Kurdish feminism and the Kurdish nationalist movements

The position of Jineology within the transnational guerrilla war for independence in the twentieth and twenty-first century, in the context of the Kurdish identity and Kurdish feminism.

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Classical master thesis

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The process of writing this thesis has been a long, complicated, and exhausting one. I started the process in February, after just having completed the first exam period of my Master’s, which was also my first Belgian exam period. Hence the exhaustion. Nevertheless, I have thoroughly enjoyed this process. I have gained more knowledge and insights on the Middle East, its conflicts and the position of women in the region. Specifically, I have learned more about the Kurds and the Kurdish struggle. I have come to realize that there is always more than one side to the story and that organizations can have similar interests and be in conflict with each other. Furthermore, it is crucial to maintain a critical perspective, and to my dismay, I am now aware that academic articles can be biased. Lastly, I have learned to discuss and critique the literature in a way that presents more than one perspective.

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Overview of the used terminology

Kurdish titles

The Kurds have many titles and use different ways to signal one’s status. Romano (2006) cites Finkel and Sirman, who give a clear overview of the most common titles. To refer to the Kurdish elite, usually, the titles ‘agha’, ‘asiret beyi’, ‘shaikh’ and ‘sayyid’ are used. The definitions of these titles are, according to Finkel and Sirman (1990, as cited in Romano, 2006), who cite Lale Yalcin-Heckan, as follows:

“Briefly, aga/agha is a term with many meanings, but in relation to Eastern Turkey, it often means a rich landowner and a patron. Asiret beyi is simply the leader of a tribe (asiret). Shaikh, in the Eastern Turkish and Kurdish context, is a tariqa (religious brotherhood, sect) leader. Shaikhs have murids (followers) in the brotherhood. A sayyid, on the other hand, is someone who claims descent from the Prophet Muhammed’s family, thus it is a hereditary title. ([Finkel & Sirman, 1990, p. 290])”. (p. 33)

Additionally, Edmonds (1971) states that Sayyid is used to indicate that someone is a religious leader or teacher.

Peshmerga

The term Peshmerga is used both as the name of the military wing of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR) and to refer to Kurdish-Iraqi military in general. The translation of ‘peshmerga’ according to Bengio (2012) is ‘ready to die’, but can also be translated to ‘those who face death’ (Lortz, 2005). Therefore, the meaning of Peshmerga is context-dependent. Stansfield (2003), for example, uses ‘peshmerga’ to refer to Kurdish-Iraqi military, yet Bengio (2012), and Esfandairy and Tabatabai (2015) use Peshmerga to refer to the military wing specifically.

Kurdish nationalist movements and bodies

Iran

(KDPI) Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran
(JK) The Society for the Revival of Kurdistan
Komala Committee for the Rebirth of Kurdistan, Komala Jiyaneway Kurdistan¹

¹ For other possible spellings of the name of the committee, see appendix C.
Iraq
(IKR) Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR)
(KDP) Kurdish Democratic Party of Iraq
Peshmerga Military wing of the IKR
(PUK) Patriotic Union of Kurdistan

Syria
(DFNS) Democratic Federation of Northern Syria
(KDPS) Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria, Partîya Dêmokrat a Kurd li Sûriyê
(KNC) Kurdish National Council
(NCBDC) National Coordination Body for Democratic Change
(PYD) Kurdish Democratic Union Party, Partîya Yekîtî ya Dêmokra
(SNC) Syrian National Council
(YPG) People’s Protection Unit, Yekîneyen Parastina Gel
(YPJ) Women’s Protection Units, Yekîneyên Parastina Jinê

Turkey
(KDPT) Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey
(PJAK) Party of Free women in Kurdistan, Partiya Azadiya Jin a Kurdistan
(PKK) Kurdish Workers Party, Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan
(PPKK) The Vanguard Workers Party of Kurdistan, Partiya Pêşenga Karkerên Kurdistan, also known as Şivancilar
(PRK) Kurdistan Liberation Party, Partiya Rizarîya Kurdistan (PRK), also known as Rizgari, which translated means ‘liberation’
(TAJK) Free Women’s Movement of Kurdistan, Tevgera Azadiya Jinên Kurdistan
(TKSP) The Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan
(YJA-Star) Women’s military Unit of the PKK, Yekîneyên Jinên Azad ên Star
Abstract
This research discusses Jineology, a Kurdish feminist movement, in the context of Kurdish identity and Kurdish nationalism. Jineology has its basis in the ideology and theorizations of Abdullah Öcalan, founder and leader of the PKK, a Kurdish nationalist movement. The objectives of Kurdish feminism and Kurdish nationalism, however, are not the same. Therefore, this research presents an overview of both Kurdish nationalism and feminism to clarify how Jineology is situated within the Kurdish nationalist movement, despite crucial differences in discourse and objectives. To do so, the formation of Kurdish identity is discussed, as the Kurdish identity is the core of the Kurdish nationalist movement. Additionally, the position of women and the significance of their participation within the Kurdish struggle is discussed. All in all, Jineology will be discussed in the context of Kurdish identity and Kurdish nationalism, with a specific focus on nationalism and gender.

Dit onderzoek bespreekt de relatie tussen Jineologie, een Koerdisch feministische beweging, Koerdische identiteit en Koerdisch nationalisme. Hoewel Jineologie gebaseerd is op de ideologie en theorieën van Abdullah Öcalan, oprichter en leider van de PKK, een Koerdisch nationalistische partij, de doelstellingen van Koerdisch feminism en Koerdisch nationalisme zijn verschillend. Op basis hiervan presenteert dit onderzoek een overzicht van zowel het Koerdisch nationalisme als feminisme om te verduidelijken hoe Jineologie gesitueerd is binnen de Koerdisch nationalistische beweging, ondanks een verschil in discours en doelstelling. Om dit overzicht te kunnen schetsen zal ook de vorming van de Koerdische identiteit besproken worden, aangezien de Koerdische identiteit de kern van de Koerdisch nationalistische beweging is. Verder wordt ook de positie en de participatie van de vrouw in de Koerdische strijd besproken. Samenvattend zal Jineologie besproken worden in de context van de Koerdisch nationalistische beweging, met een specifieke focus op nationalisme en gender.
Introduction

This research discusses Jineology, a Kurdish feminist movement, which arose from Kurdish nationalist movements, and is based on a changed Kurdish ideology. Jineology is discussed in the context of Kurdish identity, Kurdish nationalism, and Kurdish feminism. Kurdish nationalism is based on the formation of Kurdish identity and gender has begun to form an important aspect of Kurdish nationalist movements to the extent that a gender discourse has become prevalent and Kurdish ideologies have changed. The addition of gender discourse, therefore, has created a transformation from a nationalist movement to a liberation movement. This is significant due to the geographical location of the Kurds, in what Moghadam (1992; 2004; 2007) calls the patriarchal belt. Whereas autonomy used to be an important goal of the Kurdish nationalist movement, an independent Kurdish state for many Kurdish nationalist movements is no longer the objective. Instead, although first guerrilla fighters for independence, now equality has become the new objective. Nevertheless, some Kurdish movements still fight for independence and an autonomous state.

Despite existing research on the Kurds, this research is a valuable addition to the existing literature on the Kurds, the Kurdish conflict and Kurdish feminism, as it aims to discuss a specific Kurdish feminist movement, Jineology, in the context of these aspects. Additionally, this research also sheds light on the identity formation of the Kurds as an ethnic group, how identity can result in conflict and how the Kurdish ethnicity is related to Kurdish nationalism. Furthermore, the position of Kurdish women within the Kurdish society is also discussed, which sheds light on the role of women within nationalist projects, and how their position is both significant and expected. Lastly, although the Kurds, who are “marginalized politically, economically and geographically” (McDowall, 1996, p. xi), and the Kurdish question have been studied ever since the last three decades, Mojab (1997) states that the Kurds “[…] are often branded as a tribal or nomadic people, [while] Kurdish social organization has been complex, comprising rural, tribal, and urban ways of life.” (p. 3). It must be noted that Mojab

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2 The Kurdish question is also known as the Kurdish conflict, the Kurdish rebellion, the Kurdish struggle or as a civil war. Since this thesis is about Kurdish feminism, the terms used are either Kurdish conflict or the Kurdish question, as these terms come across as the most objective or neutral. The use of the term ‘Kurdish rebellion’ has a certain charge to it, as the Kurdish fight is likely to only be perceived as a rebellion from the perspective of the nation-states. To the Kurds, their fight is likely to be a defense, rather than a rebellion. The same is true for the term ‘Kurdish struggle’, which implies that the Kurds are oppressed, which shifts the focus more to the perspective of the Kurds. As such, the terms ‘Kurdish question’ and ‘Kurdish conflict’ are considered to be slightly more neutral.
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(2004) recognizes the influences of Western media and academia in this branding and considers it to be “at best simplistic and at worst politically motivated” (p. 111). As a result, this research presents a broader overview and goes beyond the Kurds’ tribal organization characterization. It looks at their organization as an ethnic group. Additionally, despite the long history of the Kurdish question, which is evidenced by the research of Eppel (2016), McDowall (1996), Smith (2009), Tax (2016), Tejel (2009), and others, this research studies the twentieth and twenty-first century, as it was in 1999, with the arrest of Abdullah Öcalan, leader and founder of the PKK, a Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey, that a new discourse and ideology was implemented. As McDowall (1996) states: “any modern history of the Kurd must examine two inter-related questions” (p. 1); the two inter-related questions being the political conflict between the Kurds and the nation-states of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey; and the struggle of the Kurdish people to build a national and coherent identity. Therefore, to study Jineology within the context of Kurdish nationalism, attention must be paid to Kurdish identity, Kurdish conflicts, and Kurdish nationalism, as all these aspects are interlinked.

The research question of this thesis as such, is: ‘how does Jineology relate to Kurdish identity, Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish feminism?’ To answer this question, the following sub-questions will be discussed first:

Who are the Kurds?
How was the Kurdish identity formed?
What is Kurdish nationalism?
What is the position of women within the Kurdish struggle?
How does Jineology relate to Kurdish nationalism?

Using the sub-questions as guidelines for structure, the first chapter of the theoretical framework will, although in short, discuss who the Kurds are, and as such answer the first sub-question. The second chapter will discuss the formation of Kurdish identity and Kurdish nationalism and as such answers the second and third sub-questions. To do so, I will present a theoretical framework, which is drawn on the work of Anderson (2006), Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993), Eriksen (2010), Gellner (1983), and Moerman (1965), as these scholars have extensively researched ethnicity and nationalism. The third chapter will discuss the position of Kurdish women within the Kurdish struggle, based on a two-fold change within Kurdish nationalism. An important aspect of this is the position of women within the patriarchal structure of the Middle East as identified by Moghadam (1992; 2004; 2007), a feminist scholar.
and professor in sociology. This will be discussed in relation to agency of religious women in the Middle East, as discussed by Mahmood (2005), a professor in anthropology. This will be combined with a discussion of Jineology and its ideologies and discourse. As such, the fourth and fifth sub-question will be answered. This chapter will also provide an extensive overview of the theorizations of Abdullah Öcalan, as his ideology has had a large impact on Kurdish nationalism.

This thesis aims to analyze identity, ethnicity, nationalism of the Kurds, and relate it to Jineology and gender while simultaneously avoid creating an overview that contains so much information that important details get overlooked. To create this theoretical overview, I will draw on work that gives an overview of the Kurdish history and the Kurdish conflicts, for example, the works of Dahlman (2002), Eppel (2016), Gunes (2018) and McDowall (1996). Their work provides an overview, yet the texts lack a specific focus on Kurdish feminism. I will add a focus on Kurdish feminism by discussing the position of Kurdish women and Jineology, based on, for example, the works of Çağlayan (2012), Neven and Schäfers (2017), Tax (2016), and Tejel (2009).

In sum, this thesis discusses Jineology, a Kurdish feminist movement in the context of Kurdish nationalism. It will be shown how Kurdish nationalism has evolved into a liberation movement, which explains how Kurdish nationalism has become the basis for Jineology. All in all, the objectives of Jineology, in the context of Kurdish nationalism and the position of Kurdish women will be discussed in this thesis.
Method
This research has aimed to answer the question of how Jineology relates to Kurdish identity, Kurdish nationalism, and Kurdish feminism, by discussing the Kurds as an ethnic group, their identity, their nationalism, and their feminism. Therefore, the research presents a theoretical framework consisting of three chapters addressing five sub-questions. This chapter dwells into how the research was set up, its limitations and further research suggestions to address these limitations.

The setup of this research
To answer the research question of this thesis, ‘how does Jineology relate to Kurdish identity, Kurdish nationalism, and Kurdish feminism?’, the following approach has been used. First, the research questions were formulated. This was achieved through an orientational literature study, inspired by a lecture presented by Marlene Schäfers on Kurdish Feminism³. The lecture was of importance for this research, as it piqued my interest in the subject, and as such, inspired me to research Jineology and Kurdish feminism. The orientational literature study indicated that there was a relation between Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish feminism, uncovered that limited literature was available, and that a gap in the literature existed. Additionally, it also showed how studies on Kurdish nationalism tend to ignore the change in ideological discourse.

After the research questions were formulated, a theoretical framework was created based on a literature study. First, the first chapter was written, which discusses the Kurds, and answers the first sub-question, as it provides the contextual framework of this research. Second, the third chapter was written, as it discusses Jineology and Kurdish feminism, and answers the fourth and fifth sub-question. Therefore, this chapter was considered to be the most important part of the theoretical framework. Additionally, it also provided a background which helped to stay focused when writing the second chapter on Kurdish nationalism, which answers the second and third sub-question. The Kurdish question is a complex history interwoven with many events, that it was important to stay limited in the discussion of Kurdish nationalism. To refrain from being too elaborate, an introduction and conclusion were added to each chapter, and additionally, it is explicitly discussed how each chapter relates to the research questions.

³ The lecture was part of a twelve-week course called ‘Feminism and Diversity in a Transnational Historic Perspective’, which is part of the Master Gender and Diversity. The guest lecture by Dr. Marlene Schäfers was titled ‘Gender and feminism in the context of de/colonization in the MENA region’, presented on October 26, 2018.
Furthermore, as scholars appear to not agree on several details and characteristics with regards to the Kurd and the Kurdish case, throughout this research, several footnotes indicate possible or different translations and spellings of people and organizations. As such, in a way, extra research was required, before literature could be presented and added to this research. As I have drawn on more than hundred-and-twenty-five different works and have used a combination of academic and non-academic sources, I have been able to create an overview that presents the story of the Kurds from multiple perspectives.

Theoretical framework

To create a theoretical framework and literature overview, I have drawn on several scholars and sources. First of all, to discuss Kurdish nationalism in the context of the formation of the Kurdish identity, I have created a theoretical framework which discusses the construction of ethnic and national identities, based on Anderson (2006), Anthias & Yuval-Davis (1993), Eriksen (2010), Gellner (1983), and Moerman (1965). Secondly, I have discussed the significance of the position and the participation of women within the Kurdish struggle, based on the concepts of the patriarchal belt (Moghadam, 1992; 2004; 2007), and agency (Mahmood, 2005) have been used to present the significance of the position and the participation of women within the Kurdish struggle. Thirdly, Öcalan’s pamphlet ‘Liberating Life’ has been discussed to present how his ideology changed, and what his theorizations entail. Lastly, Jineology has been discussed, for which I have consulted several articles, among which the articles of Düzgün (2016) and Neven and Schäfers (2017). This framework has been strengthened by the addition of works that present an overview of who the Kurds are, such as Eppel (2016), Jwaideh (2006) and McDowall (1996), and works that discuss Kurdish nationalism, such as Edmonds (1971), Gunes (2012; 2018) and Romano (2006).

The discussed literature was collected via multiple academic databases during the period from February until July 2019. A selection of both academic and non-academic work has been used, the last category usually in the form of testimonies or reports of experiences. I have found that non-academic work supports academic work, in the sense that it provides real-life insight into what is theorized in academic work. These sources have been used, yet it has been taken

4 I have referred to newspaper articles or blogs in which Kurdish fighters discuss their everyday life, conference-speeches of members of Jineology, or the works of Öcalan, to create a more complete overview. As such, I have not just included academic theories, but also non-academic work.
into account that the non-academic work might not be in line with academic standards of objectivity.

The academic database that was used most is the online database of Google Scholar, primarily due to the fact that Google Scholar searches multiple online databases at once. To do so, multiple search strings were used, which varied from names of influential people within the Kurdish history to general key concepts to specific aspects of the Kurdish question. The used search strings differed per chapter or paragraph, as each part required specific literature\(^5\). Furthermore, via Google Scholar, its online library, Google Books, could also be consulted. Additionally, the references of the literature that was already found, often also provided new sources which could be studied. Lastly, the libraries of the University of Ghent offer access to many books that were of use for this research.

Finally, after conducting an extensive literature review, the research questions were answered throughout this research.

**Limitations**

Although I have been able to answer all the research questions and have created an overview of who the Kurds are, how their identity was formed, and what Kurdish nationalism is, this research was subject to several limitations. The first limitations of this research were time and space. The Kurdish question cannot be summarized in a few pages, and the task of describing the history of the Kurds is not an easy one, due to multiple factors. First of all, the Kurdish question is situated in a turbulent socio-political context, in the time period of the World Wars, the era of the Soviet-Union and communism, where colonialism was an important power-structure, and with many context-specific conflicts and regimes. Additionally, feminism was also on the rise in the twentieth century, which has had its influence on the Kurds and their movements as well. Nevertheless, to keep this research focused on Kurdish nationalism and Kurdish feminism, it was necessary to omit aspects of the socio-political context which were not directly related to Kurdish nationalism and feminism. Therefore, to answer the research questions, I have slightly touched on all of these subjects, yet most of it has been left out. To illustrate, the aim of this research was to discuss Kurdish feminism and with that, most of the context of communism, the influence of Russia and the USSR have been omitted. This is not

\(^5\) Examples of the used search strings are ‘Kurdish nationalism in [the respective nation-states]’, ‘Jineology’, ‘Kurdish feminism’, ‘Abdullah Öcalan’, and ‘Rojava’, although variations of and additions to these search strings were also used.
to say it is not of importance, however, for this specific research, it was not supposed to be included. Further research, however, could benefit from taking this into account.

Secondly, there has been no mention or discussion of other types of feminisms or activisms, such as Kemalism in Turkey, nor has a detailed discussion of the several (oppressive) regimes in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey been given. Furthermore, the different branches of Islam and the influence this might have on the patriarchal structure of countries within the patriarchal belt have also not been taken into account. Further research might benefit from taking these aspects into account, as this could possibly shed light on or explain differences between Kurdish women and other women in the Middle East.

Lastly, it also has to be noted that I have been limited in the use of sources. First of all, only sources in Dutch and English could be accessed, due to a lack of knowledge in for example Arabic, Turkish of the Kurdish language, in which more literature is likely to exist. Secondly, some sources could not be used, due to restricted access. Thirdly, it must also be noted that I have been limited in the use of sources to whom my sources referred, in that several authors drew on Kurdish websites or websites related to the Kurdish question, such as ‘PKK online’, or ‘thekurdishquestion.com’, yet many of the linked websites or webpages were no longer available. Fourthly, similar to Tejel (2009), who states in her notes that “it is impossible […] to cite here all of the works which are dedicated to the Kurdish question, Kurdish identity, and nationalism in these three countries.” (p. 141). This is both due to the extensive literature framework that is available, which cannot be studied in its entirety and discussed exhaustively, but also due to the limited amount of words that could be used in this thesis. Notwithstanding, I have aimed to give a complete yet summarized overview which discusses the most important aspects of Kurdish history.

**Objectivity**

As a Western scholar, studying a Middle Eastern case, it is important to be aware of the perspective that is applied. Specifically, concerning Kurdish female fighters, a Western perspective can easily become an Orientalist view or a romanticized perspective. This is pointed out by Neven and Schäfers (2017) who state that it cannot be assumed that female Kurdish fighters are fighting for Western values, as this projects an Orientalist narrative. Similarly, a

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6 See appendix E for an overview of some of the sources that could not be accessed.
blog of a female Kurdish guerrilla fighter named Zilan Diyar\(^7\) (2014, December), adds the critique that the West is only focused on the physical appearance of the Kurdish female fighters. Diyar states that the interest of the West in the fate of the Kurds is recent\(^8\), whereas for the Kurds their story and their battle knows a long history. Furthermore, Diyar states that the West does not know or does not remember the names of the women who sacrificed themselves for what they believed was the right cause, but for the Kurdish fighters they serve as an example. This paints a picture of the raw reality of the war, with victims on both sides, and underlines how not only should an Orientalist narrative be avoided, but also a romanticized view.

It should go without saying that creating an Orientalist narrative or presenting a romanticized view was anything but the intention. Rather, the intention was to create an overview which describes the situation of Kurdish women and adds to a more accurate understanding of their struggles, their women’s movements, and feminism. Yet, in line with Sandra Harding (1987; 1993), who discusses the concept of objectivity, I have to point my positionality out. According to Harding (1993), strong objectivity “requires that the subject of knowledge be placed on the same critical, causal plane as the objects of knowledge” (p. 69). Furthermore, Harding (1987) states that: “[…] the class, race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs and behaviors of the researcher her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to paint”. (p. 9). As such, my position as a white, middle-class Christian, Western woman, and thus my perspective on life, is likely to differ from that of a Kurdish, possibly Muslim, woman. Additionally, my position as a female master’s student in gender and diversity is likely to have influenced the way I have interpreted the answers to my research questions. The same is true for the analyses I present in the discussion-section. I have

\(^7\) The blog of this Kurdish guerrilla fighter is presented on a, amateur WordPress site called Tendance Coatsey, which is described as a critical Marxist blog. It appears that multiple people can send in their blogs and the blogs will be published accordingly. The piece by Diyar is introduced as follows: “By Zilan Diyar, a Kurdish guerrilla fighter” and it is stated that the piece originally appeared in ‘Yeni Özgür Politika’, in Turkish with the title ‘The time has come.’. Although not objective or academic, this is piece is cited as it represents the opinion of a Kurdish guerrilla fighter and it shows how the interest of Western media is perceived by Kurdish fighters. As such this blog is considered relevant.

\(^8\) The West’s interest in the fate of the Kurds is only recent, as the United States is heavily involved in the Middle Eastern politics, in such a way that it disadvantaged the Kurds. Opinions have changed, however, as the Kurds have fought alongside the West to defeat ISIS. Nonetheless, this is grounds for another study, and will not be discussed here further.
made my analyses based on the discussed literature, in combination with the knowledge I have collected as a master’s student in gender and diversity.

