



The power of Kurdish women

A discourse analysis of the Kurdish Women's Movement in Rojava

Lavin Bahzad

Department of Human Rights
The Historical Institution
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Abstract

Kurdiska kvinnors kraft

En diskursanalys av den kurdiska kvinnorörelsen i Rojava

Den långvariga traditionen av kvinnor som tar sig an roller inom det militära i den kurdiska frihetsrörelsen, är först på senare år uppmärksammas på gott och ont. Denna uppsats kommer därmed fördjupa sig i kurdiska kvinnors aktörskap inom den kurdiska kvinnorörelsen och deras förändringsarbete för ett mer demokratiserat Rojava genom att undersöka källmaterialet "Stateless democracy with the Kurdish movement" av René In der Maur och Jonas Staal. Denna uppsats syftar till att fördjupa och förmedla en ökad medvetenhet och förståelse för de kurdiska kvinnornas identitet i Rojava och deras feministiska frihetskamp. Studien använder sig av diskursanalys för att undersöka hur den primära källan skildrar temat kurdiska kvinnors aktörskap i Rojava. Jag kommer att använda teorin "Kvinnors aktörskap i krig" med huvudfokus på de kurdiska kvinnornas aktörskap och teorin feministisk separatism. Dessa teoretiska komponenter kan ge en djupare förståelse av temat om kurdiska kvinnors aktörskap i den kurdiska kvinnorörelsen. Resultaten av diskursanalysen fick mig att dra slutsatsen att framställningen av de kurdiska kvinnorna i Rojava ofta är hur kraftfulla de är eftersom materialet ständigt deklarerar kurdiska kvinnors vitala roller positivt. Författarna har strävat efter att presentera och demonstrera temat på ett övertygande sätt eftersom de ser upp till och stödjer kurdiska kvinnors aktörskap genom sättet de konstruerat sitt innehåll.

Nyckelord: Kurdiska kvinnorörelsen, kvinnors aktörskap, Rojava, kurdiska kvinnor, Rojava-revolutionen, Diskursanalys

Abstract

The long-lasting tradition of women that tackles roles within the military in the Kurdish freedom movement is now, in recent years, beheld for better or for worse. This thesis will immerse into the Kurdish women's agency in the Kurdish Women's Movement and their work of change for a more democratized Rojava by examining the source material "Stateless democracy with the Kurdish movement" by René In der Maur and Jonas Staal. This thesis aims to deepen and convey an increased awareness and understanding of the identity of the Kurdish women in Rojava and their feminist freedom struggle. The study employs discourse analysis to examine how the primary source portrays the theme of Kurdish women's agency in Rojava. I will use the theory "Women's agency during war" with the main focus on Kurdish women's agency and the theory of feminist separatism. These theoretical components can bring a deeper understanding of the theme of Kurdish women's agency in the Kurdish Women's Movement. The results of the discourse analysis led me to conclude that the portrayal of Kurdish women in Rojava is frequently how they are feminist, brave and powerful since the content regularly declares Kurdish women's vital roles favourably. The authors have aimed to present and demonstrate the theme convincingly and compellingly since they look up to and support Kurdish women's agency by the way they constructed their publication.

Keywords: Kurdish Women's Movement, Women's agency, Rojava, Kurdish women, Rojava revolution, Discourse analysis

List of abbreviations

Daesh	ISIS, The Islamic State and al-Sham
KJB	The High Women's Council
PKK	Partia Karkaren Kurdistan, Kurdistan Worker's Party
PJA	Partiya Jiyana Azad a Kurdistanê, Free Women's Party
PYD	Partiya Yekîtiya Demokrat, Democratic Union Party
YPG	Yekîneyên Parastina Gel, People's Defence Units
YPJ	Yekîneyên Parastina Jin, Women's Defence Units

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1 Introduction

*"We denounce political, ideological and ethnically motivated discrimination and the restrictions on women's freedom. We declare that we will fight together against the problems we face as women, no matter our political leanings and ideological convictions. This conference offers us women a platform to coordinate our joint international struggle against those in power, the dictators, and the patriarchal power system. It depends on us to strengthen these foundations. We have faith in ourselves and are convinced that it will be women who will bring peace to the Middle East."*¹

These words echoed loudly at the first "Middle East Women's Conference" in 2013 in the Kurdish city of Amed. The conference was organized by the "Free Democratic Women's Movement (TJA)" where over 250 women from different countries in the MENA region participated in the struggle for liberation from the patriarchal system.² The movement in Rojava, Western Kurdistan, is also a global struggle that touches on universal human ideals. The struggles of women who have been denied their existence and rights for far too long. Following Daesh's rise in 2013, mobilization was critical.

There is strong opposition in Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria to recognizing Kurds' freedoms and rights. Kurds have waged a struggle against state, political, cultural, social and economic oppression and fascism of various states or terrorist organizations for a long time. Historically, Kurds have never lived in complete freedom. After the Ottoman Empire fell and after the First World War, Kurdistan was divided into four countries. Thus, resulting in the world's most prominent stateless people with up to 45 million people. The systematic repression has led to genocide, chemical gas attacks, forced assimilation, mass displacement, political captivity, systematic rapes, torture and sex slavery.

¹ Peace in Kurdistan. "Middle East Women's Conference: Final Resolution" <https://www.peaceinkurdistancampaign.com/middle-east-womens-conference-final-resolution/> (Retrieved 16-04-2022) (Updated 18-06-2013)

² Ibid. Peace in Kurdistan "Middle East Women's Conference: Final Resolution"

It also results in restricting the right to political, civil, social and cultural rights, the restriction of citizenship, the restriction of political organization, and the restriction of the Kurdish language and the Kurdish culture. The Dersim uprising, Turkey's civil war, the Anfal campaign and the Halabja attack are examples of incidents in which systematic ethnic cleansing of Kurds has been carried out.³

A new focus on women's participation in the war has been created, which has previously been neglected in the context of political struggles. A context in which Kurdish women have historically never mainly been entirely passive. Surprisingly, most of the world turned its focus so late. Given that struggle is such an integral part of the Kurdish identity where one has almost always been in the struggle against at least one oppressor and conducted a resistance with social, political and military mobilization. In addition, the struggle for freedom has for decades included a feminist movement that wants to challenge dominant systems of ideas with other alternative feminist approaches.⁴

1.1 Problems, purpose and research questions

The outside world's expectations of women in combat are usually low and still are less for Kurdish women. Traditionally, women's actors, ideals, and motives in combat are often diminished and based on weak, passive victim stereotypes. Then today, women in the Kurdish freedom movement and its military context have been undermined and not taken seriously. There has been dehumanizing treatment and propaganda portraying them as prostitutes who are being exploited as victims of the "patriarchal backward-looking" culture or so appropriated their struggle in the form of clothing collections. Often women who operate in political projects are not acknowledged and depicted rightfully, where their crucial role is constructed beyond the individual feminist standpoint and wishes of portrayal, and instead often state-focused. One can indicate that there have been flaws in the simplified construction, reducing the Kurdish women's struggle and the Kurdish question to their quest for large-scale, drastic, and far-reaching work of change—a work of

³ Nationalencyklopedin. <https://www.ne.se/uppslagsverk/encyklopedi/l%C3%A5ng/kurder> (Retrieved 16-04-2022)

⁴ Dirik, Dilar. "Feminism and the Kurdish movement" 2015. p.3

change and a long-term project that has lasted for decades. In this paper, I reject such reasoning by illustrating the range and individuality of Kurdish women's experiences. Hence, there is a need to build, advance, and nuance a fairer picture of these marginalized women while fighting for a democratic Rojava. My purpose is to deepen and convey an increased awareness and understanding of the identity of the Kurdish women in Rojava and their feminist freedom struggle. What are the main components of their identity and struggle? Understanding the struggle beyond the problematic patriarchal and racist depictions and society's greater focus on strategic geopolitical interests in the Kurdish question.

It is highly relevant to conduct a study on this subject, not least to their fight against the world's most dangerous terrorist organization and democratic work in the neighbourhood of fascist, dictatorial and corrupt countries. Without also for the newfound directed international attention and interest, as a result, it requires more multifaceted portraits and reports. This paper includes lessons about a feminist movement beyond the dominant ideologies. It employs discourse analysis to analyze how the primary source illustrates and investigates the topic of Kurdish women's work of change in Rojava.

The following questions are addressed in this paper:

❖ According to the source material "Stateless democracy with the Kurdish movement," how do the authors present and demonstrate the theme of women's agency in the Kurdish Women's Movement in Rojava?

1.2 Material and limitations

I have narrowed my study to focus on the discourses applied in the primary material "Stateless Democracy with the Kurdish movement" and how the theme of women's agency is being manifested in their narratives. The decision to explore and focus on women's agency in the Kurdish Women's Movement made me include secondary sources that are prominent in the research field.

1.2.1 Primary and secondary material

The primary material, "Stateless Democracy with the Kurdish movement," is a 249-page long publication and book by the project New World Academy, founded by the Dutch Academy called BAK (Foundation for Contemporary Art, Utrecht) and the political organization New World Summit. The editors and program coordinators René In der Maur and Jonas Staal have edited the academic policy collections "New World Academy" and "New World Summit. It is an alternative educational platform that allows stateless organizations to debate their political ideas with artists, students, and movements, published "Stateless Democracy with the Kurdish movement". It is their fifth volume, produced in conjunction with the Kurdish women's movement and was launched May 30th, 2015. This publication was released in Amsterdam, with a keynote lecture by Kurdish journalist and writer Havin Güneşer, followed by a debate on the Rojava Revolution with Kurdish and international artists and academics panel mainly from the movement. The book was created by a group of persons who visited or stayed in Rojava under their new governmental administration.

