of the new state-sponsored feminism that granted support for the long-suffering Brazilian women's rights activists. In 1932 Vargas signed a new

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<sup>7</sup> Getúlio Vargas, *A Nova Política do Brasil*. Rio de Janeiro: Jose Olympio, 1938 &1940. Reprinted in *A Documentary History of Brazil*, ed. By E. Bradford Burns. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1966.

election code granting women the right to vote.<sup>8</sup> Despite these changes in the state discourse concerning women, feminine honor still relied on patriarchal, Church-supported constructions centered on virginity until marriage, and then unwavering fidelity to husband, father, Church and the ultimate patriarch--the state.<sup>9</sup>

This construction of feminine honor could not be separated from masculine honor, a keystone of male identity that centered on men's abilities to control female bodies. This notion of feminine honor remained codified in state law through Brazilian penal codes. From the Imperial period to the most recent and presently binding 1940 Penal Code inspired by modernists, the Brazilian law made the distinction between punishment for crimes against "honest" or "virgin" women and crimes against "dishonest" women.<sup>10</sup> Virginity and the ability of family and society to control a woman's sexuality remained a significant factor in individual women's lives and in courts of Brazil. Families, police, and women initiated court cases against men who "took" a woman's virginity and refused to marry her.

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<sup>8</sup> See S Bess, Susan K. *Restructuring Patriarchy: The Modernization of Gender Inequality in Brazil, 1914-1940* for an in-depth examination of how the modernist proponents in Brazilian society co-opted the feminist movement. For an extensive historical narrative of the Brazilian feminist movement see June Edith Hahner, *Emancipating the Female Sex: The Struggle for Women's Rights in Brazil, 1859-1940*.

<sup>9</sup> This is the topic of Suanne Caulfield's 2000 work *In Defense of Honor: Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil*. Caulfield argues that within Brazilian state's and elites' attempts to "modernize" and emulate European social and cultural ideals, debates over honor remained a powerful force and central theme for elites and individuals, both white and black. Caulfield primarily examines legal theory, court cases, and personal letters to demonstrate how honor and sexual morality was used to serve particular political agendas. She contends that many elites and government officials throughout the period cited moral superiority based on sexual purity and honor as a positive attribute and justification to characterize Brazil as modern; where others cited Brazil's obsession with sexuality and honor, exemplified by "hymenolatry," especially by white elites who insisted on the moral inferiority of Brazil's "uneducated", racially-mixed populace, as a sign of "backwardness."

<sup>10</sup> Human Rights Watch, Women's Rights Project, *Criminal Injustice: Violence Against Women in Brazil*, 1991.

This marks a difference with the Turkish and Kurdish cases. Despite Church laws forbidding pre-marital sex, and to the great lament of elite and middle-class Brazilian social reformers, sex outside of the sacrament was common, and the courts were used by women and their families to force men to marry women with whom they had sex.<sup>11</sup> In Turkey, pre-marital sex was so stigmatized and dishonorable that it was rarely admitted and certainly not in public courts, unless a woman was raped or pregnant. In the case of rape, both Brazilian and Turkish law allowed for reduced sentencing or no criminal charges at all for perpetrators of rape if they agreed to marry their victims. Virginity was prized in both societies, but a spectrum of disciplinary action was employed by families and states in both cases for women--almost exclusively--who challenged this marker of feminine and familial honor.

The importance of race and class in determining statist notions of honor cannot be overstated. Drawing on the modernist discourse of social hygiene, statist reform programs encouraged and monitored the proper health and well-being of the family in service of the nation. These programs resembled Turkey's assimilation campaigns for the Kurds. The ideal family was essentially middle class and white, which did not match the reality of the majority of Brazilians. Armed with the legitimacy of positivist, modernist ideology, the state instituted education policies aimed at whitening the country.

Whitening took many forms in the Americas. It was an explicit immigration plan instituted by nineteenth-century and early-twentieth-century modernization regimes that recruited or limited immigration to Europeans. These modernists hoped to foster

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<sup>11</sup> Caulfield, Sueann *In Defense of Honor: Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil*. (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2000), pp. 3.

miscegenation that would biologically change the African and mixed populations to be whiter. During the Vargas regime and throughout the twentieth century, the state initiated education policies focused on health, hygiene and attempted to instill middle-class, white cultural traditions in Afro-Brazilian and indigenous populations.<sup>12</sup>

Brazilian nationalists celebrate the notion of “racial democracy” as they compare Brazilian policy of racial equality under the law since the Republican period to the U.S. long history of legal segregation. The institution of whitening policies created a de facto segregated society, marginalizing Afro-Brazilians into the present.<sup>13</sup> Whitening projects are key to understanding the importance of the civilizational discourse of backwardness in Brazil and how race and class have been joined to form a hegemonic culture that marginalized people of color.

The “white middle-class social reaction to massive statist reform policies aimed at modernizing the Brazilian economy and citizenry in effect continued to marginalize Afro-Brazilians and the indigenous people. The educational reforms of the Estado Novo demanded supposed intelligence tests that segregated public schools. Though the law claimed that students were divided based on aptitude, this racially segregated people too. Middle-class white families could afford to tutor their children and prepare them for entrance exams. They also used their financial leverage to send their children to high

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<sup>12</sup> See Jerry Dávila, *Diploma of Whiteness: Race and Social Policy in Brazil, 1917–1945* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003).

<sup>13</sup> See Tanya Kateri Hernández, *Racial Subordination in Latin America: The Role of the State, Customary Law, and the New Civil Rights Response* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013). For the specifics of the Brazilian case see Chapter Three, “Brazilian “Jim Crow” The Immigration Law Whitening Project and the Customary Law of Racial Segregation -- A Case Study,” 47-72.

performing private schools. The middle class benefitted from reforms focused on the power of education for securing top jobs and full civic participation, while poor working class, non-whites continued to be pushed to the margins of society.<sup>14</sup> When faced with pressure for democratization of resources and challenges to privilege along gender, class, and racial lines, the Brazilian middle class, like many of their Turkish Kemalist counterparts, preferred authoritarianism.<sup>15</sup>

Brazil's populist leader, Getúlio Vargas, returned to power in 1951 with the approval of a populist alliance that included the religious, white middle class that had previously supported him. However, faced with an economic crisis and labor demands he allied himself staunchly with workers and distanced himself from his middle class supporters. When Vargas attempted widespread working-class relief, such as land reform, the middle class mobilized in protest. The Brazilian bourgeoisie radicalized in the face of workers' gains, and helped usher in a period of military dictatorship in which the middle class, buying into the U.S. model of consumerism, identified with the pro-American, right-wing authoritarianism.<sup>16</sup>

Race politics intersected with class politics throughout the twentieth century. Colloquially some Brazilians maintained over 136 different terms to describe a person's skin color in efforts to avoid being marked black and carrying the weight of the way race, pseudo-science, and race culture characterized people of African descent in the

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<sup>14</sup> Tanya Kateri Hernández, *Racial Subordination in Latin America*, 47-70

<sup>15</sup> For a discussion of how Kemalism impeded class consciousness see Sinan Ciddi, *Kemalism in Turkish Politics: The Republican People's Party, Secularism, and Nationalism* (New York: Routledge, 2009) 5-11, 55-57.