This research, despite the aforementioned limitations, has aimed to, first of all, give an overview of the history of the Kurdish question, second of all, show the influence of Kurdish nationalism on Kurdish feminism and as such Jineology, and third of all, although more implicit, to add to a general understanding of ethnicity, nationalism, gender, and identity.
Chapter 1 - The Kurds

1.1 - Introduction

This chapter discusses the Kurds, their cultural characteristics, geographical location, and population. These aspects are discussed to provide a context of who the Kurds are and how the Kurdish nationalist movement came to be. Therefore, this section provides an answer to the first sub-question: ‘who are the Kurds?’. Additionally, this chapter will also provide a framework which will be the basis for the next sub-question; ‘what is the Kurdish nationalist movement?’ as Kurdish nationalism can only be understood when one knows who the Kurds are, and what their history is.

As will be shown, the Kurds are an ethnic minority, who have known a history of repression and rebellion, which started with the divide of the area they were located in, also known as Kurdistan. Despite generalizing terms, however, many distinctions among different groups of Kurds exist. As such, it is important to be careful to perceive the Kurds as one group.

1.2 - Who are the Kurds?

The Kurds are one of the world’s largest ethnic minorities (Gunes, 2018; Mutlu, 1996), although by some considered to be the largest minority, (Smith, 2009; Vali, 1998), without a country or nation-state. According to McDowall (1996), the Kurds are marginalized and suppressed politically and economically. After the First World War, Kurdistan⁹ got divided over the newly established nation-states of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, and as such, the Kurds became geographically marginalized as well (McDowall, 1996; Smith, 2009). The Kurds have yet to regain their independence and autonomy (Fuller, 1993; Harris, 1977; Smith, 2009; Vali, 1998), due to complex structures of colonialism, the establishment of nation-states and nationalism. This will be discussed in more detail in chapters 2 and 3.

More recent texts on the Kurds often focus on the Kurdish question or the situation of the Kurds in the twentieth century. This does not do justice to the long history of the Kurds, who have been mentioned in historical texts since antiquity (Eppel, 2016; Gunes, 2018). As such, although brief, a description of the Kurds, their cultural characteristics, geographical location, and population will be given, before discussing the Kurdish question.

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⁹ Kurdistan is used here to describe the geographical area that the Kurds inhabit, which used to be one area, until it became divided after the Sykes-Picot agreement was signed in 1916. This is discussed in more detail in paragraph 1.4, where a map of the area is also included.
1.3 - Cultural characteristics

A first cultural characteristic of the Kurds is their long history within the Middle East. This is evidenced by the background and the definition of the term ‘Kurds’, although Edmonds (1971), points out that “there has been considerable controversy among scholars regarding the origins of the people and the name.” (p. 87). Although debates have been ongoing, Eppel (2016) suggests that the way to identify oneself in the geographical area of Kurdistan was through family, tribal, local or religious relationships. The term ‘Kurd’ then was a signifier of these relationships. Furthermore, the translation of the word ‘Kurd’ is shepherd or Bedouin, which can be an indicator of how the Kurds used to live. Edmonds (1971), on the other hand, states that during the seventh century, “the name ‘Kurd’ was being applied to the Western Iranians and the other Iranianised peoples established astride the mountain systems of the Zagros and the eastern extension of the Tau” (p. 87).

A second cultural characteristic is that to define the Kurds, often the term ‘Kurdish society’ or a similar term is used. This implies, however, a sameness among all Kurdish groups. Yet, although there are aspects of the Kurdish life and culture that can be found in all groups, meaning the Kurds as spread out over Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, there are certainly differences among them (Alinia, 2013; Dahlman, 2002), some of which based on the cultural differences of the nation-states in which the Kurds are now located (Dahlman, 2002). Tejel (2009) states as well that: “the group which is known and recognized under the generic name of “Kurd” is far from being homogenous. It includes several dialects, religious denominations (Sunni, Shi‘ism, Alevism, and Yazidism), and various social and geographic identities (both tribal and nontribal).” (p. 3), which is confirmed by Alinia (2013), and similarly stated by Kirisci and Winrow (1997), who discuss the difficulty in defining who the Kurds are. Thus, it is important to note that the term Kurdish society cannot be used as a “singular construct”, and distinctions between the different Kurdish groups should be made (Dahlman, 2002, p. 276). Nonetheless, Marr and Al-Marashi (2017) state that the Kurds, although spread over four nation-states, relate to each other, specifically because of the shared language, but also because of a shared culture and their sense of nationalism. Lukitz (2005) even makes mention of a strong awareness among Kurds of their specific cultural and ethnic identity, which is repeated by Jwaideh (2006), who states that “the Kurds appear to have been aware of their separate national identity many years before Kurdish nationalism became a reality.” (p. 291)\(^\text{10}\).

\(^{10}\) The ethnic identity of the Kurds and how this relates to Kurdish nationalism is discussed in further detail in chapter 2
Similar to Marr and Al-Marashi (2017), according to Entessar (1984; 2014), Federici (2015), Harris (1977), and Stansfield (2003), language is one of the main factors that unites the Kurds. Entessar (2014) claims the following: “despite this apparent lack of homogeneity, the perception of a common language as an integral part of the Kurdish nation is very strong among Kurdish nationalists.” (p. 913). Sheyholislami (2011) states it even stronger and claims that “in the case of the Kurds, language needs to be viewed as one of the most important identity markers.” (p. 23). Whereas Alinia (2013) and Gunes (2018) identify two main languages as spoken by the Kurds; Kurmanji and Sorani, Entessar (1984) also makes mention of Zaza, yet states that Zaza in contrast to the other two dialects, cannot be understood by speakers of the first two dialects. Kurmanji (or Kirmanji) is mostly spoken in Syria and Turkey and in parts of Iran and Iraq; Sorani is spoken in Iran and Iraq (Gunes, 2018). Kurmanji, however, is the language that is spoken by two-thirds of the Kurdish population, even though Kurmanji is divided into two subdialects (Harris, 1977). The amount of (sub)dialects, however, make it hard to use language as a clear and sure criterium for census or population counts and adds to the differences among Kurdish groups.

The main religion of the Kurds is Islam, with a majority as Sunni Muslim and a minority of Shi’i Muslims in Iran and Iraq (Alinia, 2013; Dahlman, 2002; Entessar, 2014; Harris, 1977; Gunes, 2018). Judaism and Christianity are not as common, however, Jews and Christians do make up a significant part of the population in a number of Kurdish cities (Alinia, 2013; Dahlman, 2002). Furthermore, a lot of variations on Islam and other religions can be found, which is described by Harris (1977) as ‘tribal religious practices’. As such, Alinia (2013), concludes that religion, unlike language, is not a crucial factor that unites Kurds.

Thus, there are several cultural characteristics by which to identify the Kurds. Minor differences within a characteristic, however, makes it hard to define the Kurds as a homogeneous group. This is evidenced by the fact that language is a unifying factor, yet due to multiple dialects and variations, it is hard to use language as a characteristic in for example population counts. Additionally, as there are shared characteristics among the different groups of the Kurds, there are also characteristics, such as religion, that differ per group.

1.4 - Kurdistan

Kurdistan, which means ‘Land of the Kurds’ (Tejel, 2009), is an area spread out over the nation-states of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. It is a Kurdish inhabited area and encompasses a 200,000 square mile area at the borders of the four nation-states (Dahlman, 2002; Vali, 1998). Nonetheless, according to Edmonds (1971), its borders are not formally recognized on an
international level, and as such, Kurdistan has never been an official state (Alinia, 2013). Moreover, according to Alinia (2013), the term Kurdistan, as used to indicate the geographical area, was not used before the fifteenth century. See map 1 for an indication of the geographical location of Kurdistan, and how it is divided over the four nation-states.


Tejel (2009) describes that Kurdistan was “integrated into the Turko-Iranian world” (p. 69) around 1040. Partially due to this integration within the Turko-Iranian world, Kurdistan was welcoming towards other religions, although also a place for orthodox Sunnites (Tejel, 2009).

Kurdistan was forcibly divided by Britain, France, and Russia, after the First World War, according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916 (Alinia, 2013; Mojab, 2000)\(^\text{11}\). The Sykes-

\(^{11}\) Important to note however is, that this was the second division of Kurdistan, as Kurdistan had been divided before in 1639 (Sheyholislami, 2011). Sheyholislami explains that:
Picot Agreement, the official title is the Asia Minor Agreement, is a secret agreement between Great Britain and France, which was supported by Russia. The goal of this agreement was to place the area under European guidance (Fromkin, 1989). “It led to the redivision of the Western part of Kurdistan between the newly created states of Iraq, Syria and Turkey” (Mojab, 2004, p. 114). The agreement caused the Kurdish inhabited area to be divided over the four newly formed nation-stations, as with the new nation-states new boundaries were formed which did not take the existence of Kurdistan into account.

According to the agreement, Great Britain received among others, what is currently known as Jordan and South Iraq; and France received amongst others North Iraq, Lebanon, Syria and southeast Turkey (Knapp, Flach, & Ayboğa, 2016; Rogan, 2016). Mojab (2004) describes the division of Kurdistan and the results of this division as follows:

“In Turkey, nationalist forces, led by Kemal Ataturk, seized state power and founded a secular republic in 1923. Iraq and Syria were formed as modern nation-states under the direct rule of Britain and France. In Iran, a secular, centralizing, and dictatorial monarchy was established by Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1925. […] The nationalist regimes of Turkey and Iran declared secularism, modernization, and Westernization as the cornerstones of their project of nation building. Women were to play a prominent role in this process. They were unveiled, often forcibly, and encouraged to enter the nondomestic spheres of work, education, and politics.” (p. 114)

The division of Kurdistan led the new nation-states to deny the Kurdish identity, and instead form new national identities, which did not take other ethnicities into account. Gerger (2014, as cited in Knapp, Flach & Ayboğa, 2016), states that: “Kurdistan was dismembered, and the Kurdish people stripped of status” (p. 40). The nation-states thus forced the Kurds to let go of their identity as Kurd, and instead take on the identity of the respective nation-states (Fuller, 1993; Vali, 1998). As such, “the division of Kurdistan after the First World War and the consequent structural diversity of Kurdish societies, administered by different political and economic regimes, have deprived the Kurds of political unity and cultural cohesion.” (Vali, 1998, p. 83). The Kurdish response to this repression is known as the Kurdish rebellion, Kurdish

“a treaty between the Ottomans and Safavids resulted in drawing the first official border line between the two empires. It ran through Kurdistan and separated what is known today as Iranian Kurdistan from the rest of Kurdistan, which today is made up of parts of Turkey, Iraq, and Syria.”. (pp. 50-51).
struggle, or Kurdish question. Gunes (2018) describes the Kurdish response as a defense of rights and defiance of governments that suppress the Kurdish identity and culture. Naturally, the governments of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey rather view it as a rebellion than a defense.

1.5 - Population
The number of the Kurdish population is hard to estimate, as not every Kurd openly identifies as Kurd, and because some Kurds identify as both Kurd and Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian or Turk (Dahlman, 2002; Kirisci & Winrow, 1997) This causes the statistics to be inaccurate, which is amplified by nation-states, who have a tendency to underestimate the number of Kurds in their country, and by Kurdish nationalists, who are likely to overestimate their number (Gunes, 2018). According to Gurses (2014), the Kurds constitute about ten percent of the population in Iran and Syria and about twenty percent in Iraq and Turkey. Dahlman (2002) mentions similar percentages, but estimates that the region of Kurdistan has a population of twenty to twenty-four million Kurds. Vali (1998) on the other hand speaks of a Kurdish population of about thirty million and Gurses (2014) estimates the Kurdish population in this area at thirty-five million. However, Mutlu (1996) remarks in the demographic study of the Kurds in Turkey that the estimates depend on the source and the used demographic techniques. Mutlu (1996, p. 517) for example describes the Kurds as “the second largest in size” and states that the estimated population of Kurds varies between three and fifteen million, which is in strong contrast to Gurses (2004) estimation of 35 million. Nevertheless, whether the estimate is as low as 10 million, which was Harris’ estimate in 1977 based on language as the criterium, or as high as 35 million, the Kurdish population is as large as other groups who have a nation-state (Harris, 1977).

1.6 – Conclusion
This first chapter has aimed to give an overview, albeit short, of who the Kurds are, their history and some cultural characteristics, including their geographic location and population. This overview has presented the turbulent history of the Kurds, the loss of their land, although it was never a nation-state, and the difficulty in determining their number, which is related to the suppression the Kurds know in the nation-states in which they reside. It also gives a first indication of how hard it is to collect data about the Kurds, due to different statistics that are used.\[12\]

\[12\] See appendix C, in which it is shown in detail how scholars disagree on names, translations and dates.
In answer to the first sub-question, it is concluded that the Kurds are an ethnic minority, located in the area where the borders of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey meet. Important shared characteristics are a history of conflict and language. Religion, on the other hand, is not a unifying characteristic, which indicates the heterogeneity of the group.
Chapter 2 - Kurdish identity and nationalism

2.1 - Introduction

This chapter answers the second and third sub-question: ‘how was Kurdish identity formed?’ and ‘what is Kurdish nationalism?’. These questions were formulated as an important aspect of the Kurdish struggle is the Kurdish identity. Despite differences among groups of Kurds, as shown in chapter 1, Tejel (2009) states that “the anthropologist Martin van Bruinessen nevertheless affirms that the Kurds have been conscious of their distinctive identity for some centuries, despite internal divisions.” (p. 3), which is confirmed by Jwaideh (2006) and Lukitz (2005). As such, the formation of Kurdish identity will be discussed first, followed by a discussion of the Kurdish struggle.

To discuss ethnicity, identity and nationalism, I will draw on Anderson (2006) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993), to whom is usually referred when discussing nationalism and the concept of identity, to create a theoretical framework. Benedict Anderson originally developed the concept of ‘imagined communities’ in 1983, which discusses nationality and nationalism in the context of ethnicity and nation-building. As such, Anderson (2006) defines a nation as “an imagined political community […]” (p. 6), pointing to the construction of communities and nations. Floya Anthias and Nira Yuval-Davis, in association with Harriet Cain, discuss identity formation of those communities, and draw on Anderson’s theory and relate it race and racism. Furthermore, I will also draw on the work of anthropologist Thomas Hylland Eriksen, specifically his book titled ‘Ethnicity and Nationalism’ (2010). Additionally, several other authors, such as Jwaideh (2006), Lukitz (2005) and Tejel (2009) will be discussed as well. As this theoretical framework will link to Kurdish identity and the Kurdish struggle, I will be able to answer the sub-questions as mentioned above and create an overview of how Kurdish identity was formed and how it relates to the Kurdish struggle.

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13 This thesis draws on the revised edition of the book from 2006, as, according to Anderson’s preface, it is an attempt “to correct errors of fact, conception and interpretation” (Anderson, 2006, p. xii) present in the first edition.

14 The association with Harriet Cain is limited to a part of chapter 6, whereas in this thesis the first two chapters are used.

15 Similar to Anderson (2006), the work of Eriksen was first published in 1992, but, as stated in the preface of this third edition, thinking about ethnicity and nationalism has changed since 2002, when the second edition was published, and as such, also since 1992. As such, I have decided to draw on the most recent edition.
2.2 - Identity formation, ethnicity, and nation-states

Although Anderson (2006) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993) seemingly discuss different aspects of ethnicity, namely identity, and nation-states; it will be shown that the two are in fact related. Whereas Anderson (2006) focuses on nationalism, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993) have a more specific focus on ethnic identity. To discuss their theorizations, I will use the definition of ethnicity and nationalism as presented by Eriksen (2010).

Eriksen (2010) states that ethnicity can be used in two ways. The first way is the ‘everyday use’ of the term, which is associated with ‘minorities’ and ‘race’16. The second way is how the term is used within Social Anthropology, where “it simply refers to aspects of relationships between groups which consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive” (p. 5). To define ethnicity specifically, Eriksen draws on research by anthropologist Moerman (1965) who studied the Lue in Thailand. Unable to define their ethnicity based on what are considered to be objective characteristics; for example, language or religion, Moerman had to conclude that “someone is a Lue by virtue of believing and calling himself Lue and of acting in ways that validate his Lueness” (p. 1222). Thus, ethnicity according to Moerman is that what binds a group together through self-identification. As will be shown, this corresponds with Anderson (2006). Thus, ethnicity appears to be a marker of identity which is constituted of shared characteristics, but also of self-identification.

Eriksen (2010) relates nationalism to ethnicity, and states that “nationalism stresses the cultural similarity of its adherents and, by implication, it draws boundaries vis-à-vis others, who thereby become outsiders.” (p. 10). The difference between ethnicity and nationalism, according to Eriksen, who draws on Gellner (1938), is the relation to the state. Nationalism is

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16 It is important to note that the literature differentiates between ‘ethnicity’ and ‘race’. Although related, the categories are not the same. Moreover, ‘race’ is often perceived as being merely socially constructed, and not a category of identity (Eriksen, 2010; Wade, 1993). As such, when discussing race, race is often put between quotation marks to illustrate this. Richard Jenkins (2008) cites Peter Wade (1993), and states that:

“‘race’ is typically differentiated from ethnicity in terms of a contrast between physical and cultural differences. […] However, the ‘physical differences’ with which we are concerned in matters of ‘race’ are only differences that make a difference because they are culturally or socially signified as such”. (p. 77)

Moreover, according to Wade (1993) “differences of appearance commonly called ‘racial’ are just that: appearance.” (p. 20). Due to limited time and space however, additionally to the fact that the Kurds are an ethnic group, and not a race, this will not be discussed in further detail in this thesis.
related to the demand of an own state, whereas no such claims are made based on ethnicity, although claims to rights and recognition are made based on ethnicity. Gellner, however, does perceive a nationalist group to stem from an ethnic group. Thus, an ethnic group can make a nationalist claim, which is why we speak of a Kurdish nationalist struggle, despite the fact that the Kurds are an ethnic group. Therefore, a nation is considered to be a group of people who share a geographic location, and as such form a community. Gellner (1983) defines three markers of what defines a nation; “under these conditions, though under these conditions only, nations can indeed be defined in terms both of will and of culture, and indeed in terms of the convergence of them both with political units.” (p. 55). Thus, the aspects of self-identification, which is the will to be a member of a group, a shared culture, and a political impact17, is what constitutes a nation, according to Gellner. Eriksen (2010) summarizes accordingly:

“both [Anderson (1991 [2006]) and Gellner (1983)] stress that nations are ideological constructions seeking to forge a link between (self-defined) cultural group and state, and that they create abstract communities of a different order from those dynastic states or kinship-based communities which pre-dated them.” (p. 120).

To understand the link between ethnicity and nationalism, Eriksen (2010) explains that:

“when we look at nationalism, the link between ethnic organisation and ethnic identity [...] becomes crystal clear. According to most nationalist ideologies, the political organisation should be ethnic in character in that it represents the interests of a particular ethnic group”. (p. 121)

Therefore, it is concluded that nationalism draws on ethnicity, even though ethnicity is in part based on self-ascription to a group, and a nation is constituted of a group of people who form a community, based on a perceived shared identity18. Nonetheless, although ethnicity is based on self-identification, other markers exist to indicate ethnic identity (Eriksen, 2010).

17 I understand a political impact to be a government or some form of leadership which determines the politics of that nation.

18 Or, in the words of Gellner (1983): “nations are the artefacts of men’s [people’s] convictions and loyalties and solidarities” (p. 7). This quote shows the artificiality of nation-states, and such of nationalism.
According to Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993), ethnic identity is comprised of several markers which are all socially constructed. Anthias and Yuval-Davis, in addition to the definition as presented by Moerman (1965), point to the origin-story of an ethnic group. The origin story of a group appears to be the most important marker and Anthias and Yuval-Davis state that whether the origin-story of a group is real or not, the construction of this story creates a sense of belonging and as such forms the basis of a community. This appears to be true for the Kurds as well, as the Kurds make use of several myths to date their origin back to Mesopotamia\(^\text{19}\) (Çağlayan, 2012; Eppel, 2016; Öcalan, 2013; Sheyholislami, 2011). This is most clearly shown by Öcalan (2013) who uses the Kurdish origin in Mesopotamia as the basis of his ideology, as will be discussed in paragraph 3.4.

Furthermore, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993) also state that ethnic and national categories of identity are influenced by the socio-political context, and acknowledge amongst others war, colonization, immigration, and the nation-state. Additionally, Anthias and Yuval-Davis state that the requirements to belong to an ethnic group are usually birth or marriage, but “conversion or assimilation can also provide the right credentials” (p. 13), although this appears to be in contrast with Moerman (1965). A possible explanation is that Moerman’s research was dedicated to one specific ethnic group, and because of the fact that ‘official’ markers were not applicable to the Lue. Nonetheless, the criteria for belonging to an ethnic group may vary and can be influenced by economic, ideological or political ideas (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1993). This confirms that the process that is behind the formation of identity is constructed. Additionally, Anthias and Yuval-Davis understand ethnicity to be comprised of culture, gender relations, language, and religion, amongst others; which is affirmed by Eriksen (2010), yet also relate to class and politics. Finally, Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993) link ethnicity to nationalism, similar to Eriksen (2010) and Gellner (1983).

According to Anderson (2006), a nation is an “imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (p. 6), which, as stated, corresponds with Gellner (1983) and Moerman (1985). It has to be noted here, however, that Anderson (2006), unlike Eriksen (2010) and Gellner (1983), does not differentiate between nation and ethnicity\(^\text{20}\). Anderson (2006) considers a community to be imagined, as one does not know all the members

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\(^{19}\) For a further reference to the Kurdish myths, see appendix A.

\(^{20}\) A comparison between the theorizations of Anderson (2006) and Gellner (1983) can be found in Eriksen’s work, chapter 6. Eriksen (2010) compares the two, as both works originally appeared around the same time. Although Eriksen (2010) sees a divergence in both their work, Eriksen also points out that the works are compatible in that both study the construction of communities.
of her or his community, yet the belonging to the group gives a sense of identity and a feeling of connection. Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993) agree and explain that nationalism arises from this perceived imagined community, and state that: “national or nationalist projects will be centred around claims and practices for separate political representation, territory or unification.” (p. 13). Thus, nationalism is based on ethnicity, yet Tejel (2009) explains, seeing as how the geographic area in which the Kurds lived was divided, that “[...] ethnicity was not a predominant issue for the Kurdish populations before the creation of the new states in the Middle East. Belonging to an ethnic group was only one component of their identity.” (p. 3). Here, Tejel underlines the difference that Eriksen (2010) and Gellner (1983) make between ethnicity and nationalism, that is the claim to a state.

