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To cite this article: Nil Mutluer (2025) Decolonial encounters in Diyarbakır: imbricated subjectivities, gendered tactics, and everyday resistance, *Turkish Studies*, 26:5, 1004-1031, DOI: [10.1080/14683849.2025.2512245](https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2025.2512245)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2025.2512245>



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Published online: 10 Jul 2025.



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Decolonial encounters in Diyarbakır: imbricated subjectivities, gendered tactics, and everyday resistance

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how the AKP's centralized cultural and gendered policies in Diyarbakır – particularly after the 2016 trustee appointments – operate as part of a neocolonial project. Based on ethnographic fieldwork, it explores how inhabitants and institutions of Diyarbakır respond not just through open resistance, but also through everyday negotiations and tactics. Drawing on de Certeau's strategies and tactics, Gill and Pires' imbrication, Mignolo's border thinking, and Collins' outsider within, I show how gender, ethnicity, and religion are deeply intertwined in power relations. The study highlights how youth and Kurdish women craft subjectivities challenging dominant narratives, contributing to decolonial feminist scholarship.

ARTICLE HISTORY Received 6 August 2024; Accepted 1 May 2025

KEYWORDS Kurds; gender; youth; religion; AKP trusteeship

Introduction

The Kurdish regions in Turkey have been subjected to various forms of state-led colonial practices since the foundation of the Republic.¹ While these practices have evolved in line with the changing political interests of the state over time, they have consistently sought to marginalize and assimilate Kurds and Kurdish identity, language, and culture.² In the past decade, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP) government has introduced a new mode of authoritarian governance, in which cultural, gendered, and religious strategies are mobilized in tandem – particularly in Kurdish cities – to promote its own nationalist – Islamic framework under the banner of 'domestic' and 'national' (*yerli ve milli*) values.³ After the 2016 coup attempt, the state of emergency extended

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these authoritarian policies across the country. However, only in Kurdish provinces⁴ were elected mayors from the Peoples' Democratic Party (*Halkarın Demokratik Partisi*, HDP) dismissed and replaced by state-appointed trustees (*kayyum*), underscoring the persistent colonial logic of suppressing Kurdish political autonomy.⁵ Through these trusteeships, the AKP enacted centralized strategies that profoundly transformed the cultural and everyday life of cities like Diyarbakır (*Amed*), particularly intervening in the realms of gender, youth, and religion.

This article focuses on Diyarbakır, a city of great symbolic significance for Kurds due to its historical, socio-political and cultural heritage. Diyarbakır has been subjected to multiple colonial practices, including gendered, cultural, social, political, environmental and economic assimilation, as well as state-perpetrated racism in the Kurdish region.⁶ In addition to Kurdish political movements – encompassing political parties (HDP, Peoples' Equality and Democracy Party [*Halkların Eşitlik ve Demokrasi Partisi*, DEM]), social actors (the Kurdish women's movement, human rights groups) and the armed group Kurdistan Workers' Party (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê*, PKK) – Diyarbakır is also home to numerous independent, traditional or state-run religious groups, such as *Hüda-Par* (Free Cause Party)/Hezbollah (*Hizbullah*), the Naqshbandi order, and Said Nursi-influenced Nurists, as well as a variety of non-religious social and political groups. These actors and residents respond to the AKP's strategies in diverse ways in everyday urban life. Despite their ideological, class, or generational differences, many of these actors express a common demand for the recognition of Kurdish culture, language, and memory.

Based on ethnographic fieldwork carried out during the period of trustee governance, this article explores how both institutional actors (civil society, cultural centers, women's organizations) and inhabitants (young people, women, religious and secular residents) negotiate, resist, or tactically engage with the state's strategies. Drawing on de Certeau's distinction between 'strategies' and 'tactics' in everyday life,⁷ I analyze how the state deploys centralized, top-down strategies while diverse actors produce everyday tactics to sustain local knowledge and resist assimilation. Bringing this together with the concept of 'imbrication',⁸ I argue that identity formations in Diyarbakır cannot be understood as separate categories – such as gender, ethnicity, or religion – but rather as entangled and co-constitutive elements of everyday life, shaping imbricated subjectivities and resistance. I also draw on 'border thinking'⁹ to show how these actors produce localized and situated knowledge that challenges state-centered narratives, generating new forms of belonging, memory, and political agency. In particular, I examine how gender and youth emerge as key terrains through which both the state and local actors negotiate meaning and power. In order to understand the complex positionalities of actors in their everyday power relations

between strategies and tactics – especially young women from diverse ideological and religious backgrounds – I turn to Patricia Hill Collins' concept of the 'outsider within',¹⁰ which illuminates how marginal actors develop epistemic and practical agency while navigating systems of domination from within. These engagements reflect not merely intersections of gender, ethnicity, and faith, but what Gill and Pires describe as imbricated and overlapping configurations of oppression and privilege¹¹, inseparably woven into everyday identification processes.

The qualitative ethnographic fieldwork of this study was conducted in Diyarbakır in two separate periods – March – April and October – November 2023 – capturing dynamics before and after the 2023 presidential elections. The research included 38 in-depth interviews and four focus group discussions, complemented by informal conversations and participant observation. I engaged four key groups: (1) individuals who had worked in the former elected Kurdish municipality and later served in trustee or state institutions aligned with the AKP; (2) members of political and religious actors, including *Hüda-Par*/Hezbollah; (3) civil society representatives from diverse ideological and religious backgrounds; and (4) women and men from different age groups, with a focus on youth and middle-aged individuals across various class positions, gender identities, sexual orientations, and political affiliations. Observations were conducted in both everyday and institutional spaces, including cultural centers, religious events, education programs, and urban public settings. Data analysis was guided by discourse analysis within a decolonial feminist and queer framework and grounded in a reflexive approach to ethnographic engagement.¹² My interpretations also draw on previous fieldwork and observations in Diyarbakır and other Kurdish cities between 2006 and 2016.

Bringing together the conceptual framework outlined above with insights from my ethnographic fieldwork, I argue that the influence of the pre-trustee, locally elected HDP municipal governance persists not only among pro-HDP actors but also among those aligned with *Hüda-Par* or religious groups. Through tactical negotiations, everyday actors reproduce, reinterpret, and resist state discourses, thereby generating plural, grounded, and sometimes contradictory forms of subjectivity, agency, and resistance. The article proceeds in three parts. It opens with a historical and political analysis of AKP governance in Kurdish regions, which is offered not as background, but as a central site where key theoretical concepts such as imbrication, border thinking, and subjectivity are mobilized to examine colonial strategies and everyday responses. I then turn to ethnographic material to analyze institutional and everyday responses to trustee policies. In the final section, I reflect on how these processes reshape subjectivity, agency, and belonging in contemporary Kurdish political and cultural life.

Colonialist background and decolonial responses: political Islam, Kurdish movement & gender

Following the dissolution of empires and the subsequent establishment of modern nation-states on their historical territories in the aftermath of the world wars, the Kurds were structurally positioned within the subaltern margins of what Mignolo defines as the modern/colonial world order¹³, excluded from sovereignty and subjected to the epistemic and political violences of nation-state formation.¹⁴ Within this structure, power relations were not only defined by national boundaries but were deeply imbricated with race, gender, and religion. Drawing on Gill and Pires¹⁵, the concept of imbrication of the Kurds can be understood not a singular axis of oppression, but as an overlapping and co-constitutive entanglement of ethnic, religious, gendered, and political hierarchies that have remained active into the present.