<sup>16</sup> Brian P. Owensby. *Intimate Ironies. Modernity and the Making of Middle-Class Lives in Brazil*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 200.

nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1940 the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) created four official, institutionalized categories of color that represent appearance, *branco* (white), *pardo* (brown), *preto* (black), *amarelo* (yellow--indicating Asian ancestry). In 1991 the census added the *Indígena* (Indigenous) category.<sup>17</sup> After *amarelo* and *Indígena*, Brazilian's officially identified as *preto* the least. *Preto* is the category that signals predominant African ancestry and appearance. In 1991 people identifying as *preto* made up only five percent of the population, where forty-two percent identified as *pardo*.<sup>18</sup> Together they made up almost half of the population. In the 2010 census people identifying as *pardo* and *preto* together made more than half of the population,<sup>19</sup> but racial, social, and economic discrimination discouraged Brazilians from affirming their blackness.

Intensive policing by the authoritarian state, economic marginalization, racial discrimination, and gendered oppression overlapped in Afro-Brazilian communities. The recent government report concerning working women conveys the intersectionality of oppression in modern Brazilian history. Black women earn, on average, forty percent of the amount of wages earned by white men.<sup>20</sup> Sixty percent of all domestic violence

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<sup>17</sup> For an recent examination of race and ethnicity across Latin American societies see Edward Telles, *Pigmentocracies: Ethnicity, Race, and Color in Latin America* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press) 2014.

<sup>18</sup> Stanley R. Bailey and Edward E. Telles, *From Ambiguity to Affirmation: Challenging Census Race Categories in Brazil* (University of California: Los Angeles, 1995), [http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/telles/Paper\\_AffirmationandAmbiguity.pdf](http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/faculty/telles/Paper_AffirmationandAmbiguity.pdf) (accessed March 22, 2016).

<sup>19</sup> Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [Institute of Geography and Statistics], *Atlas do Censo Demográfico 2010* [Atlas of Census Demographics 2010], 136-138. [http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/mapa\\_site/mapa\\_site.php#populacao](http://www.ibge.gov.br/home/mapa_site/mapa_site.php#populacao) and [http://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/visualizacao/livros/liv64529\\_capa\\_sum.pdf](http://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/visualizacao/livros/liv64529_capa_sum.pdf) (accessed March 22, 2016).

<sup>20</sup> Alile Dara Onawale, "Brasileira negra ganha menos de 40% do salário de brasileiro branco" [Brazilian Black Women Earn less than 40% of the Salary of Brazilian White Men] *Geledés*

reports are made by women of color.<sup>21</sup> Afro-Brazilian women are murdered at twice the rate of non-white women.<sup>22</sup>

In contrast to their Kurdish counterparts who experience similar compounding levels of oppression, Afro-Brazilian women formed an activist movement in the 1930s that was never banned. The Brazilian state permitted Afro-Brazilian feminist activism throughout the twentieth century. However, the importance of the white, middle-class, and Christian family in nationalist ideology continued to marginalize black women. In 2015 eighty percent of working Afro-Brazilian women were employed in manual, domestic labor, propping up the middle-class dream while being systemically restricted from it.<sup>23</sup>

This is the context in which the history of twentieth-century Brazilian interpersonal violence must be examined. In Brazil gendered honor crimes-- even wife murders--which are commonly referred to across Latin America as “crimes of passion” were decriminalized during the First Republic. These most extreme acts of patriarchal violence continue into the present under the legal protection of “momentary insanity,” which encompass “crimes of passion” and the *legítima defesa da honra* (legitimate defense of honor).

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<http://www.geledes.org.br/brasileira-negra-ganha-menos-de-40-do-salario-de-brasileiro-branco-diz-ipea/#ixzz43ndScYim> (accessed March 15, 2016).

<sup>21</sup> Pesquisa Nacional de Saúde [National Health Survey] of the IBGE (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics] 2013).

<sup>22</sup> Bruna Cristina Jaquetto Pereira *Tramas e dramas de gênero e de cor: a violência doméstica e familiar contra mulheres negras* [Traumas and dramas of gender and color: domestic and family violence against black women] University of Brazil, Department of Sociology. Dissertation (2013).

<sup>23</sup> Minority Rights Report: Profile Afro-Brazilians, <http://minorityrights.org/country/brazil/> (accessed March 20, 2016).

Honor culture in Brazil has Mediterranean roots that took shape in colonial society. It is formed from an entrenched patriarchy that was institutionalized in both religious and political systems in colonial, imperial, and republican societies. Honor killings and the modern notion of masculine and feminine honor would seem contradictory to the early twentieth-century insistence on modernization and more recently Brazil's commitment to international human rights. However, the particularities of Brazilian national identity and its reliance on the sanctity of the family help to explain this paradox. An examination of honor crimes in Brazil and the battle over the 'legitimate defense of honor' underscores not simply a continuation of colonial cultural values, but also the very *modern* history of honor crimes and the power that the Brazilian state continues to grant men over women.

Within the U.S. media honor crimes are almost exclusively identified with the Islamic Middle East. Including Brazil in the discussion of honor-related violence is not simply an effort to dispel the characterization of Middle Eastern society as *the* culture that promotes honor crimes by demonstrating that honor crimes are carried out and even state-sanctioned in other parts of the world. Understanding the discourse surrounding honor crimes from both inside and outside of Brazil and the Middle East helps to dispel stereotypes concerning Latin American and Islamic(ate) culture and society simultaneously. The stereotypes of Latin America are different than the Middle East, but formed in a similar Orientalist project. The "West" constructed Latin Americans as paradoxically hypersexualized,<sup>24</sup> profoundly sexist as characterized in discourses of

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<sup>24</sup> Adriana R. B. Vianna and Sergio Carrara, "Políticas Sexuales y Derechos Sexuales en Brasil: un Estudio de Caso" [Sexual Politics and Sexual Rights in Brazil: A Case Study] in Richard Parker,

*machismo*,<sup>25</sup> and adhering to strict Catholic religiosity<sup>26</sup> Rather than substantiating honor crimes in the most “Westernized,” successful countries in the Middle East and Latin America as evidence of the ultimate “backwardness” of these cultures and societies, this comparative examination demonstrates how specific socio-economic and political factors, particularly nationalist state-formation, combined with cultural practices that are comparable to many societies around the world create an environment ripe for honor-related gendered violence.<sup>27</sup>

An in-depth examination of the construction of masculine honor in Brazil and the culture of male violence is out of the scope of this project. Instead, this chapter focuses on understanding the ways that honor culture interacted with the hegemony of modernity and nationalist state formation. Modern nation-state formation gave honor-related, gendered violence a new legitimacy and disciplinary authority over Brazilian women that affected the poor and people of color differently than middle-class white women.