Thus, the construction of ethnic identity is based on several markers, which may vary over time. Yet, the construction of ethnic identity creates the idea of a community, which accordingly creates a perceived identity, which ensures a sense of belonging. Therefore, this sense of identity can turn into a nationalist claim, which is when an ethnic identity becomes a nationalist identity (Eriksen, 2010; Gellner, 1983).

2.3 - Kurdish identity

As Kurdish nationalism is based on Kurdish identity, this chapter will give an insight into what Kurdish identity entails, and how it relates to ethnicity and Kurdish nationalism.

Sheyholislami (2011) describes Kurdish identity, and states that “a Kurdish national identity is defined by a shared culture, language, territory, set of symbols, memory and experience, and future political aspirations” (p. 47), yet points out that the Kurds as a group are fragmented, which has also been pointed out in chapter 1. Sheyholislami also cites Jamal Nabaz (1985, as cited in Sheyholislami, 2011), who states that “the Kurdish nation is comprised of one ethnic unit, and has one history, one language, and one geography.” (p. 52)21. Eppel (2016) offers another perspective and claims that the collective Kurdish identity or Kurdayeti, a sense of Kurdishness, is created by the Kurdish movement. Jongerden and Akkaya (2015) agree with Eppel (2016) that a sense of Kurdish identity arose around the twentieth century. To link Kurdish identity to the emergence of Kurdish nationalism, however, implies that Kurdish identity is recent, yet also that Kurdish nationalism is Kurdish identity. This, as Eppel (2016) himself states, ignores the social and political significance the Kurds had before the Kurdish

21 Although Nabaz states that the Kurds have one language, this should not be taken literally, as, as shown in chapter 1, at least two different Kurdish languages have been identified.
nationalist movement came to rise. Therefore, although Kurdish nationalism is based on Kurdish identity, Kurdish identity entails more than Kurdish nationalism. This is underlined by Sheyholislami (2011), who states that “a Kurdish national identity emerged around the beginning of the twentieth century, bearing strong ethnic roots” (p. 47), which acknowledges an earlier Kurdish ethnicity. Moreover, whereas Kurdish nationalism arose in the twentieth century, Kurdish identity emerged earlier. Hassanpour (2003, as cited in Sheyholislami, 2011), for example, claims that the Kurdish identity started to form in the seventeenth century. According to Bengio (2012) and Jwaideh (2006), Kurdish identity and nationalism were already beginning to form in the sixteenth century. Edmonds (1971) and McDowall (1996) claim that Kurdish identity and Kurdish nationalism arose simultaneously with the first nationalism of the Arabs and Turks, after the 1850s. This is in contrast with scholars who claim the Kurdish identity started to form in the twentieth century. The difference in the works of these scholars lies in whether they differentiate between Kurdish ethnicity and identity, or not. Thus, scholars appear to differentiate between ethnicity, Kurdish nationalism, and Kurdish identity. This is shown by Natali (2005), who explains that Kurdish ethnicity became the Kurdish identity, because governments used political categories of identity in order to determine who was part of the national identity of the state, which was around the twentieth century. Thus, scholars do not acknowledge a Kurdish identity separate from Kurdish nationalism, which to an extent is in line with Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993), Eriksen (2010) and Gellner (1983), yet this ignores that ethnicity exists separate of nationalism. Alinia (2013), Edmonds (1971), and Natali (2005), on the other hand, perceive Kurdish identity to be related to geographical location, and not as a discourse of the Kurdish nationalist movement. Alinia (2013) states it as follows:


Although this in a way corresponds with the analyses of Anderson (2006) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993), statements as such discuss the Kurds as an already existing community. Therefore, Kurdish nationalism as presented by Alinia (2013), Edmonds (1971) and Natali (2005) shows the community which Anderson (2006) considers to be imagined. Thus, rather than assuming geography to be an aspect of nationalism, it could be possible that shared geography as a basis for nationalism is a result of the imagined community. Gresh (2009) adds
on and states that Kurdayeti or Kurdish identity is comprised of more than nationalism or geographical location and considers Kurdish tribal and political structures also to be of importance to Kurdish identity.

Thus, scholars do not necessarily agree with Anderson (2006) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993) that Kurdish nationalism is based on ethnicity and derived from Kurdish identity. Instead, an opposite picture is painted in which Kurdish identity is presented as a result of Kurdish nationalism, separate of ethnicity. Notwithstanding, Vali (1998) points out that it should be noted that the entire concept of Kurdish national identity is a modern concept, which again corresponds with Anderson (2006) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993), who underline that the social construction of such identities must be considered.

Notwithstanding, identity, although perceived, can create a community and a sense of belonging. This perceived community can be so strong, that when there is a feeling of repression based on identity, it can eventually lead to conflict; for example, if one’s perceived identity does not align with the perceived identity of the majority, which is the case for the Kurds. Anthias and Yuval-Davis describe it as follows (1993):

“Ethnic positioning provides individuals with a mode of interpreting the world, based on shared cultural resources and a shared collective positioning vis-à-vis other groups, often within a structure of dominance and contestation. Therefore belonging, or indeed being designated as a member of an ethnic group, is often seen to imply that one cannot belong to other groups.”. (p. 14)

Thus, if one identifies as being a member of a certain ethnic group, it is implied that one cannot be a member of another group. As such, identities contrast each other, which, according to Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993) and Jwaideh (2006) results in conflict. Jwaideh (2006) clarifies how this is the case for the Kurds, as “Kurdish national awareness grew rapidly with every fresh Kurdish outbreak.” (p. 292), and eventually, “Kurdish national sentiment […] became a political force of great importance in the affairs of the Middle East” (p. 292). The ethnic identity of the Kurds positions them vis-à-vis the ethnic identity of the Iranians, Iraqi, Syrians, and Turks. As a result, conflict arose in the twentieth century, as nation-states aimed to create their own national identity. This gave the Kurds not choice but to either deny their own identity for an Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian or Turkish one or reject the identity of the nation-state for their Kurdish identity (Ahmetbeyzade, 2000; McDowall, 1996). This is exemplified by one of the most famous statements by Mustafa Kemal Attaturk: “happy is one who can say one is
a Turk” (Kirisci & Winrow, 1997, p. 2), which excludes non-Turkish residents. Similarly, in Syria, Kurdish identity was perceived to be explicitly different from the Syrian identity and was therefore excluded from what was perceived to be the Syrian identity (Tejel, 2009). These examples show explicit differentiation between Kurdish identity and other ethnic identities, which resulted in the Kurdish struggle.

Thus, Kurdish identity can be interpreted in two ways. Either as a result of ethnicity or as a result of Kurdish nationalism. Kurdish identity based on ethnicity arose when the Kurds started to form a group, and Kurdish identity linked to Kurdish nationalism is more recent. Nevertheless, both interpretations cannot be separated from each other, as the Kurdish ethnic group did transform into nationalism. It can be thus concluded that Kurdish identity is founded in Kurdish ethnicity, and has transformed into Kurdish nationalism.

2.4 - Kurdish conflicts
The history of Kurdish conflicts goes back to the first contact with the Arabs in 637 (Alinia, 2013; McDowall, 1996). Yet, these conflicts were different from the current Kurdish struggle, in that Kurdish rebellions of that time period were not explicitly based on a sense of Kurdish identity. It is more likely that the Kurds fought as “soldiers of Islam” (McDowall, 1996, p. 23). According to several authors, this is also true for the first Kurdish rebellions in Turkey in 1920 and 1930, as it is likely that those rebellions started from a religious and tribal perspective, rather than from a nationalist perspective (Edmonds, 1971; Içduygu, Romano, & Sirkeci, 1999; Koohi-Kamali, 1992; 2003). Thus, these conflicts were not yet related to Kurdish identity, in contrast to the current Kurdish struggle. Alinia (2013) however, does note that what differentiates the Kurds from other ethnic groups who rebelled against governments due to ethnic suppression, is that the Kurdish, because of their tribal background, already knew a form of organization and a sense of independence. This is supported by Jwaideh (2006), who dedicates a chapter to ‘the social organization of the Kurds’22. Nonetheless, as discussed earlier, ethnic identities are perceived and create an imagined community (Anderson, 2006; Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1993), therefore, it is harder to define when the Kurds first started fighting out of perceived Kurdish identity.

Nonetheless, what is currently known as the Kurdish conflict started in the twentieth century, although the existing literature makes mention of different dates of rebellions and

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22 For further reference to both the tribal and non-tribal organization of the Kurds, see Jwaideh (2006), chapter 2.
conflicts\textsuperscript{23}. According to Van Bruinessen (2006), the first rebellions in Iran and Iraq started in 1918, yet Al-Ali and Pratt (2011) state that the Kurds in Iraq have demanded autonomy \textit{“since their incorporation into the Iraqi state in 1923”} (p. 341). According to Smith (2009), the first rebellions in Turkey started in 1925; and twenty years later in 1948, the rebellions in Syria started, although according to Plakoudas (2017) the Kurds have been oppressed since 1962. On the other hand, however, the Kurdish Democratic Party of Syria was established in 1957 (Tejel, 2009), which implies that the Kurds were active in Syria before the 1960s. Additionally, Edmonds (1971) states that \textit{“from 1923 onwards, armed risings of importance occurred in Turkey, Iraq, and Persia [Iran]”} (p. 89). Tejel (2009) makes mention of armed struggles from 1927 to 1931 and 1984 to 2007 in Turkey which is in correspondence with Smith (2009), and from 1943 to 1945, 1961 to 1970, and 1986 to 1988 in Iraq which is later than the periods mentioned by Al-Ali and Pratt (2011) and Smith (2009). Nevertheless, according to Mojab (1997), it was not until 1979 in Iran, 1961 in Iraq and, 1980 in Turkey that the Kurds succeeded in the organization of bigger groups of Kurdish people. The organization of bigger groups of people led to armed resistance, although Tejel (2009), as stated makes mention of armed conflicts before that, which then led to a political conflict within the respective countries, which has not yet been resolved (Gunes, 2018; Mojab, 1997). Furthermore, the Kurds in Iran and Syria were only active from time to time, and rather than present, absent from this political fight, whereas in Iraq and Turkey the Kurds were able to create and sustain a continuous rebellion (Smith, 2009).

The Kurdish conflict, therefore, consists in fact of four conflicts, between the Kurds and the nation-states. The Kurdish conflict revolves around the Kurdish nationalist demand for a Kurdish independent state (Entessar, 1984; Gunes, 2012; 2018). As a result, the conflicts are similar, yet not the same (Alinia, 2013). Movements to attain the goal of an independent state, according to Jwaideh (2006) and Entessar (1984), started first in the nineteenth century, yet actual Kurdish nationalist movements were established in the twentieth century, as discussed in appendix B. The successes of the Kurdish nationalist movements are according to Jwaideh (2006), due to the involvement of Kurdish intellectuals, to the Kurdish nationalist press, and to Kurdish clubs and societies, which is confirmed by Edmonds (1971)\textsuperscript{24}. Later, although the first

\textsuperscript{23} For an elaborate discussion of the Kurdish conflicts and the Kurdish nationalist movements, see appendix B and C.

\textsuperscript{24} Edmonds (1971) pays specific attention to the Kurdish nationalist press, stating that although at first Kurdish literature was limited to poetry and folklore, due to restrictions, since the 1920s a weekly newspaper was published.
Kurdish feminism and the Kurdish nationalist movements

Uprisings were usually short. Jwaideh (2006) states that “these early efforts laid the foundation for the development of Kurdish nationalism into a future mass movement” (p. 292). Yet, as Gunes (2012) explains, a conflict based on nationalism is a conflict between two nationalisms; the nationalism of the minority, or the oppressed, and the nationalism of the majority, or the oppressor. Albeit it cannot be denied that the Kurds suffered under oppressive regimes, their nationalist movements claimed victims too. Additionally, despite the use of generalizing terms to refer to the Kurdish conflicts, there are differences in the Kurdish conflicts with the respective nation-states. The conflicts in Iran and Turkey started with the development of the national identity of the nation-states, which is in contrast with the Kurdish identity. Therefore, due to conflicting identities, a conflict arose, which is in line with Anderson (2006) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993). The Kurdish-Iraqi and Kurdish-Syrian conflict, however, are to a lesser extent based on the formation of a national identity.

Interesting regarding the Kurdish-Iranian conflict is that it did not arise because the Iranian identity denied the existence of the Kurdish identity, but rather because the Iranian identity was mostly based on a unification on the basis of the Persian language and identity, which as such excluded the Kurds. This is underlined by Entessar (2014), who states that the rise of Kurdish nationalism should be analyzed in the context of the rise of nationalism in Iran. Furthermore, Kashani-Sabet (1999) describes the rise of Iranian nationalism as a result of a “territorial desire” (p. 3), as the borders of the Iranian territory were the embodiment of the Iranian identity. The loss of Iranian territory, therefore, as a result of the Russo-Persian war of 180425, fuelled the discourse of territory as Iranian identity, because it showed how easily that territory could be lost again. The conflict with the Kurds arose when Iran began to promote their Persian and Shi’i characteristics (Edmonds, 1971; Kashani-Sabet, 1999), ignoring that those characteristics did not apply to every ethnic group in Iran. This is connected to the construction of the Iranian identity based on the Persian language. Therefore, Entessar (1992, as cited in Romano, 2006), states that the situation for Kurds in Iran was similar to the assimilationist practices in Turkey. The use of the Kurdish language was forbidden, and Kurdish education was disrupted due to a lack of funding. Here, in line with the analysis as provided by Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993), as discussed earlier, what is perceived to be the

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25 The Russo-Persian war of 1804 was a war between the Persian and the Russian Empire. The war ended in 1813, when the Treaty of Gulistan was signed. The war led to the loss of Iranian territory, which was situated in the Caucasus, to Russia (Entessar, 2014; Kashani-Sabet, 1999).
Iranian identity, suppresses the identity of groups who do not have that same identity. Kashani-Sabet (1999) underlines this, stating that:

“tensions became manifest in the public sphere as schools and other cultural agencies promoted Persianization. The Iranian homeland, though still formally the birthplace of Armenians, Kurds, and Baluchis, as well as Farsis and others, increasingly came to represent the Vatan of Shi’i Persians through the persistent efforts of the state to extirpate competing cultures.”. (p. 4)

Thus, a clash between the Kurds and the Iranian nationalist movement appears to be inevitable, because the Iranian identity was based on one single ethnic group (Vaziri, 1993, as cited in Entessar, 2014). It leads Entessar (2014) to the conclusion that “the Kurdish predicament in Iran, as elsewhere in the Middle East, has not been so much the product of Kurdish identity formation but the result of securitization of ethnic issues in the country” (p. 212). Koohi-Komali (1992) uses even stronger wording, stating that Kurdish nationalism in Iran was related to the Iranian government’s suppressive administration. Thus, the root of the Kurdish-Iranian conflict is based on the rise of conflicting national identities. These identities transformed into nationalism, which resulted in conflict, in line with the analyses of Anderson (2006) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993) as discussed before. It is therefore that Entessar (2014) concludes that a sense of new Iranian identity was built based on the first sense of nationalism.

The Kurdish-Turkish conflict started during a decade of great turmoil, in 1908 (McDowall, 1996), specifically due to Turkey’s repressive regimes. Discrimination against and repression of the Kurds has been present ever since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, as this new republic was based on the Turkish culture, identity, and language. As a result, it was not allowed to express any form of Kurdish identity or use the Kurdish language (İçduygu, Romano, & Sirkeci, 1999; Özcan A. K., 2006).

In contrast to the Kurdish conflicts in Iran and Turkey, according to Edmonds (1959; 1971), the Kurdish Iraqi nationalist movement has been the most powerful, and fruitful, as only in Iraq the Kurds are recognized as an ethnic minority. Therefore, it is not forbidden to use the Kurdish language for example, which is the case in Iran, Syria, and Turkey. Alinia (2013) underlines this, stating that the Iraqi Kurds “have enjoyed greater cultural rights than Kurds in Iran and Turkey” yet “they have also experienced recurrent wars and armed conflicts, genocide, mass deportations, chemical warfare, mass executions, and human rights violations on an enormous scale.” (p. 21). Nonetheless, similar to the rise of nationalism in Iran, and again
in line with Anderson (2006) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993), nationalism in Iraq according to Lukitz (2005), is related to the nation-state. Similar to the Kurdish-Iranian conflict, the Kurdish-Iraqi conflict was heavily influenced by the political environment in twentieth-century Iraq, which had a strong Arab character, as Iraq during that time experienced the rise of the ideology of Arab nationalism (Lukitz, 2005; McDowall, 1996). Additionally, according to Lukitz (2005), the Iraqi identity could either be based on ethnicity or territory. A national identity based on ethnicity however, would mean the exclusion of non-Arabs, for example, the Kurds, as Iraq was “ethnically too heterogeneous” (Wimmer, 2003, p. 113). Although multiple ethnic groups residing in one nation-state does not have to lead to conflict, in Iraq, the formation of a national identity based on ethnicity once again excluded the Kurds from the national identity of a new nation-state. According to Wimmer (2003), the national identity of Iraq based on ethnicity eventually did lead to conflict, at least in part, exactly because of its ethnic heterogeneity.

The Kurdish-Syrian conflict is similar to the Kurdish-Iranian and the Kurdish-Turkish conflict, as Syria used similar assimilationist policies which repressed the Kurds (Enzinna, 2015; Federici, 2015; Özcan A. K., 2006). Nonetheless, Tejel (2009) states that “the Syrian Kurdish movement has traditionally employed a strategy of peaceful action, coupled with a moderate political program” (p. 5). Additionally, Edmonds (1971) states that the position of Syrian Kurds is different in that their population is smaller.

The four different conflicts indicate the strength of ethnic identity when it clashes with another ethnic identity. Furthermore, it also shows how Kurdish identity, whether it is based on ethnicity or not, is indeed at the core of the Kurdish struggle. Therefore, it can be concluded that the theories of Anderson (2006) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993) apply to the Kurdish case of the twentieth and twenty-first century. The construction of ethnic identity within a nation-state can lead to a conflict with other ethnic identities within a nation-state, as is shown with the Kurdish struggle.

2.5 - Conclusion

This chapter answers the following sub-questions: ‘how was Kurdish identity formed?’ and ‘what is Kurdish nationalism?’. The theoretical framework that was presented based on Anderson (2006), Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993, Eriksen (2010), Gellner (1983) and Moerman (1965), has shown that Kurdish identity is first and foremost based on ethnicity, which is derived from shared cultural characteristics, of which language is an important aspect. Yet, it has also been shown that some scholars perceive Kurdish identity to be interwoven with
Kurdish nationalism. It has also been stated that it is often assumed that one can only be a member of one ethnic group at the same time. Furthermore, it has also been shown how ethnicity and nationalism lead to conflict with other groups, due to the exclusivity of ethnicity. Therefore, it is concluded that the Kurdish ethnicity transformed into the Kurdish claim to an autonomous state, which leads to a nationalist discourse of this ethnic group. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Kurdish conflict is a result of the development of the Kurdish identity. With the Kurdish conflict, Kurdish nationalism arose as well, yet as a result of the Kurdish ethnicity. As such, these two sub-questions could not be discussed separate of each other, as Kurdish identity is interlinked with Kurdish nationalism.

In sum, this chapter has provided a theoretical framework of identity formation, ethnicity, and nationalism. It is within this framework that the sub-questions have been discussed and answered. I conclude that Kurdish identity points to the Kurds as an ethnic group, fragmentation and similarities included. Kurdish nationalism I perceive to be ‘a result’ of Kurdish identity, as Kurdish nationalism was a response to the repression of Kurdish identity. This provides a solution to the different studies as presented by scholars, in which some perceive Kurdish identity to be based on ethnicity and some to be based on Kurdish nationalism.
Chapter 3 - Jineology and Kurdish feminism

3.1 - Introduction

Chapter 3 will present how the Kurdish movement went from nationalism to liberation movement. The differences between these movements are understood as follows. The Kurdish nationalist movement has as its main goal the creation of an autonomous, Kurdish state, whereas the Kurdish liberation movement has shifted its goal to fighting capitalism, classism, and patriarchy, and achieving equality. The Kurdish liberation movement is based on the theorizations of Abdullah Öcalan, founder and leader of Kurdish nationalist movement the PKK, which have been the inspiration for Jineology, which is a Kurdish feminist movement. Jineology, or Jineoloji in Kurdish, which literally means the science of women, is a radical feminist movement, formed in 2008 (Neven & Schäfers, 2017). Jineology draws on Öcalan’s ideology, as women are placed in the center of liberation. As will be shown in this part, however, the change from nationalist to freedom movement is twofold and both due to an increase in the participation of women in the 1980s in Kurdish nationalist movements and due to the change in discourse as inspired by Öcalan. Nonetheless, Jineology is situated within the context of Kurdish nationalism and cannot be studied separately from the Kurdish nationalist movements. Naturally, the changed discourse which places women in the center of liberation also allowed for increased participation of women. This is further explained by Marcus (2007), who describes the change from nationalist movement to freedom movement as an intertwined process, as according to Marcus “the jump in female recruitment coincided with Ocalan taking a more vocal stance in favor of women’s rights, and it seems one fed off the other” (p. 173).

Therefore, to understand the change from nationalist movement to a freedom movement, first, the history of the participation of women in Kurdish nationalist movements will be discussed. The participation of women and its significance will be discussed based on Valentine M. Moghadam’s concept of the patriarchal belt, after which a critical note will be added based on Saba Mahmood’s concept of religious agency. This overview will be the first step in answering the fourth sub-question: ‘what is the position of women within the Kurdish struggle?’ The second step of studying the position of women within the Kurdish struggle is studying Öcalan’s ideology, who adds a gender-perspective to the Kurdish discourse. After the theorizations of Öcalan are discussed, which are presented by Öcalan himself in Liberating Life (2013), a critique on the ideology will be presented in paragraph 3.6. The implications of

26 The term liberation movement and freedom movement will be used interchangeably, but both refer to the Kurdish movements who have changed their objectives in line with Öcalan’s ideology.
Öcalan’s theorizations are shown by discussing Jineology, and the change within the PKK. An overview as such allows answering the fifth sub-question: ‘how does Jineology relate to Kurdish nationalism?’. Jineology will be discussed based on the article by Neven and Schäfers (2017), but also based on discussions by Öcalan (2013), and the speech of Gonul Kaya (2014, March), who discussed the relevance of Jineology on the first Jineology world conference in Cologne, Germany. Additionally, critical perspectives will be added based on the work of Marcus (2007) and Tax (2016).