The secondary sources are chosen to understand previous research on women and war and Kurdish women's agency and roles. I have mainly included sources close to the Kurdish Women's Movement. Like the articles "Feminism and the Kurdish Movement" by Dilar Dirik and Handan Çağlayan's "Women in the Kurdish movement- Mothers, Comrades, Goddesses". Contrary to this, I have also included scholars that do not have close ties to the movement. Like Deniz Gökalp's article "A gendered analysis of violence, justice and citizenship: Kurdish women facing war and displacement in Turkey,"

Chris Coulter's article "Female fighters in the Sierra Leone war: challenging the assumptions?" and Ira Merdjanova's "The Kurdish Women's Movement in Turkey and Its Struggle for Gender Justice." Additionally, I have also made the choice to include a historical overview of Rojava since Rojava is a complex topic. I applied the sources "Revolution in Rojava: Democratic Autonomy and Women's Liberation in Syrian Kurdistan" by Michael Knapp, Anja Flach, and Ercan Ayboğa and National Geographic for outlining Rojava.

1.2.2 Criticism of sources

The primary material contains real accounts and interviews which can create an opportunity to convey a depth in the production of knowledge that, for example, could not have been given with quantitative studies. The benefits are many when using these types of sources within social studies, especially when it comes to a group with a lack of representation and invisibility in general. On the other hand, this creates a vulnerability to subjectivity, neutrality and limitation. Although if their narratives are not accepted as objective fact, I am still able to "discover how subjects assert their agency, invest their activities with meaning, define their own representations, and influence how these data are acquired, categorized, stored, and interpreted accordingly"⁵ Simultaneously, a researcher must deconstruct oral accounts to analyze them using a theoretical framework. Furthermore, unlike most data, oral reports should be interpreted in light of their context, discourse, and the idea of self-presentation. According to Jacoby, all informants and researchers present themselves in a specific way to be perceived as more acceptable to justify their acts.⁶

One of the difficulties I encountered when analyzing the source material's interviews and articles was determining how to evaluate the accounts of their informants. Can they be founded on facts and reality or personal experiences and narratives? Considering my goal was to examine the participants' and researchers' per-

⁵ Jacoby, Tami. From the trenches: dilemmas of feminist IR-fieldwork. 2007. p.162-163

⁶ Ibid. Jacoby, Tami. 2007. p.162-163

spectives on the issue of Kurdish women's agency in the source material, I determined that the accuracy of their assertions was not the most significant factor. Although if their stories are not accepted as objective reality, I may "discover how subjects assert their agency, invest their activities with significance, shape their representations, and influence how these data are amassed, categorized, stored, and interpreted accordingly".⁷ The reliability of my source material would have been even higher if I had conducted the interviews and collected the articles by the authors myself. I have carefully assessed the material and whether this type of material can maintain a high level of reliability by examining the material's contributors, founders and publishers. Compared with other similar materials, the assessment has been made that this material has higher reliability. This primary source is well-worked since it is extensive, comprehensive and exhaustive and relevant to the theme of this study.

1.3 Research ethics and evaluations

Given that this thesis is based on the collective experiences of the Kurdish women's movement, one premise for this research is a shared experience between women, at least among women in a certain place, which is supported by my usage of the word "woman." In this paper, I will use the two biological sexes and name them woman and man. I am aware that there are more gender identities and have made the evaluation that it is more relevant and appropriate for this study to use the two biological sexes.

Out of respect for the suffering of the Kurdish people and the struggle against colonial oppression and the occupation of the four countries, Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran, I have chosen to name Kurdish areas and names of Kurdish cities geographically. This mainly affects cities and areas in Western Kurdistan (Rojava) and Northern Kurdistan (Bakur). Furthermore, due to not maintaining the four colonial states' division and oppression of the Kurdish people. The goal for the oppressors has been that you should not be allowed to identify yourself as a Kurd from Kurdistan but rather neglect the Kurdish identity. Beyond that, to recognize Kurdistan's existence, as long as Kurds exist, Kurdistan will

⁷ Ibid. Jacoby, Tami. 2007. p.162-163

remain. I am also aware that this study would have taken another form and choice of material if I was not doing this through the lens of sympathizing with the struggle in Rojava and Kurdistan.

2 Background and previous research

This background and previous research section will first address a historical review of Rojava. It is vital to investigate historical events that continue to impact the Kurdish question and Kurdistan. After that comes an overview of the YPJ, the women's defence force. Beyond that, a research overview with mainly significant researchers who are primarily close to the Kurdish women's movement to promote high credibility will be presented. Moreover, to introduce the research situation and have been selected for their relevance to my study. The relevance of these sources is how they provide us with deeper insights into how women's agency in war can be set in different contexts to nuance the theme. The scholars also compare their work to other studies.

2.1.1 A historical review of Rojava

The Kurds and Kurdistan may belong to the world's oldest people and civilization. A people who have been moving in nomadic and semi-nomadic tribes for thousands of years.⁸ In the book "Revolution in Rojava: Democratic Autonomy and Women's Liberation in Syrian Kurdistan" by Michael Knapp, Anja Flach and Ercan Ayboğa the authors state how Rojava civilizations can be traced from 15 000 B.C. There have been several rulers in this region, for instance, female rulers and multi-ethnic empires like Assyrian, Aramaean, Persian, Macedonian, Roman, and Ottoman rulers.⁹ After the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain, Germany, Russia and France all had common interests in the remnants of the empire. In 1916, Great Britain and France created the Sykes-Picot agreement that founded the political division about the colonial interests in the Kurdish region. Later in 1920, during the San Remo Conference and the peace of Sévres with the Allies of the First World War and the Ottoman Empire, the borders and countries of the Middle East were presented based on the interests of Great Britain and France. Kur-

⁸ Knapp, Michael, *Revolution in Rojava: Democratic Autonomy and Women's Liberation in Syrian Kurdistan*, Pluto Press, 2016 p.31

⁹ *Ibid.* Knapp, Michael, 2016 p.26

distan and the Allies' previous plans for Kurdish independence were disregarded. Turkey had renegotiated with the Allies in the Lausanne Peace in 1923 and was clear that the Kurds would not get any autonomy and independence and gave Kurds minority status in the affected countries.¹⁰

The number of Kurds in the world varies, but the most realistic estimates range from 35– to 40 million; of that number, approximately 19 million live in Turkey, 10–18 million in Iran, 5.6 million in Iraq, 3–4 million in Syria, 0.5 million in the former Soviet Union, and approximately 1 million in Europe. Kurds are the Middle East's fourth-biggest ethnic group, and they constitute the world's largest nation without a state.¹¹ In a broader sense, Kurds have always lived in the region of Rojava. Today the Kurds are the biggest minority group in Syria, and during Assad's state formation after World War II, the Kurds posed a threat to the pursuit of the rule of Arab nationalism. On April 17, 1946, Syria and the Syrian Arab Republic became independent. The Western colonial powers influenced the Pan-Arab movement with their colonial policies, German romanticism and nationalism. Pan-Arabism was based on nationalism and the exclusion of other ethnicities, mainly Kurds. This movement influenced dictators such as Bashar Al-Assad and the Ba'ath party.¹²

Furthermore, the Kurds were forcibly assimilated, deprived of their Syrian citizenship, and property rights - also heavily denied any form of Kurdish political activity and mobilization. In the Heseke province in 1962, the Kurds there would prove that they had lived in these areas before 1945. If that was not the case, they were classified as "ajanib" which meant foreigners, likewise for those in these areas since the 1920s. If one had not been at home during these checks, one would have been classified as a "maktoumeen" (stamped as hidden). One's status was even more thickened and discriminated against, and one had no access to any identifications. This, in turn, led to the inability to apply for passports, public sector employment, access to health care and the restriction to higher education. In 2004, there were about 200,000 with the status of "ajanib" and up to 100,000 as "maktoumeen". In 1963, when the Ba'ath party took power, the Kurds in

¹⁰ National Geographic. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/who-are-kurds> (Retrieved 10-04-2022) (Updated 16-08-2019) Ibid. Knapp, Michael. s.28

¹¹ Ibid. Knapp, Michael. 2016 p.50

¹² Ibid. Knapp, Michael. p.28

Syria were classified as immigrants from Turkey. The head of Internal security, Muhammad Talab Hilal set out a 12-step plan for total “arabification” because he accused how the Kurds posed a threat to the Arab nation. When introducing his plan, he declared these words; *“The Kurdish question, now that the Kurds are organizing themselves, is a malignant tumour which has developed and been developed in a part of the body of the Arab nation. The only remedy which we can properly apply there to is excision.”*¹³

Hilal's plan marked the following decades for a homogeneous Arab Syria. Kurdish land, education, voting rights and jobs were taken away. Tens of thousands of Arabs were relocated to the Kurdish areas to "arabize" the region. To this day, this region and its Kurdish population have been excluded and denied rights. Along with this, this Kurdish area has long been economically exploited as a "domestic colony."¹⁴

2.1.2 YPJ (Yekîneyên Parastina Jin/Women’s Defence Units)

During the Arab Spring in 2011, Syrian state institutions withdrew from Western Kurdistan since Bashar Al-Assad had to fight rebels in Southern Syria. The withdrawal allowed the Democratic Union Party (Partiya Yekîtiaya Demokrat, PYD) to seize control of the region through the efforts of militants within the People's Protection Units (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel, YPG) and the Women's Protection Units, an all-female militia (Yekîneyên Parastina Jin, YPJ). In August 2011, roughly half of Rojava's Kurds had formed councils. The Syrian civil war and the Syrian army's withdrawal war allowed the Kurds to assert their rights and achieve de facto autonomy in Rojava, Western Kurdistan. From March 2011 to July 19, 2012, Rojava has constructed its direct-democratic social order in little over a year. Despite the short lead time, it was ready on July 19. The revolution was thriving because people in cities and villages had planned ahead of time.¹⁵

The YPG (Yekîneyên Parastina Gel/People's Defense Units), formerly known as YXG, was founded in 2011, and the defence force consisted of both men and women. The authors Michael Knapp, Anja Flach, and Ercan Ayboğa illustrate how acceptance of wom-