In the early twentieth-century the prevalence of “crimes of passion” became a symbol of Brazilian backwardness among a growing group of modernist Brazilian

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Rosalin Petchesky, and Robert Sember, eds, *Sexualidad Políticas Sobre Reportes desde de las Lineas del Frents* [Politics of Sexuality: Reports from the Front Lines] Sexual Policy Watch (2008), 27-56.

<sup>25</sup> See Josué Ramirez, *Against Machismo: Young Adult Voices in Mexico City* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008). Rosina Cianelli, Lilian Ferrer; Beverly McElmurry, "HIV Prevention and Low-Income Chilean Women: Machismo, Marianismo and HIV Misconceptions" *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 3 (2008), 297–306.

<sup>26</sup> Marysa Navarro, “Against Marianismo” in Rosario Montoya, Leslie Jo Frazier, and Janise Hurtig, eds., *Gender’s Place: Feminist Anthropologies of Latin America* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002) 257-272.

<sup>27</sup> Martha Santos, “On the Importance of Being Honorable: Masculinity, Survival, and Conflict in the Backlands of Northeast Brazil, Ceará, 1840s-1890” *The Americas*, vol. 64: 1 (July 2007) 35-57; *Cleansing Honor with Blood: Masculinity, Violence, and Power in the Backlands of Northeast Brazil, 1845–1889* (Stanford: Stanford University Press) 2012. Laura Gotkowitz, “Trading Insults: Honor, Violence, and the Gendered Culture of Commerce in Cochabamba, Bolivia,” *HAHR* 83:1 (February 2003) 83-118;

thinkers who desired to improve Brazil's reputation in the international community. After the horrors of the First World War, global political leaders and peace advocates demanded recognition of Wilsonian Progressive principles and regarded the position of women in society as a marker of national progress that echoed the discourse surrounding the "woman question" in the Turkish and Kurdish press. In a 1989 article, historian Susan K. Besse, described a period of time between 1910 and 1940 during which Brazilian popular culture became obsessed with "crimes of passion." The popular media and contemporary scholars contended that Brazilian women were in grave danger of falling victim to enraged husbands. Wife-murder trials or "crimes of passion" became public spectacles, very similarly to the Turkish press concern with honor killings in the 1990s. Marc A. Hertzman in his history of race and music in Brazil described the press's interest in the 1911 murder-suicide of a Portuguese singer, Dora Henriqueta dos Santos, and a mixed, Afro-Brazilian musician, Octavio Icarahyense Dias, who used the stage name "*Moreno*"-- a name that denoted a shade of dark skin. According to the popular press Moreno killed Dora because she shamed him by having sex with other men. The early twentieth century press emphasized Moreno's skin color and painted him as a "savage." As Hertzman's analysis of the importance of race in understanding the history of Brazilian music, race was also important to understanding the way gendered notions of honor and whitening projects intersected in the context "modern" national identity projects. According to Hertzman, Dora's shame was not only adultery, but also engaging in an intimate relationship with a person of African ancestry.<sup>28</sup> The press spectacle of Dora and Moreno

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<sup>28</sup> Marc A. Hertzman, *Making Samba: A New History of Race and Music in Brazil* (Durham, N.C. and London: Duke University Press, 2013) 87-90.

illuminates the significance of race for understanding honor culture in Brazil, but modernist did not only focus on crimes of passion among people of color. Between 1910 and 1940, modernist were obsessed with honor crimes across social and racial strata. Besse argued that the public's and government's obsession with "crimes of passion" was not due to a sudden upswing in the number of victims, but instead a result of a new modernist movement that saw "crimes of passion" as a "threat" to Brazilian social hygiene, and therefore, international reputation.<sup>29</sup> This led women and a small group of powerful men to propose legislation banning the temporary insanity defense for spousal murder. This movement worked, and the third and most recent 1940 Penal Code specifically states, "Emotion or passion does not exclude criminal responsibility."<sup>30</sup>

The legal reform reflects nearly one hundred years of hard work by Brazilian feminists, but like Besse contended, it also exemplifies the efforts and causes of the elite and middle-class (mostly male) proponents of the modernization project. This is the same context in which women's rights were espoused as a key to modernization, as previously discussed. However, women's modern role in Brazilian society remained strictly defined by their use in promoting the new nationalist state. This meant education and working outside of the home, but it also put increased pressure on women as the keepers of the home, which remained the basic building block of the Brazilian nationalists' construction of society. The state retained the duty of policing women to fit

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<sup>29</sup> Susan K. Besse, "Crime of Passion: The Campaign Against Wife Killing in Brazil, 1910-1940" in the *Journal of Social History*, 22.4, (Summer 1989). Peter and Sterns, pp. 658-666.

<sup>30</sup> The Brazilian Penal Code, Article 28. Reprinted in Women's Rights Project Paper, "Criminal Injustice: Violence against Brazilian Women," 21.

this mold throughout the twentieth century, as indicated by the consistent effectiveness of the “*legitima defesa da honra*.”

After the 1940 revision of the Penal Code, it became much more difficult to obtain acquittals for men charged with murder in cases where male honor was supposedly challenged by invoking temporary insanity. Despite this apparent victory for human rights, Brazilian defense lawyers changed their approach to honor crimes by appealing to cultural notions of honor and an interpretation of Article 25 of the Brazilian Penal Code that describes self-defense as, “the case of one who using the necessary means with moderation reacts against unjust aggression present or imminent to his right or someone else’s.”<sup>31</sup> This leaves judges and, in the case of murder charges, juries, to interpret a women’s alleged adulterous affair as “unjust aggression.” The prevalent use of “*legitima defesa da honra*” demonstrates the precarious and contradictory position of the state and society as the purveyors of modernity, but also as advocates for the importance of maintaining the ability to control women’s bodies and the patriarchal social order.

Though the state and its advocates met pressure from external and internal protesters, the legitimate defense of honor was used throughout the last half of the twentieth century to gain reduced sentences or acquittals for men accused of murdering their wives. In all cases the state questioned the victim’s behavior in terms of how well she adhered to cultural and state-sanctioned norms of “honorable” Brazilian women.

In a 1983 case where a husband shot and killed his wife in public, the judge reduced the husband’s sentence to one year in prison on the grounds that the wife was of

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<sup>31</sup> Brazilian Penal Code. Article 25, reprinted in Women’s Rights Project Report, 21.

“bad behavior. Even though married, and the mother of four, she led a futile life and used scandalous clothes, provoking other men’s desires. She did that despite her husband’s poor health.”<sup>32</sup>

This federal judge did not only determine the fate of the criminal, but also the “worth” of the victim. The choice to decide the case based on the alleged behaviors of the wife reflected the consistent discrimination of women in the Brazilian legal system based on state-advocated cultural notions of honor. Moreover, that state was an accomplice in the crime by contributing to the continuation of the hegemonic discourse concerning male and female honor and maintaining legal avenues for men to murder their wives. This is an extreme stance of the state, despite its official claim in response to a 2002 United Nations probe concerning women’s rights and honor crimes that Brazil has “no specific legislation dealing with crimes committed in the name of honor, but that since the mid-1980s most Brazilian courts had not accepted the argument of ‘self-defense of honor.’”<sup>33</sup> This exists in contradiction to an appellate judge’s decision to overturn the 1991 landmark Lopes case, in which a higher court had ruled that murder is never a legitimate response to adultery.<sup>34</sup> Lopes appealed to a lower court and was later acquitted of murder. In 1995 the Brazilian National Movement on Human Rights reported that over sixty-six percent of women victims were involved in marital relationships with the

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<sup>32</sup> “Criminal Injustice: Violence Against Women in Brazil” Human Rights Watch, Women’s Rights Project Report, 37.