In this same period, the Republic of Turkey was founded with a gendered nationalism¹⁶ based on secularism through binary oppositional values: political Islam was positioned as the antithesis to secular modernity,¹⁷ while Kurdishness was rendered the colonized and culturally insignificant¹⁸ other in relation to Turkishness. These exclusions were not merely symbolic; they were embedded in the institutional and discursive structures of the Republic, producing subjectivities that were always-already shaped by their relation to the nation-state. This entanglement of national identity, gender norms, and cultural exclusion exemplifies the imbricated nature of colonial and modern formations of power.

The emergence of political Islam in Turkey from the 1960s onward, culminating in the rise of the AKP in 2002, marked a transformation in these relations.¹⁹ The AKP's self-presentation as a 'democratic Muslim'²⁰ party challenged secular nationalism's binary logic, particularly through its appeal to religious and ethnic constituencies. Meanwhile, the Kurdish movement – facing persistent assimilationist and repressive policies, especially following the 1980 military coup – intensified its demands for cultural and political rights. The PKK emerged in this period as a central actor, despite its designation as an illegal guerrilla group. Over time, the Kurdish movement expanded to include legal political parties and a wide range of civilian organizations, becoming a powerful social force in the region.²¹

Historically, Kurdish identity was also preserved and articulated by religious networks and tribal leaders. Groups like the Naqshbandi, the Nurists, and Hezbollah²² (now the legal political party *Hüda-Par*) maintained influence, even as the secular and leftist Kurdish movement grew stronger.²³ The state's collaboration with these groups – particularly in the 1990s when Hezbollah's involvement in political violence escalated – can be read as a strategic effort to fragment Kurdish resistance.²⁴ These alliances

exemplify how power is not deployed along clear-cut lines, but through imbricated and sometimes contradictory formations that simultaneously draw on religion, nationalism, and colonial governance.

When the AKP came to power in 2002, it leveraged these formations to expand its influence in Kurdish regions, utilizing tribal and communal structures inherited from earlier parties like the Democratic Party (DP), while aligning with neoliberal developmentalism.²⁵ Its emphasis on ‘Muslim fraternity’ offered an alternative to the exclusionary secularism of the founding republic and helped establish the AKP as the second strongest actor in the region.²⁶ However, the subjectivities this new religious-political order produced remained fragmented, with competing understandings of Islam, Kurdishness, and citizenship circulating among diverse actors.

The Kurdish movement itself underwent an ideological transformation in the 2000s, moving away from orthodox Marxist and independence-oriented positions toward a pluralist model of democratic autonomy. This ideological shift opened space for engagement with religious figures and discourses. In 2011, the movement supported Kurdish *meles* (religious scholars) who led Friday civil prayers in Kurdish, directly challenging the authority of the *Diyanet* (Presidency of Religious Affairs), which enforces a monolingual, nationalist Islamic discourse.²⁷ This move towards Muslim fraternization not only mirrored the AKP’s approach but also divided the AKP’s dominance on religious issues, highlighting a broader diversification within Kurdish political strategies.²⁸ Therefore, this move disrupted the epistemic authority of the state and created a space for what Mignolo would call ‘border thinking’²⁹ – knowledge practices that emerge at the peripheries of modern/colonial systems and challenge the state’s claim to universal truth with local knowledge by thinking both within and outside of the universal truth and local knowledge.

In 2013, the AKP launched a peace process with the Kurdish movement. However, shifts in regional dynamics – including the war in Syria, the rise of the People’s Defence Units (*Yekîneyên Parastina Gel*, YPG)³⁰, and the Kurdish movement’s activities in Syrian cities such as Rojava and beyond – along with the HDP’s historic success in the June 7, 2015 elections which cost the AKP its parliamentary majority, led to an abrupt return from peace to a militarized stance. Despite initial hopes for pluralism based on religious identity, political and ethnic differences prevented progress, resulting in the collapse of the 2015 peace process and an escalation of violence.³¹ This was followed by the declaration of emergency rule in Kurdish provinces, leading to severe casualties and widespread destruction.³² After the 2016 coup attempt, Turkey entered a nationwide state of emergency, leading to the 2017 constitutional referendum which concentrated power in the presidency. These shifts reflect how the state mobilizes memory politics and national trauma as part of what Aleida Assmann

describes as memory regimes, structured systems of remembrance that define not only what is remembered, but how and by whom.³³

One should also recognize that gender has always been central to the production and contestation of national identity in Turkey. Since the early Republican period, the figure of the modern Turkish woman – secular, educated, and modest – served as a symbol of national honor and state-defined modernity.³⁴ Early policies reflected a state feminism model, where gender equality was instrumentalized by the regime.³⁵ Independent feminist mobilization only began in the 1980s, and by the 2000s, a pluralist women's movement had emerged and was comprised secularists, leftists, Kurds, LGBTIQ + individuals, and pious Muslim women.³⁶ This pluralism was increasingly targeted by the AKP, especially after its second term, as the party shifted toward a more authoritarian, gender-conservative agenda.

Kurdish women experience multiple and overlapping forms of oppression – as women, as Kurds, and as residents of a militarized, colonially governed region.³⁷ The state's gender and youth policies – before and after the AKP period – in the Kurdish region reflect what Nagel has analyzed as the deep entanglement of state power, sexuality, and nationalism.³⁸ Gendered violence, state surveillance, and the moral regulation of Kurdish women's bodies are not incidental, but central to the governance of Kurdish identity. The control of sexuality, reproduction, and familial structures becomes a key battlefield where state ideology, nationalism, and colonial legacies converge.

Early Kurdish nationalism invoked women as cultural symbols – transmitters of language, keepers of purity – but rarely prioritized their political agency.³⁹ This began to change after the 1980s, as the PKK began to organize women not only as supporters, but as agents of revolution.⁴⁰ By the 1990s, women were participating directly in guerrilla warfare and political organizing, shifting their representation from passive victims to empowered political actors. The discourse of the Kurdish movement in the late 1990s and 2000s further evolved to emphasize new familial and gender dynamics.⁴¹ As Nazan Üstündağ notes, women are no longer imagined solely as biological reproducers of the nation, but rather 'become the starting point for imagining and practising a liberating psychoanalytical/mythical project and animate the movement's 'freedom drive'.⁴² These practices are expressions of agency and subjectivity that directly challenge both state power and patriarchal control within the movement itself. The emergence of autonomous women's and youth branches within Kurdish political organizations institutionalized feminist principles like equal representation and co-presidency. This transformation can be understood through Collins' concept of the 'outsider within', which articulates how women – particularly women of color and ethnic minority women – can leverage their marginal position within dominant structures to produce critical and transformative knowledge.⁴³ Kurdish women's political subjectivities are shaped not despite their marginality, but through it.