¹³ Ibid. Knapp, Michael. 2016. p.32

¹⁴ Ibid. Knapp. p.32

¹⁵ Ibid. Knapp. p.203

en's participation in the military increased in connection with the belief that the liberation of society could only be achieved with the liberation of women. Women from the PKK's female military force returned to Rojava to assist in the military mobilization of women in Rojava. The authors emphasize the importance of defending oneself and the theoretical aspect of military defence, which increased acceptance of women's military participation by their families.¹⁶ During the July 2012 revolution, the YXG was transformed into the YPG and thousands of women were recruited. The female military was considered essential for the defence of Rojava and the struggle for the liberation of women. With that realization, several autonomous people began forming women's organizations in 2013. On April 4, the YPJ (Yekîneyên Parastina Jin/ Women's Defense Forces) was founded which operated in parallel with the YPG and appeared to be for women only. In each military canton and neighbourhood, there was a women's battalion. Thereon, there was a YPJ center in each district, several academies on women's defence were established, and new women's defence units were formed daily. According to journalist Berfin Hezîl, approximately 50% of all women in Rojava have received weapons and military training in October 2014.¹⁷

In interviews with women from YPJ, they express how women's active role has led to one revolutionary transformation. YPJ fighter Destan from Kobane announces what has been most lucrative in the conflict, *"I never thought a woman could be coequal with a man. In our family, men were always dominant, and I considered it entirely normal and accepted it as legitimate. Only in the YPJ did I come to understand that male dominance is not a normal part of life but on the contrary, that it goes against the natural order. This realization awakened an enormous feeling of freedom within me. The greatest use of this conflict, in my eyes, is the break with the feudal values in Kobani."*¹⁸

In Kobane, there should be as many males as female warriors, and in Afrîn, about 35–40% of women should participate. It is doubtlessly to include women in the military decision-making processes; in the YPG at least 30–35% of women should be included when making decisions. The YPG has had a Kurdish female commander who has been a commander in YPJ mainly on the Kobane front, her "nom de guerre" is Narin Afrin, and otherwise, it is Meysa Abdo. Furthermore, the authors point out how in addition,

¹⁶ Ibid. Knapp, Michael. 2016. p.104

¹⁷ Ibid. Knapp. p.105

¹⁸ Ibid. Knapp. p.105

other non-Kurdish women participated in the YPJ. In the city of Serêkaniyê, the non-Kurdish Bengin Melsa has acted as commander of the YPJ.¹⁹ Aside from the fact that Kurds are leading the Rojava movement, its political structures are founded on ethnic diversity principles. In the Rojava region, the starting point is "The Social Contract," which was implemented on 29 January 2014 and other minorities who will speak to all Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Aramaeans, Turkmens, Armenians and Chechens in Rojava.²⁰

2.1.3 Feminism and the Kurdish Movement

The Kurdish researcher at the University of Oxford and the activist in the Kurdish women's movement Dilar Dirik spoke at Hamburg University. In the edited article "Feminism and the Kurdish movement" by Internationalist 360, Dirik pointed out under "The World Women's March (Women of the World Unite at Rojava Border)" how the YPJ was praised for their opposition to Daesh. Dirik shows increased interest among feminists around the world for this movement. In a broader sense, a movement which aspires to advocate for women's freedom under their terms.²¹

Researcher Dilar Dirik begins by announcing the complicated relationship between feminism and Kurdish women when, for example, they have been painted black for their feminism by Turkish feminists.²² To leave their Kurdish ethnicity behind themselves and be forcibly assimilated to become Turks in the nationalist "modernization project." Since they were considered backward-looking. The political struggle when they have been in the armed forces has repeatedly been met with gross state violence in the form of racism and sexism through torture methods, systematic rapes and propaganda campaigns. Turkey has carried out propaganda as objectified the Kurdish women in battle, and they have been portrayed as prostitutes.²³ On the one hand, there have been Western portraits that Dirik expresses as sexist and diminished. They have been portrayed either as being exploited for the sake of a national struggle or they participate to escape their tragic lives as victims of a backward-looking culture. Women's participation in the

¹⁹ Ibid. Knapp, Michael. 2016. p.106

²⁰ Staal, Jonas. To Make a World, Part III: Stateless Democracy - Journal #63 March 2015 - e-flux

²¹ Dirik, Dilar. "Feminism and the Kurdish movement" 2015. Internationalist 360. p.1

²² Ibid. Dirik, Dilar. "Feminism and the Kurdish movement" 2015. s.2

²³ Ibid. Dirik, Dilar. s.2

struggle has often become disowned. It has not been possible to explain in a nuanced way how the Kurdish movement has been able to create a feminist grassroots movement that has challenged traditional structures to a significant extent. Dirik describes how the "mainstream" often have problematic and brief procedures that only deviate from the ideals and the ideology behind the struggle and their imagined models.

It is of great essence to further investigation based on the position held by Kurdish women. Their vulnerability of one multifaceted oppression as belonging to a stateless population. Partly to their socio-economic vulnerability and partly to the patriarchal violence from other states and even their society. Aspects to consider if one wishes to move beyond feminist limitations. In the Kurdish women's movement, Dirik highlights how one wants to explore the boundaries of feminism and be able to go beyond them. Nevertheless, one should not dismiss feminism without going beyond boundaries is about further developing another system by radically criticizing current systems and politicizing grassroots movements. Be able to lead a mental revolution because dominance is first established in a thought process. Be able to reject the patriarchal, question the global postcolonial capitalist order and be able to redefine conceptual feminist frameworks.

Dirik underlines how, for example, there may be an imperialist "feminism" that can just wars in the Middle East to "save women from barbarism."²⁴ The dominant authorities consider one of the most mobilized and powerful movements to threaten the 'status quo.' A new social contract is needed. Which kind of feminism can be accepted or not? What restrictions occur to inhibit the struggle because of the maintenance order?²⁵ One needs to criticize 'mainstream' feminism that fails to aim for a large-scale and powerful social change and social justice. Thus, feminism where other intersections than gender are ignored and the lack of attacking the root cause behind current concepts of femininity. As a result, the feminists in Rojava considered a new social contract. Since it is described how holistic approaches are required that can reach all affected people. How intersec-

²⁴ Ibid. Dirik, Dilar. *Feminism and the Kurdish Movement*. 2015. p.8

²⁵ Ibid. Dirik, Dilar. p.3

tional is a struggle if it fails to spread? New attitudes are needed in the relationship between knowledge, power and the dominant global system. The Kurdish women's movement succeeded in a mass movement that applied theoretical positions and debates and real-life experiences and practices that could create a significant political awareness—being bound to find collaborative solutions beyond all chance.

By starting from science, one will be able to put social solutions into practice with its focus on the voices of the marginalized. This movement has created methodological approaches such as 'Jineology' (Jin, "woman in Kurdish"). Debates have been held in the Qandil Mountains, on Rojava's front lines and in poor areas of Amed. Questions have been asked, such as "How should we redefine women's history? How should knowledge be achieved? How should society create mechanisms to increase women's empowerment and freedom?". A fundamental concept within the Kurdish women's movement is that one should create organizational structures based on autonomous self-organization to evoke progressive democracy. Women's liberation is considered a destination and an end destination. However, an active executive method should be practiced every day. It should be an uncompromising and principled principle. One needs to put this work into a system. The road there requires more than changes in the law, that a fundamental critique of the system is needed so that it is not overburdening women. It should be the responsibility of everyone in society because women's freedom is a yardstick for society's ethics and freedom. It requires self-reflection. A common recurring slogan used in Rojava in the fight against Daesh is that Daesh cannot be fought as long as the mentality they possess is also fought. A mentality which occurs partly in a global rape culture.²⁶

In conclusion, the Kurdish women's Movement in Rojava is a constructive movement that aspires to profoundly and radically transform their society and set the groundwork for communities utterly free of injustice and inequity. Establishing women's agency is a central component of women's liberation in Rojava. Consequently, this movement has mobilized militarily, politically, socially and legally. Legislative changes and bans on gender-based discrimination, forced marriage, child marriage, 'bride price', domestic violence, honor killings and polygamy have been implemented in Rojava. Men who have

²⁶ Ibid. Dirik, Dilar. 2015. p.5-6

committed violent crimes against women cannot participate in administrative work. Power has been decentralized, and monopolism is prevented, equal power in decision-making processes and the promotion of consensus guarantees women's representation. Defence forces, separatist municipalities, academies, tribunals and cooperatives were established in the middle of the war. Other minorities have been included and encouraged in their organization. As one activist from Rojava put it, *"We do not knock on people's doors and tell them they are wrong. Instead, we try to explain to them that they can organize themselves and give them the means to determine their own lives"*.²⁷

2.1.4 Advocacy work and its obstacles

Researcher Handan Çağlayan clarifies in the article "Women in the Kurdish movement- Mothers, Comrades and Goddesses" how the Kurdish women's movement has been able to mobilize and found several hundred social organizations in the first place that addresses gender equality issues and violence against women in the Kurdish regions. The mobilization has led to a step closer to gender equality and women's increased socio-economic position. The author highlights the new stance of women as active agents in historical processes.²⁸ On the other hand, the women's positive developments for women and their advocacy work have a long history of political tensions in Turkey. Mainly after post-1980, women's increased participation in the Kurdish freedom movement began to attract attention. Increased visibility in public contexts, demonstrations, meetings, their active members in various legal-political parties and guerrilla forces increased political tensions.²⁹ For instance, a mass arrest operation was carried out in 2009 against Kurdish politicians and women politicians made up a third of all arrested.³⁰ At the same time, Kurdish women became a symbol of Kurdish culture. Çağlayan illustrates how they are seen outside prisons dressed in their colourful traditional clothes at the same time as they symbolize rights claims. In their military uniforms, they were symbols of liberation. The researcher describes how the academic world, on the other hand, was silent for a long time in the 90s and early 00s, possibly

²⁷ Ibid. Dirik, Dilar. 2015. p.5

²⁸ Çağlayan, Handan, Women in the Kurdish Movement: Mothers, Comrades, Goddesses. Palgrave Macmillan; 2020 s.2

²⁹ Ibid. Çağlayan, Handan, Women in the Kurdish Movement. p.5

³⁰ Ibid. Çağlayan. p.3

due to political sensitivity. At the same time, the author observes that it was disconcerting to hear accounts spoken by second-hand sources firsthand in the academic world rather than Kurdish women themselves. Hence clarifies the author her choice of interview studies of Kurdish women. Since their voices had long been exploited.³¹