<sup>33</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Working towards the Elimination of Crimes Against Women Committed in the Name of Honour*, 2002, 57. 102.

<sup>34</sup> The Lopes case drew international attention to women’s rights in Brazil. See James Brook, “Honor-Killing of Wives is Outlawed in Brazil” *The New York Times*, March 29, 1991. Available online at, <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9D0CEEDC153AF93AA15750C0A967958260>.

perpetrators. In 1996 seventy percent of homicides committed against women were carried out by intimate partners, and 25 percent of those murders occurred in public spaces.<sup>35</sup>

In the international press and when interviewed by representatives from international organizations such as Human Rights Watch, judges, prosecutors, and activist insisted that honor crimes are an “interior” or racial problem stemming from “backward” segments of society.<sup>36</sup> The discourse of the “interior” in Brazil operates similarly to the discourses of “custom,” “tradition,” “east,” and “tribal” in Turkish society. The dominant, hegemonic white, middle-class “Others” Afro-Brazilians and the indigenous and mixed populations of the interior. In estimating the social legitimacy of “the legitimate defense of honor,” Pernambuco prosecutor, Alivar Caribe, told Americas Watch that the use of honor defense worked in the “interior” eighty percent of the time. He said, “The jury doesn’t want to know about the law... the citizens don’t judge correctly. In the interior people do not conform to the expectations of society.”<sup>37</sup> In a 1991 interview in the *New York Times* that asserted that “in Brazil’s large coastal cities, juries have increasingly rejected the “defense of honor” as old-fashioned,” feminist writer Rose Marie Muraro said, “In the interior of the country, it is easier and cheaper for a man to hire a gunslinger to kill his wife than to get a divorce and to separate the property.”<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> United Nations General Assembly, *Working towards the Elimination of Crimes Against Women Committed in the Name of Honour*, 2002, 57. 102.

<sup>36</sup> “Criminal Injustice: Violence Against Women in Brazil” Human Rights Watch, Women’s Rights Project Report, (1991) 27.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-28.

<sup>38</sup> James Brook, “Honor’ Killing of Wives Is Outlawed in Brazil” *The New York Times* (March 29, 1991).

Muraro suggested some of the material factors that contribute to the persistence of the success of “the legitimate defense of honor;” however, based on the 1991 interviews conducted by Americas Watch and Human Rights Watch, officials in the Brazilian legal system had low opinions of the capacity of rural and poor people in the interior to understand the law or desire to institute it.

The international community and Brazilian human rights activists continue to demand equal protection under the law for all Brazilian women. These groups attempted to destabilize the hegemonic discourse of “honor” in Brazil by calling for the legal recognition of human dignity for all women. The reluctance to accept this critique does not simply reflect its inability of the state to effect change on a traditional cultural attitude. After examining the nationalist discourse concerning the role of women and the family in Brazilian national identity and national honor, it is clear that the state actively worked to initiate policy that reproduced the environments where honor crimes more frequently occur.

The prevalence of virginity testing in Brazil in the twentieth century and into the present further showcases the institutionalization of honor violence in Brazil, like in Turkey. Suanne Caulfield’s 2000 work, *In Defense of Honor: Sexual Morality, Modernity, and Nation in Early Twentieth-Century Brazil*, details the use of virginity exams to discipline working-class women throughout the early twentieth century. However, the practice did not die, not even with the feminist movement of the 1980s and 1990s. As recently as 2014, the country erupted in debates over the Ministry of Education’s request that applicants for a state teacher’s license submit to a medical report confirming her virginity if unmarried. There was no equivalent request for male

applicants. An advertisement in the newspapers in Salvador for police officers requested that unmarried female candidates submit the same documentation regarding their virginity. Virginity is still the litmus for honorable and employable women in Brazil, according to some conservative segments of the Brazilian government, particularly in regards to segments of the state that have specifically statist, positivist, reform agendas, such as education and policing.<sup>39</sup>

The particularities of twentieth-century legal sanctioning of honor crimes in both Brazil and Turkey can only be viewed against the backdrop of twentieth-century modernization projects, not simply “age-old” cultural attitudes. The “legitimate defense of honor” in Brazil is an integral part of a global history of nationalist post-colonial construction of identity and the history of twentieth-century human rights activism as well as the role of modern-state formation in the discipline of women’s bodies through the institutionalization of honor-culture.

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<sup>39</sup> Roque Planas, “Brazil’s Appalling ‘Virginity Test’ for Woman Sparks Outrage.” Huffington Post Latino Voices, Sept 22, 2014. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/12/brazil-virgin\\_n\\_5672158.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/08/12/brazil-virgin_n_5672158.html) (accessed, June 22, 2015).

## CHAPTER VII

### CONCLUSION: FEMINIST RADICAL DEMOCRACY'S CHALLENGE TO HONOR CULTURE

The 2011 celebration of Newroz, the Kurdish New Year and spring festival, drew record-breaking crowds to Diyarbakır, which were estimated to have exceeded five hundred thousand people. Newroz represented a space for Kurdish political expression in response to and despite years of state regulation, suppression, and violence during the holiday. Newroz symbolized Kurdishness in Turkey that the state at a minimum regulates and in the extreme outlaws. In the context of liberal political protests around the world, particularly the Arab Spring and the ongoing tradition of Kurdish identity affirmation associated with the celebration of Newroz, Kurdish gay rights activists took to the streets during the festival and proclaimed their right to exist simultaneously as Kurds and members of the LGBT community. Since the 2011 wave of global political protest, LGBT activists in the Kurdish regions of Turkey have organized and aligned with pre-existing women's rights groups to form a feminist front that challenges the dominant Turkish culture and local Kurdish community to recognize their rights as Kurds, lesbians, gays, transgender people, and women and to fight the honor culture and the patriarchal state that challenge their right to exist. Kurdish feminist organization in Diyarbakır

represents a radical democratic movement that recognizes the multiple layers of oppression that gay Kurds and women face in Turkey, and works to improve the lives of the most marginalized people in the region.<sup>1</sup>

Hebûn Diyarbakir, formed in 2010 from the remnants of the much smaller, disbanded LGBT group, Hevjîn. Members of Hevjîn decided to organize to agitate for Transgender and gay rights in the Kurdish regions. They reported abuse from families and the police. Transgender prostitutes were particularly singled out by the police.<sup>2</sup> Hevjîn activists attempted to form a support network and collect money, mostly between themselves, to pay legal fines for transgender sex workers. Transgender people face abuse by the police, family, and society in Turkey. In one week alone in 2015, five different transgender women and men reported abuse. Suicide and abuse rates are high in for both gay and transgender people in throughout Turkey. In a Canadian Broadcasting Company interview, Trans activist, Niler Albayrak, said that the LGBTQ community in Turkey lives in an “empire of fear.”<sup>3</sup> After three years of organizing Hevjîn published a

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<sup>1</sup> “Hebûn LGBT Röpörtajı; Özgürlük Ötekilerden Doğar” Hebûn Diyarbakir, January 8, 2013, [http://www.hebunlgbt.com/haber\\_detay.asp?haberID=83](http://www.hebunlgbt.com/haber_detay.asp?haberID=83). Accessed January 28, 2013. Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya and Joost Jongerden, used the term “radical democracy” to discuss how the PKK has embraced “politics beyond the state, political organization beyond the party, and political subjectivity beyond class,” and I find this term useful to describe the inclusive political project initiated LGBT and feminists activists in the Kurdish regions of Turkey in the present.