It has to be noted that although the changes within the Kurdish struggle are interlinked, for the clarity of this research, the change from nationalist to freedom movement will be discussed as a two-fold change. Both aspects, the increased participation of women within the nationalist movement and Öcalan’s ideology were of importance for this change, yet the Kurdish nationalist movement and the Kurdish women’s movement are not the same. Açık (2014) states that:

“within the Kurdish political spectrum, the PKK and the Kurdish feminist groups represent ideologically opposing positions. Yet both groups position themselves as Kurdish actors within the Kurdish national movement and engage in debates on how roles for women should be played out within the movement.” (p. 114).

In other words, the PKK forms the context in which Jineology situates. The PKK has taken the ideology of the freedom of women up as an important aspect of their party and views gender inequality as an aspect that has to be addressed as part of their ‘Women’s Liberation Ideology’ (Nurhak, 2014, as cited in Düzgün, 2016). It is thus concluded that Jineology to an extent, has replaced Kurdish nationalist movements. Therefore, this chapter first discusses the increase in participation of women, and then the theorizations of Öcalan.

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27 This article was chosen, due to several reasons. First of all, Dutch and English literature on Jineology and Kurdish feminism is limited, and often has a focus on Kurdish women in Turkey. Moreover, if one searches for Jineology on Google Scholar, only two academic results pop up, Düzgün (2016) and Neven and Schäfers (2017). Other articles found by using the search string ‘Kurdish women’s movement’ give multiple results, yet never discuss Jineology specifically. Second of all, Neven and Schäfers (2017) discuss Jineology partially in their interview with Necibe Qeredaxi, who is heavily involved with the Jineology movement in Brussels. As such, this article presents a clear overview of Jineology, and gives an insight in Jineology.

28 Part of the sources as used here, might not be objective, academic sources, but rather speeches from conferences, articles from newspapers, of the words of Öcalan, and more. Additionally, some of the used academic sources
3.2 - The increased participation of women

The first change with Kurdish nationalism is the increased participation of women. The participation of women increased with a change in the socio-political context in Turkey at the end of the twentieth century. The military coup of 1980 created opportunities for women to participate in the fight in Turkey. This was possible as the military coup of 1980 in Turkey accelerated the Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (PKK), the most important Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey, and its armed resistance. Yet, around the same time opportunities for women to participate arose in the other nation-states too. Gökalp (2010) presents it as follows, stating that: “the PKK insurgency marks a new phase in Turkey's “Kurdish question.” (p. 561). According to Bengio (2016), “Kurdish women in Turkey were pioneers in the transformation of Kurdish women’s role in the social, political, and military spheres of the society” (p. 34), and according to Gunes (2012):

“From the 1980s onwards […] more and more Kurdish women started to engage in politics,” taking an active role both in the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê, or PKK), […] and in the legal parties established a few years later”. (p. 119)

merely draw on testimonies of (female) Kurdish guerrilla fighters, for example, as presented in newspapers or on video. These sources and others are used, as they clearly depict the line of thought that Öcalan followed, or because these sources portray the realities of (female) Kurdish guerrilla fighters. Nonetheless, non-academic sources will never be used in such a way that it is presented as the truth.

29 The Turkish military coup of 1980 was the third coup d’état in the history of the Republic of Turkey. The precedent for this coup was set with an earlier coup in 1960 (Harris, 2011). Similar to the coup in 1960, the coup of 1980 happened in a climate where religious nationalists rose to power in a time when the military changed its attitude towards religion (Kaplan S., 2002). Then “on 12 September 1980, the commander-in chief of the Turkish Armed Forces, Kenan Evren, and his colleagues imposed martial law on the whole country.” (Kaplan S., 2002, p. 119). Ultimately, it was a clash between left and right wing groups, the leftist groups amongst others being Kurds, the rightist groups amongst others being anti-Kurd (McDowall, 1996). One of the leftist groups involved was the PKK, yet Öcalan, as leader of the PKK, managed to escape the night of the coup and fled to Syria (Gerber & Brincat, 2018; Özcan A. K., 2006).

30 Additionally, Gökalp (2010, p. 562) identifies three “overarched and intertwined transformations” with regard to the agency of Kurdish women and their increased participation. In line with this thesis, only the first transformation, related to the change in the socio-political context is relevant. As such, the other two identified transformations will not be discussed, as these transformations refer to the Kurdish struggle, rather than to Kurdish feminism.
Thus, as of the 1980s, women started to participate, which is confirmed by Z. S. Özcan (2011) and Tax (2016), although based on Marcus (2007) this was not necessarily a form of empowerment; since Marcus states that the role of women changed, as they were “forced to take a more active role in family and society” (p. 172, emphasis added). Nonetheless, it is stated that from that time, the PKK in Turkey shifted its focus to the recruitment of women (Açık, 2014; Mojab, 2000), and similarly did the Komala in Iran (Mojab, 2000). The reason why women became more visible after the coup of 1980, was because of the oppressive regime that followed after the coup (Çağlayan, 2007, as cited in Açık, 2014), or, as Gökalp (2010) states, because of “the opening-up of social and political maneuvering spaces for women […]” (p. 562). Additionally, Tax (2016), also explains that: “many national liberation struggles sought to enlist women in combat mainly because they needed more soldiers, not because the men running things saw a battle for women’s rights and autonomy as essential to the struggle.” (p. 141). This oppressive regime, as described by Çağlayan (2007, as cited in Açık, 2014), allowed for women to become activists in the place of their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers, as the men had to endure horrific treatment and torture in prisons and what is more, “being generally considered by the male dominated society to be non-political objects, women were the only sector of the society at the time who were able to be active during the military occupation” (Açık, 2014, p. 2). Thus, in Turkey, the recruitment of women increased, specifically because women had to become activists in the place of men. The socio-political change in Turkey is recognized as the start of the participation of Kurdish women, within the struggle; thus this is also the first time gender became an aspect of the Kurdish struggle, due to the fact that the participation of women was highly contested. It must be noted, however, that women participated in the other nation-states before the 1980s.

Not just the Kurdish women in Turkey participated actively, albeit not related to the military coup in Turkey of 1980, but also women in Iran, Iraq, and Syria were actively involved in Kurdish nationalist movements in the twentieth century (Al-Ali & Pratt, 2011; Bengio, 2016; Mojab, 1997; 2000). Mojab (1997), who discusses the participation of Iranian and Iraqi women, states that women in Iran were already active in the nationalist movement as early as 1946, during the existence of the Kurdish Republic in Iran31 via the women’s party of the Kurdish Democratic Party. It has to be noted, however, that this participation of women was not inspired by a Kurdish ideology, but rather by the feminism of European women and women of the then

31 The Kurdish Republic of Iran, also known as the Republic of Mahabad is also discussed in appendix B.
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USSR. Eventually due to a lack of “feminist consciousness”, however, the party had little success. According to Bengio (2016), women in Iraq were active as early as the 1920s. Women in Iraq who participated in the Kurdish nationalist movement have a similar story to the women in Iran. Yet, it is also stated by Bengio (2016) that:

“Iraq’s Kurdish women present a different story than that of their counterparts in Turkey and Syria. The causes for these differences might be that Iraqi Kurdish society there is more traditional than in Turkey and that there was no overarching ideology to guide the women’s movement and press for revolutionary changes there”. (p. 40)

A small number of women in Iraqi Kurdistan rose to a more prominent position (Bengio, 2016; Mojab, 1997), yet “the political and intellectual environment dominated by nationalism and feudal patriarchy was not hospitable to feminist consciousness” (Mojab, 1997, p. 3). Iraqi women were allowed as members of the Kurdish Democratic Party-Iraq (KDPI), but they also had limited success: women were indeed part of the party's program and gender equality was part of the agenda, however, in reality, only a few women were actively involved. Moreover, the role of women within the KDPI was limited to offering support for the men who were allowed to be active (Mojab, 1997). Two reasons can be identified for the limited success of women who were allowed to participate in Iran and Iraq (Mojab, 1997). First of all, according to Mojab (1977) women in the Middle East were not allowed to form their own organizations. Middle Eastern women found themselves in a patriarchal society, which meant that women were not perceived as political subjects. Furthermore, it was not just a lack of possibility to organize themselves in a patriarchal environment, but also the aforementioned lack of feminist knowledge. Second of all, the women’s movements that did exist had limited opportunities to gain success, as feminism had to compete with nationalism, and oftentimes the nationalist cause prevailed over issues of gender equality. The situation for Iranian women eventually changed in 1980, similar as for the Turkish women, when the Komala started to recruit women (Mojab, 1997). Iraqi women, on the other hand, fought for a more nationalist cause until 1991, when a more gender-oriented agenda started to come up. This focus on gender eventually became possible due to the changes in the political environment. It allowed for the establishment of new political organizations and it created space for international NGO’s; and therefore, more opportunities arose for Kurdish women to put women’s rights on the political agenda (Al-Ali & Pratt, 2011). It cannot be said, however, that with a change of the political environment, Kurdish women no longer met resistance in their cause, because “[…] women’s initiatives were
frequently regarded suspiciously and were even actively opposed by conservative Kurdish male political actors” (Al-Ali & Pratt, 2011, p. 343).

The participation of Syrian women can be traced back to the 16th century, as is shown by Bengio (2016), in her analysis of what she calls ‘charismatic women in Kurdish history’. Bengio discusses this as “a phenomenon that was unique to the Kurdish experience, while being absent from neighboring Arab, Turkish, and Iranian societies.” (p. 33). Bengio even states that Kurdish women enjoyed more freedom than women in neighboring countries. Yet, again context shows that this position of leadership was often reserved for women of the aristocracy, for women who were related either by blood or by marriage to the male leadership. Moreover, similar to the situation in Turkey after 1980, these women almost always only became leaders when the male leader was not present (Bengio, 2016). As in Turkey, Bengio points out that these situations should not be mistaken as a signal of equality between women and men. Nonetheless, Syria is described to be the most transformative for women of all the Kurdish areas (Bengio, 2016). Additionally, women in Syria have also played an active role in the politics of Rojava (Bengio, 2016; Knapp, Flach, & Ayboğa, 2016), the Kurdish independent state in Northern Syria, which was established in November 2013, when Syrian military left the area (Federici, 2015; Leezenberg, 2016). According to Bengio (2016), “women are effectively transforming the entire society of Rojava and setting an inspiring example for the rest of the Islamic world, and wherever women are oppressed.” (p. 39), and according to Knapp, Flach, and Ayboğa (2016), “in Rojava, the idea gained acceptance that women would be the spearhead of the revolution” (p. 89).32 It has to be noted however that Rojava is set up in accordance with the ideology of Öcalan. As aforementioned, Öcalan added a gender aspect to his theorizations, thus, within the state of Rojava, gender is an important part of the ideology, which in turn shows how gender is present within the Kurdish struggle, but also how gender is an important aspect Öcalan’s ideology. Therefore, the participation of women says more about the liberation movement than Kurdish nationalism. Additionally, the Kurdish nationalist movement in Syria, the PYD, similar to the PKK has a female unit as well, the YPJ. It has to be noted, however, that the transformation of the situation of women is referring to the position of Kurdish women in Syria in the twenty-first century; it does not refer to the situation of Kurdish women in Syria at the end of the twentieth century. According to Bengio (2016), the reason why women were able to be so successful in Syria in the twenty-first century, however, is due to two reasons. First of all, the PKK, although originating in Turkey, had been active in

32 See appendix D for a discussion of Rojava and how it relates to Öcalan’s ideology.
Syria for a long time. When Öcalan fled Turkey during the military coup, he was welcomed by Hafiz al-Asad, the president of Syria at that time (Ismet, 1992, as cited in Bengio, 2016). Secondly, the Syrian democratic party, the PYD, the main political party of Rojava as of 2015, is a direct branch of the PKK, as it was started by former members of the PKK (Bengio, 2016; Federici, 2015). Therefore, it is shown how the increased participation of women is interlinked with several socio-political factors, among which the changed discourse of Öcalan and the influence of Kurdish political parties.

In sum, this paragraph has shown how women have both been included in and excluded from the Kurdish struggle. On the one hand, some women were able to participate and as such create a gendered discourse within the Kurdish struggle. On the other hand, however, the participation of women within the Kurdish discourse was not always due to a feminist approach or a gender discourse, but rather due to political circumstances such as oppressive regimes. Additionally, the participation of women was not supported by everyone. Yet the participation of women was nonetheless significant, as will be shown in the next paragraph.

3.3 - The significance of the participation of women

The participation of women is remarkable for several reasons, specifically in relation to the previously stated conclusion that the participation of women within the Kurdish struggle is not always a result of a gender-discourse. Firstly, the participation of women is significant, due to the geographical location of Kurdistan in what Çağlayan (2012) and Moghadam (1992; 2004; 2007) call the patriarchal belt. It has to be noted however that Moghadam (1992) discuss

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33 See appendix B for a further discussion of Kurdish nationalist movements have branched out to multiple nation-states, as well as a discussion of the relation between the PYD and the PKK.


It has to be noted however that the article of Caldwell that Moghadam (1992) refers to, is titled ‘Theory of Fertility Decline.’, and the article of Caldwell that Moghadam (2004) refers to is titled ‘The Globalization of Fertility Behavior’, which is a chapter of the revised book ‘Theory of Fertility Decline’ of 2001. I was only able to find the chapter titled ‘Globalization of Fertility Behavior’, albeit as a journal article, yet the term ‘patriarchal belt’ did not appear to be discussed there. Caldwell (2001) has been added to the references, for full accountability of the sources used, yet also to appendix E, which shows an overview of the sources that were inaccessible.
patriarchy in specific relation to Islam, yet also states that both Judaïsm and Christianity are situated in a patriarchal society. This is an important difference with Çağlayan (2012), who merely locates the Kurds within the patriarchal belt, but does not discuss patriarchy in relation to Islam, or other religions. Nonetheless, although not all Kurdish groups are Muslim, as Moghadam (1992) states that Judaïsm and Christianity can also be found in patriarchal societies, the concept is considered to be applicable to the Kurds, due to their religious heterogeneity as discussed in paragraph 1.3.

According to Moghadam (1992; 2004), the relationship between women and men in countries located within the belt are determined by patriarchy. These countries, located in the so-called patriarchal belt includes countries in the Middle East, North-Africa and South Asia. Moghadam (1992) explains the patriarchal belt as follows: the patriarchal belt “ [...] is characterized by extremely restrictive codes of behavior for women, such as the practice of rigid gender segregation and a powerful ideology linking family honour to female virtue.” (p. 10). The term ‘patriarchal belt’ thus refers to a geographical area in which social and cultural attitudes determine specific roles for women and men. Additionally, Moghadam’s work of 1992 has a specific focus on the relation between Islam and patriarchy within Muslim societies, who are usually geographically part of the patriarchal belt. Later, Moghadam (2004) discusses discourse on the family within patriarchal societies and the value that is attached to the structure of the family. Therefore, it is concluded that there is a relation between geographic location, patriarchy and the importance of family. This is of importance, as due to the value of family within patriarchic societies, gender roles are based on the structure of the family, and as such, gender segregation follows. This is evidenced by Youssef Choueiri (2010), a professor in Arab and Middle Eastern history, with a PhD in modern Arab historiography, who shows a patriarchic gender division according to a typical family structure, stating that: “a woman fulfills her functions by being a wife and mother, while a man is to be the undisputed authority, the breadwinner, and the active member in public life” (p. 167). It shows how within a patriarchal structure that values the traditional structure of the family, a caring role for women is emphasized, yet men are expected to have a dominant role. As Kurdistan is located in the patriarchal belt, it is assumed that these structures of rigid gender segregation are also found.

35 Here, the different branches within the Islam, the Sunni Islam and the Shi’i Islam and possible differences with regard to family structures are not taken into account. This is explicitly mentioned as the majority of the Kurds are Sunni, see paragraph 1.3, and because within the Kurdish-Iranian conflict, religion is a dividing factor, as most Iranians are Shi’i, see appendix B, which implies that the branch of Islam can be of importance or make a difference.
among the Kurds. This naturally implies that the patriarchal system is a reality for Kurdish women, which implies the expectation that women will limit themselves to tasks that are considered to be women’s tasks (Çağlayan, 2012). In this, structural barriers exist, which, in the context of Kurdish women who have joined guerrilla armies, would prevent women from working or serving in the army. Therefore, it is remarkable that these structures have not held Kurdish women back to join the fight. It shows what the position of women and gender is within the Kurdish struggle, in that Moghadam’s patriarchal belt and Choueiri’s conceptualization of gender segregation show the significance of the presence of a gender-discourse within the Kurdish struggle.

Thus, it can be concluded that according to a patriarchal family structure, a woman’s place would not be in the revolution. Given the geographical location of Kurdistan in the patriarchal belt and the fact that women were not considered to be political subjects, as will be further discussed below, in combination with the value that is placed on families within a patriarchal society, the participation of women is remarkable. Yet, Bengio (2016) rejects the idea that Kurdish women had limited freedom, as Bengio states that Kurdish women are known to have more freedom than other Middle Eastern women. One thus has to be careful and take this into account, as apparently it cannot be simply stated that Kurdish women are under the patriarchal system, despite the geographical location of Kurdistan within the patriarchal belt. On the other hand, however, Bengio (2016) also explicitly states that the leadership roles of women were usually in relation to men, or as a (temporary) replacement of the male leader and additionally that “the majority of women suffered from all of the typical forms of discrimination inflicted by a traditional and conservative male-dominated society.” (p. 34). Yüksel (2006) confirms this, by stating that “Van Bruinessen's most striking point is that, contrary to Kurdish nationalist discourse, according to which Kurdish women enjoy equality with Kurdish men, ‘Kurdish society is highly male-dominated and it has been for all of its known history’.” (p. 787). Furthermore, Yüksel also makes reference to a quote of Van Bruinessen (2001, as cited in Yüksel, 2006), which states the following:

“It is true that some women have achieved extraordinary influence in Kurdish society, but the vast majority of them have not. It is also true that in some parts of Kurdistan women have a certain freedom of movement, perhaps more in many other parts of the Middle East. This is certainly not characteristic, however, of all Kurdistan, and the nature and degree of this freedom moreover depend much on their families' social status.”. (pp. 787-788)
As such, Kurdish women, albeit possibly having relatively more freedom than women in other Middle Eastern countries, are still subjected to a patriarchal system. As the idea of more freedom for Kurdish women might be nothing more than a Kurdish discourse, and Kurdish women do live in a patriarchal society, it is noticeable that in those countries women are part of the Kurdish struggle, and moreover, that women’s movements have started to emerge.

Secondly, the participation of women is significant, as women were not considered to be political subjects (Mojab, 1997), and therefore, there was considered to be no relation between politics and women. The participation of women shows, however, that Kurdish women started to challenge this notion (Özcan Z. S., 2011). The increased participation of women within Turkey, therefore, led to political debates both between Kurdish groups, but also between Kurdish and Turkish groups who fought for women’s rights within Turkey. It raised the question of what the role of women in society was, specifically in relation to the participation of women in nationalist movements, but also in relation to the place of women in politics and the topic of women as political subjects (Açık, 2014). According to Çağlayan (2012) however, the participation of women de facto did challenge the traditional gender roles and stereotypes. The perspective started to change after 1980, as around this time female participation in the PKK increased (Çağlayan, 2012). Yet it was also during this time that Öcalan started to present his new theorizations. This is underlined by Çağlayan (2012), who argues that there is a causal relationship between the Kurdish discourse based on Öcalan’s theorizations and the active participation of Kurdish women, both politically and in the fight, and it was in this context that the first Kurdish women’s organizations started to form. “Thus, the 1990s witnessed the mass mobilisation of Kurdish women, as well as the emergence of independent feminist initiatives.” (Açık, 2014, p. 2).

Nonetheless, despite a mass mobilization of Kurdish women, at first, their participation was not welcomed with enthusiasm. Tax (2016) contrasts Çağlayan (2012) and affirms that the participation of women in the PKK did not change gender ideas overnight. Tax cites an analysis of the PKK from 1997 by Andreas Marburg, which shows how men were not willing to give up “their positions of power and [didn’t] want to accept women as commanders” (p. 139). Additionally, Marburg (1997, as cited in Tax, 2016) also shows that not only men had difficulty accepting the change, women had trouble adapting as well, as some women “[…] hang onto men and can’t get rid of their dependence and have no self-confidence, [they] have avoided leadership positions, and don’t want to accept other women in those positions.” (p. 139). Bengio (2016), furthermore, states that at first men were unwilling to accept women as fighters,
however, more or less ten years after the military coup, in the 1990s, about 30 percent of the PKK was made up of women, command positions included (Marcus, 2007). Nonetheless, Tax (2016) does describe that the PKK realized that in order to follow their ideology, the participation of women was necessary, despite the initial hesitation that some women and men had. The establishment of all-female departments within the guerrilla group turned out to be a successful manner to involve women after all.

The initial hesitation of women specifically, however, is interesting, as one could easily assume that joining the PKK, or any other nationalist movement, would bring personal liberation from a patriarchic structure. Marcus (2007) however points out that it is unclear whether the participation of women in the PKK was due to a true conviction, or due to the freedom the PKK offered, compared to the daily life in a patriarchal structure. Life within the PKK offered freedom, as its objective was and is to fight patriarchy, but also because the PKK meant a chance to receive education, and in that the chance for girls and women to take control over their lives. Yet, although a lifestyle as presented by the PKK could appear to be a lifestyle of freedom, the aspect of a woman’s agency cannot be ignored as the change to a lifestyle of freedom also meant a change to an unknown lifestyle. It cannot be assumed that every woman saw the lifestyle of freedom as presented by the PKK, as desirable. Some women might have preferred their life as it was, despite it being in a patriarchic structure, which is why I want to discuss the concept of agency36. The concept and question of agency are discussed by Saba Mahmood in her book *Politics of Piety*37. Mahmood (2005) discusses agency in the context of religious Middle Eastern women and elaborately explains that, what by some is perceived as subjugation or submission, is in fact agency. A good example of this is the concept of ‘self-cultivation’ as presented by Mahmood. Based on the concept of self-cultivation, supposed submission to men can be a choice, rather than patriarchic suppression. Self-cultivation can be the wearing of a veil, not as an obligation, but as a choice. Ahmetbeyzade (2000), who studies the position of Kurdish women in relation to Turkish nationalism agrees with Mahmood, and states:

36 Due to limited time and space, the concept of agency in relation to religion will not be discussed in depth here. To further study this topic, I refer to Mahmood (2005), as introduced in the text and Spanò (2013), who offers a review of Mahmood’s *Politics of Piety*.