Moreover, the researcher highlights the relationship between feminist theorists and nationalist movements. It leads to theoretical shortcomings if one does not include gender relations when analyzing ethnic and national identity. As well, how this relationship creates different constructions in society. Gender relations are the basis of ethnic and national identity. Once one analyzes this connection, the position that men have taken represents societies and where women are considered to hold symbolic values and roles. The researcher introduces Cynthia Enloe's notes about how masculinity produces nationalism. On the other hand, women's reproductive role is introduced in nationalist contexts and their cultural and biological duties to society.³² Other duties and responsibilities imposed on these women are conveying the authentic essence of one's ethnic group and the national project to future generations as an extension of motherhood. Otherwise, it is claimed that women can be excluded from their societies. Consequently, this format has a basis for controlling women's bodies, sexuality, and behaviour in the nation's name.³³ All in all, it describes how different roles are created for men and women. A crucial factor due to the subordinate role of women is the power structures that are permeated in society, and the researcher recognize these as not immutable. Thereupon, it is emphasized how this exists for identities which follow the exact track of being socially constructed.³⁴

In addition, the author emphasizes the portrayal of the Kurdish woman and what contradictions it has meant for them. On the one hand, one should relate to traditional gender roles such as motherhood and whether one can carry on one's role as "The authentic essence of Kurdishness." On the other hand, it is described how "her" is the Kurdish woman's construction in active participation in an active struggle, based on the role of the

³¹ Ibid. p.5-6

³² Ibid. Çağlayan, Handan, Women in the Kurdish Movement. 2020. p.7

³³ Ibid. Çağlayan. p.7-8

³⁴ Ibid p.8

politician and warrior. Çağlayan underlines her interpretation of women's active participation in politics and how it has led them to a permanent role which has arisen with the help of conceptualization linked to the collective identity, collective actions, the collective actor, and everyday experiences and the social network.³⁵ The researcher asks himself whether the Kurdish identity has influenced Kurdish women's mobilization and participation in the movement. She is critical at the beginning of the movement's advancement in the 1980s. The image of "the woman who drives the man" was said to have been replaced in the 1990s by "the trustworthy woman," "the woman as the hero," and "the woman as the founder of the new society." She arrives at a point when the conceptualization and interaction of collective action, collective identification, and individual identity had moulded and shaped the definition of Kurdish identity and women's identity. Thus, the author reasons, "*I, therefore, started from the relationship between action and identity consciousness to define women's social and political activism, subjective experiences, expressed within the context of the Kurdish movement, as a form of practice.*"³⁶ Overall, the researcher Çağlayan emphasizes how ideologies create a meaningful structure for action. However, the vulnerability is the victim of injustices that personify them and drive the struggle. When one can share their everyday experiences, it produces a mobilization for collective action.³⁷

Similarly, like Dilar Dirik, both address the limitations of the Kurdish Women's Movement and the feminist struggles it has undertaken. Both these researchers and this research overview can complement the picture of how Kurdish women's participation in the military has been able to grow. How the movement has been able to develop and what challenges they have met to develop their current mechanisms within the movement. Dirik describes the path to the different methods and principles used, and Çağlayan presents the duties that women in the Kurdish movement carry in the collective identity.

³⁵ Ibid. s.9

³⁶ Ibid. Çağlayan. s.10

³⁷ Ibid. Çağlayan. s.11

2.1.5 Active agents during and after war

Several authors and academics have argued how women in conflict and war make women more vulnerable to exploitation, marginalization and poverty. On the other hand, Ina Merdjanova emphasizes in her article “The Kurdish Women’s Movement in Turkey and Its Struggle for Gender Justice” how the challenges and mistreatment of Kurdish women could not silence them or limit their participation. On the contrary, political repression must have contributed to a resistance that contributed to women being given an increasingly active role in the struggle. There were mass protests against the Turkish state's mass arrests of Kurds in this resistance movement. Many women protested even though they were subjected to torture and sexual abuse when imprisoned.³⁸

Kurdish female guerrilla fighters are regarded as the core of the Kurdish women's movement. Women's activism embodies itself in three main areas: armed resistance, the formal political arena, and civil society.³⁹ It is reaffirmed how the female guerrilla fighters have formed the foundation of the Kurdish women's movement. Consequently, a new concept of Kurdish identity was established in a gender-egalitarian framework. Women argued strongly that the fight for Kurdish identity must encompass women's rights and abolish familial violence. Even if it is still a work in progress, this fundamental rethinking and reworking of the Kurdish gender system provide greater space for women to raise their social, cultural, and political standing and represents the most profound social impact of the Kurdish Women’s Movement. The emergence of women's role in the Kurdish Movement was inspired by the strive for gender equality, which was established by Öcalan and was welcomed, further expanded, and realized in the Kurdish Movement's organizational structures by female activists.⁴⁰

The women are outlined as crucial actors in the Kurdish nation-building. They had the task of being cultural denominators and, on the other hand, mothers and teachers for the

³⁸ Merdjanova, Ina. "The Kurdish Women’s Movement in Turkey and Its Struggle for Gender Justice." *Histories*. 2021. 1. p.187

³⁹ Ibid. Merdjanova, Ina. 2021. p.186

⁴⁰ Ibid. Merdjanova. p.189

nation's children. The first Kurdish women's organization was founded in 1919 in Istanbul and was called "the Society for the Advancement of Kurdish Women." This great platform could advance the ideas of the unique role of women in the national awakening. It then asserts how the Kurdish women's movement began to expand in the 1970s and 1980s when the realization that gender equality is an essential component of the Kurdish freedom movement.⁴¹

Merdjanova presents how women have often been neglected in their demands for men's liberation after the nationalist movement has fulfilled its purpose. Women have since been considered to return to traditional roles in the family and society. This is exemplified in Algeria, Mozambique and Namibia, among others. Nevertheless, it is apparent that women guerrillas are highly regarded in the Kurdish society and therefore play a major role in altering the old gender regime. Crucially, they have important responsibilities that extend across combat: they teach both men and women about gender equality in the home and society. Men who beat their wives or take a second wife are also disciplined by them.⁴²

Deniz Gökalp underscores in the article "A gendered analysis of violence, justice and citizenship: Kurdish women facing war and displacement in Turkey" how Kurdish women's work concerning their political awareness and ability to seek justice in political, legal, socio-economic and cultural foundations.⁴³ To return to Merdjanova's illustration of how Kurdish women have been able to change the circumstances of war and conflict for women into something other than vulnerability. Similarly, Gökalp asserts how Kurdish women have used the circumstances of the war as catalysts to develop social participation, political awareness and social organization to advance their rights. Gökalp announces how previous research indicates that women still tend to get caught up in powerlessness in conflicts that create physical, social, economic and political vulnerability. "*The ultimate feminist endeavor in research is to "explore the possibilities for changing power imbalances" during which women interests, demands, and expectations.*"⁴⁴ There may be cases where one challenges these structural barriers and aims to change power balances

⁴¹ Ibid. Merdjanova, Ina. 2021. p.184

⁴² Ibid. Merdjanova. p.186

⁴³ Gökalp, Deniz. "A gendered analysis of violence, justice and citizenship: Kurdish women facing war and displacement in Turkey." 2010. *Women's Studies International Forum*. p.561

⁴⁴ Ibid. Gökalp, Deniz. 2010. p.563

where women's demands and interests can be fulfilled. As mentioned earlier, social, economic and political changes hit women most because of their already structural subordination. Furthermore, these challenges can be developed into different forms of identities (such as political) and different expectations than men, which shapes another type of struggle for other rights.⁴⁵ Agency is acknowledged as an essential component of war and its aftermath. It is not just about what women "do" but also who they are. Women's agency includes the ability to speak and decide for themselves, to be able to distance themselves from patriarchal structures from family and relatives and to be able to handle the various traumas of conflict and displacement. Also, their capacity to seek justice, speak in the name of their lost husbands and sons, develop survival strategies for their families, and articulate their willingness to be active agents of change for themselves and the "Kurdish struggle."⁴⁶

Additionally, Chris Coulter demonstrates in "Female fighters in the Sierra Leone war: challenging the assumptions?" how on several levels, the categorization of the female fighter simultaneously challenges and complicates the traditionally and gendered tropes of 'woman the victim' and 'man the aggressor.' Many studies on 'women and war' recognize women as somehow intrinsically more peaceful or solely as victims, inadvertently perpetuating a comparative lack of 'agency' in 'conflict-affected women.'⁴⁷ Nonetheless, women who are subject to even the most heinous oppression "have agency, too." For this reason, it is essential to comprehend how women in war tend to utilize patriarchal concepts and images for their own goals ingeniously.⁴⁸ Colter contends that humanitarian agencies and quantitative conflict analyses have appropriated the concept of 'victim' somehow in a way associated with 'lack of agency.' The idea obscures, however, unwittingly, alternative functions that these victims may have recreated and how their local communities perceived them.⁴⁹ However, by concentrating solely on women as victims, we overlook their broad range of political and social agents. The category of 'victim' has evolved into a socially constructed identity that commonly tacitly endorses 'women's

⁴⁵ Ibid. Merdjanova, Ina. 2021. p.186

⁴⁶ Ibid. Gökalp, Deniz. 2010. p.563

⁴⁷ Coulter, Chris. "Female fighters in the Sierra Leone war: challenging the assumptions?" 2008. p.54

⁴⁸ Ibid. Coulter, Chris. 2008. p.67

⁴⁹ Ibid. Coulter. p.68

war experiences.' The author concludes how one needs to recognize that women are actors who make their own choices while also realizing that hierarchical structures and specific contexts frequently shape their decisions.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Ibid. Coulter, Chris. 2008. p.69

3 Theory and method

In this chapter, I will introduce the theories and method applied. As this thesis examines the Kurdish women's movement and their way to empowerment, I have therefore applied feminist theories that focus on "Women's agency and War" - with the main focus on Kurdish women's agency and resistance in relation to war. I have also applied feminist separatism theory since it is a theoretical component that can explain and make us further understand the theme of women's agency and war. My question is based on the primary material, "Stateless democracy with the Kurdish Movement." Therefore, it is relevant to use the method of discourse analysis to explore their stance on the theme of the Kurdish Women's Movement.