<sup>2</sup> Hevjîn was committed to the transsexual community in Diyarbakir and some members of the former organization are active in Hebûn. For a brief discussion of the differences between Hevjîn and Hebun as discussed in an English language interview with Hebûn founding member, Arif, see Bradley Sucker and Dan Littauer, “From Diyarbakir with Love.” *Pink News*, February 9, 2012, <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2012/02/09/from-diyarbakir-with-love-kurdish-gay-and-proud/>, (accessed December 12, 2012).

<sup>3</sup> Nil Köksal, “Being Transgender in Turkey: Some Say They Live in 'Empire of Fear' *Canadian Broadcasting Corporation* (August 15, 2015), <http://www.cbc.ca/news/world/being-transgender-in-turkey-some-say-they-live-in-empire-of-fear-1.3175570>, (accessed March 20, 2015).

magazine in 2010, but by 2011 the group had disbanded.<sup>4</sup> Outward expressions of homosexual identity in Turkey in twentieth and twenty-first century transgressed both nationalist ideals of ideal citizens and honor culture. The dominant heteronormative culture polices sexuality, and the economic marginalization of gay and transgender activist make it very difficult to agitate for change.<sup>5</sup>

In Kurdish, *hebûn* means to exist, or to reappear and come back into existence. *Hebûn*, the Kurdish verb, signals two related declarations for the LGBT community in Diyarbakır. The name indicates its members' desire and new right to use the Kurdish language freely in many venues in Turkey. It also signifies the LGBT communities' attempt to inform and shape Kurdish culture in this period of intense discussion over ethnic minority rights and Kurdish identity. Feminist activists in Diyarbakır, which include the LGBT community, do not simply champion women's rights, but also work to explain and challenge the hierarchical way society is organized along gendered lines in hopes of improving the whole society, not just the lives of women, gays, or transgender. The Kurdish gay community's decision to take the name *Hebûn* emphasizes the importance of understanding how gender, sexuality, and ethnicity overlap in the Kurdish regions of Turkey. The space this organization is creating for these debates can only be understood in the context of the discourse and disappointment of the "Kurdish opening" that began in 2009 with high hopes and the Arab Spring.

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<sup>4</sup> Alexander Christie-Miller, "LGBT Activist Launch Groundbreaking Publication" *Eurasia* (August 30, 2010) <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/61826> republished at <http://www.turkishnews.com/en/content/tag/transsexual-kurds/> (accessed October 20, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Will Carter, "Suffering and Loss in Istanbul's Transgender Slums." *Middle East Eye* (July 28, 2015) <http://www.middleeasteye.net/in-depth/features/silence-suffering-and-dispossession-istanbul-s-transgender-slum-1343803757> (accessed March 20, 2016).

In 2009 Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and President Abdullah Gül officially recognized the country's "Kurdish problem," where previous Turkish regimes had completely denied the existence of Kurds altogether. More importantly, these leaders supported the initiation of debate and policy addressing Kurdish civil rights.<sup>6</sup> Since its inception, the nationalist state inflicted numerous restrictions on Kurdish identity expression from outlawing Kurdish political parties to various bans on the use of the Kurdish language as previously discussed in this dissertation.<sup>7</sup> For more than thirty years, as tensions escalated between the government in Ankara and the *Partîya Karkarên Kurdistan* (PKK/Kurdistan Workers' Party), the heavy hand of the state pressed down on the various Kurdish communities throughout Turkey, and particularly on Kurdish political organizers, leaders, and journalists. In 1991 Leyla Zana, a Kurdish MP from Silvan, Diyarbakır Province, famously spoke one sentence of Kurdish while being sworn into parliament. In response, the state launched a massive investigation that allegedly connected Zana with the PKK and culminated in a 15-year prison sentence. Despite a domestic and international outcry of support for the civil-rights activist and political prisoner, Leyla Zana served 10 years in prison before being released in 2004.

Beginning in 2009 many held high hopes that Erdoğan's ruling *Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* (AKP/Justice and Development Party) would legislate, through civil rights guarantees, an end to conflict between the Kurds and the state in Turkey, especially

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<sup>6</sup> See Michael Gunter, "The Closing of Turkey's Kurdish Opening," *Journal of International Affairs* September 9, 2012, <http://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/closing-turkey%E2%80%99s-kurdish-opening>, (accessed, January 21, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> See Amir Hassanpour, *Nationalism and Language in Kurdistan 1918-1985*, Edwin Mellon Press, 1992, pp. 132-136; 150-152.

after the AKP government began easing the restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language. However, the window for the “Kurdish opening” seemed to close nearly as soon as the state raised it. This disappointment proved to radicalize the Kurdish initiative throughout the country and particularly in Turkey’s unofficial Kurdish capital, Diyarbakır (Amed in Kurdish). As pressure from Kurdish activists and the pro-Kurdish *Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi* (BDP, or Kurdish: *Partîya Aştî û Demokrasîyê*, Peace and Democracy Party), which was disbanded due to state legal persecution and reformed in 2012 as *Halkların Demokratik Partisi* (HDP/People’s Democratic Party), intensified. The state started arresting politicians, academics, journalists, and students by the thousands. Over three thousand students were imprisoned and over one thousand politicians and activists were jailed for their alleged terrorist connections/affiliation with the PKK by the end of 2012.<sup>8</sup> The state failed to quiet Kurdish voices. Even the voices of the most marginalized Kurds, LGBT individuals and women, roared in the streets of Turkey and throughout the world via social media in 2011 and 2012.<sup>9</sup>

Demanding gender equality while continuously supporting Kurdish civil rights, including the demands of the Kurdish political prisoners who endured a 68-day hunger strike that began on September 12, 2012, through their website, Facebook, and Twitter accounts, Hebûn and its feminist allies fought for both political rights and cultural space in Kurdish communities in Turkey. Kurdish LGBT and women’s rights groups in Turkey

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<sup>8</sup> Gunter, <http://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/closing-turkey%E2%80%99s-kurdish-opening> and Howard Eissenstat, “In Turkey: The Ivory Tower Beseiged,” *Human Rights Now Blog*, November 14, 2012, <http://blog.amnestyusa.org/europe/in-turkey-the-ivory-tower-beseiged/>, (accessed February 1, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> See Hebûn Twitter; Lamda Istanbul, <http://www.lambdaistanbul.org/s/> (accessed March 22, 2016); LGBTQ Muslims, <http://islamandhomosexuality.com/5-times-turkey-stood-up-lgbt-people/> (accessed March 22, 2016).

worked towards a radically democratic Kurdish Spring that demanded economic, political, and gender equality in Turkey and Kurdistan. Examining the ways in which Kurdish gay and women's rights activists challenged multiple layers of oppression over the previous three years reflects the legacy of over thirty years of leftist, feminist radical identity politics in the Kurdish regions that have been intensified by ongoing war and the 2011 global protest movement. This radical democratic protest fundamentally challenge honor culture and the patriarchal state that institutionalized it.