Performing Islam, forgetting the Kurds: everyday strategies of cultural domination and decolonial response

The AKP's current strategies diverge from past secular Turkish nationalism by focusing on reconnecting Diyarbakır with Islam, while omitting references to its Kurdish identity. Between 2013 and 2016, three pivotal events – framed by the neocolonial strategy of the AKP government in Diyarbakır and Kurdish regions – shaped the formation of collective memory and everyday tactics and subjectivities at the local level. The first event was the October 6–8, 2014 clashes sparked by ISIS's siege of Kobane at the Turkish border in Syria, which was defended by the YPG. Following the HDP's call for Kurdish solidarity, clashes erupted between Kurdish movement supporters and *Hüda-Par*/Hezbollah supporters.

The second incident was the Sur curfews. Between September 6, 2015, and March 9, 2016, the Sur neighborhood in Diyarbakır experienced armed conflict and a prolonged state of curfew between state security forces and Kurdish resistance linked to the PKK.⁴⁴ Initial curfews in September, October, and November 2015 were followed by a prolonged and intense curfew from December 2, 2015, to March 9, 2016. The government's repressive policies intensified after the June 2015 elections and escalated further following the re-run elections in November, prompting Kurdish resisters to dig trenches and leading to direct clashes with security forces. Tahir Elçi, president of the Diyarbakır Bar Association, was killed on November 28, 2015. The conflict resulted in hundreds of deaths and extensive destruction, and many inhabitants were also displaced due to the conflict and subsequent urban renewal.⁴⁵ Elçi's assassination, together with the violence that followed, crystallized a rupture in the region's memory regime, turning Sur from a living neighborhood into a site of collective trauma.⁴⁶

The third event was the 2016 coup attempt. It significantly affected power dynamics between religious communities and the Turkish government, including in Kurdish regions. The state has often aligned with the tribal and religious groups, such as the Naqshbandi, Nurists, and Hezbollah to weaken the Kurdish movement. Hezbollah, now the legal political party *Hüda-Par*, joined the AKP's ruling coalition in the 2023 elections. While *Hüda-Par*'s political influence is limited, its alliance with the AKP is symbolically significant. According to some interviewees and claims made by the Kurdish movement, *Hüda-Par*/Hezbollah supported security forces with weapons during the Kobane and Sur incidents.

These key events along with evolving relationships with religious communities have influenced local social and political dynamics and continue to shape everyday life. New colonial strategies of the AKP, carried out by the Governor's Office and Trustee Municipality, aim to create a new collective nation-religion-based memory to strengthen new national values. These

strategies impact various parts of the city, such as the Sur neighborhood, and Kurdish cultural initiatives like the Cegerxwin Youth Culture and Art Centre, which I will introduce in the following section. In response, as I will show, civil society organizations and individuals are developing imbricated subjectivities and tactics that intersect gender, ethnicity, and faith and develop knowledge beyond boundaries.

Institutional colonial strategies and imbricated tactics

In 2021, an urban redevelopment project was completed in the demolished Sur neighborhood under then-Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu's vision to model it after Toledo, Spain. This large-scale planning is a paradigmatic state strategy of spatial control. Due to curfews and gentrification Sur had become a site of collective trauma for a significant part of Diyarbakır's population, and I met numerous inhabitants who deliberately avoided the demolished and rebuilt neighborhood. In particular, those who identified with the Kurdish movement avoided it consciously, as it symbolized their personal losses and continuing pain. This deliberate avoidance enacts a form of everyday tactic, and positions these individuals as 'outsiders within', occupying a marginal yet epistemically powerful standpoint.⁴⁷ Inhabitants of Diyarbakır are generally disconcerted by the demolition of Sur and the state's apparent acquiescence to Hezbollah supporters during the clashes. While some may attribute blame to the Kurdish movement, too, they still perceive the state's actions as illegitimate. Those who are disconcerted include members of various religious communities who do not espouse the politics of violence.

The state continues to implement its strategies, one of which is a notable new colonial initiative in Sur. The 2022 campaign, 'The Way of Diyarbakır, the Way of Conquest', serves the purpose of 'remembering while forgetting'.⁴⁸ Its main exhibition was held in the mansion of the Cemil Pasha family, founders of the Kurdish Teali Society, which once sought Kurdistan's independence. The exhibition featured ceramic and tile paintings of the city's historical and cultural sites and the 1383rd anniversary of the conquest of Diyarbakır by the Islamic army. AKP-appointed Diyarbakır Governor Ali İhsan Su inaugurated the exhibition, highlighting the importance of 'Diyarbakır in Islamic history':

The Islamic army conquered Diyarbakır and from there the gates of Anatolia were opened. In this respect, the conquest of Diyarbakır is very important. With the conquest, Diyarbakır became and continues to be a city of culture, art, tolerance, unity and abundance.⁴⁹

This official narrative illustrates a state-sponsored memory regime that privileges Islamic conquest and erases Kurdish heritage. The statement suggests that Diyarbakır's identity and unity are primarily associated with Islamic

culture, emphasizing its connection to Anatolia and Turkey. In contrast, Kurdish culture and identity do not receive comparable emphasis or recognition in this context.

Simultaneously, the state promotes religious nationalist messages through events like the Sur Culture Road Festival since 2022, organized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. It also supports religious social structures and families, including children, through specialized events. For instance, during the Qur'anic course workshop at the festival, numerous young hijab-wearing girls, accompanied by their families, participated in a procession from Dağkapı Square to Hazreti Süleyman Mosque. Some interviewees expressed concern about the potential discrimination stemming from such large, congregational displays, noting that cultural activities outside trustee-backed institutions receive little support.

... in this city, for example ... you cannot get permission from the governor's office for a cultural event, for a women's event, for a women's movement organization, or anything else.⁵⁰

This utterance highlights how state strategies produce differential access – a core feature of imbrication. Although some interviewees from religious circles emphasized the celebratory nature of children walking to the Grand Mosque for prayers at the end of the Qur'anic course, another interviewee stated that such crowded congregational images trigger discrimination, as no other institution or structure outside the trustee body is supported for cultural activities such as women's or human rights organizations.⁵¹

One of the institutions that the AKP left inactive during the trusteeship period and that is still remembered by the people of Diyarbakir is the Cegerxwin Youth Culture and Art Center, which was opened by the elected leaders of Kayapınar Municipality in 2010 with the aim of bringing local culture to all segments of society through art, workshops and various activities. When it was opened, the district governor's office initially objected to the name because it was in Kurdish. Similarly, when the trustee first came in, it was said that the name would be changed, but they backed down in fear of public backlash.⁵² However, what was emphasized in many of my meetings with different circles in Diyarbakır was that Cegerxwin had gradually ceased to be a center of Kurdish culture. With the trustee, the Conservatory – a center for Kurdish culture and Kurdish language education opened by the Metropolitan Municipality – was also closed. The closure of Kurdish language institutions underscores how colonial strategies seek to dismantle cultural memory regimes.

Although the AKP's strategy is to centralize such projects and ignore what local municipalities are doing for Kurdish culture and society, independent structures have emerged with their own tactics to preserve Kurdish culture, art, language and memory and to bring them together with different

segments of society. These include MA Müzik, a music center for all ages; KASED (Women Culture and Art Center), which provides a space for women's local music, art, and literary activities; the Middle East Cinema Academy Association, which focuses on cinema activities; and the Amed City Theater, which conducts theater activities, are among the most active of these institutions. When I interviewed people from these organizations, they told me that they used to be part of a common structure. The Cultural Department of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, which functioned like a Ministry of Culture as the elected municipality, was one of the most important supporters of Kurdish culture and the arts.⁵³ Against the colonial strategies of the trustees, these independent initiatives enact everyday tactics against centralized strategies and instantiate imbrication by blending cultural, gendered, and political claims.