3.1 Theory

3.1.1 Women's agency during war

The feminist theoretical framework on women's participation in the war has shifted from a focus on how women are victimized during conflicts to an emphasis on the agency. When examining women and conflict in Kurdistan, it is vital to investigate the concept of agency in depth. How may agency be conceptualized in contexts that limit and obstruct action? When discussing the spaces of opportunity that exist during the conflict, how should the agency be perceived? What does agency mean when women become victims of war violence?⁵¹ It is critical to distinguish emic, or local, understandings of agency, which are frequently presented in opposing groupings, as with the oppressed vs. the released, the emancipated vs. the backward, and lastly, the aggressor vs. the innocent, from an analytic examination of agency.⁵² Agency is mostly associated with resistance, and liberation is defined as "*the capacity to realize one's own interests against*

⁵¹ Begikhani, Nazand, Hamelink, Wendelmoet and Weiss, Nerina. "Theorising women and war in Kurdistan: A feminist and critical perspective." 2018. p.15

⁵² Ibid. Begikhani, Hamelink and Weiss 2018. p.15

the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will or other obstacles."⁵³ This explanation is based on a feminist concept of human conduct, which aims to find the subject's political and moral autonomy in the face of authority. Individual or organized resistance is merely one kind of activity. Although essentially tied to power and dominance, the agency may or may not be concerned with change but rather with continuity and stability. Social and gender norms, as well as power systems, are appropriated, negotiated, and adopted in the same way that they are actively challenged. In studying women in the context of war, we propose an understanding of agency that allows for a more complex and ambiguous interpretation of the term, allowing us to investigate how people can act in and through social constraints, gendered norms, and, not least, the context of war and violence. Agency in regard to Kurdish women and war may thus be viewed as the recognition of people's capacity to actively interact in a changeable social and political landscape in which many frequently contradictory ideological discourses coexist. Taking this approach to agency allows us to move beyond the nationalist depictions of women as victims of state violence or patriarchy on the one hand or emancipated women on the other. This analysis highlights the complexities with which women negotiate their positions, as well as the fact that their gendered roles are continually shifting.⁵⁴ Kurdish women were frequently portrayed as victims of war, as victims of numerous oppressions resulting from governmental aggression, sexism, and economic distress, and as refugees.⁵⁵

Much contemporary feminist theory begins by theorizing women's geopolitics and situated experiences with war and militarism. However, it also investigates the correlation between gender and gender-based violence and numerous political and social positions based on race, ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, and age. Gender is inextricably linked to other political and analytical categories, and examining the confluence of these categories is crucial to successfully fighting subordination and developing subjectivity. Women's positions and statuses are diverse and interact in ways that shape their gender identity and lack of access to power.⁵⁶

⁵³ Ibid. 2018, p.16

⁵⁴ Ibid. p.16

⁵⁵ Ibid. p.23

⁵⁶ Ibid. Begikhani, Hamelink and Weiss 2018. p.9

War conditions have contributed to inhibiting the establishment of autonomous women's rights movements since women activists were frequently obliged to prioritize the attainment of fundamental human rights above women's rights. Thus, ongoing violence and insecurity are some of the long-term effects of war that significantly impact the lives of Kurdish women. Women's activism has emerged in the aftermath, or as a direct result, of prior wars, and in the setting of a "continuum of violence."⁵⁷ These examples show how many Kurdish women have adopted and mobilized political discourses to improve their position in their local environment, make themselves heard, and convince male relatives of the justness of their demands. As Deniz Gökalp indicates, political discourses of victimization imposed on women by state or male violence may be liberating if women can mobilize such discourses to advance their goals.⁵⁸

3.1.2 Feminist separatism

In this study, I will also apply the theoretical aspect of feminist separatism, a theory that analyses how autonomous spaces within the women's movement can seek liberation. As stated by Frye, men are skeptical of separatism because it restricts male access to women, limiting male privilege. In contrast, women are concerned about being penalized for defying society's male-defined demands and expectations. Nonetheless, Frye contends that feminist independence is required to equalize the power balance since it provides women a place to escape men's dominance and a context outside of patriarchal norms.⁵⁹ For instance, separatism can be encountered in women's shelters, clinics, and lesbian communities, such as in practices like divorce or abortion. Frye refers to men's hunger for access to, and hence influence over, women as "male parasitism," since males, like parasites, drain women's power, independence, and resources. Women may take charge of their lives and disrupt the parasitic framework by utilizing separatism, including all-female groups and organizations.⁶⁰ According to Yuval Davis, all-female military groups may create a safer environment for women, especially when it comes to

⁵⁷ Ibid. 2018. p.10

⁵⁸ Ibid. 2018. p.15

⁵⁹ Frye, Marilyn. "Some reflections on separatism and power." *The lesbian and gay studies reader*. 1993. p.410

⁶⁰ Ibid. Frye, Marilyn. 1993. p.406,414

safeguarding them from sexual harassment, and allow them the opportunity to accomplish equivalent jobs as males, in contrast to mixed forces where women must constantly prove themselves.⁶¹

The author Laurel Weldon underscores the need to allow marginalized groups to self-organize. She indicates that feminist scholars have long underlined the need for autonomous women's organizations and groups where they may develop their own goals and strategies for dealing with or resisting their oppression.⁶² Self-organization is required to guarantee that marginalized subgroups or "internal minorities" can develop and articulate their own opinions. Feminist theorists have emphasized the significance of autonomous organization by women, such that organization in which women could choose the direction and norms of interaction.⁶³ Democratic theorists claim that when dominant groups develop a "counter-public" or distinct dialogue among themselves, they are better equipped to combat their marginalization in the larger public sphere. Such counter-publics serve as "bases and training grounds for agitational actions," allowing disenfranchised groups to create and spread new thoughts and ideas to the dominant public sphere.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Davis, Yuval. "Gender and nation." 1997. p.410

⁶² Weldon, S. Laurel. "Inclusion and understanding: a collective methodology for feminist international relations." 2006. p.75

⁶³ Ibid. Weldon. 2006. p.56

⁶⁴ Ibid. Weldon. p.56

3.2 Method

In this section below I will introduce my chosen method discourse analysis. The thesis' scientific approach is based on a qualitative method and analysis. The decision is linked to the desire to gain a more profound knowledge of social processes. A more comprehensive understanding of numerous aspects of various occurrences can lead to a more insightful viewpoint that no quantitative research can provide.

Sandra Halperin and Oliver Heath define discourse analysis as "the study of text within the social context" in their book on political research. Their definitions is based on qualitative analysis of how discourses provide legitimacy and significance in the social context.⁶⁵ Discourse analysis is both interpretive and constructivist. It is concerned with studying the meanings assigned to human behaviour and how discursive processes generate meanings through the creation, diffusion, and consumption of text.⁶⁶ Discourse analysis is founded on the fundamental notion that concepts are formed discursively, and that language is a channel for action and function. This idea is central to the Speech Act theory, namely the leading theory of discourse analysis. It contends that we do not simply talk (or write) for the sake of speaking; there is a meaning behind it, and by speaking/writing, we may make attitudes, ideas, events, processes, and connections real. Language could be used to construct several versions of the social reality by creating various types of social and cultural meanings.⁶⁷

In the book "Methods for social work," David Ekholm and Viktor Vesterberg express how discourse analysis is an analytical method that can be applied to examine constructions of social problems. This means analyzing societal problems and how they have been presented in different contexts.⁶⁸ Discourse analysis can be defined as "a specific way of talking about and understanding the world (or a section of the world)." It is a method used to be able to read texts critically and to be able to understand how and why

⁶⁵ Halperin, Sandra and Heath, Oliver. 2017. "Political research. Methods and practical skills." p.456

⁶⁶ Ibid. Halperin, Sandra and Heath, Oliver. 2017. p.336-337

⁶⁷ Ibid. p.337

⁶⁸ Ekholm, David & Vesterberg, Viktor, "Diskursanalys- Metoder för forskning i socialt arbete." 2020. p.157

the language is used as it is. It is mainly sentences and patterns that are analyzed. The function of the method is based on identifying discourses.⁶⁹ According to Marianne Winther Jørgensen and Louise Phillips, discourses aim to make norms, attitudes, opinions, knowledge and values visible with the help of language's presentation of reality. When the conversation around a topic is made visible, it is easier to understand what influences our notions of different representations.⁷⁰ Jørgensen and Phillips point out how the benefits of discourse analysis make it easier to make visible contradictions and hidden power relations. As a result, it is feasible to evaluate commonly held assumptions and see how dominant constructs and deterministic assertions might be undermined and destabilized. In turn, this could lead to a shift in the social power relations that have the power to construct the discursive order.⁷¹

Jonas Ringström presents in "Discourse analysis: An analysis of the second-order or a second rank analysis?" how the method has become increasingly popular and significant in scientific contexts and not least for social science researchers. The reasons are sociological as texts and media have gained significant importance in society.⁷²

Eva Bolander and Andreas Fejes defines discourse analysis in the book "Handbook of qualitative analysis".⁷³ They clarify the usefulness of the method and why it is so important. The approach is appropriate for researching what realities are generated. When discourse analysis is performed, texts are deconstructed to show which truths are created about what is considered normal or abnormal. Discourse analysis is essential when understanding the significance of language in how we form ourselves and others. The research generated is both a founder of the discourse and a result of discourse; the research is written within the context of what the discourse controls as feasible while also

⁶⁹ "Allmänt om forskningsansatser med kvalitativ metod" p. 11:13 https://www.sbu.se/globalassets/ebm/metodbok/sbushandbok_bilaga11.pdf

⁷⁰ Winther Jørgensen, Marianne & Phillips, Louise, "Diskursanalys som teori och metod", Studentlitteratur, Lund, 2000. p.16