The historic tensions between nationalists and women's rights activism continues in the Kurdish regions of Turkey--a place not unlike other regions of the world--where women's rights have been curtailed by nationalist agendas, here both Turkish and Kurdish. This is certainly a reality of the less studied history of LGBT activism in the region. Hebûn members worked hard to finance and shoot a documentary film and found little support and often antagonism from both the police and Kurdish nationalist community. As journalist and activist Naila Bozo, eloquently reported for Mideast Youth<sup>10</sup> sometimes the Kurd (him/herself) is "an oppressor of Kurdistan" when it comes to LGBT issues.<sup>11</sup> On the message boards of Ahwaa.org, a Middle East LGBT virtual community and part of the Mideast Youth umbrella organization, Kurdish LGBT members anonymously discussed issues related to their sexuality and discrimination. One participant brought up her frustrations with the Kurdish nationalist response to LGBT

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<sup>10</sup> Middle East Youth is a grassroots organization that operates with the expressed purpose to use digital and social media to end oppression in the Middle East and North Africa.

<sup>11</sup> Naila Bozo, "The Kurd: An Oppressor of Kurdistan," Mideast Youth, April 16, 2012, [http://www.mideastyouth.com/2012/04/06/the-kurd-an-oppressor-of-kurdistan/?fb\\_action\\_ids=10151423938653631&fb\\_action\\_types=og.likes&fb\\_source=aggregation&fb\\_aggregation\\_id=288381481237582](http://www.mideastyouth.com/2012/04/06/the-kurd-an-oppressor-of-kurdistan/?fb_action_ids=10151423938653631&fb_action_types=og.likes&fb_source=aggregation&fb_aggregation_id=288381481237582). (accessed February 15, 2013).

rights. She said, “every time I [sic] express my support for the Kurdish LGBT there are always some kurds [sic] (and other nationalities) who say that this is not what kurds [sic] should be focusing on right now. they [sic] say the important thing is FIRST [sic] to secure kurds [sic] their rights and THEN[sic] start discussing LGBT rights.”<sup>12</sup> LGBT individuals and other feminist activists face the same historical problems in regards to having their rights usurped by the “greater good” of the nationalist cause.

However, this phenomenon is not inevitable, since 2011 feminist, nationalist, and civil rights activists have collaborated to end ethnic, racial, and gender discrimination in Turkey by promoting a hybrid identity and rejecting the notion of competing allegiances. Since the government lifted the restrictions on the use of the Kurdish language, feminists have worked to share the voices of Kurdish women and speak to Kurdish women in Turkey. Some feminist organizations are printing and speaking in Kurdish, such as KA-MER and *JİNHA*, a feminist news source based in Diyarbakır that runs a Facebook page and publishes in Kurdish, Turkish, and English. These activists utilize their new, less restricted right to use the Kurdish language in the press to initiate discussions concerning the compounding layers of oppression that Kurds and other minorities face in Turkey.

Through their website, social media, and community organization, Hebûn activists have been vocal in their effort to unite marginalized and minority communities in Turkey with some reciprocation. Like KA-MER, Hebûn gained some popular and international support by initially focusing on honor-based violence in Kurdish communities. In 2008 the murder of Ahmet Yıldız, a Kurdish gay-rights activist who was shot while leaving a

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<sup>12</sup> “Question about Kurdish LGBT,” thread, Ahwaa.org, <https://ahwaa.org/topics/268>. (accessed February 12, 2013).

café in Istanbul, brought international attention once again to honor culture in Kurdish communities. This time the international gay rights community demanded justice for Yıldız and used his death to raise awareness of the LGBT community's struggle in Turkey. Ahmet's father was charged with his murder.<sup>13</sup> Other gay and transgender men and women have been killed or live with death threats by family members on a regular basis, according to Hebûn. The organization publicizes the stories of Kurdish LGBT men and women in hopes of affecting change and equal protection under the law in Turkey.

In addition to joining the international feminist efforts to stop honor violence, Hebûn focuses on publicizing and ending other forms of oppression, such as the police harassment that the gay and transsexual community faces continually in Diyarbakır and the surrounding provinces. According to Hebûn, the police continue to raid the homes of gay or transgender men and women on the premise of alleged involvement in prostitution. These individuals are treated unjustly by the police due to the ways that their identity transgresses both gender and racial norms.<sup>14</sup> Being a gay Kurd is like having two strikes against you in Turkey, and Kurdish and LGBT activists are joining together to denounce all forms of discrimination under the law in Turkey by rejecting this double oppression.

In article after article published on Hebûn's website and then distributed across social media networks, the group expresses their stake in minority rights in Turkey, including

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<sup>13</sup> "Ahmet Yıldız Duruşması yine ertelendi!" *Hebûn Diyarbakir*, January 25, 2013, [http://www.hebunlgbt.com/haber\\_detay.asp?haberID=90](http://www.hebunlgbt.com/haber_detay.asp?haberID=90). (accessed, February 1, 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Sucker and Littauer, "From Diyarbakir with Love." *Pink News*, February 9, 2012, <http://www.pinknews.co.uk/2012/02/09/from-diyarbakir-with-love-kurdish-gay-and-proud/>, (accessed December 12, 2012).

the plight of Armenians, Assyrians, Alevis, and other religious and ethnic minorities. This reflects the history and importance of both leftist and feminist theories and organization in the Kurdish regions of Turkey. Hebûn focuses on the points where race, ethnicity, class, religion, and gender overlap in Turkey, and sees the rights of all minorities as part of the LGBT agenda. This is a radical, feminist-democratic approach to understanding and changing the mindsets and livelihood of people in the Kurdish regions of Turkey.

This approach is definitely not entirely new. Kurdish leftist groups, particularly the Marxist PKK, pushed for gender equality in its ranks, at least officially. Gay rights, on the other hand, have not been explicitly taken up by the PKK; yet, pro-Kurdish political parties, such as the BDP-HDP, have advocated for the rights of the gay and transgender community in Turkey in recent years. In an LGBT event in Ankara the representatives from the BDP were the only party that attended in an official capacity.<sup>15</sup> Minority-rights activists of all stripes--Kurds, feminist/LGBT, socialist/leftist- are courting each other to push forward democratic reforms in Turkey.