The MA Musicians, who host about 750 children from different classes, religions and levels of education, mention that Kurdish families, albeit from different walks of life, support their work, especially because of their sensitivity to the Kurdish language and culture. The director of MA Music, who was suddenly left in the lurch when the conservatory was closed and had to start with debts and the support of families, also emphasizes the 'culture of resistance':

A culture of resistance has emerged in Kurdistan, which is perhaps the difference from the Kurdish point of view, the point that needs to be emphasized. In fact, it is this culture of resistance that the state wants to kill or destroy again. In other words, to use religion or, let's say, traditional structures to destroy the culture of resistance that has emerged again.⁵⁴

This statement powerfully combines individual agency and collective imbricated tactics of culture and faith to counter state strategies. The motivation of families and children's interest also drive the activation of the children's TV channel Zarok. Additionally, a specialized team is dedicated to the creation of music for children.

In the interviews I also asked the families who send their children to MA Music about their political identifications. They say that there might be religious people and even AKP voters among the participants of the courses of the structures that were established independently after the dissolution of the Conservatory, and that the political affiliations of the participants are not openly discussed as they strive to foster an inclusive environment rooted in Kurdish culture.⁵⁵

While talking about religious activities in the city, a young woman active in KASED, which is a women's organization focusing on culture and literature, said that when they were looking for a location for their organization, they primarily aimed to work in a poor neighborhood, so Bağlar was always on their minds, as it is home to migrants who were forcibly displaced first

from their villages in the 1990s, and then again from Sur. However, when they were looking for a location in Bağlar, they observed that many new types of congregations and religious institutions had started to open in the neighborhood in recent years, thus, they decided to be active there ‘in order not to leave this place to their monopoly, but to leave a place for the women here.’⁵⁶ This strategic placement of a women’s space in Bağlar also enacts both de Certeau’s ‘everyday tactics’ and Collins’ ‘outsider within’ positionality.

Individual subjectivities

In everyday life in Kurdish regions, learning the Qur’an or attending a Qur’an course is part of practices both among religious and even secular circles. This is because it is not uncommon for people who do not consider themselves religious and/or are politically aligned with secularism and the left, to have attended a Qur’anic course at some point in their lives or for their children to do so. For instance, a middle-aged, middle-class, HDP-voting, female teacher stated that she was able to read the Qur’an in Arabic and that she had learned it from a neighbor who taught it to everyone in the neighborhood when she was young. Instead of paying money, they helped to clean this neighbor’s house, and after the entire Qur’an had been recited, a gift was presented to this neighbor based on the family’s income. These gifts ranged from a twisted gold bracelet to a small donation, depending on the student’s family budget.⁵⁷

A 19-year-old university student – who used to live in Sur before its demolition and who formerly voted for the HDP but now votes for the secular Republican People’s Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*, CHP) recounts a similar experience of learning the Qur’an. Additionally, she notes the emergence of new gender-segregated Qur’anic courses in Sur and observes an increase in the number of girls wearing the hijab.⁵⁸ Similarly, during my interviews with individuals affiliated with the AKP, one of the interviewees, a graduate of the Faculty of Theology, expressed concern that the widespread introduction of Qur’anic courses may lead to the misuse of religion as an instrument of oppression and ideology. An individual who previously held a position within the elected HDP municipality and is currently responsible for the cultural activities of a museum in Sur has made similar observations regarding the increased number of Qur’anic courses. In fact, she stated that the courtyard of the museum is kept open so that children can be in a different environment from that of the Qur’anic schools. Furthermore, activities are occasionally organized with children for that purpose.⁵⁹ These varied perspectives illustrate how everyday tactics and subjectivities around religion are deeply imbricated with political alignment and generational shifts.

The observations of Diyarbakır inhabitants who consider themselves secular resonate differently from those of individuals who consider themselves religious. In a focus group meeting with young people who belong to religious communities – such as Hezbollah, the Naqshbandi order and Nurists – or are individually religious, it was emphasized that children of congregation members learn to read the Qur'an and acquire religious knowledge within their own communities. This is seen as part of the ongoing process of transmitting religion and Kurdish identity through family and community. In our interviews, some participants emphasized that the Kurdish region has always been open to the madrasa tradition and that they represent the continuation of religion and the madrasa, which is still a natural part of Kurdish identity, even if it was damaged by the Republic.⁶⁰ The madrasa tradition here operates as a form of border thinking and epistemology, preserving local modes of knowledge production at the margins of state policy.

Young people identifying themselves as religious also mention that this education has an inherently gender-discriminatory dimension. They point out that after compulsory primary education, girls' education is generally limited to Qur'an courses and community education, while boys are free to continue their education to the level they desire. While acknowledging that gender discrimination against girls in education has 'lessened' somewhat in recent years, they claim that girls are able to complete high school and even pursue university education only with difficulty, often after struggling with their families to overcome their resistance. Notably, it can be said that power relations within the community also affect gender discrimination, as daughters of community leaders are more likely to be sent to university.⁶¹ This gendered schooling regime is itself an imbricated structure of patriarchy, religion, and state neglect.

The fact that gender discrimination was openly criticized in my interviews with young men and women from individual religious and congregational backgrounds raises the question of to what extent change is being driven by young people. When we talked about whether the congregations are slowly being influenced by the youth or other movements such as the Kurdish movement or the women's movement, the changing world, urbanization, a young man studying at the Faculty of Theology, some of whose relatives are members of one of the congregations, replied that 'the congregation is always the one that shows the direction ... it is not the one that takes the direction.'⁶² Yet, another young woman, who resisted studying within the congregation and switched from the chador to the headscarf, responded that 'but young people can cause change by being rebellious.'⁶³ She discusses the relationship between the chador and concepts such as modesty, decency, and piety, and how it is now perceived in the community:

I am not a pious woman according to them. I am not a modest woman because my face is open. I don't care if my ankle is exposed when I walk – this is not a problem for me. It's a problem for them, not for me. Because of that, I was not liked.⁶⁴

Her defiance exemplifies individual agency and challenges the imbricated structures of gender, religion, and local knowledge. In one of our conversations, the same young woman mentions that urbanization, social media, and the struggle for rights like women's rights 'inevitably meet the desire for liberation in her.'⁶⁵ This concluding reflection shows how border thinking and youth agency combine to generate new subjectivities at the edges of state authority.

Silencing “*Kadın*”/“*Jin*,” centering “*Hanım*”: the reconfiguration of gendered space and subjectivity

In 2023, seven years after my last visit to Diyarbakır, the first thing I noticed was billboards with the term ‘*hanım*’ (lady). This reminded me of 2010, the centenary of International Working Women's Day on March 8, which was celebrated differently in Diyarbakır than elsewhere in Turkey. The municipality had declared Diyarbakır a women's city, hosting events attended by feminists, leftists, LGBTIQ+, secularists, Muslim women, and women from across Turkey. Gültan Kışanak,⁶⁶ then co-chair of the Kurdish-oriented Peace and Democracy Party (*Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi*, BDP),⁶⁷ spoke about peace and the struggle against patriarchal and discriminatory mentalities, resonating with the diverse audience. Billboards at the time reflected two approaches: the popularly elected Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality of the BDP celebrated March 8 for both ‘*kadın*’ (woman) in Turkish and ‘*jin*’ in Kurdish, while the Diyarbakır Governor's Office (*Valilik*), as the state representative of the AKP government – which at that time was not yet strong enough to implement its centralist policies – used ‘*bayan*’ (madam).⁶⁸ By 2023, during the period of appointed trustees, the word *hanım* was the only term used on city billboards and in public spaces for women.