⁷¹ Ibid. Winther Jørgensen & Phillips. p.16

⁷² Ringström, Jonas "Diskursanalys: En analys av andra ordningen eller en andra rangens analys?" 2014. i *Den metodologiska labyrinten: erfarenheter och vägval inom samhällsvetenskaplig forskning*. Thelander, Joakim (red.). Kristianstad University Press, Kristianstad, 2014 p.113 <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:hkr:diva-13270>

⁷³ Bolander, Eva & Fejes, Andreas "Diskursanalys" i Fejes, Andreas & Thornberg, Robert (red.), *Handbok i kvalitativ analys*, 1. uppl., Liber, Stockholm, 2009

creating realities about what is feasible. The question of how the researcher influences what is investigated becomes tough to address.⁷⁴

In a broader sense, it is described how reality is continuously created through language. Language is considered to create images of reality and shape the world in different ways. The creative role that language has aroused great interest in the research world. Through discourse analysis, one can emphasize the impact of language and how it shapes the world differently.⁷⁵ One of the most used definitions of discourse analysis is Michael Foucault definition “practical actions that systematically form the objects they are talking about”.⁷⁶

All in all, texts that are analyzed are descriptions of reality, and within the discourse analysis, the texts establish truth claims. This implores the question, "What descriptions of reality are given the status of being true in a particular context?"⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Ibid. Bolander and Fejes. 2009. p.82-83

⁷⁵ Ibid. p.85

⁷⁶ Foucault, Michel. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and The Discourse on Language*. 1972. Pantheon Books, New York p.54

⁷⁷ Ibid. Bolander and Fejes. 2009. p.88

4 Stateless democracy with the Kurdish Women's Movement

The source material "Stateless democracy with the Kurdish movement" is a collection of interviews, reports and articles made in Rojava and a great deal of background work with the help of representatives of the movement. The work includes publications that connect the relationships and roles of art, democracy, ideology, politics and propaganda in political struggles. The ambitions are to engage in critical thinking and develop collaborative actors and projects that can challenge the prevailing framework within justice and representation. They present the publication "Stateless Democracy with the Kurdish movement," which they have worked on together with the Kurdish women's movement but first and foremost, the researcher Dilar Dirik. The editors have announced Dilar Dirik as a contributor through their direct dialogue during the work of the material. The entire work is elaborated with continuing education of female Kurdish representatives from the academic world.⁷⁸

4.1.1 Dilar Dirik "Living without approval"

Dilar Dirik is a researcher at Oxford University and a prominent activist in the Kurdish women's movement. The authors conclude how Dirik declares the movement to grow in step with resistance to the colonial oppression: "*Dirik traces the history of the Kurdish movement to ancient Mesopotamia and its separation through colonial rule as the foundation for the rise of the women's movement.*"⁷⁹ Jonas Staal begins the interview with Dirik by asking a broad question about the nature of the Kurdish Women's Movement. She expresses in the opening interview how the focus has been on transforming women's liberation based on a grass-roots foundation and not on an elitist ideal, according to the author.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ In der Maur, Renée and Staal, Jonas. (ed.). Stateless democracy with the Kurdish movement. 2015. The New World Academy Reader, 5.

⁷⁹ Ibid. Dirik, Dilar. and Staal, Jonas. Living without approval. 2015. p.21

⁸⁰ Ibid. Dirik. 2015. p.29

The researcher Dirik breaks down the words Kurdish women's movement. She points out that it is essential to name the movement based on ethnicity and gender, precisely for the multifaceted sides of oppression that accompany being a Kurdish woman. Multiple marginalized identities carry a diaspora in the four oppressive states of Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran and how the Kurds have suffered discrimination in their Kurdish communities. There is multilayered oppression and different hierarchical mechanisms on patriarchal, racist, socio-economic, civic and cultural grounds. Dilar Dirik emphasizes how one cannot liberate oneself as a woman without challenging the other forms of oppression.⁸¹ Dirik continues to deepen the meaning of the concept of movement within the Kurdish women's movement. By using the concept of movement, one is not geographically or party-limited, but the movement must be able to operate everywhere. The mobilization has been combined with grassroots features and theoretical components. There are ambitions around mobilizing different women within the regions. Such as Turkish, Arabic, Persian and Afghan women. For example, the Kurdish women's movement is said to have organized its first "Middle East Women's Conference" in 2013 in Amed. Women from North Africa, all the way to Pakistan, were invited.⁸²

4.1.2 The Rojava revolution

Furthermore, in the interview with Dilar Dirik, she defines the Rojava revolution and how women's liberation is a fundamental component of that be able to understand and build a democracy, where autonomous women's organizations like Yekîtiya Star and YPJ are designed as such. Yekîtiya Star decides on women's issues, such as who should be co-president of a specific canton. The body advocates women's liberation as fundamental to implementing democracy. Many cooperatives have been established to ensure women's systemic inclusion in politics and the economy according to the author. Autonomous women's councils coexist with general people's councils at all levels, from neighbourhood communes to cantons.⁸³ Dirik explains how independent and autonomous women's councils are at different levels, such as at district and local levels. They

⁸¹ Ibid. Dirik. 2015. p.30-31

⁸² Ibid. p.30-31

⁸³ Ibid. p.50-51

are noted as having the power to veto the other councils. Mechanisms have been implemented that contribute to real change, such as quotas and co-chairmanship. To ensure that women can meet their full potential, perhaps these mechanisms will not be needed one day. *“If we truly appreciate women, then we need to set in place quotas to guarantee that women are fully recognized in their potential.”*⁸⁴

Despite the war against IS, the vision of building has succeeded up a democratic society. It is crucial to building something parallel to the wartime; otherwise, everything fails. During the revolution, the struggle was usually only reduced to self-defence against Daesh. Which, of course, is a crucial fight to prevent genocide.⁸⁵

4.1.3 Havin Güneşer "Feminicide"

The authors have included the article and edited transcript of the speech “Feminicide” by Havin Güneşer, a Kurdish journalist and spokesperson for the movement "Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan-Peace in Kurdistan." 2014 she gave a speech at the "Women's Conference" in Rome. In the speech, Güneşer recounts when the Kurdish freedom movement was founded in the 1980s, so it was a great mix of different people with different class affiliations, ethnicity, and beliefs brought together with a common goal. A feminist foundation began to emerge where opposition to feudalism, chauvinism, nationalism and male domination. An excellent foundation to be able to develop the movement forward. *"Women joined the guerilla forces from the beginning because of the sexism they faced in feudal tribal structures and the fury they felt in increasing colonialist and exploitative oppression against the Kurds by the Turkish Republic."*⁸⁶

A foundation was laid in the women's movement through Abdualah Öcalans and his position as strategist and political leader of the Kurdish movement. His strong faith and encouragement for women's active position and power. Öcalan highlighted women's oppression and their struggle for freedom, despite having met resistance at first from male members. Güneşer notes how Öcalan enabled political, social, cultural, ideological and

⁸⁴ Ibid. Dirik. 2015. p.50

⁸⁵ Ibid. p.50

⁸⁶ Ibid. Güneşer, Havin. Feminicide. 2015. p.61

organizational platforms for women. The first separatist women's organization was established in 1987, "The Union of the Patriotic Women of Kurdistan" (YJWK). In the early 90s, there was an increased turnout of women who participated in the guerrilla forces. In 1993, the first women's separatist defence force was founded. Thus, this constituted the women could shape the organization entirely based on their own needs and ambitions as women in battle. Women gained increased self-confidence, and many significant ideological, political and social changes began to take effect. *"This development gave women significant self-confidence and led to enormous ideological, political, and social transformations."*⁸⁷

In 1995, "The Union of Free" was founded by "Women of Kurdistan." Thus, the change work began mainly on a political and social level where, for example, they started with education about men's mentality. Especially in 1998, they began to concretize the work and design a principled work and an ideology for women's liberation. Therefore, the "Kurdish Women's Workers Party" (PJKK) was implemented, and in 2000, the movement was further expanded with a broader power and organizational perspective. Then the "Free Women's Party" (PJA) was formed. During this era of change work for women's rights, Güneşer contends how the greatest masterpiece was to found the declaration "Women's Social Kurdistan Contract."⁸⁸The women's liberation movement was restructured during several stages. The need for a confederal and more flexible organization began to emerge. In 2005, "The High Women's Council" (KJB) was established to create a point of cooperation between the self-defence forces, social organizations, the "Women's Freedom Party of Kurdistan" (PAJK), and the young women's organization. At the local level, women had begun to completely organize themselves and control decision-making processes where the latter could be represented at other levels.⁸⁹

Güneşer concludes her speech by honoring the triple murder of the PKK-members, *"I would like to commemorate the three revolutionary women who were murdered in Paris: Sakine Canısız, Fidan Doğan, and Leyla Şaylemez. Moreover, I wish to honor the brave young women who are, as we speak, fighting to stop the spread of fascism. They cannot be left alone."*⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Ibid. Güneşer. 2015. p.62

⁸⁸ Ibid. p.62

⁸⁹ Ibid. p.66

⁹⁰ Ibid. p.69

4.1.4 Zilan Diyar "The Whole World is Talking About Us, Kurdish Women"

Zilan Diyar is a Kurdish guerrilla fighter who has written the article "The Whole World is Talking About Us, Kurdish Women." The added article in "Stateless Democracy with the Kurdish movement" is a revised version of a text originally published in Kurdish Question on December 23, 2014. Diyar begins by announcing how female warriors have become a worldly phenomenon visible everywhere. How this deep-rooted tradition is one reality that the world has recently learned. The author expresses how surprising it is that eyes have not been on the Kurdish women before. Moreover, the world has often missed many dimensions in the struggle with their secondary analysis. *"The world is amazed by these women who fight against the men that want to paint the colours of the Middle East black and wonder where they get their courage from, how they can laugh so sincerely. Our calendar did not run parallel to the world's calendar. These women's gazes were focused deep into the far distance. I am surprised at how they noticed us so late, at how they never knew of us before. I wonder how they came to be so late in hearing the voices of the many valiant women who expanded the borders of courage, belief, patience, hope, and beauty."*⁹¹