Since the disappointing “Kurdish Opening” these groups share at least one common antagonist--the AKP. Hebûn published headlines quoting BDP officials that are explicit in their criticism of the “racism and chauvinism” (ırkçılık ve şovenizm) of the state in general and particularly the ruling AKP.<sup>16</sup> In an extremely tense political climate, where

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<sup>15</sup> “Turkey: The PKK and the Kurdish Settlement,” *International Crisis Group* Europe Report No. 219. September 11, 2012, [http://www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/219-turkey-the-pkk-and-a-kurdish-settlement.pdf](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/europe/turkey-cyprus/turkey/219-turkey-the-pkk-and-a-kurdish-settlement.pdf). (accessed on January 29, 2013).

<sup>16</sup> “Aydoğan: Sevag özel bir cinayete yaşamını yitirmiştir” (Aydoğan –BDP MP from Diyarbakir-: Sevag lost their lives in a hate crime/ special murder), *Hebûn Diyarbakir*, January 25, 2013, [http://www.hebunlgbt.com/haber\\_detay.asp?haberID=91](http://www.hebunlgbt.com/haber_detay.asp?haberID=91). Accessed February 1, 2013.

not only Kurdish political leaders but also university students and loosely organized activists are imprisoned, Hebûn's internet and social media campaign is nothing less than revolutionary. They specifically criticize the AKP for its religious conservatism in regards to women's issues and gay rights. As recently as 2010, the Minister of Women and Family, Selma Aliye Kavaf, labeled homosexuality a medical disease. According to Hebûn, LGBT identity is like "dynamite" to the idealized Turkish family-values discourse that the AKP promotes. Since LGBT identities are threatening to the historically and currently idealized basic unit of Turkish society--the family--homosexuality is heavily censored in Turkish television and films.<sup>17</sup> Further antagonizing the conservative state, Hebûn joined other LGBT organizations in Turkey, such as Lambda Istanbul and ethnic and religious minority rights advocates, as well as the Kemalist *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* (CHP/ Republican Peoples Party) to support hate-crime legislation throughout 2012--legislation that the AKP initially opposed.<sup>18</sup> In recent years the increased social conservatism of the AKP has radicalized and united many diverse groups in Turkey.

After more than fifteen years of intense dialogue and activism concerning the position of women in Kurdish communities in Turkey, one year after Hebûn formed, and in the midst of a major watershed in Middle Eastern politics, the international symbol of "woman" lit the streets of Diyarbakır, Turkey the week of Newroz in March of 2012.

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<sup>17</sup> "Hebûn LGBT Röportajı; Özgürlük Ötekilerden Doğar" (Hebûn LGBT Interview: From Others Freedom Rises) Hebûn Diyarbakır, January 8, 2103, [http://www.hebunlgbt.com/haber\\_detay.asp?haberID=83](http://www.hebunlgbt.com/haber_detay.asp?haberID=83). Accessed February 13, 2013.

<sup>18</sup> See Nefretsoylemi.org, (Hate Speech) to follow the debates and news related to the criminalization and monitoring of hate speech/crimes in Turkey, <http://nefretsoylemi.org/faaliyetler.asp>. (accessed, February 5, 2013).

Nearly a million Kurds descended on the city--the biggest Newroz celebration on record to date--and though some insisted that it was just a decoration, the importance of the sign certainly was not lost on everyone.

The city was buzzing with political energy and resistance as the calendar zeroed in on the Kurdish New Year and the Interior Minister of Turkey, İdris Naim Şahin, refused to allow the BDP to move the celebration to Sunday, March 18 instead of the usual March 21.<sup>19</sup> BDP officials pushed for a Sunday celebration, so more people could attend and participate, but in the wake of the Roboski tragedy, in which 34 civilians from the Kurdish villages of Roboski/Ortasu and Bujeh/ Gülyazı were killed by a Turkish airstrike that the state claimed was aimed at the PKK, relations between pro-Kurdish parties and the state were tense, to say the least.<sup>20</sup> People throughout the city were anxious and excited for the impending holiday, as well as for the opportunity to protest the governments' attempt to control Newroz. On March 17, the celebration kicked off without the blessing of the state, Hebûn affirmed its Kurdish identity and spoke out in support of pro-Kurdish politicians, and announced to its over one thousand followers to celebrate in Diyarbakır/Amed on March 18, via Twitter.

Since then, the organization has been increasingly vocal about its stake in Kurdish civil rights.<sup>21</sup> The BDP Chairman, Selahattin Demirtaş, was specifically endorsed by

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<sup>19</sup> "The Stupidity of Banning Newroz" *Hurriyet Daily News*, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/the-stupidity-of-banning-newroz-.aspx?pageID=238&nid=16465>. March 21, 2012, (accessed January 12, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> "Thousands Commemorate in Roboski- Demand for Justice" *Bianet News English*, <http://bianet.org/english/human-rights/143162-thousands-commemorate-in-roboski-demand-for-justice>, Decmeber 28, 2012, (accessed January 13, 2013).

<sup>21</sup> Hebûn LGBT, Twitter Post, March 17, 2012 6:57 a.m., <https://twitter.com/hebunlgbt/statuses/180956019868971008>. (accessed February 13, 2013).

@hebunlgbt, the official Twitter handle for Hebûn during Newroz. Demirtaş and others criticized Erdoğan's popularity among religious and socially conservative political parties in the Middle East that have been active since the Arab Spring. Specifically, in regards to the demand for Kurdish rights, Demirtaş said, "When there are protests in Egypt or in Syria, Erdogan tells their leaders to listen to the voice of the people. If he doesn't want to be like the dictators in the Middle East, he has to do the same."<sup>22</sup> The BDP and other leftist parties have welcomed allies in women's groups and the LGBT community in the Kurdish regions of Turkey that see the conservatism of the current government as particularly threatening; however, the AKP's appeal to the populist, religious masses proves very difficult to unseat, even in the Kurdish provinces. Organizations like KAMER and Hebûn that espouse a feminism that is essentially both anti-nationalistic and inclusive can be very destabilizing to the religious and conservative masses whether they are Turkish or Kurdish, or Muslim or Christian. Homosexuality was decriminalized in 1858 under the Ottoman Tanzimat reforms. The secular, Turkish Republic, despite its continued emphasis on the importance of the nuclear family, never legislated against homosexuality. Regardless of these laws, even some of the founders of Hebûn admit that it was still not safe for them to "come out" to their religious and otherwise culturally conservative families.

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<sup>22</sup> Piotr Zalewski, "In Turkey's Kurdish Southeast, an Incendiary Celebration." *Time World*, March 20, 2012, <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,2109647,00.html>. (accessed, November 20, 2013).