37 Agency of religious women is an important aspect within feminist studies. Burke (2012), based on Orit Avishai, identifies four types of agency, namely: resistance, empowerment, instrumental and compliant. For further information on the concept of the agency of religious women, see Avishai (2008) and Burke (2012).
“Kurdish women have critical perspectives of their own situation. They interpret, act and react against oppression, as well as negotiating with various forms of patriarchies. Although these women may be oppressed by diverse patriarchal systems, they are not simply victims [...] but subjects with choices.”. (p. 187)

Additionally, Spanò (2013), who reviews Mahmood’s *Politics of Piety* shows the importance of taking the concept of agency into account, stating that:

“The suggestion to look at agency in a nonliberal framework [a patriarchic structure, for example] offers the opportunity of gaining an analysis of those complex relationships between the immanent form of a normative act, the model of subject it presupposes, and the types of authority on which is based.”. (p. 193)

An analysis of the hesitation in joining the PKK thus has to take the agency of women into account. It has to take into account that women have power, despite oppressive structures. Notwithstanding, it remains remarkable that women have been able to participate in the Kurdish struggle, due to the patriarchic structures and the conviction that politics is not of relevance to women. Although sometimes it might have been merely strategic recruitment, it has changed the position of women and has added a gender discourse to the Kurdish struggle.

**3.4 - Öcalan’s ideology**

Abdullah Ōcalan formed his ideology after his arrest in 1999 (Al-Ali & Tas, 2017), during his imprisonment on the Turkish island of Imrali, although Çağlayan (2012) mentions that Ōcalan already started to criticize “traditional patriarchal family structures, women’s secondary status within the family, and the gender roles […]” (p. 8), in the 1980s, and published his thoughts in 1992 in his book titled ‘Woman and Family Question’. Ōcalan’s arrest, however, is considered to be a significant moment, as it allowed him to (further) conceptualize his ideology, which is why it is often mentioned as the moment when Ōcalan formed his ideology. A clear overview of Ōcalan’s changed ideology is presented in his pamphlet *Liberating Life* (Ōcalan, 2013), published by the International Initiative. The pamphlet shows that Ōcalan’s ideology is structured as follows. Ōcalan (2013) starts his analysis with capitalism and makes the connection to patriarchy and accordingly to structures of hierarchy and power. All in all, Ōcalan’s ideology could be summarized as follows: “capitalism and the nation-state represent the dominant male in its most institutionalised form.” (p. 43), and as capitalism and the nation-
state represent oppression, both are rejected by Öcalan. This is also shown by Düzgün (2016), who refers to a video on female Kurdish guerrilla fighters to share the testimony of Desine, a fighter of the Kurdish YPJ/YJA unit in Syria. Desine (Ahmad, 2014 as cited in Düzgün, 2016) states that she fights against capitalism, as according to her, and in line with Öcalan “in capitalism men dominate while women are the underdogs” (p. 285).

Öcalan bases this analysis, on the old Mesopotamia and the Neolithic age, what according to Öcalan used to be a matricentric society. This is analysis is similar to analyses as presented by Murray Bookchin (Biehl, 2012, February), an American socialist scholar and philosopher who has heavily influenced Öcalan’s thought. To illustrate this analysis, Öcalan (2013) uses the Ziggurat, a three-layered temple, significant for the architecture of the Sumerians during the Neolithic age as a metaphor for his theorizations. Öcalan considered the Ziggurat with its layers the “the first patriarchal household[s]” (Biehl, 2012, February, p. 5), as Öcalan sees similarities in the structure of the temple and the structure of the current-day society, which Öcalan considers to be oppressed or enchained in three ways. First of all, Öcalan (2013) makes mention of oppression (of women) in the form of ideological slavery, secondly in the concept of force and thirdly in the grasp of society on the economy, or capitalism. The layers of the Ziggurat symbolize this oppression, as the Ziggurat was used for different activities:

“The upper levels of the Ziggurats are propounded as the quarters of the god who controls the mind. The middle floors are the political and administrative headquarters of the priests. Finally, the bottom floor houses the craftsmen and agricultural workers who are forced to work in all kinds of production.”. (pp. 9-10)

The description of the Ziggurat then allows Öcalan to clarify his idea of ideological slavery, which Öcalan considers to be solidified in religion, his idea of the force of production, and his idea of the hold society has on the economy (Öcalan, 2013). This comparison, therefore, is used to illustrate the intertwined mechanisms of capitalism and patriarchy, which is most clearly shown in the hierarchy as present in the Ziggurat. In the end, it is not necessarily capitalism and patriarchy which are the problem, but the hierarchy and power that both are the basis for

38 Murray Bookchin’s thought was centered in an ecological, anti-capitalist framework. At first, Bookchin considered anarchism, but found it did not provide the solution of the anti-capitalist society he was looking for. Instead, Bookchin formed the concept of ‘libertarian municipalism’. 
capitalism and patriarchy, and the result of capitalism and patriarchy (Öcalan, 2013). Therefore, Öcalan considers the Ziggurat both as the first patriarchal society, which is considered to be rooted in capitalism, and as a metaphor for oppression in society.

To summarise, Öcalan finds a change in the Sumer society of the Neolithic age and as such traces the beginning of capitalism and patriarchy back to the old Mesopotamia. This then leads Öcalan to his analysis of power and hierarchy, which are visible in both mechanisms of capitalism and patriarchy. It has to be noted, however, despite the analysis of Öcalan, which considers the Mesopotamian society as the basis for oppression, according to Gunes (2012; 2018), Kurdish nationalists trace back their own origin to Mesopotamia - and consider the Neolithic age to the golden age for the Kurds - which is based on two popular Kurdish myths: the legend of Kawa the Blacksmith, and the myth, or festival of Newroz (Gunes, 2012). Similarly, according to Çağlayan (2012), the myth of Kawa the Blacksmith and the myth of Ishtar the goddess are used both to “emphasize historical continuity from the prehistoric peoples of Mesopotamia and the Neolithic rural revolution until today” and “allow [for] the construction of a continuous identity of Kurdishness” (p 2).

The reference to the old Mesopotamia by nationalists might seem ironic after Öcalan’s theorizations as discussed. One has to note, however, that Öcalan appears to use his analysis of the Sumerians more as a metaphor for oppression in a capitalist and patriarchal society. Furthermore, in Liberating Life, Öcalan (2013) praises the Neolithic age to be matricentric and the golden age for women as well. Moreover, Öcalan himself refers to remnants of Kurdish origins in Mesopotamia, which is also clarified by Biehl who cites Öcalan (2004, as cited in Biehl, 2012, February) stating that: “many characteristics and traits of Kurdish society, […] mindset and material basis, […] bear a resemblance to communities from the Neolithic [age].” (p. 7). Additionally, it can also be argued that the analysis of Mesopotamia as a matriarchal or matricentric society appears to function as an analysis, and as evidence of patriarchy and gender oppression in the current day society. It is as such that Mesopotamia is both considered

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39 For a further reference to the Kurdish myths, see appendix A.

40 Matriarchal as referring to “a family, community, or society that is ruled by women, especially one in which women also own and control property” (Matriarchy, n.d.) and matricentric as “gravitating toward or centered upon the mother” (Matricentric, n.d.).

41 As with any analysis of oppressive structures, one cannot study capitalism without studying patriarchy or other power structures, and vice versa. See Lugones (2007), who offers an explanation as to how these power structures are interlinked in colonialism, for a more extensive discussion. Öcalan mentions colonialism in the Neolithic age,
to be the golden age, and used as a symbol for oppressive structures in society, in that the Neolithic age is not considered to be capitalist and patriarchic, but rather the starting point for capitalism and patriarchy, which then allows for pointing out the contrast between Mesopotamia and the current society. Additionally, from a Kurdish nationalist point of view, it should also be considered that the geographical location of Kurdistan and Mesopotamia overlap, which could be a reason to link Kurdish myths to Mesopotamia and claim the area as the origin of the Kurds. Furthermore, the glorification of Mesopotamia by Kurdish nationalists also ties in with the aforementioned Kurdish nationalist discourse on the freedom of Kurdish women, in paragraph 3.2 and 3.3. I thus conclude that the discourse that Kurdish women have more freedom than women from neighboring countries, is part of nationalist discourse, and is related to the Kurdish myths of Kawa the Blacksmith, who brought liberation, and Ishtar the Goddess of fertility. This discourse of freedom and Kurdish origin be easily related to an era which is perceived to be matricentric and in that line of thought, it makes sense to determine the Neolithic era to be the golden age for the Kurds.

As Öcalan continues his theorizations, the analyses about capitalism and patriarchy, in relation to power and hierarchy are used to show how the domination of men is visible and enforced in religion, but also to study the submission of women, which Öcalan does by drawing on Mies’ concept of housewifization (Mies, 1986). The enforcement of the dominant male in religion and the submission of women in the family, in this view, leads to an ideal of the family, one in which men are the head of the household, and women are the enslaved housewife. Öcalan ties this to the Kurds and the importance they attach to family, yet underlines the supposed freedom of Kurdish women. Additionally, Öcalan states that power ultimately manifests in the nation-state, namely through sexism, which is in the housewifization of the woman, and through the force of nationalism and militarism. Sexism is the ideology of power and results in the subjugation of women in this view, as “housewifisation became institutionalised when the sexist society became dominant.” (p. 26). Moreover, sexism is perceived to be not just an ideology with housewifization as a result, but it is also considered to be the mechanism on which nation-states are built. As a result, in his analysis of hierarchy and power in relation to the concept of housewifization, Öcalan again comes to reject the nation-state, stating that: “a hierarchical and authoritarian structure is essential for a patriarchal society” (p. 23). Öcalan and as such neither Öcalan, nor the researcher make mention of capitalism or patriarchy separate of other power structures. The structures are perceived to be interlinked, following Lugones (2007).

42 The importance of the family is also discussed by Mohdad (1992; 2004). See paragraph 3.2
takes it further, and analyses the structure of a nation-state, stating that: “eventually, [the] hierarchical society had to either disintegrate or result in statehood” (p. 24), making it clear that the latter is what happened. Therefore, Öcalan rejects the structure of the nation-state, although it is acknowledged that “it was really the hierarchal and patriarchal society that subjugated women […], before the development of the state” (p. 24), the nation-state is based on that hierarchal and patriarchal society. This means that a nation-state reproduces the subjugation of women in its hierarchy and patriarchy because the basis of the nation-state is hierarchal authority: “the institution of authority would gradually gain prominence in society and […] would transform into state authority.” (p. 23). Furthermore, Öcalan also analyzes the use of force and violence, and the concept of power, implying that men only through force could become dominant, as the following question is presented; “how is it possible that the power held by the woman fell into the hands of the man, who is really not very productive and creative. The answer lies of course in the role force played.” (p. 29). Interesting is that it appears here as if Öcalan rejects the use of force and violence. This would be in stark contrast with the guerrilla group as part of his movement, the PKK. Nonetheless, women still participate, then and now, in the guerrilla warfare, despite their support of Öcalan’s thought and his rejection of the use of violence. According to a representative of the Free Women’s Movement of Kurdistan (TAJK) in Turkey, recognition for women within the Kurdish society had to be gained, not just politically, but also via the military way (Tax, 2016). This explains why, despite Öcalan’s newfound resentment for violence, women still take up arms in order to fight for their cause. Therefore, female-only units are necessary to allow women to develop themselves independently from men, rather than staying in their shadow. Houzan Mahmoud (2014, as cited in Tax, 2016), a Kurdish Iraqi activist, underlines this when discussing the options women have with regard to gaining their freedom:

Van Bruinessen (2000) distinguishes two departments within the PKK, a military and a civilian (political) PKK. The differences between the two groups, as determined by Van Bruinessen (2000), are based on the level of education and the moment of joining the PKK. The military part of the PKK consists of people with no to lower education, who were the first recruits after the university students, usually young boys from the countryside. This group is responsible for the guerrilla activities of the PKK. The second group are people with secondary of higher education, who joined after first successes of the PKK military-wise. Rather than being responsible for guerrilla activities, this group takes care of the more ‘PR-related’ tasks, such as diplomacy, spreading information, creating contacts, or the publishing of newspapers and journals, as well as the organization of activities (Van Bruinessen, 2000). It is the civilian or political part in which Öcalan mostly implemented his ideology, yet both sides needed to be balanced in that both sides needed to remain satisfied (Van Bruinessen, 2000).
“in the case of Kurdish women, taking up arms and fighting on the front line is perhaps their best option. To refuse to become slaves, to be raped, killed or ruled by Islamic Sharia Law under ISIS is only viable through armed resistance”. (p. 144)

Moreover, Tax (2016) also states that:

“Militarization is central to the ideology of the Kurdish women’s movement. Because of the extreme inequality in traditional Kurdish society, says a spokeswoman for the PKK women’s army YJA-Star, women had to become soldiers; they could only deal with their subordination by “becoming a power themselves”. (p. 145)

Therefore, when Öcalan’s thought is put into practice, or applied to Kurdish women, the reality does not always comply with the ideal of no violence that is presented in Öcalan’s ideology.

Furthermore, Öcalan also pays attention to the position of Kurdish women in his theorizations. Öcalan does so by firstly stating the important place family had in Kurdistan, and by once again underlining the supposed freedom of Kurdish women: “it is not a coincidence that amongst the peoples of the Middle East the Kurds have the best-developed sense of freedom.” (p. 39). The Kurds are supposed to have the best-developed sense of freedom as according to Öcalan (2013) the structure of family within the Kurd’s tribalism as matricentric and free, and states that the strength of Kurdish women to date stems from the structure of family within Kurdish tribalism. As the Kurds no longer enjoy the freedom found within a matriarchic structure, Öcalan comes to his call for the organization of women in Jineology.

Ultimately, Öcalan’s goal is universal liberation, which would be “impossible without a radical women’s revolution which would change man’s mentality and life” (p. 51). Therefore, Öcalan determines gender equality to be the most important condition to achieve freedom: “in fact, freedom and equality cannot be realized without the achievement of gender equality” (p. 52). Öcalan’s presented solution manifests in his call to create separate and specific movements who stand up for the freedom and equality of women. In this, Öcalan, ironically, does not seem to see much room for men, as it is stated that “women need to determine their own democratic aim, and institute the organisation and effort to realise it” (p. 53). Cartier (2016), however, acknowledges this irony and explains that:
“through personal reflection and self-criticism of his own relationships with women [Öcalan] began to question the patriarchal family structure in which women were always put in the position of being an object. He concluded that he needed to undergo a transformation by ‘killing the man’ inside himself […]” (section 5, paragraph 3)

Additionally, Öcalan never explicitly states that it is only women who will be able to create the necessary revolution. Rather, Öcalan perceives it to be a political struggle to overthrow the ideologies which keep women subjugated, moreover: "if success is not attained politically, no other achievement will be permanent" (p. 54). I thus conclude that Öcalan himself was aware of the irony as well, but found a, possibly strategic, way to keep himself involved.

Thus, Öcalan’s approach asks for women to achieve democracy, in order to find freedom and true equality, as both Bookchin and Öcalan had realized that in order to create a revolutionary change in society, Marxism-Leninism was not the solution, and neither was anarchy. Instead, both saw a solution in democracy, or more specifically, in what Bookchin calls ‘libertarian municipalism’ or what Öcalan calls ‘democratic confederalism’ (Biehl, 2012, February; Finley, 2017; Gerber & Brincat, 2018). The downside of this ideology is that it places the responsibility of freedom upon women, as will be discussed in paragraph 3.6, yet first Öcalan’s inspiration and the implications of his theorizations will be discussed.

3.5 - Öcalan’s inspiration and implications for the Kurds

Öcalan’s theorizations show clearly how he was inspired by other thinkers. First of all, “Öcalan, […] has adopted key aspects of Bookchin’s thought within his own political model of ‘democratic confederalism’.” (Gerber & Brincat, 2018, p. 3). Öcalan’s model of democratic confederalism was thus based on what Bookchin calls liberal municipalism. Cemgil and Hoffman (2016) explain the political models and state that: “this ‘democratic confederalism’ or ‘libertarian municipalism’, entails elements such as community-based, cooperative production and trade as social ecology, radical gender equality, and local forms of direct democratic political rule.” (p. 54). Additionally, according to Gunes (2018), Rojava⁴⁴, the independent Kurdish state which is set up in line with Öcalan’s democratic confederalism, “is

⁴⁴ As Rojava is set up in line with Öcalan’s democratic confederalism, a few years after the establishment, its name was changed from Rojava to Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS) (Gunes, 2018). Additionally, the DFNS’ objective is in line with Öcalan’s ideology as well, which is “to be a territorially contagious but multicultural self-governing region within a democratic and federal Syrian state” (Gunes, 2018, p. 62).
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not organised along ethnic lines and aspires to be a multi-ethnic entity with decentralized administration and representative bodies to accommodate all of the ethnicultural groups in northern Syria” (p. 69).

Yet, Bookchin was not his only inspiration. Debbie Bookchin, the daughter of, in addition to Biehl also mentions Maria Mies as a source of inspiration for Öcalan (Bookchin, 2018), which has become clear in paragraph 3.4, where it is shown how Öcalan draws on Mies concept of ‘housewifization’, labeling it the first form of enslavement, and the basis of all slavery (Öcalan, 2013). According to Biehl (2012, February), a student of Murray Bookchin; Braudel, Foucault, and Wallerstein amongst others, are furthermore also often named as inspirational influences on Öcalan, although Biehl does not discuss this further. Additionally, Nadje Al-Ali states in the foreword of Öcalan’s book ‘The Political Thought of Abdullah Öcalan’, that “other influential thinkers and movements often quoted include the American anarchist Emma Goldman, Immanuel Wallerstein, V. Gordon Childe, Fernand Braudel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Michel Foucault, the Frankfurt School and the Zapatistas.” (Öcalan, 2017, p. 7). It can thus be noted that Öcalan drew on more than the works of Bookchin, yet Öcalan’s biggest change in ideology, which also influenced the PKK, was based on Bookchin’s liberation municipality, and Mies’s concept of housewifization.

Öcalan most clearly influenced the PKK in the following two ways. First, based on Öcalan’s ideology, a gender discourse was added to the discourse of the Kurdish nationalist movement. Secondly, Öcalan’s ideology led to a change in the objectives of the PKK. Therefore, Öcalan’s ideology had a direct impact on the Kurdish nationalist movement. These changes within the PKK are relevant to the story of Kurdish feminism, in that Öcalan’s ideology has a universal and transnational perspective. Moreover, according to Gökalp (2010), Marcus (2007) and Yüksel (2016), amongst others, with the arrest of Öcalan in 1999, the change in discourse ended the guerrilla-period of the PKK, which implies the change from violent nationalist movement to freedom movement. This corresponds with Akkaya and Jongerden (2011) and Al-Ali and Tas (2017), who perceive the arrest of Öcalan to be the starting point of the ideology. This has to be interpreted as a changed objective and focus, not as the literal putting down of arms. As stated before, the guerrilla-department of the PKK is still active.

The change in the PKK’s objectives is partially due to Öcalan’s theorizations on the concept of democratic confederalism. An example of how Öcalan’s changed his perspective on the Kurdish struggle and on what the new aim should be is shown by Biehl (2012, February) as follows:
Öcalan thus has a larger perspective and transforms the Kurdish struggle into a nation-wide struggle, as Öcalan not just applies democratic confederalism to Kurdish nationalism, but also states that Turkey cannot be a democracy as long as the Turkish Kurds are suppressed. Therefore, Öcalan has applied his concept of democratic confederalism to the situation of Kurds in Turkey, but also turns these theorizations into practice by implementing it into the PKK, and by changing the PKK’s discourse on independence and freedom, stating that democratic confederalism should be achieved, rather than a Kurdish independent state. Although it can be questioned how much influence Öcalan really has on the PKK, which will be discussed in paragraph 3.6, nonetheless, as a result of Öcalan’s theorizations, Marxist-Leninism was abandoned as a discourse for the PKK in 1990 and replaced by a discourse of universal liberation. As such, Öcalan “began to globalize the theory of the [Kurdish] revolution” (Özcan A. K., 2006, p. 116). Moreover, as aforementioned, the ideology of democratic confederalism is to date also brought to practice in the Kurdish independent area of Rojava, in Northern Syria, also known as the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria. Thus, for the PKK, Öcalan’s ideology meant the inclusion of women and the newly added objective of the universal liberation of women. Therefore, the implementation of Öcalan’s ideology in the PKK has created a context in which to situate Jineology, as the PKK’s new objective is amplified by the Jineology movement.

Therefore, Öcalan both changed the course of the PKK and Kurdish nationalism, and laid the foundation for Kurdish feminism; as he inspired the Jineology movement. It has to be noted, however, that “the metamorphosis of the party’s national standpoint does not […] mean that the party has deserted the cause of Kurdish national entanglement” (Özcan A. K., 2006, p. 136). Instead, similar to Öcalan’s ideology, the PKK’s aims have universalized, which is in line with Öcalan, who states that freeing the Kurds can only happen in universal freedom, in freeing everyone (Biehl, 2012, February). However, although Öcalan might have laid the foundation for this new discourse within the PKK, the new discourse of the Kurdish nationalist movement, and in that its change to freedom movement, cannot solely be ascribed to Öcalan. This is shown by Biehl (2011) and Tax (2016), who refer to the words of Ercan Aybola, a Kurdish activist, who was interviewed by Janet Biehl in 2011. Aybola states that the ideology
of the PKK was not just formed by Öcalan’s theorizations, but also by members of the PKK, as “during this process of strategic change, the freedom movement activists read and discussed a new literature that supported and could make contributions to it. It analyzed books and articles by philosophers, feminists, (neo-)anarchists, libertarian communists, communalists, and social ecologists.” (Biehl, 2011, question 6, paragraph 4).

3.6 – A critique on Öcalan’s ideology

As this thesis aims to give a critical analysis of the available literature, it would not be complete without a critique of Öcalan’s ideology. Despite positive results due to the participation of women within the Kurdish nationalist movement and the theorizations of Öcalan, in addition to the discussion of the concept of agency (Mahmood, 2005), further critical analysis is necessary.

First of all, a critical perspective is offered by Marcus (2007), who raises the question if Öcalan “truly believed in equality for women”, stating that “he certainly understood that he could gain a powerful ally in women if he defended their rights.” (p. 173). Marcus Therefore questions if Öcalan could be a considered a true ally to the cause of Kurdish women, or if his theorizations are merely a strategic ideology to increase support for the Kurdish nationalist cause. Marcus (2007) further explains that due to Öcalan’s insistence that the participation of women was necessary, the PKK was able to grow, as it spoke to women and “gave women an immediate sense of worth” (p. 173). Furthermore, it can also be questioned if Öcalan truly wants to lay down arms, as the military department of the PKK is still active. Therefore, it has to be taken into account that it is possible that Öcalan’s ideology is not merely an ideology, but also a strategy.