4.1.5 Gönül Kaya, "Why Jineology? Re-Constructing the Sciences Towards a Communal and Free Life"

Gönül Kaya is a Kurdish Women's Movement spokesperson and journalist. Her article is an edited version of her speech at the conference "Jineology: Radical Thinking and Constructing from a Women's Perspective," which took place on February 28–March 2, 2014, at the University of Cologne. On December 28, 2014, it was initially published in "Kurdish Question." Kaya recognizes Jineology (Kurdish: *jin*; *woman*) as the "creation of a women's paradigm." She goes in-depth when explaining the meaning behind Jineology. It is believed to be based on "Women's science." Jineology represents a new phase from the standpoint of the Kurdish women's movement. Where they aim to dissolve patriarchy.⁹²

⁹¹ Ibid. Diyar, Zilan. The Whole World is Talking About Us, Kurdish Women. 2015. p.75

⁹² Ibid. Kaya, Gönül. Why Jineology? Re-Constructing the Sciences Towards a Communal and Free Life. 2015. p.84

It all started in 1987 with distinct and autonomous women's organizing efforts. According to Kaya, women led the Kurdish people's protests against the repression of Kurdistan in 1989. The beginning of a national resistance phase "with a new women-focused character." The women's movement advanced its theoretical and practical work within different fields with the slogan that women's liberation is the liberation of society. "*At this point, we propose jineology as a necessary strategy towards overcoming the prevailing, dominant system of the field of science and constructing an alternative system of science liberated from sexism.*"⁹³ The advanced women's movement emphasized ideological, philosophical and intellectual work. In addition, a critical approach to the dominant field of research began to be developed. Kaya clarifies how Jineology would adopt a strategy to be able to design an alternative knowledge system in the field of research that is free from sexist structures. "*Women should create their disciplines, reach their interpretations and meanings, and share these with all of society.*"⁹⁴ In 2011, an education system began to be developed based on Jineology. It is considered necessary to be able to shed light on the existence of women within all its dimensions and nuance of previous perceptions. At the same time, one should be able to criticize and interpret knowledge structures that touch on history, society, and the world in one overall way according to Kaya. Gönül Kaya summarizes the ideology and epistemology of Jineology so that it can create an approach based on women and society's cohesive roots and identities that have so often been separated from the truth. Jineology is regarded as having an underlying principle where the ideology should be a continuation of the experiences and progress of previous feminists.⁹⁵

4.1.6 No. This is a Genuine Revolution: David Graeber Interviewed by Pinar Öğünç

David Graeber is an activist and professor of anthropology at the London School of Economics and is one of the few Western intellectuals to draw attention to the importance of Rojava and its significance for the people inside and outside the region. Which he calls "a remarkable democratic experiment." In a broader sense, Graeber emphasize how he feels about it as remarkable when the Western world once chooses to

⁹³ Ibid. Kaya, Gönül. 2015. p.86

⁹⁴ Ibid. p.91

⁹⁵ Ibid. p.91

focus on a feminist cadre that one does not want to know about the ideas behind the groups. *"They just figured it happened somehow. To some degree, it is orientalism (or, to put it simply, racism). It never occurs to them that people in Kurdistan might be reading Judith Butler too. At best, they think, "Oh, they're trying to come up to Western standards of democracy and women's rights."*⁹⁶ He explains how the perspective of the Western world so often does not think they could go beyond the "western standard" done before just because one believes more in the principles of Western states. The professor finishes by lifting and emphasizing the matter of taking responsibility as fellow human beings to support and help those who are fighting for a better alternative system than capitalism.⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Ibid. Graeber, David. No. This is a Genuine Revolution. 2015. p.199

⁹⁷ Ibid. Graeber, David. p.207-208

5 Analysis

The following section will analyze the source material. The theme of the leading role of the Kurdish women's movement in the Rojava revolution will be analyzed through discourse analysis, and the theoretical aspects of "Women's agency in war" and feminist separatism will be applied.

5.1 Discourse Analysis of the theme women's agency in the Kurdish Women's Movement

Discourse analysis is a research approach that examines the written or spoken language in relation to its social setting. The project "Stateless democracy with the Kurdish movement" was constructed and developed in close consultation with interaction with key actors in west Kurdistan. *How can we understand the theme of the Kurdish women's agency in Rojava through the work and interviews by the authors? What is portrayed as the truth? Which subject positions emerge? What is excluded by their texts?*⁹⁸ The authors presented the theme of Kurdish women's agency through interviews, academic articles, poems and the articles of the Rojava administration's "Social contract".

In the New World Academy "Stateless Democracy," the researchers writes about the theme of the Kurdish women's movement and its broad scope and impact. We find several Kurdish women's stories from the movement and academics in several articles. The academic representative of the Kurdish Women's Movement, Dilar Dirik, edited the book and outlined the movement's history, goals, and political intricacies. Other key representatives of their work are Rojava's Democratic Union Party (PYD), Sheruan Hassan and Amina Osse, who guided them in Rojava and helped them interview the participants. Other contributors are Kurdish revolutionaries, solidary artists, academics and writers. The work's context has been constructed according to the Kurdish Women's movement concepts since different contexts and settings create different realities. The

⁹⁸ Ibid. Bolander, Eva & Fejes, Andreas. Diskursanalys. 2009. p.88

editors have asserted certain subject positions, for instance, by shedding light on essential representatives of the Kurdish Women's Movement.

5.2 Dilar Dirik “Living without approval”

In the first interview with the scholar Dilar Dirik by Jonas Staal, certain discourses can be observed. One recurring narrative is how Dirik traces the history and suffering of the Kurdish people and the victimization of Kurdish women. She begins by deconstructing the words “Kurdish” “women” and “movement” to provide a more in-depth understanding and meaning of the theme. Dirik addresses the 'women question' by acknowledging the many oppressions that Kurdish women endure. She expresses herself broadly and then utilizes specific instances to contextualize the theme of the Kurdish women's movement. Perhaps the most significant point to note about Dirik’s contribution is the fact that she unveils the existence of a Kurdish women's society. The interviewer's vast questions make it simple to comprehend the implications of the topics. The questions are also versatile, having long, direct, detail-focused and short general questions. For instance, when Staal asks, “*The model of democratic confederalism has recently found its full implications in the northern part of Syria, in the so-called Rojava Revolution, led by Kurdish revolutionaries. Could you explain what the Rojava Revolution is?*”⁹⁹ Dirik answers by firstly being very descriptive and explaining the historical concepts of the Rojava Revolution. Thereafter she out-brings several events that happened during the revolution that threatened the fighters in Rojava. In the descriptions of several events, she makes the reader create a certain sympathy for the Kurdish struggle. She advances her claims by declaring various examples of the Kurdish people's fight and how often they have been let down. Beyond that, she has the space to be able to answer questions long. The previous question is answered in over three pages, and she has answers which extend over four pages.

5.2.1 Women’s liberation

Dirik is beginning by lifting the marginalization of Kurdish women which can lead to a narrative that they are victims. She is thereafter shifting the victimization by stating

⁹⁹ Ibid. Dirik, Dilar. 2015. p.43

their ambitions and goals for women's empowerment in the Rojava revolution. The author demonstrates the autonomous organizing and mechanisms during the revolution and war, which establish how the notions of the agency are associated with resistance, as Weiss states. *Liberation* is defined as the power to fulfil one's objectives despite the weight of habit, tradition, transcendental will, or other barriers. This argument rests on a feminist perspective of human action that seeks the subject's political and moral autonomy in the face of authority. As Dirik illustrate how despite the struggle against ISIS, the aim of establishing a democratic society has been realized. However, it was only reduced to self-defence and this can be compared to Weiss idea of how agency is primarily concerned with power and control, the agency may or may not be concerned with change, preferring to maintain continuity and stability. One may argue that Dirik's depiction of Kurds generates an image of them as an exception in the Middle East.

Furthermore, Dirik recognize the importance of women organizing themselves so they can reach their full potential. *“If we truly appreciate women, then we need to set in place quotas to guarantee that women are fully recognized in their potential.”*¹⁰⁰ In this way, self-organization has led to people having the freedom to pursue their aims and approaches when dealing with and opposing injustice. As Laurel Weldon points out, self-organization is crucial for oppressed groups for them to form their ideas and opinions. Similarly, feminist theorists have underlined the role of autonomous organizing by women for them to form the ability to choose the direction and norms. To conclude, feminist separatism is an upcoming theme in Dirik's description of women organizing during the Rojava revolution, and it is lifted in a favourably way for Kurdish women.

In the same way as Weiss theoretical aspects of women's agency, indicates as necessary to actively challenge power systems since new power structures have been incorporated in Rojava by the Kurdish Women's Movement according to Dirik. We can conclude that Weiss aspects of agency regarding Kurdish women and conflict may thus be regarded as acknowledging their ability to operate in a changing social, active and political context populated by various, usually opposing, ideological discourses and forces. To conclude, feminist separatism is an upcoming theme in Dirik's description of women

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. Dirik. 2015. p.50

organizing during the Rojava revolution, and it is lifted in a favourably way for Kurdish women. Taking this perspective to agency enables us to go beyond nationalist representations of women as victims of state violence or patriarchy instead of being able to view them as women fighting for their emancipation. Dilar Dirik confirms how Kurdish women in Rojava have been able to strive for real change, which portrays that they have been key agents and actors in Rojava by how her chapter, in many ways, centralizes the theme of Kurdish women's leading roles.

5.3 Havin Güneşer “Feminicide”

Presenting the journalist and spokesman for "Freedom for Abdullah Öcalan-Peace in Kurdistan" Havin Güneşer provides a particular conception of the PKK's perspectives and significance to the Kurdish Women's Movement's theme in her transcribed speech. When the editors of the material include her given address from the Women's Conference in Rome, they want to convey certain validity and legitimacy to the concept of women's agency. As a result, the setting of this speech generates the impression that women's mobilization is vital.