Lexical power plays: imbrication of gender policies through terms

Although these words – *kadın*, *jin*, *bayan*, and *hanım* – may appear to mean the same thing, they reflect discursive, cultural, and socio-political differences in power relations. This lexical contest can be read as an imbricated field of gender, ethnicity, and state power. In Turkey, *kadın* is claimed by pro-egalitarian actors as an everyday tactic of resistance, whereas *bayan* serves as a polite state strategy that distances itself from feminist demands. As feminist and women's movements gained momentum, the use of *kadın*

became more widespread. Yet, within pro-patriarchal and conservative mindsets – particularly following feminist movements’ demands for equality and rights – *kadın* is often perceived as vulgar and even immoral. As a result, groups and individuals who align themselves with this worldview tend to prefer *bayan*. Similarly, some Kemalist and secularist individuals adopt *bayan* to distance themselves from feminist discourse.⁶⁹ Over time, Kurds resisting colonial policies have strategically used *jin* and *kadın* to assert both ethnic and gender identity, an act of border thinking that challenges the foundations of the modern/colonial world order. While *hanım* is commonly used as a polite term in everyday speech, it has also been adopted by conservative and Islamist circles since the 1960s as part of a broader political Islamic discourse.⁷⁰ In the past decade, the AKP has used the word *hanım* not only in its policies on gender and sexuality but also across cultural and social domains, with the aim of referring to and strengthening its ‘*yerli*’ (domestic) and ‘*millî*’ (national) authoritarian agenda.

Different uses of these terms – and who employs them – map out the complex overlap of Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms, religion, secularity, and gender. Their strategic circulation – such as the AKP’s monolingual promotion of *hanım* – and local tactics of counter-naming reveal how naming becomes a site of both assimilation and resistance. In Diyarbakır, the erasure of *jin* and *kadın* in favor of *hanım* epitomizes a colonial assimilation strategy aimed at undermining both language and the imbricated border thinking developed through years of resistance.

State strategies and memory regimes

Following the 2016 coup attempt in Turkey, President Erdoğan’s government declared a state of emergency, granting him the authority to enact legislative changes via decrees. Decree 647, issued on August 15, 2016, allowed the government to replace elected local officials with appointed trustees in municipalities labeled as ‘linked to terrorism’. The state of emergency also led to the closure of 246 civil society organizations and 42 media outlets with Kurdish affiliations.⁷¹ These legal measures are top-down strategies that dismantled local gender-sensitive institutions and reshaped the region’s memory regime by erasing archives of women’s rights work.

During the time when Diyarbakır had elected local governments, it was among the few provincial municipalities in Turkey, alongside Van and Mardin, that had dedicated departments and directorates focused on women’s issues. These included departments for women’s economic empowerment, anti-violence initiatives, and education. The municipality also established 43 women’s centers, safe houses, research centers on women’s issues, and cooperatives aimed at providing support, including psychological assistance, to women at risk or who had experienced violence. Additionally,

Diyarbakır Municipality pioneered local efforts against violence with initiatives like the ‘First Step Station’ and the ‘Alo Violence’ hotline,⁷² working in collaboration with local and international civil society organizations.

The HDP’s local government policies aimed at combating violence, especially gender-based violence, are driven by the region’s patriarchal tribal system and violent colonial conditions. Both conditions perpetuate inequalities and marginalization, particularly affecting women, children, and LGBTIQ+ individuals. State policies labeled as ‘special security’ have worsened their vulnerability, impacting not just their physical safety but also their psychological well-being, economic stability, and access to education. The oppressive and colonial mindsets link racial, ethnic, and national boundaries with sexual boundaries.⁷³ In times of war and a state of emergency, ‘exceptions’ are made by dehumanizing the bodies of marginalized groups, and allowing those in power to ‘abject’⁷⁴ others’ bodies by treating them as sites of violence through torture, sexual assault, ill treatment or even killing. In the Kurdish issue, such policies persist, with the Kurdish population being regarded as ‘disposable bodies,’ whose deaths are not considered losses.⁷⁵ This nexus of state violence and gendered control reflects an imbricated system of colonial, patriarchal, and securitized power.

After trustees were appointed, significant reductions occurred in gender-sensitive positions, leading to dismissals of many specialists. Men replaced some directors in women’s departments, and files detailing violence against women, children, and LGBTI+ individuals were confiscated by the state, with unclear handling thereafter. This raises ethical concerns, especially given that security forces are often implicated in violence in the region. This transfer of sensitive information to state control could endanger applicants seeking justice.⁷⁶ Additionally, a notable shift from an open-door policy to a closed-door administrative approach was observed following the trustee appointments in Diyarbakır. According to Çiçek’s report for the Diyarbakır Political and Social Research Institute, elected local administrations’ strategic plans (2015–2018) focused on European values like community participation, inclusivity, cultural pluralism, gender equality, and local economic development. Conversely, trustees appointed by the central government prioritize infrastructure and social services, viewing municipalities as extensions of the central administration.⁷⁷

According to Diyarbakır inhabitants, the absence of women-centered policies in current local governments exacerbates gender discrimination and violence. During the period of elected municipalities, women felt empowered and could easily access local authorities, even in villages. Now, with only state institutions remaining, trust is eroded due to state and AKP policies.⁷⁸ One inhabitant described the former municipality as being as familiar and trustworthy as ‘visiting a neighbor’s house’ even for traditional women, contrasting with current perceptions.⁷⁹ This shift underscores the outsider within

positionality: women once embedded in local governance now stand marginalized and surveilled.

In the Kurdish geography, sexual harassment, rape, and violence against women have long been intertwined with special security policies, especially during periods of declared states of emergency since the 1980s, though with varying degrees of intensity. Numerous cases involving security officers have led to suicides, disguised deaths, and unresolved cases of violence and rape.⁸⁰ Additionally, young Kurdish women are often blackmailed into becoming informants, engaging in prostitution, and participating in drug activities by security officers who specifically develop emotional relationships with women. The women's movement continues to resist against these sexist state policies. However, interviewees from various political backgrounds note that these issues have worsened since the trusteeship period, with increased repression and weakened local protective mechanisms.⁸¹ This trend is evident in areas like gentrified Sur, Sülüklü Han – which many Kurds avoid due to painful memories – and neighborhoods such as Ofis. One interviewee expressed the changing face of this soft sexist state mechanism as follows:

In the past, it would have been unthinkable for a Kurdish woman who cared about the Kurdish movement to have a relationship with a policeman, even appearing together would have been 'an abnormal thing.' This situation has existed for years in front of the *İş Bank* in Ofis [neighborhood]. Very good-looking, tall policemen, to whom society ascribes a certain status, target young girls, especially between the ages of 16 and 22. These young girls have not completed their personal development and are in need of a man, but they come from families that are patriotic and committed to family values. These women have sexual relations with police officers, without thinking of marriage, and are then abandoned. This situation leads to different reflections and perceptions within the family.⁸²

This utterance reveals how gendered violence is both a colonial tactic of control and a breach of women's agency, further entangling state, patriarchy, and privacy. A similar mechanism is also highlighted by those working in the field of drugs.⁸³ Three points deserve particular attention: the age of drug abuse has dropped to the primary school level,⁸⁴ and among those who are sexually abused are not only young women and girls, but also boys. Here, the boundary-crossing of gender, generation, and vulnerability underscores the imbricated nature of social control.