Secondly, it has to be noted that an ideology which places women in the center, results in a double burden on women. In other words, a changed ideological discourse is not necessarily reflected in the lives of the women it concerns. According to Mojab (2004, p. 114), modernization” and “Westernization” became the foundation of the new nation-states of Iran and Turkey. Jayawardena (1986, as cited in Çağlayan, 2012) states that women were often expected to both represent a modern woman, yet also the national identity. It is expected that women embody the modern and the traditional at the same time, which then places a double burden on women. The expectation of women to embody the modern can be linked to the desire to avoid colonialism, as in Turkey, rather than to the desire to empower women (Kandiyoti, 1987). One then has to remain cautious, as this discourse of women as representatives of the modern society rather works in the interest of the country, than in the benefit of women. Açık (2014) studies the Turkish nationalist movement and the role of women in nationalist
movements, and looks at the strategic benefits and ideological justifications of placing women in the middle:

“As with other national liberation struggles, the Kurdish national movement relies heavily on the mobilisation and support of all sections of society, particularly women. The ideological justification for making women the forerunner of this movement is often made possible by connecting national issues with women’s issue and promising the liberation of ‘the land’, as well as that of ‘the woman’.”. (p. 117)

Çağlayan (2012) makes a similar analysis when discussing the Kurdish movement in Turkey after 1980, by drawing on different authors who discuss modernization, nationalism, and women. Furthermore, Çağlayan (2012) shows that the discourse on women’s liberation is not just a part of the Kurdish nationalist movements, but an effect of nationalism in a patriarchal society. Therefore, in relation to the critique offered by Marcus (2007), it can be questioned if Öcalan did move away from a nationalist discourse, and whether his theorizations are merely strategic. Additionally, it shows that the position of women within the Kurdish struggle is not easily defined, as it appears to be multiple-faceted. Yuval-Davis (2003, as cited in Çağlayan, 2012), who is described by Çağlayan as “another researcher who is wary of the effects of these [nationalist] movements on women’s positions” (p. 4) further underlines this, and states that: “women’s liberation’ is one of the important mechanisms for signifying both internal and external actions of ethnic and national projects towards modernization.” (p. 4). Furthermore, Çağlayan (2012) goes on and shows that Yuval-Davis and Anthias similar to Çağlayan perceive there to be a double burden on women when nationalist projects get interlinked with gender:

“In Gender, Nation, State (1989 [, p.7] [45], Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias demonstrate the different duties and missions that are assigned to women in this context. In so doing, nationalist projects and constructions see women as reproducers of the ethnic/national community, both biologically and culturally. Their duty as reproducers paves the way

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45 Although Çağlayan (2012) refers here to the title of the book as Gender, Nation, State, the actual title of the book, which also mentioned in Çağlayan’s references, is Women-Nation-State, which is how it will appear in the references of this research. Çağlayan (2012) thus refers to the introduction of Yuval-Davis, Anthias and Campling (1989).
Yuval-Davis, Anthias, and Campling (1989), state that women are placed in a central position, as biological and national reproducers. Thus, Kurdish nationalist movements that draw on Öcalan’s ideology, portray women as the axis of the nation. Women are hailed as heroes, both responsible for the reproduction and the protection of the nation (Çağlayan, 2012; Mojab, 2000), yet this has both upsides and downsides. On one hand, it does create a change in discourse and might start liberation for women. On the other hand, however, in the context of nationalism and modernization, it also places a double burden on women in that women have both the responsibility to be the reproducers of the nation and the responsibility of making the nation modern. There is a paradox in there, in that women are expected to represent the nation, but are also expected to show the nation’s modernity, which implies that the nation is not yet modern. Thus, women are expected to represent nationalism and modernity which is perceived to be not present in the nation yet. Furthermore, the citations above also show that the Kurdish movement might not be unique in its discourse on the liberation of women, but rather, it might be an expected result of nationalism. Moreover, the citations confirm the difficult position gender appears to have within nationalist movements, and Therefore within the Kurdish struggle. Lastly, Walby (1992, as cited in Çağlayan, 2012), states that: “[…] a shift in patriarchy takes places with modernization from the private form of patriarchy where women are controlled at home to a public form of patriarchy.” (pp. 5, 19). The authors thus show a, possibly problematic, relation between patriarchy, nationalism and the liberation of women. This is confirmed by Tamar Mayer (2000), who is the editor of the book ‘Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation’, which includes chapters by several authors who discuss gender and nationalism. Mayer (2000) importantly states that “nation, gender and sexuality are all constructed in opposition, […] they are all part of culturally constructed hierarchies, and all of them involve power” (p. 5). Furthermore, Mayer (2000) cites Anderson and states that “the nation has largely been constructed as a hetero-male project […] (Anderson 1991:16)” (p. 6). This implies the following. If gender and sexuality are constructed in opposition of nations and nationalism, it appears impossible to add a discourse of liberation for women to a nationalist project, even though the addition of a liberation-discourse appears inevitable. Öcalan, although he agrees with Mayer’s analysis, as he rejects hierarchies and power, instead presents gender-equality as a solution. Furthermore, with the nation constructed as a hetero-male project, there appears to be little room for women.
Another critique is presented by Van Bruinessen (2000), as Van Bruinessen states that Öcalan only implements his ideology in the ‘civilian’ department of the PKK. This could be explained as the use of violence, which is the responsibility of the military department of the PKK, as discussed in footnote 43, would not be in line with Öcalan’s ideology. Moreover, Öcalan has promised on several occasions to give up the guerrilla fight for a political fight, yet states that: “progress towards a political solution necessitated the active involvement of the 'civilians' but carried the risk of making the 'military' feel marginalized.” (Van Bruinessen, 2000, p. 9). Additionally, there do remain groups who continue the fight for an independent Kurdistan. Federici (2015) for example describes the rise of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), with the People’s Protection Unit (YPG) as its guerrilla or armed part, which was in 2012. Gunes (2018) also attests to this as according to Gunes it is unlikely that conflicts will quiet down. Gunes states that one of the main sources of conflict and unrest in the Middle East has been because of the Kurdish rebellion. Additionally, Gunes (2018) considers it likely that the Kurdish demands for an autonomous state will continue to create conflict: “it is possible that the dominant regional powers will, once again, unite in their opposition to Kurdish aspirations and to keep the status quo in the region intact.” (p. 100). Thus, the Kurdish nationalist movement has not necessarily been replaced by a Kurdish freedom movement, but it appears that some Kurdish fighters for themselves have replaced the Kurdish nationalist movement with the Kurdish freedom movement. Nonetheless, it remains important to critically analyze Öcalan’s influence on the PKK. As is shown in paragraph 3.5, Öcalan’s ideology was not the sole inspiration for the changed discourse and objectives.

Nonetheless, both Çağlayan, drawing on Kandiyoti (1987) and Düzgün (2016) does not exclude the possibility that the added gender discourse will prevail, as right now the participation of women has defied and changed traditional gender roles. Furthermore, despite the remaining existence of the military department of the PKK, the PKK has de facto changed their discourse. Therefore, Öcalan’s influence on the Kurdish question should not be discarded.

3.7 - Jineology and Kurdish feminism

The Kurdish feminist movement Jineology is established based on the ideology of Öcalan, as presented in paragraph 3.4. As a result, Kurdish women have joined the fights as guerrilla fighters with which they challenge traditional gender roles (Düzgün, 2016). Moreover, women have not just challenged traditional gender roles, according to Düzgün (2016) women have also

46 See footnote 43, for a more detailed description of the different departments of the PKK.
expressed the demand for gender justice, and as such internalized what Öcalan theorized. Women have done so, as according to Al-Ali and Tas (2017) “both Kurdish and Turkish activists stress the necessity of understanding that a just and sustainable peace must include gender equality and that gender justice cannot be achieved in times of war” (p. 354). Additionally, Öcalan’s theorizations are also brought into practice in the Kurdish feminist movement Jineology.

Jineology was first introduced by Abdullah Öcalan in 2003, in his work ‘The Sociology of Freedom’ (Kaya, 2014, March). As aforementioned, Jineology, or Jineoloji in Kurdish, which literally means the science of women, is a radical Kurdish feminist movement, formed in 2008 (Neven & Schäfers, 2017). The name of the movement is comprised of the Kurdish word for woman, ‘Jin’ and the word ‘logos’, which in Greek means word, science or knowledge (Neven & Schäfers, 2017; Jineoloji, n.d.; Kaya, 2014, March). Although Jineology was established in 2008, Kurdish feminism arose earlier, as according to Z. S. Özcan (2011), Kurdish feminism has its roots within the Kurdish struggle and came up in the 1980s. It is stated that Kurdish women both started to participate in the Kurdish struggle and started to raise questions about the position of women within the Kurdish struggle (Özcan Z. S., 2011). Thus, Jineology is a movement within Kurdish feminism, but Kurdish feminism is more than just Jineology.

Neven and Schäfers (2017) discuss Jineology and start to shed light on the historical-political context in which Jineology situates. Their focus, however, lies mostly on the movement of Jineology itself. Brecht Neven is a graduate student in Political Science. Neven wrote his dissertation on the ideological Kurdish paradigm and wrote the article on Jineology together with Marlene Schäfers, who holds a PhD in Social Anthropology. An important part of their article is the interview with Necîbe Qeredaxî. Qeredaxî is a journalist and a founding member of the Kurdish Institute in Brussels, a research center for Jineology. It is stated that Jineology has added a new perspective and objective to the Kurdish nationalist movement. According to Düzgün (2016), Jineology is considered to be a science, as its goal is to close the chasm which social sciences to date has not closed. This is also stated by Tax (2016), who cites a speech by Gönül Kaya, a journalist, and representative of the Kurdish Women’s Movement at the first world conference on Jineology in Cologne, Germany. Although Düzgün does not specifically state what ‘gap’ social sciences has not closed, Neven and Schäfers (2017) state

47 See the website of the Kurdish Institute for more information on their mission, vision and activities: https://www.kurdishinstitute.be/en/about-us/
that Jineology presents a critique which considers the social sciences to be dominated and controlled by men (Neven & Schäfers, 2017). Kaya (2014, March) explains that social sciences are an extension of the patriarchy, which results in:

“the normalization of militarism and violence, the deepening of sexism and nationalism, the unrestrained development of technology, especially weapon technology for the control of society and individuals, the destruction of nature, nuclear energy, cancerous urbanization, demographic problems, anti-ecological industrialism, Gordian knots of social issues, extreme individualization, the rise of sexist policies and practices against women, rights and freedoms”. (p. 36)

The new social sciences as proposed by Jineology is supposed to change these “errors” (Tax, 2016, p. 37). Furthermore, Nurhak (2014, as cited in Düzgün, 2016) states that: “Jineology is built on the principle that without the freedom of women within society and without a real consciousness surrounding women no society can call itself free” (p. 285). Thereby, gender equality has been placed at the heart of the Kurdish movement (Al-Ali & Tas, 2017; Neven & Schäfers, 2017). Ultimately, the struggle for both gender equality and Kurdish rights is shown in the following quote of Sebahat Tuncel, a member of the former Turkish pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party, who describes Sakine Cansiz, a leader of the PKK: “she was a feminist, and her struggle was always double-edged: against male dominance and for Kurdish rights.” (Tax, 2016, p. 136).

Based on the critique on the social sciences, and the principle of the liberation of women, as introduced by Öcalan, Jineology’s goals are first and foremost to fight patriarchal structures which are assumed to be present in society (Neven & Schäfers, 2017), but also to fight against the structures of capitalism and the nation-state. It asks for a revolution and “for a theoretical reflection on social reality and for practical efforts undertaken towards radically changing that reality [of oppression]” (Neven & Schäfers, 2017, pp. 2-3). According to Öcalan’s ideology, this fight is what will liberate women (Öcalan, 2013). Thus, the proposed revolution should start with a renewed understanding of the oppression of capitalism and patriarchy that Kurdish women have to fight, which are assumed to be present in the oppressive structure of the nation-state. Fejiç and Ivekoviç (2015) attest to this, implicitly underlining Öcalan’s ideology, and state that:
“If the issue of sex is, as we believe, at the heart of every other form of inequality, then the sequence in the analysis of events needs to be reversed: it is not the national liberation struggle […], aiming at creating a new national state, that is primary, that has democratic prospects and would therefore liberate women as well as nations/peoples and nationalities. It is on the contrary women/feminists who could and should do something about the “national” and “race” matter.” (p.168)

Ultimately, according to Neven and Schäfers (2017), “the movement asserts that for the social struggle to be successful, it is vital to fully comprehend the links between capitalist, statist and gender oppression” (p. 3). Thereby, not just an anti-capitalist frame is applied, but also an anti-colonialist frame, as Kurdistan is by some considered to be a colonized, and women as the first of those who were colonized (Jineoloji, n.d.; Kaya, 2014, March; Neven & Schäfers, 2017; Öcalan, 2013). Additionally, Jineology does not only offer a critique on society, but also on Western feminism (Neven & Schäfers, 2017). Therefore, Jineology is not only a movement for Kurdish women, but, according to Qeredaxî (as cited in Neven and Schäfers, 2017), is closely related to (European) feminism. This corresponds with Jineology’s goals, as described by Neven and Schäfers (2017), which is “to transfer the advancements of the Kurdish women’s movement into society” (p. 3), as according to Kurdish feminism peace and women’s rights are inseparable (Al-Ali & Tas, 2017). It is not considered to be an alternative to European feminism, however. Nonetheless, Jineology is labeled as Kurdish feminism, and not as just ‘feminism’, as it is a movement which arose from the theorizations of not just Öcalan, but of Kurdish women everywhere (Neven & Schäfers, 2017). Furthermore, Jineology is not limited to a country, as the Kurdish women’s movement is present in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey.

Moreover, rather than simply presenting a changed discourse for the Kurdish nationalist movement, the objective of an “independent socialist Kurdistan” (Neven & Schäfers, 2017, p. 2) is no longer the aim for Kurds who are part of the Jineology movement, which is similar to the changed discourse of the PKK. Instead, I would argue, the discourse of an independent socialist Kurdistan has been replaced with a discourse of universal liberation. This discourse is based on “the theory and praxis of feminism, social ecology and libertarian municipalism, [with the aim] to transcend the state.” (Neven & Schäfers, 2017, p. 2). This is underlined by Tax (2016), who states that Jineology is a different movement, although it evolved from the Marxist-Leninist PKK. The aim to transcend the state is in line with Öcalan’s theorizations, in which he claims that the structure of a state is oppressive.
As Jineology is based on the ideology of the founder and leader of the PKK, Neven and Schäfers (2017), in one of their interview questions, mention that Jineology and the Kurdish struggle are closely related. Their question implies that Jineology and the Kurdish struggle are not the same. This is underlined by Qeredaxî, who makes a difference between the two movements as she, based on Jineology, perceives a solely nationalist struggle to be dangerous (Neven & Schäfers, 2017). Instead, according to Qeredaxî, Jineology as a Kurdish freedom movement: “[…] does not claim to wage a national struggle anymore, but a struggle for a democratic nation.” (Neven & Schäfers, 2017, p. 10). The difference between the two movements is perceived by Neven and Schäfers (2017) as follows:

“The aim of the national struggle is the creation of a state. It seeks to bring down one state and erect a new nation-state in its place, based on the idea of one nation, one language, one history, one flag, one culture. The aim of the Kurdish freedom movement, however, is not that. The aim of the democratic nation is that society governs itself through democratic autonomy.” (p. 11)

As such, it is clearly shown that there is a perceived difference between the Kurdish nationalist movement and the Kurdish liberation movement. The defining aspect is the concept of democratic confederalism, which is the foundation in Öcalan’s ideology. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that to a certain extent, both movements are intertwined. Rojava shows how the movements are intertwined, as Rojava knows a lot of Jineology movements, and is organized according to the ideology of the Kurdish liberation movement, yet the existence of Rojava is a result of Kurdish nationalism 48.

All in all, the aim of this paragraph has been to show how Jineology relates to Kurdish nationalism, and as such answer the last sub-question. It can be concluded that Jineology situates within Kurdish nationalism and is derived from it, yet it cannot be equated with Kurdish nationalism.

3.8 - Conclusion

This chapter has aimed to answer the fourth and fifth sub-question: ‘what is the position of women within the Kurdish struggle?’ and ‘how does Jineology relate to Kurdish nationalism?’.

48 See appendix D for a further discussion of Rojava and how it is structured in accordance with Öcalan’s ideology.
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First, the presence of women within Kurdish nationalist movements, and their participation has been discussed, including the significance of their presence. The participation of women has been significant, due to the geographical location of Kurdistan within the patriarchal belt, and the agency of those women, who might deliberately choose to stay within a patriarchal structure. It has been shown that their position is complicated, and has changed over the years, in accordance with changes in the socio-political context. Accordingly, the evolved discourse of Kurdish nationalism has been shown, which sheds light both on the position of women and on how Jineology relates to the Kurdish struggle. I have done so by discussing Öcalan’s ideology, the implications of this ideology for the Kurds, and by presenting a critique on this ideology. Furthermore, the fifth sub-question has also been answered by presenting what Jineology entails, and what its discourse and objectives are. Therefore, it is concluded that Jineology relates to the Kurdish struggle, yet cannot be equated to the Kurdish struggle. The goals of Jineology and Kurdish nationalist movements differ too much to present them as similar. This becomes most clearly however when studying Rojava, as Rojava was established by the Kurdish nationalist movement, yet is structured in line with the Kurdish liberation movement.
Discussion

This research has shown that Jineology relates to Kurdish identity, Kurdish nationalism, and Kurdish feminism in several ways. This has been shown by answering five sub-questions, respectively: ‘who are the Kurds?’; ‘how was the Kurdish identity formed?’; ‘what is Kurdish nationalism?’; ‘what is the position of women within the Kurdish struggle?’; and ‘how does Jineology relate to Kurdish nationalism?’.

Chapter 1 has shown how the Kurds are an ethnic minority, geographically located along the borders of Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, in what they call Kurdistan. The borders of Kurdistan however, have never been officially recognized by any government (Alinia, 2013). The many scholarly debates indicate that there is disagreement about what characterizes the Kurds as a group. Nonetheless, it is agreed upon that the Kurds are aware of a shared identity (Jwaideh, 2006), and several authors have pointed out that the Kurdish languages are one of the unifying factors (Entessar, 1984; 2014; Federici, 2015; Harris, 1977; Marr & Al-Marashi, 2017; Stansfield, 2003).

Chapter 2 has shown how the Kurdish identity was formed, based on theories of what determines ethnicity (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1993; Eriksen, 2010; Moerman, 1965), and on theories of what forms a nation, a community and how the perceived identity of a group translates into nationalism (Anderson, 2006; Eriksen, 2010; Gellner, 1983). Although there is an ongoing debate among scholars as to what constitutes Kurdish identity, the following has been concluded. Kurdish identity first and foremost refers to the Kurds as an ethnic group. The shared ethnicity forms the basis of Kurdish identity, as it creates cohesion among an otherwise heterogeneous group. Furthermore, shared characteristics, such as geography, language, and origin bind the Kurds together. Yet, another aspect of Kurdish identity is the fragmentation within the Kurdish society, which has also been discussed in chapter 2.

Chapter 2, furthermore, has discussed Kurdish nationalism. It has been shown that the Kurdish identity has evolved into a nationalist claim and the fight for an autonomous Kurdish state. The loss of autonomy over Kurdistan after the First World War, when the Ottoman Empire was divided, caused conflicts between the nation-states Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, and the Kurds, as the perceived Kurdish identity contrasted the identities of the nation-states. This conflict resulted in the Kurdish struggle, which led to years of conflict, many victims and high death-tolls (Gunes, 2018). Kurdish nationalism, therefore, can be defined as a transnational guerrilla-war, with the objective to create an independent Kurdish state. Some scholars will state that the Kurdish nationalist movement has failed or has no chance of succeeding (Gunter, 2004; Koohi-Kamali, 2003; Romano, 2006), yet the Kurdish movements have been able to book
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successes towards their goal. Examples are, despite its short life-span, the Republic of Mahabad in Iran and Rojava, or the Democratic Federation, in Syria. Furthermore, the Kurdish nationalist movement has also been able to establish many political parties and organizations, and a Kurdish nationalist press (Edmonds, 1971; Jwaideh, 2006). Yet, on the other hand, many political leaders of the Kurds have been arrested or assassinated, and the assimilationist policies which have repressed the Kurds, have caused setbacks for the Kurdish nationalist movement.

Chapter 3 has shown what the position of women is within the Kurdish struggle and how Jineology relates to Kurdish nationalism. These two sub-questions are connected, as Jineology, a Kurdish feminist movement, stems from the Kurdish nationalist struggle. As such, first the participation of women has been discussed, and it has been shown that due to changing socio-political contexts women got the chance to be a part of the Kurdish movement. This participation of women resulted in debates about the political position of women, as their participation challenged the notion that women were not political subjects (Mojab, 1997). This debate eventually allowed for more women to participate. The significance of the participation of women has been shown with the use of the concept of the patriarchal belt (Moghadam, 1992; 2004; 2007). Additionally, the concept of agency of (religious) women has also been discussed, as one cannot simply assume that a woman who lives in a patriarchal, religious society, is oppressed (Mahmood, 2005). Nonetheless, it is explained how the patriarchic structures of the Middle East are likely to limit women, specifically with regard to participating in the Kurdish struggle. Therefore, it is significant that Kurdish women have taken up arms and have participated. Furthermore, Abdullah Öcalan’s ideology on Kurdish nationalism and the participation of women has also been discussed. This discussion has shown that Öcalan has added a gender-discourse to the Kurdish struggle, which transformed the Kurdish nationalist movement into the Kurdish liberation movement and further increased the participation of women. Accordingly, it is within this context that Jineology is situated. Based on the provided framework in which to situate Jineology, the movement could be discussed, and it could be analyzed how Jineology relates to Kurdish nationalism. It has been shown that Jineology stems from Kurdish nationalism, yet is not similar to the movement. Instead, Jineology is part of the new Kurdish liberation movement.