Notwithstanding the grinding and continuous trials that the feminist front faces in Diyarbakır, they are finding new friends in recent months in places that may surprise some audiences--an Islamic group. The *Antikapitalist Müslümanlar* (Anti-capitalist Muslims) is an organization that is against the AKP, but it is religious and it supports both ethnic minority and gay rights. Though the dominant religious voice in Turkey espouses conservative politics and cultural values that use honor to shame and marginalize sexual minorities, alternative ideas of Muslim religiosity persist. *Antikapitalist Müslümanlar* marched in Istanbul on May 1, 2012 protesting the AKP, and has participated in various other protests throughout Turkey in the past year.

In February of 2013 the group issued a statement that drew the attention of Hebûn. The previous year, a 17-year-old, gay teenager called R.Ç. was murdered by his father and two uncles in Diyarbakır. The *Antikapitalist Müslümanlar* announced their support for R.Ç. and others like him who challenge traditional family structures that are promoted by the government to gain the favor of the masses. Quoting the Qur'an's commandments to love without exception, the *Antikapitalist Müslümanlar* are offering a religious alternative that challenges the AKP and the dominant religious discourse that deems homosexuality and gender equality sinful and/or unhealthy depending on the ideology of their audience. Regardless of religious affiliation or personal belief, this is certainly a welcome interpretation for any LGBT individual, and considering the visceral connection that Hebûn maintains with R.Ç.'s case and the stake they have in the lives of men and

women like R.Ç, it is no surprise that Hebûn reprinted the statement issued by Antikapitalist Müslümanlar.<sup>23</sup>

After more than 5 years after the major regime changes of the Arab Spring it is still not clear what the revolutions will mean for women and minorities in countries like Egypt and Tunisia, and in some cases the outlook is bleak. However, in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, women and LGBT individuals are uniting with Kurdish nationalists, socialists, and even religious groups to push a very broad, radical interpretation of citizenship and democracy that challenges the overlapping hegemonic authority of patriarchy, honor culture, and Turkish and Kurdish nationalism. These groups are actively attempting to organize a revolution that will change civil and political rights for women and minorities in Turkey as well as Turkish and Kurdish honor culture. This feminist spring is demanding the most radical change of all the international protest movements of the past five years.

In response to these combined efforts to push for radical feminist democracy in Turkey, since 2013 the state has reacted with fascist force. Though Istanbul has hosted gay rights parades since 2003 without violence, this year the state refused to issue a permit. When groups decided to march without state sanction, the police used rubber bullets, water cannons, and pepper spray to break up the parade.<sup>24</sup> The state is cracking down on any dissent.

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<sup>23</sup> “Antikapitalist Müslümanlar R.Ç için Yazdı” (Anticapitalist Muslims Write for R.Ç), *Hebûn Diyarbakır*. February 3, 2013, [http://www.hebunlgbt.com/haber\\_detay.asp?haberID=100](http://www.hebunlgbt.com/haber_detay.asp?haberID=100). (accessed February 3, 2013).

<sup>24</sup> Mehmet Çaliskan and Yesmin Dikmen, “Turkish Police Use Water Canon to Disperse Gay Pride Parade” *Reuters* (June 28, 2015), <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-rights-pride-idUSKCN0P800Q20150628> (accessed March 23, 2015).

State violence against the people in the Kurdish regions reached levels comparable to the most intense years of civil war in the 1990s. Whole neighborhoods in Cizre and the Sur neighborhood of Diyarbakır have been leveled.<sup>25</sup> The rightwing press that enthusiastically supports the AKP against their political rivals, attacked HDP leaders, Selahattin Demirtaş and Gültan Kışanak, in a press conference organized to discuss the current humanitarian crisis in the Kurdish regions of Turkey. HDP proposed “self-management” in the Kurdish regions of Turkey as a federalist solution to the current wave of state initiated violence against Kurds in response to the success of the HDP in the June 2015 elections.<sup>26</sup>

A reporter for *Yeni Akit*, a conservative newspaper, couched his questions and accusations against the Kurdish political leaders within the discourse of honor. The reporter, Mehtap Yılmaz, affirmed the importance of honor in conservative Turkish culture when asked, “Don’t you have any honor?... When terrorist militants [PKK] come into your cities, did you ask your Kurdish women, your daughter to share their homes with men from the mountains? Who are kidnapping your girls? In front of other militants he raped your daughters.”<sup>27</sup> According to this reporter and the discourse of honor, Kurdish honor depends on the ability of the Kurdish political elite’s ability to protect

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<sup>25</sup> Kiran Nazish, “Cizre in Ruins after Turkey Lifts Curfew in Kurdish Towns” *Aljazeera* (March 13, 2016) <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/cizre-ruins-turkey-lifts-curfew-kurdish-towns-160312113030597.html> (accessed March 23, 2016);

<sup>26</sup> For a discussion of the HDP’s plan for self-management, see Sukru Kuçukşahin, “Turkey’s Kurdish Leader: We Will Struggle on in Parliament ‘Til the End’” *Al-Monitor*, <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2016/03/turkey-hdp-leader-demirtas-vows-to-struggle-in-parliament.html> (accessed March 25, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> “Öz yönetim” ilan ederken kimse sordun Gültan?” [When You Proclaimed “Self-management” Did You Ask Anyone Gültan?” *Yeni Akit* (December 17, 2015), <http://www.yeniakit.com.tr/haber/oz-yonetim-ilan-ederken-kimse-sordun-gultan-114109.html> (accessed March 22, 2016).

women and girls. Allegedly endangering the implied sexual integrity of Kurdish daughters represents dishonorable behavior. I did not find any reports of rape or kidnapping from Kurdish families in the cities where civilians, the PKK, or PKK affiliated youth organizations are struggling against the attacks from the Turkish military. The reality of the threat of “terrorist” in Kurdish homes does not matter. The conservative Turkish press used the discourse of honor to insult the national honor of Kurdish political activist and Kurdish national identity.

The political party most associated with Kurdish civil rights also has the most radical democratic views concerning LGBT and women’s rights in Turkey. The conservative press and the AKP government use the discourse of honor to discredit feminist demands for human rights. Conservative, populist views represented by the AKP have upset the Kemalist elite and middle-class dominance of Turkish hegemonic culture in Turkey that formerly criticized honor culture in Kurdish communities as “backward.” Now conservative, AKP, supporters turn the discourse of honor against democratic Kurds. Turkish nationalist in the twenty-first century who support the AKP publically affirm the hegemony of honor. In the wake of the AKPs fascist takeover of the press in Turkey in 2015-2016, the views of reporters like Yılmaz are the few voices in the media that remain uncensored. It is unknown how the Kurdish people will react to these most recent waves of state violence and conservative Turks’ use of the discourse of honor to delegitimize Kurdish agitation for civil rights and federalist autonomy. It also remains to be seen what the impact of violence on honor crimes will be in the twenty-first century.

After examining the history of the relationship between modern state-formation, nationalism, and honor culture it is clear that statist policies, whether liberalizing or

reactionary, in the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first century, did not curb honor related violence or the legitimacy of honor in society. Instead modern states and nationalist groups used honor as vehicle to advance their own agendas. The power of the discourse of honor in twentieth century reforms of the law and society, in nationalist campaigns, and in popular culture persists in the world. Feminist activism against its oppressive mandate perseveres too.

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