The municipality, once accessible to women, LGBTIQ+ people, and children, has become a closed space, but the community has developed grassroots tactics to counter state strategies. In 2019, the Diyarbakır Network Against Violence (DŞMA) was established by organizations such as the Rosa Women's Association, ÖHD (Lawyers for Freedom Association), and the Diyarbakır Bar Association's Women's Rights Centre and LGBTIQ+

Rights Commission. Despite facing resource cuts and frequent police raids under the trusteeship regime, these groups have continued their work.⁸⁵ According to DŞMA's 2023 report, violence increased by 3.6 percent from the previous year, with law enforcement and public officials identified as the main perpetrators.⁸⁶ DŞMA's persistence exemplifies everyday tactics and constitutes a counter-memory regime that documents state violence.

The DŞMA report also highlights the rise of economic violence as the second most prevalent form of violence in 2023. High inflation in Turkey has severely impacted individuals and communities, with economically disadvantaged groups experiencing increased poverty. The AKP's neoliberal social service policies, including activities and training programs, promote a culture of charity rather than solidarity, reinforcing hierarchical and dependent relationships between donors and recipients. A feminist activist notes that public courses offered to women by the trustee municipality and various ministries, including the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs, do not focus on women's self-development but instead serve to normalizing a neoliberal charity culture, thereby deepening impoverishment.

First of all, impoverishment. I mean, very seriously, very quickly ... we do 40 somersaults to get a woman to the bar association. We even do another 40,000 somersaults to make sure that the woman who goes to the bar association can proceed with the case once she knows her rights. But it is very difficult, very, very difficult ... the moment you tell a woman that there is financial help available from the PTT [post office], she can find out about the post office before you do. Because help is such a serious thing, I mean help in quotes, but it is actually a kind of charity culture that is mentioned in the literature. As soon as the woman hears where and how to get financial help, she is all ears. She tries to get it quickly. I understand that these women have really got used to this over the years.⁸⁷

This vivid quote shows how imbrication of neoliberal charity, economic precarity, and gendered care shapes women's survival tactics. The Ministry of Family and Social Services' social assistance funds are distributed to beneficiaries via the national postal service (PTT). The integration of the postal system into women's everyday lives is a direct outcome of the expansion and routinization of these welfare benefits, particularly under the AKP government.⁸⁸ This infrastructural alignment illustrates a broader state strategy of embedding welfare provision within the fabric of daily life, thereby reshaping subjectivities and reinforcing modes of dependency.

In addition several of the participants I interviewed, as well as women's rights activists indicated that during the AKP period, social services occasionally provided financial support for courses such as mask-making, sewing, embroidery, and pastry-making.⁸⁹ According to Yörük's study on the AKP's neoliberal social welfare policy, social welfare has been more consistently provided to Kurds than to the poor in other regions, prioritizing

political goals over poverty reduction and aiming to depoliticize the Kurdish struggle. The funding for these women's training sessions is drawn from the social welfare budget.⁹⁰ Additionally, these courses are often complemented by seminars, meetings, or tea parties that emphasize new national family values. This selective redistribution is a strategic form of control: state aid that simultaneously empowers and disciplines marginalized groups.

Family schools and more

In Diyarbakır and the other 81 provinces in Turkey, the content and mechanisms through which new family values are communicated include family centers, family schools, and marriage schools. These programs are delivered by the Directorate of Family and Social Services, the Ministry of National Education, and municipalities. Their curricula cover family communication, technology use, conflict and stress management, addiction prevention, social and emotional skills, peer relations, healthy nutrition, physical activity, and moral development.⁹¹ The Ministry of National Education also offers online courses on topics such as family law, family in Turkish literature, and etiquette and decorum (*Adab-ı Muaşeret*).⁹² These programs function as state strategies that blend scientific discourse with the AKP's patriarchal, religious-national norms to shape gendered citizens.

While these courses are grounded in scientific and psychological disciplines, certain lessons either incorporate or are interspersed with patriarchal, religious, and nationalist themes. For instance, the Courtesy and Etiquette lesson emphasizes the patriarchal family structure and the importance of national and religious values. Similarly, the Family Law course includes a section on Religious Law, which is not part of Turkey's legal system.⁹³

In addition to the written content, the approach of lecturers in courses on women and family issues is instrumental in conveying messages. These lecturers serve as key channels through which the state disseminates its new '*yerli ve milli*' – 'domestic and national' – strategies to course participants. Interviews with representatives from the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Family and Social Services, and the Religious Affairs Ministry – who teach family and marriage courses and provide family and women's counseling – revealed varied perspectives on gender equality. For instance, a male educator from the Ministry of Family and Social Services, experienced in family work, echoed the AKP's stance, claiming that the Istanbul Convention (The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence) was used to pressure men. On March 20, 2021, President Erdoğan announced Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, justifying it by stating that the convention's prohibition of discrimination based on sexual orientation conflicted with Turkey's *milli* (national) values and '*genel ahlak*' (general morality).⁹⁴ This

political-legal turn is a strategy to reframe gender rights as threats to moral order, reshaping public subjectivities.

While expressing opposition to violence against women, the same educator argued that the primary issue lay in communication problems within families and claimed that children and women were invoking the convention as a tool to exert pressure on men. This placement of blame shifts responsibility from perpetrators to victims, a tactic of discursive control.

In the family I went to as a counsellor, one of our children is only 10–12 years old. She/He's threatening his father: 'If you don't buy me a tablet, I'm going to report you again. I'll say he's being violent towards me.' Just like, let's say, Law No. 6284 on the Prevention of Violence and the Protection of the Family, there are steps to punish the husband ... there are very serious problems caused by indefinite alimony or the acceptance of the woman's testimony as the only basis.⁹⁵

The educator, in a discussion with a representative from the Family Centre, asserted that a key method for preventing domestic violence is for women to flatter their husbands. He proposed that women should cultivate a positive and respectful dynamic by expressing gratitude and admiration, using phrases like, 'You are the pillar of our home' or 'May God bless you'.⁹⁶ This view reflects a broader patriarchal ideology and aligns with President Erdoğan's and the AKP's discursive framing of gender relations, particularly in connection with the Istanbul Convention.

In contrast to the aforementioned male educator's patriarchal approach, a female preacher from the Diyanet, who provides training on women and the family, emphasizes informing women of their rights then they report violence and never advises them to return to their partners.

Of course we talk about women's rights, of course we don't talk so much about men's rights because it's a bit more delicate. Because she has already been abused, she has already been victimized.⁹⁷

The preacher from the Diyanet acknowledged her limited knowledge about same-sex relationships, explaining that such inquiries are referred to private psychologists. She emphasized addressing violence as a critical issue, noted that, although not everyone, there are individuals who emphasize the ethical conduct of individuals within the Diyanet and other institutions in handling such matters. Her stance exemplifies how agency and feminist ethics can emerge even within state-run religious institutions.