Therefore, it is concluded that Jineology is a Kurdish feminist movement, which stems from Kurdish nationalism, which is based on the Kurdish identity. Jineology’s objective is to transform society and liberate the Kurds with a revolution that fights social injustice. Although the Kurdish liberation movement, and thus Jineology, is parallel to Kurdish nationalism, it cannot be equated with Kurdish nationalism. Instead, the perspective has changed, and the
The liberation of women is no longer supposed to be the result of a nationalist struggle, but instead, the liberation of women is believed to liberate the nation (Fejiç & Iveković, 2015; Neven & Schäfers, 2017). As a result, the nationalist objective of creating an independent Kurdish state has changed. An exception is Rojava, as it is an independent state, yet it is closely connected to Kurdish feminism and knowns many Jineology organizations (Neven & Schäfers, 2017). Thus, it is likely that without the rise of national identities in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey, which was possible due to the fall and the divide of the Ottoman Empire, the Kurdish identity would not have transformed into a Kurdish nationalist movement. On the other hand, however, according to Jwaideh (2006), Lukitz (2005), and McDowall (1996), the Kurds have always been aware of their ethnic identity and have a history of conflicts. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Kurds might have made a claim to an independent state, regardless. Furthermore, although Jineology is a Kurdish feminist movement, it is not limited to Kurdish women, as Qeredaxî (Neven & Schäfers, 2017) states that Jineology is closely related to European feminism, because the Kurdish ideology on which Jineology is based, has a transnational perspective. As such, it can be concluded that Jineology would not have existed without Kurdish nationalism, which sheds light on nationalism and how it relates to the liberation of the members of its group. Yuval-Davis (2003, as cited in Çağlayan, 2012) shows how a nationalist project is always signified by a discourse of liberation of women. This raises questions first of all about Öcalan’s motives, as discussed in paragraph 3.6, but second of all also about the relation of gender to nationalism. As Walby (1992, as cited in Çağlayan, 2012) explains, a nationalist project signals a shift from private patriarchy to public patriarchy, which means that although a discourse of liberation of women is used, the opposite is true. This raises questions about ethnicity and the position of women in society, as nationalist claims are accompanied by a liberation discourse for women, and nationalist claims are derived from ethnic identity. In line with Öcalan (2013), it, therefore, appears indeed that nations and nationalism are based on hierarchy, patriarchy, and power, which leaves women in the position of the underdog. Additionally, based on the analyses as presented in chapter 2, that a nationalist project is accompanied by a discourse of women’s liberation, also means it places a double burden on women, in that women are made responsible for the liberation and the reproduction of the nation. It means that patriarchy and nationalism go hand in hand. Therefore, it appears that a nationalist identity is patriarchic and even, based on Öcalan’s analysis, repressive to women.

The issue with such an analysis is that it will only be considered problematic if you consider structures of hierarchy, patriarchy, and power as problematic. As a feminist scholar, I do consider those structures to be problematic, yet, others will understand patriarchy as
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necessary to maintain a capitalist society of which some are in favor of. If a society is structured in accordance with men, men will remain the breadwinner, which, in a traditional structure, limits women to the household. As a result, women provide free labor, that is, household chores\(^{49}\), which enables men to keep their jobs, who therefore remain the breadwinner, and therefore the patriarch. It is what Mies (1986) calls “female productivity as the pre-condition of male productivity” (p. 58). A man would not be able to do his job, or make the money he does, without the free labor and reproduction of women. According to Mies (1986),

“All this, [the ideology of the woman as housewife as presented in media, movies, schools] combined with the fact that the middle-class woman as an ideal type is economically dependent on a husband as breadwinner, is enough to allow us to conclude that to be a middle-class woman or housewife is not a privilege, but a disaster.” (pp. 206-207)

The Kurds appear to have reached the same conclusion, and thus aim to fight the structures that are considered oppressive.

Furthermore, this research has also shown how divided scholars are when discussing the Kurds, or the Kurdish case. There are differences in statistics, in dates; for example, when parties and organizations were established, and in translations. This becomes most clear with the example of the Iranian Komala, the Committee of the Rebirth of Kurdistan, as discussed in appendix C, as scholars do not agree on the name, the English translation of the name, as well as the starting date of the committee. Furthermore, Smith (2009) and Vali (1998) have considered the Kurds the largest ethnic minority, yet Gunes (2018) and Mutlu (1996) claim the Kurds are one of the largest ethnic minorities. Thus, it is important to know that scholarly debate exists, as it means that research needs to be based on multiple sources to figure out what the facts are\(^{50}\). I have therefore aimed to present a critical overview, which points out the discrepancies that can be found in the existing body of literature\(^{51}\).

\(^{49}\) This is based on the assumption that household chores count as labor, yet no wages are being paid.

\(^{50}\) As is shown with the example of the Komala, Roosevelt (1947) mentions in his work a committee that is similar in name, yet the date of establishment differs from the date generally mentioned in the literature. Nonetheless, it appears to be likely that the same committee is discussed, based on several characteristics that are similar to other discussions of the committee.

\(^{51}\) To do so, throughout this research, several footnotes indicate possible or different translations and spellings.
In sum, this research has shown how Jineology, the Kurdish identity, and Kurdish nationalism are related to and derived from each other. This research has also shown how scholars are divided, and that discrepancies in the available literature exist. This research has added to the current understanding of who the Kurds are, and what their fight is. Furthermore, by my analysis of the relation of Jineology to Kurdish nationalism, it has added to the limited literature on Jineology and Kurdish feminism, and to the understanding of how nationalism relates to gender discourses. Future research would benefit from an extensive review which combines, discusses and summarizes the available literature, non-Dutch and non-English literature included. It is unlikely, however, that a complete review can be compiled, as many researchers disagree on details, but also due to the ideological nature of the Kurdish question, which invites many different perspectives.
Conclusion

The research conducted in this thesis has allowed me to conclude that Jineology relates to Kurdish identity, Kurdish nationalism, and Kurdish feminism. Based on the discussed sub-questions, it has become clear that Kurdish nationalism is based on the Kurdish identity, which is formed based on ethnicity. This is supported by a theoretical framework, which discusses the processes of ethnic identity formation, and the translation of ethnic identity into nationalist claims. Furthermore, it has also become clear that the participation of Kurdish women and Kurdish feminism relate to Kurdish nationalism in that Kurdish feminism is derived from Kurdish nationalism. This has been shown by discussing Öcalan’s work and theorizations, and Jineology. It has also become clear that Kurdish feminism cannot be equated with Kurdish nationalism. Thus, Jineology relates to Kurdish nationalism but differs from it. Additionally, it has also been stated that Jineology is a Kurdish feminist movement but does not entail the entire Kurdish feminist movement. Thus, Jineology relates to these aspects, yet also has its own objectives and ideologies.

The answers to the research questions furthermore situate this research in a larger framework of ethnicity, gender, identity-formation nationalism, and feminism. It fills a gap, as the current body of literature discusses these aspects, yet separate of each other. This research has shown how valuable a discussion is that combines these aspects, specifically with regard to the Kurdish case. It is shown that the participation of women within the Kurdish struggle is significant, due to geographical and contextual limitations, yet also that the used discourses are not unique. It has also become clear that Jineology has a larger perspective than just the Kurdish struggle. Therefore, this research situates the Kurdish struggle within a larger framework of nationalist struggles, but also in relation to feminism. It adds to our understanding of how the position of women within a nationalist movement is shaped by understandings of patriarchy and power, by strategy, and by a nationalist identity. It shows how the liberation of women based on a nationalist discourse, points to their oppression, rather than creating that liberation, although it cannot be denied that Kurdish women have been able to change the gender-discourse. Therefore, this research discusses discourses of liberation, yet also raises questions about the intention behind it within a nationalist struggle. Therefore, this thesis extends an invitation for further research.

52 The theoretical framework has been created by drawing on the works of Anderson, 2006; Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1993; Eriksen, 2010; Gellner, 1983 and Moerman, 1965.
References


Kurdish feminism and the Kurdish nationalist movements


Kurdish feminism and the Kurdish nationalist movements


Marije van Huffelen


Kurdish feminism and the Kurdish nationalist movements


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Appendix A: The Newroz festival and the myth of Kawa the Blacksmith

The importance of myths

Sheyholislami cites McDowall (2004), who states that Kurdish myths are used to create an origin for the Kurds. Although these stories are myths, and therefore might not be true, Sheyholislami (2011) and McDowall (1996) explain that similar stories are used to create an ethnic identity, as those stories only refer to Kurds and as such create a unique story, which creates cohesion. Fulbrook (1997) underlines this and states that “myths are stories which are not necessarily true, nor believed to be true, but which have symbolic power.” (p. 73). Additionally, Açik (2014) who draws on Temelkuran also shows that:

“Kurdish national myths are reinvented to construct a reality that makes the liberation of Kurdistan depended on the participation and transformation of Kurdish women. This leads to a re-definition of the role of Kurdish women in the society and has been perceived by many women as empowering and liberating, particularly as it broke with traditional gender expectations (Temelkuran 1997). However, as will be argued here, the fusion of the liberation of the Kurds and Kurdish women, and the discursive necessity for both to be engaged in this struggle, has also legitimated and perhaps even paved the way for radical actions such as self-immolations and female suicide bombings.”. (p. 117)

Çağlayan (2012) underlines the importance of the myths, stating that while the participation within the Kurdish nationalist movement increased, Kurdish myths started being used to create a Kurdish identity. This is also discussed in chapter 2 and corresponds with Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1993) and Eppel (2016), who state that whether the origin-story of a group is real or not, the construction of this story creates a sense of belonging, the basis of a community. Çağlayan (2012) summarizes it as follows, and draws on Demirer, stating that:

“resignification of Newroz by the Kurdish political elite since 1960s made possible the constitution of Kurdish identity in continuity with the ancient peoples of the Mesopotamia—the Medes—and also provided an important space for the expression of the Kurds’ present political demands (Demirer, 2005).”.

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53 McDowall (2004) is a revised edition of McDowall (1996). The latter is used in this research.
This appendix will only refer to two of the many Kurdish myths and stories, as these myths became of importance for the Kurdish nationalist movement. It will be shown that the festival of Newroz is derived from the story of Kawa the Blacksmith, which in turn has led to the story of Ishtar the goddess.

**Kawa the Blacksmith and the Festival of Newroz**

Drawing on Bozarslan, many authors state that the myth of Kawa the Blacksmith is the founding myth of ‘Kurdishness’. According to Çağlayan (2012), for example, the myth of Kawa has both been used as the foundation for ‘Kurdishness’, and the beginning of a new myth, the story of Ishtar the goddess. Çağlayan (2012) offers the following version of the story and states that:

“the form of Newroz, which is associated with the myth of the Kawa the Blacksmith, has become an important element in the construction of Kurdishness as a political identity since the 1960s. According to the myth of the Kawa the Blacksmith, which is defined by Hamit Bozarslan (2002) as the founding myth of Kurdishness, Medes are acknowledged as the ancestors of Kurds, who were enslaved by the Assyrian emperor Dehak. Escaping to the mountains and breaking away from Dehak, Kurdish youth rebelled against the emperor under the leadership of Kawa the Blacksmith. On March 21st, they set up bonfires up on the mountains as a symbol of their rebellion against the empire, and of their claims to freedom (Aksoy, 1998).” (pp. 21-22).

Aydin (2005) also draws on Bozarslan and makes the same mention of the story of Kawa the Blacksmith. According to Aydin, Kawa led the Medes, who are believed to be the ancestors of the Kurds, into rebellion, and thus freedom, as Kawa defeated Assyrian king Dahhak. It is stated that Kawa’s victory was celebrated as the Festival of Newroz. Lennox (2002) presents a slightly different version of the story. Lennox states that Kawa defeated king Zohang, and presents the story as follows:

“A snake grew out of each shoulder of this tyrant king and, in order to relieve the pain, the snakes required a daily feed of human brain! Every day two boys were selected, until the king’s adviser took pity on the people and decided to mix one human brain with one sheep's brain. The child who escaped slaughter was to go to the mountains to look after the sheep. It is said these children were the ancestors of the Kurds. One day Kawa, the blacksmith, was asked for his last surviving son. He told the king’s men, “I will come
with you and kill my child by my own hands.” However, instead of hitting his son on the head with his blacksmith’s hammer, he killed the king and lit a fire on the mountain behind the palace, to tell others to rise up against the king. Fires were lit on every mountain to pass the message of revolution across the region. [...] Ever since – on the night before New Year – fires are lit on the mountains of Kurdistan and people sing and dance, defying the possibility of imprisonment or, worse, for celebrating the possibility of freedom against tyranny”. (p. 142)

This version also makes mention of Kurdish ancestors and shows how the story of Kawa the Blacksmith is related to the festival of Newroz. Similarities to the versions of Çağlayan (2012) and Aydin (2005) are the rebellion or revolution, the bonfires, and the Kurdish ancestry. Aydin explains that “today, Newroz is accepted by all Kurdish movements (including those in Iran, Iraq and Syria) as a common national festival (ibid, [Bozarslan, 2002]). [...] Therefore, Newroz became an ethno-genesis and resistance myth for the Kurds.” (p. 57).

Yanik (2006) discusses the Newroz festival and illustrates how Newroz, previously known as ‘Nevruz’, became a festival celebrated in Turkey, despite the relation of the story to Kurdish identity and the assimilationist policies of Turkey. According to Demirer (2005) and Yanik (2006), the festival is originally known as the Persian (Iranian), or pre-Islamic celebration of New Year, which was celebrated around March 21, which is the first day of spring (Çağlayan, 2012). Additionally, Demirer (2005) states that is a festival to celebrate the end of winter, which is also signified in the name of the festival which means ‘new light’ or ‘new day’. Demirer states that although similar in name, the festivals of Newroz, Nevruz, and Nuroz do know differences. The festival of Nevruz is the Turkish festival (Yanik, 2006), the festival of Newroz is the Kurdish festival. I will only discuss the Kurdish festival of Newroz.

As explained, the Newroz festival is derived from the story of Kawa the Blacksmith. As the Kurdish rebellions lit bonfires to celebrate their victory and rebellion, this is also symbolized in the celebrations of the Newroz festival. Therefore, the festival of Newroz has become much more than a New Year’s celebration for the Kurds, it has offered “a framework that permits a redefinition and promotion of [Kurdish] ethnic identity, creating a reliable channel for communication and alternative civic education” (Demirer, 2005, p. 134). Furthermore, Çağlayan (2012) links the celebration of Newroz to the increased participation of women within
the Kurdish nationalist movement\(^{54}\), explaining that the celebrations helped women become more visible. Therefore, rather than a celebration, the festival became a way of demonstrating the oppression of the Kurds (Çağlayan, 2012). This was done “through suicide protests in which they set fire to themselves” (p. 12). Burning to death was meant to symbolize the first Kurdish rebellion, which, as stated, was signified by the bonfires lit under the leadership of Kawa the Blacksmith (Çağlayan, 2012). As such, fire and death by fire became a symbol of freedom and rebellion. This is supported by Lennox (2002), who mentions the importance of fire to the Kurdish movement. Thus, the festival of Newroz has been translated into an “ideological tool utilized for “identity transfer”, an “alternative story” against the hegemonic culture” (Aydin, 2005, p. 58), based on the story of Kawa the Blacksmith (Çağlayan, 2012; Lennox, 2002).

**Kurdish myths as a discourse of Kurdish nationalism**

As presented in this thesis, the concept of Kurdayeti, Kurdishness, has been translated into a discourse for the Kurdish nationalist movement (Eppel, 2016). The same has been done with Kurdish myths, specifically with the story of Kawa the Blacksmith and the Newroz festival, which has already become clear in the previous paragraph. Aydin (2005) discusses this in more depth, and states that the Kurdish nationalist movement used the story of Kawa the Blacksmith, and transformed him into a relatable figure. It is stated that “these movements placed emphasis on the class character of Kawa, rather than his Kurdish origins. They constructed him as the leader of the people who, raising his smock as a flag, initiated resistance against the cruels.” (p. 82). I find it interesting here that the Kurdish nationalist movement would not emphasize his origin as a Kurd, but rather his class. Later, however, the story of Kawa was changed again, in the sense that it became constructed as follows: “the Contemporary Kawa was also poor; however, rather than a “proletarian vanguard”, he was more a self-sacrificing hero in order

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\(^{54}\) According to Çağlayan (2012), the celebrations of the years 1990, 1991 and 1992 were of importance, as women participated and were visible. As such, Çağlayan links these celebrations, which in a way became protests, to the participation of women within the Kurdish movement, which was increasing around the time. Nonetheless, although the participation of women increased, it was met with resistance, Çağlayan (2012) states that:

> "Women’s participation had repercussions in the public opinion. The harsh responses by the security forces and the death of many demonstrators as a result of gunfire led to new demonstrations, and to more civilian deaths, including those of women. Even if there was no more violence and tension in the following years’ demonstrations, Newroz activities kept being an important field with regards to the political visibility of women". (p. 11)
“to revive the Kurdishness, which was attempted to be destroyed”.” (p. 82). Thus, the Kurdish nationalist movement did indeed construct the myth of Kawa in such a way that it related to the Kurdish origins. Although Aydin (2005) only uses ‘contemporary’ as a time indication, it raises the question if these reconstructions of the story coincided with Öcalan’s changed ideology, which also focused on the Kurdish origin in Mesopotamia. The story of Ishtar the Goddess emphasizes how the Kurdish myths have been related to the idea of origin.

Ishtar is a goddess from the Neolithic culture, which is the same culture to which Öcalan goes back to create his ideology of the position of Kurdish women (see paragraph 3.4). Çağlayan (2012) explains that:

“the myth of the Kawa the Blacksmith and the myth of the Ishtar the Goddess — emphasize historical continuity from the prehistoric peoples of Mesopotamia and the Neolithic rural revolution until today, and thereby allow the construction of a continuous identity of Kurdishness, [...] by emphasizing a historical period and structure in which women were active.”. (p. 2)

Çağlayan (2012) states that Ishtar is the Sumerian goddess of fertility. Furthermore, Ishtar is considered to be related to the origins of the Kurds in Mesopotamia. Öcalan (1999, as cited in Çağlayan, 2012) explains how the Neolithic age, believed to be matriarchic society, which became most clear in the Sumer society, is related to the origins of the Kurds. Öcalan states that:

“When we came to Mesopotamia, [...] production developed with the unity of land and woman. [...] Animals were domesticated, seeded plants were cultivated, and women did the majority of these jobs. Ishtar was the goddess of this culture. (Öcalan 1999: 134-135)”. (Çağlayan, 2012, p.16)

As such, the stories of Kawa the Blacksmith and Ishtar the goddess have been used to symbolize where the Kurds originate from, yet also to function as a symbol of resistance, and as a way to indicate the value and centrality of women; which is all in line with Öcalan’s ideology. Moreover, according to Çağlayan (2012), those stories have even been used to construct the Kurdish identity. This shows how resistance is part of that identity, yet also how identity and nationalism are related. It shows how the Kurdish case indicates the strength of ethnic identity.
Appendix B - Kurdish nationalist movements

Please note that this overview, although roughly 15 pages long, is still a summary. Books and other extensive works have been dedicated to the Kurdish conflicts in the respective nation-states. As such, it would be impossible to give a complete overview here, which includes all the political parties, movements, leaders, assassinations, rebellions, and conflicts. Yet this summary makes mentions of what appears to be the most important aspects of the Kurdish nationalist movements in Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey.

The rise of nationalism in Iran

The root of the Kurdish-Iranian conflict is usually explained in such a way that it is related to the rise of Kurdish nationalism in Iran. It is often explained that the Kurdish-Iranian conflict arose, based on the rise of the Iranian identity. Nonetheless, the conflict did not arise because the Iranian identity denied the existence of the Kurdish identity, but rather because the Iranian identity was mostly based on a unification on the basis of the Persian language and identity, which as such excluded the Kurds. Entessar (2014) additionally states that the rise of Kurdish nationalism should also be analyzed in the context of the rise of nationalism in Iran. Entessar goes on to describe how a sense of new Iranian identity was built based on a first sense of nationalism, which is in line with the analysis of Anderson (2006) as discussed before. Therefore, Entessar (1992, as cited in Romano, 2006), states that the situation for Kurds in Iran was similar to the assimilationist practices in Turkey. The use of the Kurdish language was forbidden, and Kurdish education was disrupted due to a lack of funding.

According to Entessar (2014), it was the Russo-Persian war of 1804-55 that created a feeling of unity among the Iranians, which then led to the construction of a new Iranian identity. As such, the new Iranian identity was no longer based on a sense of shared culture, but rather on shared geography. It was an identity based on Persian territory (Entessar, 2014). Kashani-Sabet (1999) describes the rise of Iranian nationalism as a result of a “territorial desire” (p. 3), where the borders of their territory were the embodiment of the Iranian identity. The loss of Iranian territory then, as a result of the Russo-Persian war of 1804, fueled the discourse of territory as Iranian identity, because it showed how easily that territory could be lost again. The conflict with the Kurds arose when Iran began to promote their Persian and Shi’i characteristics.

55 The Russo-Persian war of 1804 was a war between the Persian and the Russian Empire. The war ended in 1813, when the Treaty of Gulistan was signed. The war led to the loss of Iranian territory, which was situated in the Caucasus, to Russia (Entessar, 2014; Kashani-Sabet, 1999).
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(Edmonds, 1971; Kashani-Sabet, 1999), ignoring that those characteristics did not apply to every ethnic group in Iran. This is connected to the construction of the Iranian identity on the basis of the Persian language. Here, in line with the analysis as provided by Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992), as discussed in chapter 2, what is perceived to be the Iranian identity, suppresses the identity of groups who do not have that same identity. Kashani-Sabet (1999) underlines this, stating that:

“tensions became manifest in the public sphere as schools and other cultural agencies promoted Persianization. The Iranian homeland, though still formally the birthplace of Armenians, Kurds, and Baluchis, as well as Farsis and others, increasingly came to represent the Vatan of Shi‘i Persians through the persistent efforts of the state to extirpate competing cultures.”. (p. 4)

Thus, a clash between the Kurds and the Iranian nationalist movement was inevitable, because the Iranian identity was based on one single ethnic group. (Vaziri, 1993, as cited in Entessar, 2014). It leads Entessar (2014) to the conclusion that “the Kurdish predicament in Iran, as elsewhere in the Middle East, has not been so much the product of Kurdish identity formation but the result of securitization of ethnic issues in the country” (p. 212). Koohi-Komali (1992) uses even stronger wording, stating that Kurdish nationalism in Iran was related to their nomadic lifestyle, but mostly because of the Iranian government’s suppressive administration. Moreover, according to Gunter (2004), “the Kurdish nationalist movement has been beaten into the ground and further demoralized, by Iran assassinating its main leaders in 1989 and in 1992” (p. 109).