When portraying Öcalan's high position and support for the Kurdish Women's movement, one specific description of the theme's reality is given emphasis. Güneşer's goal is to create a broader knowledge of the Kurdish question by presenting a timeline of historical events and the struggle for the PKK and their connection with the Kurdish Women's Freedom Movement. Firstly, she begins her speech by using the words “Dear friends” which implies how she is aiming to have a personal touch in her speech. She emphasizes how they fought hard for women's liberation in her descriptions of the mobilization timeline in the movement, and she largely accords women status in her writing. Güneşer exemplifies several organizations in the movement like "Kurdish Women's Workers Party" (PJKK), "Free Women's Party" (PJA), “The High Women's Council” (KJB) and the “Women’s Freedom Party of Kurdistan” (PAJK). The mobilization of the organizations is depicted, so they are seen as highly crucial in providing meaning to the movement. In the descriptions, one could identify her call for action to care for these women by the way she emphasizes how their established mechanisms is working accordingly to their aim for women’s empowerment. As a consequence, certain subject

positions emerge, and the author narrative is on the side of the Kurdish Women's struggle. In the end of her speech, she calls for action to not leave the women who fight against fascism behind, she is arguing and demanding us to stand on their side. For instance, by using the words "They cannot be left alone." The same narrative is found in other informant's accounts by the way they are supportive, concerned and subjective.

5.3.1 Developing women's rights in war conditions

Havin Güneşer acknowledges how women's self-organization can determine their demands in combat, forming their way to their agency. "*Thus, this constituted the women could shape the organization entirely based on their own needs and ambitions as women in battle. Women gained increased self-confidence, and many significant ideological, political and social changes began to take effect.*" When she employs phrases like self-confidence, she emphasizes the benefits of autonomous organizing.

In comparison to the theoretical aspects of how war conditions have tended to hinder the establishment of autonomous women's rights movements since women activists were frequently obliged to prioritize the accomplishment of fundamental human rights above women's rights. However, we can state that women's rights were prioritized during war time in Rojava since there was space for acknowledging women's liberation and self-organizing. Connecting it to the theoretical viewpoints of how long-term impacts of war include ongoing violence and instability, which have a significant impact on the lives of Kurdish women. Women's activism in Rojava emerged from prior wars and in the setting of a "continuum of violence." Consequently, these instances demonstrate how many Kurdish women have embraced and used political discourses to strengthen their standing in their local surroundings, make themselves heard, and persuade male relatives of the legitimacy of their demands. According to Gökalp, a political discourse of women's victimhood imposed by state or male violence can be liberating if women can utilize such discourses to achieve their demands.

5.4 Zîlan Diyar "The Whole World is Talking About Us, Kurdish Women"

The Kurdish guerilla fighter Zîlan Diyar expresses and critiques in her article from the publisher "Kurdish question" how upset she is about the late international recognition and focus. Her article is written with a high author presence since she is using real-life

examples and personal pronouns. By providing us with stories and experiences with women fighters the article creates a certain personal effect of the theme. She is astonished they did not recognize the Kurdish women fighters sooner and that they had never heard of them before. *“I am surprised at how they noticed us so late, at how they never knew of us before. I wonder how they came to be so late in hearing the voices of the many valiant women who expanded the borders of courage, belief, patience, hope, and beauty.”* Diyar wonders how they missed hearing the voices of so many brave women who challenged the boundaries. She expresses the world's wrongdoing using words like "wonder" and "late" with a disappointed feeling behind them. Using words and personal narratives that raise the Kurdish women's status and agency portrays the Kurdish women's struggle as the rightful truth.

5.5 Gönül Kaya, “Why Jineology? Re-Constructing the Sciences Towards a Communal and Free Life”

The Kurdish journalist and representative Gönül Kaya highlight and portray the ideology and science of Jineology as very necessary in the transformation of society. *“At this point, we propose Jineology as a necessary strategy towards overcoming the prevailing, dominant system of the field of science and constructing an alternative system of science liberated from sexism.”* The narrative that this quote embody is how she is a part of the movement, and she is reclaiming Jineology as the essence of advancing the Kurdish Women’s Movement. When describing Jineology she is going in depth with why it is important to establish Jineology in the society, she is convincing and objective at the same time when she is descriptive of the meanings of Jineology. Kaya argues and demands that a new approach needs to be implemented where it is founded on women's and society's coherent foundations and identities since it has been so frequently distinguished from reality. *“Women should create their disciplines, reach their interpretations and meanings, and share these with all of society.”* She motivates and pushes for women worldwide to dare to dissolve patriarchy when using words like “should.” Referring to how democratic theorists argue that when dominant groups create a "counter-public" or separate discourse within themselves, they can better overcome marginalization in the greater public sphere. Counter-publics function as "bases and training grounds for agitational acts," allowing marginalized groups to develop and spread new ideas and concepts to the dominant public sphere. Kaya has been expressing how important and necessary it is to stand against dominant systems in society and how this has helped them overcome marginalization.

5.6 No. This is a Genuine Revolution: David Graeber Interviewed by Pinar Ögünç

The activist and professor David Graeber is declaring his support for the Rojava Revolution in the interview with Pinar Ögünç. Graeber is stunned by how the world has neglected and disregarded the Kurdish fighters in Rojava. He expresses disappointment when he describes how the world does not care about the fighter's motives.

*“They just figured it happened somehow. To some degree, it is **orientalism** (or, to put it simply, **racism**).”*

The discourse that is taking place in this quotation is how the opinions and attitudes of criticism of the West are integral in the Kurdish struggle. As a result, we might interpret the Kurdish Women's Movement's theme as being abandoned, enabling and allowing world critiques to occur as the norm in the movement. The world is portrayed as leaving the Kurds behind, and it is a recurring theme and discourse in the book that shapes a certain truth claim. Additionally, providing certain meanings to the theme.

6 Conclusions and discussion

This part will reflect on the question I addressed in the introduction, which was:

“According to the source material “Stateless democracy with the Kurdish movement”, how do the authors present and demonstrate the theme of women's agency in the Kurdish Women’s Movement in Rojava?”

We can conclude from the analysis chapter that the theme of women's agency in the Kurdish Women's Movement in Rojava is recurrent and central to how the theme has been presented and illustrated in "Stateless democracy with the Kurdish movement." The material has identified in several chapters how autonomous organizing is the leading way to liberation and is associated with empowerment. In the many chapters, the authors and participants have lifted many ways to centralize the theme of Kurdish women's leading roles giving out the narrative that it is a necessary component in the movement. It has been outlined in Kurdish women's different roles and activities in Rojava with the authors' positive outlook.

The results of the discourse analysis led me to conclude that the portrayal of Kurdish women in Rojava is frequently how they are feminist, brave and powerful since the content regularly declares Kurdish women's vital roles favourably. Sympathizing ways lift the narrative of their struggle as imperative. The social context of how the writers worked on this book by conducting interviews in Rojava demonstrates how close they are to the movement and how they allowed a prominent representative to collaborate with them while working on the book. This implies that the material has a subjective indication on the theme. Almost all their informants were chosen from autonomous women's organizations. This shows how they support and stand behind the Kurdish women when lifting many of their accounts, personal experiences and opinions. Almost all the participants describe women's agency in Rojava nonetheless in different ways, portraying the theme as central in the source material, which has given a certain status of what is true. The authors have aimed to present and demonstrate the theme convincingly and compellingly since they look up to and support Kurdish women's agency by the way they constructed their publication and portrayed the women. Additionally, I can conclude that the theories women's agency and feminist separatism are embodied in the

movement. Namely, they have established autonomous structures and mechanisms within women's academies, organizations, tribunals, cooperatives, security forces and military units that put women's rights foremost. The movement enabled women to become empowered as individuals by constructing action spaces and autonomous women's structures, which increased their *self-confidence*.

In comparison to previous research, it is critical to give significant theoretical and analytical insights into the issue of "Women and War," which will result in emerging feminist ideas. It will pave the way for a new feminist understanding of Kurdish women's difficult social and geopolitical circumstances and experiences. As the previous research and source material shows, Kurdish women have performed a variety of roles during wars and armed conflicts, resulting in an established agency for the fighters and activists. Kurdish women's experiences in various regions of Kurdistan are characterized by activity, resistance, and pain. They relate to women's diverse social identities based on racial, religious, socioeconomic, rural, and urban status. While reflecting on these experiences, the various materials serve as an incentive for further research into how war and militarization shape women's lives and establish gender relations, hence developing and forming people's positions and realities.

Finally, the findings of this study add to the area of women's empowerment and its deeper given the study's findings and relevance in the research area, I propose a further investigation into how women in Rojava attained liberation through militarization since it is a questioned issue. Further studies could focus on the mechanisms used in wartime and in Rojava to strive for women's rights and if these mechanisms could be applied in other regions in the world. For instance, a further comparative analysis could be investigated to examine if the mechanisms could function in other contexts. By further investigating in the theme of Kurdish women and the Kurdish question we can come a step closer to fulfilling the human rights for the Kurdish people since they still live without approval where their human rights are continuously denied. I would also like to lift how studies within the field of Kurdish studies can differ if one does not believe in the liberation of the Kurds and Kurdistan? How can the activism be interpreted then?

We are in a time where activism usually ends in front of the mobile screen. In an activism culture often based on "pick and choose" where some lives are not considered important. Therefore, this study has a high societal relevance, and it is essential to pay attention to a movement based on an active feminist grassroots movement which does not wait for things to change by the ruling powers. The front figures of the movement have challenged deep-rooted traditional structures. Women who make a crucial difference despite strong opposition and oppression from terrorist organizations, dictatorships and a fascist NATO state on the north side.

On a final note, I would also like to express my gratitude for the opportunity to be able to write about this relevant topic precisely because it is a topic that is not as obvious to be able to write about. Since there are many who have been imprisoned, tortured and killed when they paid attention to the Kurds right to obtain human rights. For instance, the researcher Handan Çağlayan got imprisoned by Turkey for lifting the Kurdish question in her research.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Ibid. Çağlayan, Handan. 2020. p. xxvii

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