During my fieldwork, I interviewed women and young people from diverse religious, social, and political backgrounds who had attended family schools or courses organized by the trustee municipality. Many attended the courses believing they would benefit from them, despite often encountering religious and political content or insinuations. Some participants opted for a tactical silence at these state-organized events, indicating

it was not an endorsement of the content. For example, those identifying with the Kurdish movement often chose silence to avoid confrontation, while others found the deep-rooted issues discussed overwhelming. Conversely, some individuals who were religious and affiliated with the AKP expressed that they perceived certain religious information was presented as forced or overly authoritative.⁹⁸ This silent dissent is a clear everyday tactic, preserving individual subjectivities under ideological pressure.

When discussing the trustee era, Diyarbakır inhabitants themselves often referred to the increased public visibility of the term *hanım*. They cited the various trustee policies discussed in this article and argued that the erasure of the terms *kadın* and *jin* from the city's everyday linguistic landscape – replaced by *hanım* – constitutes a symbolic manifestation of the AKP's gender politics under trusteeship. One interviewee involved in anti-violence work remarked that the presence of *hanım* on billboards 'embodies the institutionalization of the AKP's enduring gender ideology.'⁹⁹ Comparable critiques surfaced in focus group discussions with women from various socio-political backgrounds, where participants voiced objections to both the language and gender policies of the appointed municipality. Interviewees also reflected on changes to the '*Hanımlar Pazarı*' (Ladies Bazaar), where the recent inclusion of male shopkeepers disrupted its identity as a women-only space. Notably, residents and female vendors indicated that the *Hanımlar Pazarı* in the Kayapınar neighborhood was originally launched by the elected municipality as a '*Kadınlar/Jin* (Women) Bazaar' project and was later rebranded as *Hanımlar* during the trusteeship. As such, Diyarbakır residents identified the prominence of *hanım* in public discourse as a potent symbol of the religious-nationalist gender politics implemented by the trusteeship. These final reflections tie together how language, memory, space, and violence intersect in an imbricated, gendered colonial field – tracing state strategies, local tactics, and evolving subjectivities.

Conclusion: imbricated subjectivities, tactical resistance, and everyday life

This article has examined the AKP's post-2016 trustee governance in Diyarbakır through a decolonial lens, focusing on how state strategies in the fields of culture, gender, and youth have functioned within a broader project to reconfigure Kurdish urban space, memory, and subjectivity. Drawing on the concepts of strategy/tactic (de Certeau), imbrication (Gill and Pires), and border thinking (Mignolo), I have argued that, rather than producing totalizing effects, these authoritarian strategies have been met with layered and dynamic – and at times contradictory – forms of resistance, negotiation, and adaptation by local actors.

The fieldwork demonstrated that the central state's efforts to reshape Kurdish identity – particularly through Islamic-nationalist discourses targeting women, youth, and families – are not simply accepted or rejected. Instead, these discourses are tactically engaged with by actors across ideological, class, and religious lines. The existence of independent cultural and women's institutions, the persistence of plural memory practices, and the everyday responses of women and youth illustrate how people navigate state impositions not through binary positions but through fluid, overlapping and context-dependent identifications.

Through the framework of imbrication, this article has shown that categories such as gender, ethnicity, religion, and generation are not merely intersecting but are co-constitutively woven into each other in the fabric of everyday life. Patricia Hill Collins' notion of the 'outsider within' has further illuminated how young Kurdish women, in particular, challenge and rework dominant discourses from positions that are both embedded in and critical of the systems around them. In this context, subjectivities are not formed in isolation but emerge through situated and tactical engagements with institutional, political, and familial structures.

Furthermore, I have argued that the influence of the pre-trustee HDP municipality's inclusive and participatory governance model continues to shape the expectations, imaginaries, and practices of actors even in the context of repression. This continuity is observable not only among pro-HDP institutions but also among religious or conservative actors who tactically appropriate or reinterpret democratic and pluralistic ideals within their own frameworks.

By attending to the everyday negotiations and cultural productions of individuals and institutions in Diyarbakır, this article contributes to ongoing debates on state power, decoloniality, and resistance in contexts of settler-colonial and authoritarian governance. It also offers a conceptual intervention into how we understand agency and subjectivity not as fixed categories or binary oppositions (resistance vs. submission), but as processes shaped through imbricated and relational fields of power. Through this approach the article speaks to broader questions in gender studies, Kurdish studies, and political anthropology, inviting scholars to rethink how resistance, identity, and political belonging are enacted not only through open confrontation, but through everyday relational acts of survival, cultural continuity, and tactical creativity within conditions of constraint.

Notes

1. Beşikçi, *Devletarası Sömürge*.
2. Beşikçi, *Devletarası Sömürge*; Kurt, "My Muslim Kurdish brother'"; and Kurt and Özok-Gündoğan, "The Decolonial Turn."

3. Coşar and Yeğenoğlu, “New grounds,” and Mutluer, “The intersectionality.”
4. As this article was being prepared for publication, the AKP extended its policy of appointing trustees beyond Kurdish provinces and Kurdish parties, targeting municipalities led by the opposition Republican People’s Party in places such as Esenyurt and Şişli in Istanbul and Ovacık in Dersim.
5. Tepe and Alemdaroğlu, “How Authoritarians Win.”
6. Beşikçi, *Devletarası Sömürge Kürdistan*; Gambetti “Decolonizing Diyarbakır”; Kurt, “My Muslim Kurdish brother”; Yüksel, “Diyarbakır İş Çevreleri”; Gourlay, *The Kurds*; and Keyder and Üstündağ, “Doğu ve Güneydoğu.”
7. de Certeau, *The Practices*.
8. Gill and Pires, “From Binary.”
9. Mignolo, *Local Histories*, 1-45, 60-76.
10. Collins, “Learning.”
11. Gill and Pires, “From Binary.”
12. Weedon, “Feminist Practice,” and de Vault “Talking and Listening.”
13. Mignolo, *Global Designs*.
14. Beşikçi, *Devletarası Sömürge*; Kurt and Özok-Gündoğan, “The Decolonial Turn”; and Mignolo, *Local Histories*.
15. Gill and Pires, “From Binary.”
16. Yuval Davis, *Gender and Nation*.
17. Berktaş “Cumhuriyetin 75 Yıllık”; Bora, *Milliyetçilik*; Dressler, *Writing Religion*; Ünlü, *Türklük Sözleşmesi*; and Mutluer, “From Silent.”
18. Beşikçi, *Devletarası Sömürge Kürdistan*; Kurt and Özok-Gündoğan, “The Decolonial Turn”; and Mignolo, *Local Histories*.
19. Özkan, “Cold War Era Relations.”
20. Akdoğan, “Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi.”
21. White, *Primitive Rebels*; Watts, *Activist in the Office*; Gürbüz, *Rival Kurdish Movements*; Gürses *An Anatomy*; and Güneş, *The Political Representation*.
22. Van Bruniessen, *Kürdistan Üzerine Yazılar*; Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*; and Kurt, *Türkiye’de Hizbullah*.
23. Ekinci, *Kürt Sekülerleşmesi*.
24. For instance, the Gülen movement, once aligned with the AKP and influential in state institutions, was targeted by the AKP following the 2016 coup, which it blamed on the movement. For Hizbollah see Kurt, *Türkiye’de Hizbullah*.
25. Yeğen, *Devlet Söyleminde Kürt Sorunu*.
26. Kurt, “The ‘success’.”
27. Gözaydın, *Diyanet*; Öztürk, *Turkey’s Diyanet*; and Mutluer, “Diyanet’s Role.”
28. Türkmen, *Under the Banner*.
29. Mignolo, *Local Histories*, 49-75.
30. YPG is a Kurdish led armed organization active in Syria.
31. Türkmen, *Under the Banner*, and Mutluer, “Diyanet’s Role.”
32. GABB, *The Report*.
33. Assmann, “To Remember.”
34. Altınay, *The Myth*.
35. Tekeli, “Türkiye’de Feminist.”
36. Mutluer, “From Silent.”
37. Çağlayan, *Analar*; Üstündağ, *The Mother*;; Çelik, “Gendered Aspects”; and Mutluer, “Disposable Masculinities.”
38. Nagel, *Ethnicity and Sexuality*.
39. Çağlayan, *Analar*, and Atay “Institutionalizing.”

40. Ibid.
41. Sayın, *Erkeği Öldürmek*.
42. Üstündağ, *The Mother*, 31
43. Collins, "Learning."
44. Darıcı, "Of Kurdish Youth."
45. Karadaş Ekinçi, *Diyarbakır*
46. Assmann, "To Remember," and Olick et. al. *The Collective Memory Reader*
47. Collins, "Learning."
48. Assmann, "To Remember."
49. "Diyarbakır'ın Fethi'nin 1383'üncü yıl dönümünde 'Fetih Duvarı' sergisi açıldı", *Midyat Gündem*, May 23, 2022, <https://www.midyatgundem.com/diyarbakirin-fethinin-1383uncu-yil-donumunde-fetih-duvari-sergisi-acildi>
50. Focus Group on local and cultural policies, March 28, 2023.
51. Interview, March 28, 2023.
52. Focus Group on local and cultural policies, March 28, 2023.
53. Interview, MA Music, March 28, 2023.
54. Focus Group on local and cultural policies, March 28, 2023.
55. Interview, MA Music, March 28, 2023.
56. Interview, KASED, October 25, 2023.
57. Focus Group, women, March 30, 2023.
58. Interview, October 26, 2023.
59. Interview, ex-municipality member woman, March 30, 2023.
60. Focus Group, pious young women and men, October 27, 2023. For detailed explanation about religion in everyday Kurdistan, please see Van Bruniessen, *Kürdistan Üzerine Yazılar*.
61. Interview, October 26, 2023.
62. Focus Group, pious young women and men, October 27, 2023.
63. Ibid.
64. Interview, October 26, 2023.
65. Interview, October 26, 2023.
66. "'Kadınlar Kentinde' Kadınlar Barış İstedi," *Bianet*, March 9, 2010, available at <https://bianet.org/kadin/kadin/120544-kadinlar-kenti-nde-kadinlar-baris-istedi>). Gültan Kışanak and a group of Kurdish politicians, including former HDP co-spokespersons Selahattin Demirtaş and Figen Yüksekdağ, were imprisoned for "making terrorist organization propaganda" in the Kobane Case. Gültan Kışanak, who at the time was on trial for "supporting terrorist activities" but had not yet been convicted, was detained on October 30, 2016, and on November 1, 2016, a state-appointed official was appointed as a trustee of the Diyarbakır Municipality. Gültan Kışanak was released on May 26, 2024.
67. The names of the parties of the Kurdish political movement often change for political reasons or due to state pressure. During the period mentioned here, it was called the BDP. During the more recent field research, it was renamed as HDP. At the time of writing, the name of this party remained the same, but the abbreviation had been changed to DEM.
68. Interview, ex-municipality member, March 27, 2023.
69. Mutluer, "Kemalist Feminists."
70. In many interviews I have conducted with political Islamist women, they emphasize that the use of the term "*hanım*" has been used to refer to the women's branches of the party since the early days.

71. Ferit Demirel, "Birgeh OHAL Uygulamalarıyla Kapatılan Kürt ve Muhafif Kurumların Hafızasını Aktarıyor", *Bianet*, November, 29, 2023, available at <https://bianet.org/yazi/birgeh-ohal-uygulamalarıyla-kapatılan-kurt-ve-muhafif-kurumların-hafızasını-aktarıyor-288614>.
72. GABB, *Yerel Yönetimlerde*, 7
73. Nagel, *Ethnicity and Sexuality*.
74. *Ibid.*
75. Mutluer, "Disposable Masculinities."
76. Interview, Rosa Woman's Association, March 31, 2023.
77. Çiçek, "Hizmet-Siyaset," 25-26.
78. Interview, ex-municipality members, March 27, 2023.
79. Interview, October 25, 2023.
80. Interviews, Rosa Woman's Association, March 31, 2023, and ÖHD, March 28, 2023.
81. *Ibid.*
82. Interview, October 26, 2023.
83. Interview, an NGO member, March 30, 2023.
84. *Madde Kullanımıyla Mücadeleye Dair Rapor*, Diyarbakır Bar Association, August 2023, 12.
85. Interview, ÖHD, March 28, 2023.
86. Diyarbakır Şiddetle Mücadele Ağı, *2023 Annual Report*
87. Interview, October 25, 2023.
88. "1000 TL Sosyal Hizmet Parası," April 9, 2020, available at <https://www.aile.gov.tr/osmaniye/haberler/1000-tl-sosyal-yarım-destegi-parası-kimlere-ne-zaman-verilecek/>
89. Interview, October 25, 2023.
90. Yörük, "Welfare Provision."
91. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı, Aile Okulu, <https://aileokulu.meb.gov.tr>
92. *Ibid.*
93. *bid.*
94. Mutluer, "From Silent." Since the withdrawal, Erdoğan's administration has pushed for changes to the civil code to limit women's rights, such as reducing the right to alimony. These moves have been met with opposition from women's and LGBTIQ+ movements.
95. Interview, April 4, 2023.
96. Interview, April 4, 2023.
97. Interview, April 6, 2023.
98. Interviews, October 26, 2023.
99. Interview, May 12, 2023.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to the many individuals, centers, non-governmental organizations, and *cemaats* in Diyarbakır, encompassing diverse religious and secular perspectives, national outlooks, and ideological backgrounds, for their invaluable support and openness during my field research in Diyarbakır. While some preferred to remain anonymous, I would like to specifically acknowledge the Kurdish Studies Center, KASED (Women's Culture, Art, and Literature Association), the Association of Lawyers for Freedom, MA Music Center, Rosa Women's Association, and BAKAD (Association for Cultural Studies for Peace). I also

extend my thanks to Biray Kolluoğlu, Markus Dressler, Murat Özbek, Nazan Üstündağ, Yıldırım Şentürk, and editors and an anonymous reviewers from *Turkish Studies* for their valuable comments and contributions.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

Research for this publication has been conducted within the project ‘Piety and Secularity Contested: Family and Youth Politics in post-Kemalist New Turkey’ funded by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation), 434194191.

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