Accordingly, two nationalist movements in Iran during the twentieth century are described (Edmonds, 1971; Koohi-Kamali, 1992). Firstly, the Kurdish nationalist movement arose in 1918, with the first rebellions of Isma‘il Agha Simko, who is also known as Simko, the head of the Shikak tribe (Ahmadzadeh & Stansfield, 2010; Koohi-Kamali, 1992; Van Bruinessen, 1989). As it goes with translations from one language to another, names often prove difficult to translate. This has led to different spellings of the name of Isma‘il Agha Simko, which is also spelled as Ismail Agha Simko (Romano, 2006), or as Ismail Agha Simqu (McDowall, 1996). It is likely that ‘Agha’ is not part of Simo’s official name, however, as Agha translated means leader, see ‘Overview of the used terminology’ for more information. Often times, only the last name, Simko or Simqu is used. This research will use Simko, as this appears to be the English translation and is used in most of the consulted sources, unless a direct quotation uses a different spelling.
Simko’s rebellion was defeated by the Iranian army in 1924 (Romano, 2006). Nonetheless, some will point out that Simko’s rebellion, although an uprising against Iranian politics, was not necessarily the start of a Kurdish nationalist movement. Koohi-Kamali (1992; 2003) explains that his rebellion was a rather typical move of a tribal chief at that time. This corresponds with Edmonds (1971), who states that nationalism or a nationalist discourse was oftentimes merely a tool, used by ambitious leaders, in different ethnic groups, and labels Simko’s uprising to “of the ‘feudal’ type” (p. 96). Furthermore, Ahmadzadeh & Stansfield (2010) write that:

“[although] Simko was successful in uniting a number of tribal leaders in the Kurdish areas against the central government, yet his ends are unclear, as there is little evidence to suggest that Simko’s motives were driven by any particular Kurdish nationalist vision.” (p. 13)

McDowall (1996) additionally states that: “Simqu’s revolt remained fatally handicapped by the nature of tribal politics.” (p. 219), which is further explained by Koohi-Kamali (2003), who states that a political organization is essential in order to create a more permanent movement, which is what Simko’s tribal organization lacked.

Therefore, the political organizations that were established in the 1940s are often pointed out as the Kurdish nationalist movements. Koohi-Kamali (1992) describes the establishment of the Kurdish Republic Mahabad as the second nationalist move of Iranian Kurds, yet before the establishment of the Republic, the Komala was established (Roosevelt, 1947). Romano (2006) mentions the same political movement, but with the name spelled slightly different, namely as Komala Jiyanewey Kurdistan, Committee for the Rebirth of Kurdistan58. The committee, which was also shortened to JK or JK Society (Ahmadzadeh & Stansfield, 2010; Edmonds, 1971; McDowall, 1996), was founded in September 1942, and profiled itself as a Kurdish nationalist party; its members, according to Romano (2006) mostly an elitist crowd of intellectuals and bourgeoisie and according to Edmonds (1971) a crow of...

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57 According to Edmonds (1971), the uprising of Simko lasted until 1922, but was successful in obtaining pieces of land in the North-West borderlands.

58 A more elaborate discussion of the committee, and the variations in the spelling of its name are discussed in appendix C, as it provides an insight in one of the many differences that can be found in literature discussing the Kurds.
“middle-class townsmen, supported by the tribal chiefs” (p. 96). Despite some successes, for example, the publication of a journal called Nishtiman, which means Motherland, the organization had its social limits, as it was still organized according to tribal structures. Eventually, this resulted in the Komala Jiyanewey Kurdistan being immersed in and replaced by the Kurdistan Democratic Party in September 194559 (Ahmadzadeh & Stansfield, 2010; McDowall, 1996). See appendix C, for a more detailed overview of the different spellings of the name of the committee.

The independent Kurdish Republic is described as both the most successful60 and a missed opportunity (Gresh, 2009; Koohi-Kamali, 1992; Romano, 2006). The Mahabad Republic was established on January 22, 194661, by the Komala under the KDPI (Edmonds, 1971), based on a manifesto of eight demands, as written by the KDPI (Gresh, 2009; Romano, 2006). The Republic knew a parliament of 13 members, with Qazi Muhammad as its leader. The territory of this Republic covered the area of Mahabad, Bukan, Naqada and Ushnaviya (McDowall, 1996), and the area from Urumiya to Saqiz (Ahmadzadeh & Stansfield, 2010). The Republic of Kurdistan was, according to Romano (2006) the first example of a Kurdish state, yet it was not recognized as an autonomous state by any country (Ahmadzadeh & Stansfield, 2010). Despite its hopeful start, the Republic was conquered by the Iranian army eleven months later, on December 1946. The Iranian army was able to take over the area again, due to a lack of cohesion (McDowall, 1996), a lack of internal organization, and the withdrawal of Soviet support, without which the Republic could not exist (Ahmadzadeh & Stansfield, 2010; Gresh, 2009). Nevertheless, Ahmadzadeh and Stansfield (2010) describe the establishment of the Republic as a defining moment in Kurdish nationalism, yet the defeat of the Republic did cause

59 The political party was officially called the Kurdistan Democratic Party, however, Ahmadzadeh and Stansfield (2010) state that according to Jalil Gadani, ‘Iran’ was added in 1955, when the party had their first conference. Confusion is likely to arise, however, as Iraq also knows a political party named Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), to which Van Bruinessen (1986) refers to with the same acronym, KDPI. Based on Gunes (2018), however, it appears that the Kurdistan Democratic Party in Iraq is merely a branch of the Kurdish Democratic Party in Iran. Similarly, the party also has branches in Syria.

60 The Republic of Kurdistan was not without its achievements, despite its short lifespan. The Republic was able to achieve success politically, culturally and economically. Examples of these achievements are the Kurdish National Army and the translation of Persian schoolbooks into Kurdish, but the Republic also had a daily printed newspaper and a number different of magazines (Koohi-Kamali, 2003, pp. 111-116).

61 Roosevelt (1947) on the other hand states that the Kurdish Republic in Iran was established from December 1945 to December 1946.
the then-existing nationalist movement to suffer a blow, as the KDP had lost its leader (Ahmadzadeh & Stansfield, 2010; Marcus, 2007).

As mentioned before, it was not until 1979 that the Kurds in Iran succeeded in the organization of bigger groups of Kurdish people. One of the movements that led to the organization of a bigger group of people was the Islamic Revolution, also known as the Iranian revolution, that started in 1979. Nonetheless, according to Entessar (2014), in the end, the Islamic Revolution in Iran was not able to create progress or a continuous movement for the Kurds in the long term. McDowall (1992) wrote, however, with regard to Kurdish nationalism at that time, that “it is impossible to believe that Kurdish nationalism is finally defeated” (p. 24). Koohi-Kamali (2003) states that after the 1980s the situation for the Kurds worsened with the assassinations of several Kurdish leaders, and the political movements knew multiple setbacks. Nonetheless, is stated that:

“The reality of Kurdish politics is that its fate is tied to the fate of Iranian politics as a whole. Despite the political suppression, political prisons, executions, and social and economic deprivation, the Kurds, like the other ethnic groups in Iran, have attempted to work within the system”. (p. 214)

Therefore, it is concluded that the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iran knows many set-backs, based on both internal and external factors, yet it continues its fight.

The rise of nationalism in Iraq

According to Edmonds (1959; 1971), the Kurdish Iraqi nationalist movement has been the most powerful, and fruitful. Edmonds states that this success is due to the fact only in Iraq the Kurds are recognized as an ethnic minority and as such it is not forbidden to use the Kurdish language for example, which is the case in Iran, Syria, and Turkey. Alinia (2013) underlines this, stating that the Iraqi Kurds “have enjoyed greater cultural rights than Kurds in Iran and Turkey” yet “they have also experienced recurrent wars and armed conflicts, genocide, mass deportations, chemical warfare, mass executions, and human rights violations on an enormous scale.” (p. 21).

Similar to the Kurdish-Iranian conflict, the Kurdish-Iraqi conflict was heavily influenced by the political environment in twentieth-century Iraq, which had a strong Arab character, as Iraq during that time experienced the rise of the ideology of Arab nationalism (Lukitz, Iraq: Search for National Identity, 2005; McDowall, 1996). Lukitz (2005) however, prefers the term ‘cultural consciousness’ over nationalism, as according to Lukitz it is unsure
whether a ‘cultural distinctiveness’ had already become a trend. Similar to the rise of nationalism in Iran, and again in line with Anderson (2006) and Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992), nationalism in Iraq according to Lukitz (2005), is related to the nation-state. According to Lukitz, the Iraqi identity could either be based on ethnicity or territory. A national identity based on ethnicity however, would mean the exclusion of non-Arabs, for example, the Kurds, as Iraq was “ethnically too heterogeneous” (Wimmer, 2003, p. 113). Although a heterogeneous ethnicity does not have to lead to conflict, in Iraq, the formation of a national identity based on ethnicity once again excluded the Kurds from the national identity of a new nation-state. According to Wimmer (2003), the national identity of Iraq based on ethnicity eventually did lead to conflict, at least in part, exactly because of its ethnic heterogeneity.

The first Kurdish resistance in Iraq became visible in 1918, in the attempt of creating an autonomous province in Sulaymani (Edmonds, 1959; 1971; Gunes, 2018), which is one of the three important areas in Iraqi Kurdistan, and the home base of the PUK (Ali, 2018; Alinia, 2013). This attempt, however, failed about six months later, in 1919, when its leader, Shaykh Mahmud, his full name was Mahmud Berzenjii (Wimmer, 2003), was defeated and exiled (Edmonds, 1959; 1971). McDowall (1996) also makes mention of resistance to Mahmud’s rule by other Kurdish leaders. According to Gunes (2018), Shaykh Mahmud was released in 1922, after which he continued his efforts to create an autonomous Kurdish area. Furthermore, Kurdish nationalism was also present in the form of published journals and newspapers, specifically around the 1920s and 1930s (Edmonds, 1971; Gunes, 2018). The importance of these journals and newspapers is signalled by Jwaideh (2006), who states that: “the emergence of a Kurdish nationalist press [...] gave a strong impetus to Kurdish cultural and political activities.” (p. 292).

Gunes (2018), furthermore makes mention of the Kurdish nationalist movement Hiwa, which translated means hope. Although this movement did manage to organize some Kurds, it was repressed in 1945, two years after the revolt against the Iraqi government (Gunes, 2018). Its leader, Mulla Mustafa Barzani, fled to Iran and eventually participated in the establishment of the Kurdish Republic of Mahabad, in 1946 (Gunes, 2018). Moreover, according to Gunes

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62 According to Alinia (2013) however, it was not until 1920 that the nation-state of Iraq was established by the British. As such, this revolt technically is not the first Kurdish revolt in Iraq. Yet, the attempt did happen in what would become the nation-state of Iraq. As Sulaymani did become an important area for Kurdish nationalists, and because the attempt can be recognized as a collective Kurdish revolt, it is still discussed.

63 It has to be noted that ‘Shaykh’ is Arabic for the title Sheikh, see ‘Overview of the used terminology’ for more information.
(2018) and Marcus (2007), Barzani became a leading figure in the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq in the 1960s, as, after the failure of the Republic of Mahabad, Barzani returned to Iraq. Additionally, according to Alinia (2013), not just Mulla Mustafa Barzani played an important role, but “[all] the sheiks of Barzan have played a central role in the Kurdish nationalist movement in Iraq since the 1930s.” (p. 22). Ultimately, in the words of Alinia (2013), Kurdish nationalism can be summarized as follows: “the Kurds have recurrently been involved in guerrilla warfare against the government and guerrillas have periodically controlled large parts of Kurdish northern Iraq.” (p. 20).

Two other important movements that played a role in the turbulent history of the Kurds in Iraq are the aforementioned KDP and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). The KDP was founded by the earlier mentioned Barzani (Gunter, 2004), and the PUK was founded by Jalal Talabani, previously a member of the KDP (Alinia, 2013). Despite a strained relationship between Barzani and Talabani, which has resulted in armed conflicts, the parties have become closer after 2003 (Alinia, 2013; Stansfield, 2003). Esfandiary and Tabatabai (2015) furthermore also make mention of the Iraqi Kurdistan Region (IKR), with the Peshmerga, (translated it means ‘ready to die’ (Bengio, 2012)), as its military wing, led by Barzani (Bengio, 2012; Esfandiary & Tabatabai, 2015; Romano, 2006).

Another important time period for Kurdish nationalism in Iraq was with the fall of the Iraqi monarchy in 1958 (Edmonds, 1971; Gunes, 2018). Gunes (2018) states that Kurdish nationalism arose after 1950, sustained by the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Edmonds (1971) agrees with Gunes, stating that the fall of the Iraqi monarchy allowed the Iraqi branch of the KDP, “under the leadership of several left-wing intellectuals, [to come out] into the open” (p. 100). On the other hand, a downfall for the Kurdish resistance in Iraq, according to Alinia (2013), who refers to Hardi, was the Anfal campaign of Saddam Hussein, which, according

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64 The history of, and the relationship between the KDP and the PUK is a long and complicated one, which is shown by Stansfield (2003), who has dedicated an entire chapter to the subject. As such, this will not be discussed in further detail in this research, due to a lack of space.

65 See ‘Overview of the used terminology’ for a further discussion of the name Peshmerga.

66 Alinia (2013) states that “when the war between Iran and Iraq ended in 1988, Saddam Hussein unleashed the Anfal campaign, a new and extensive program of Arabization and genocide, on the Kurdish population” (p. 21). Additionally, Alinia in the notes at the end of book, cites Hardi (2011), who states that: “the term Al-Anfal means ‘the spoils of war’. It is the name of the eighth chapter of the Qur’an, and relates to the first jihad against nonbelievers. Anfal consisted of a series of eight military offensives that annihilated Kurdish rural life between February and September 1988” (p. 13).
to Hardi (2011) killed approximately hundred thousand civilians. Furthermore, although Alinia (2013) does recognize a resurrection of the Kurdish resistance in March when the Kurds were able to take control over the North of Iraq, as earlier revolts, this revolt too ended up a failure (Alinia, 2013).

To summarize, I will cite Alinia (2013), who states the following: “Iraqi Kurdistan was a war zone from the early 1960s (Mojab 2004a: 116) until 2003. Kurdish tribes held the balance of power in the struggle between the state and the Kurdish opposition” (p. 26).

The rise of nationalism in Syria

The Kurdish-Syrian conflict is based on similar roots as the Kurdish-Turkish conflict, as Syria used similar assimilationist policies which repressed the Kurds (Enzinna, 2015; Federici, 2015; Özcan, 2006). Nonetheless, Tejel (2009) states that “the Syrian Kurdish movement has traditionally employed a strategy of peaceful action, coupled with a moderate political program” (p. 5). Yet, Edmonds (1971) states that the position of Syrian Kurds is different in that their population is smaller. Furthermore, based on the available literature, their nationalism appears to be more recent, compared to the history of nationalisms in Iran and Iraq. Federici (2015) makes a similar analysis, stating that: “in comparison to other Kurdish populations, Kurds in Syria have had a much quieter history of nationalist mobilization, lacking powerful symbols of national struggle that could compare with the Halabja genocide in Iraq or the Mahabad Republic in Iran.” (p. 85), which is also underlined by Gunes and Lowe (2015): “Kurds in Syria had a weaker history of nationalist mobilization compared with Kurdish populations in Turkey, Iraq and Iran” (p.7). Additionally, that Kurdish nationalism in Syria is more recent, is also shown by one of its only successes, “an unprecedented opportunity” (Gunes & Lowe, 2015, p. 3), which is that in Syria the Kurds have, for the first time, succeeded in the establishment of a Kurdish, autonomous area, named Rojava, which was established in January 2014 (Gunes, 2018).

Federici (2015) explains that while Kurds in the neighboring areas of Iraq and Turkey did book successes, “there was minimal advancement of the Kurdish cause in Syria where the Ba’ath regime[67] not only denied some three hundred thousand Kurds Syrian citizenship and

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[67] The Ba’ath regime, according to Heydemann (2013), was “the authoritarian system of rule initiated by the Ba’ath Party in the early 1960s” (p. 60). Robert Kaplan (1993), author of ‘In Europe’s Shadow: Two Cold Wars and a Thirty-Year Journey Through Romania and Beyond’, writes in an article for the Atlantic that Ba’athism was derived from the Arab word for renaissance, its goal to reinstate socialism over religion. As such, this regime
state services, but also heavily restrained any form of Kurdish political activity and mobilization." (p. 81).

Nonetheless, some Kurdish nationalist movements did exist. The first Kurdish political party in Syria, Partiya Dêmokrat a Kurd li Sûriyê (KDPS) (Allsopp, 2015; Gunes, 2018), was founded in June 1957, which, as the KDP in Iraq, was a branch of the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran (Edmonds, 1971). Furthermore, any other Kurdish nationalist movement in Syria was based on the KDPS (Allsopp, 2015; Federici, 2015). According to Federici (2015) and Gunes (2018) however, the party and any other movement derived from the KDPS, were so fragmented, that the parties were not able to create a larger mobilization. The reason for the fragmentation within these movements was mostly due to the oppressive regimes of Syrian governments (Federici, 2015). Moreover, two years after its establishment, the leadership of the KDPS and its members were arrested on grounds of treason (Edmonds, 1971). Nonetheless, despite the illegality of Kurdish political parties, Allsopp (2015) states that “by the end of 2012 there were approximately 20 of them, and Kurdish sources suggested in March 2013 that this number may have doubled.” (p. 28). Additionally, Plakoudas (2017) identifies three categories of parties and movements that divided the Syrian Kurds: “the Kurdish National Council, the National Coordination Body for Democratic Change and the Syrian National Council” (pp. 100-101). One party stands out, however, as it became the strongest party, the PYD.

Despite a lack of successes in Syria, it appears that this changed with the establishment of the Democratic Union Party, Partîya Yekîti ya Dêmokrat (PYD) in 2003 (Federici, 2015; Gunes, 2018). Although it was eventually the PYD who had an important role in the establishment of the DFNS, according to Gunes (2018), there has been opposition towards the PYD from the other Kurdish nationalist parties in Syria, as other parties have challenged their authority (Gunes & Lowe, 2015). Plakoudas (2017) already makes this clear with his article, which is titled the “Syrian Kurds and the Democratic Union Party: The Outsider in the Syrian War”. Gunes (2018) additionally states the following:

“the other Kurdish political parties have a much longer history and are affiliated to the Iraqi Kurdish political parties, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). [Moreover,] they came together under the Kurdish

“deprived [about two million Kurds] of the rights to be employed, own property, enter into a legal marriage, or participate in elections.” (Federici, 2015, pp. 81-82). Furthermore, any form of cultural expression was banned.
Marije van Huffelen

*National Council (KNC) in 2011 to strengthen their position and counter the PYD’s dominance.* 

(p. 62)

This shows how Kurdish nationalist movements are intertwined with those in other nation-states, but also how, despite shared objectives, there is friction between the different movements. Even so, as other nationalist movements in Syria are linked to those in Iraq, the PYD, on the other hand, shared their agenda and ideology with the Turkish Kurdistan Worker’s Party, the PKK68 (Federici, 2015; Gunes, 2018; Plakoudas, 2017). Additionally, the PYD differs from the other parties in Syria in that the PYD had a military wing, the People’s Protection Units, *Yekîneyên Parastina Gel* (YPG) (Federici, 2015; Plakoudas, 2017). Additionally, the PYD, similar to the PKK, also established a women-only unit, as part of the YPG, named the Women’s Protection Units, *Yekîneyên Parastina Jinê* (YPJ) (Bengio, 2016). Lastly, the PYD also mirrored the PKK in its organizational structure. The PYD, according to Allsopp (2015), knowns a hierarchal structure, with its members divided over different, secret cells. This differs from the structure that the KDPS uses, which, in contrast, maintains a decentralized power structure (Allsopp, 2015). Eventually, according to Federici (2015) and Plakoudas (2017), it was the PYD, thanks to its military wing, the YPG, that was able to take over the northern area of Syria with the withdrawal of the Syrian’s army on July 2012. As Federici (2015) states: “in late 2013, these developments culminated in the creation of the autonomous Kurdish administration of Rojava [which means] (Western Kurdistan)69 in northern Syria.” (p. 82).

In conclusion, the rise Kurdish nationalism in Syria, although weaker and more recent than Kurdish nationalism in other nation-states, did eventually lead to the establishment of a Kurdish autonomous region. As such, the DFNS is an important aspect of Kurdish nationalism

68 This is despite the PYD’s continuous denial of any ties with the PKK (Plakoudas, 2017), which, Plakoudas, based on Gunter (2014), labels “an armed organization designated as a terrorist group by Turkey, the United States, and the European Union” (Plakoudas, 2017, p. 102). However, Plakoudas does state that the PYD “does sustain organic ties with the PKK” (p. 102), and what is more, that the PKK does support the PYD in its guerrilla warfare, which is similar to the PKK’s fight. Additionally, Federici (2015) states that the PYD was founded by former members of the PKK.

69 According to Bengio (2016), Gunes (2018), and Gunes and Lowe (2015), the translation of Rojava from the Kurdish language to English is ‘West’, although Federici (2015) translates it as Western Kurdistan. This however, is accurate in that Rojava is often used to refer to the Western parts of Kurdistan, as earlier presented on map 1 (Gunes, 2018; Gunes & Lowe, 2015).
Kurdish feminism and the Kurdish nationalist movements

The rise of nationalism in Turkey

Kurdish nationalism in Turkey, specifically compared to Kurdish nationalism in Syria, knows a long history. The first aspect is the early rebellions in the 1920s and 1930s, the second aspect is the establishment of an important Kurdish nationalist movement in Turkey, the PKK.

The Kurdish-Turkish conflict started during a decade of great turmoil, in 1908 (McDowall, 1996), specifically due to Turkey’s repressive regimes. Discrimination against and repression of the Kurds has been present ever since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923, as this new republic was based on the Turkish culture, identity, and language. As a result, it was not allowed to express any form of Kurdish identity or use the Kurdish language (Içduygu, Romano, & Sirkeci, 1999; Özcan, A. K., 2006). Although protests against this assimilationist approach were silenced, the Turkish Kurds have been able to generate a larger political interest since 1960. Kurdish activism increased in 1970, and with the military coup of 1980, the Kurds were able to mobilize larger groups of Kurdish people (Çaha, 2011; Gunes, 2018).

Although McDowall (1996) discusses a first organized rebellion in 1889, in which the Kurds played a large role, Edmonds (1971) identifies three Kurdish uprisings, of which the first one is in 1925. The difference with McDowall, who states that the first rebellion was about 35 years earlier, is that Edmonds only takes rebellions after the creation of Turkey as a nation-state into account. Nonetheless, the first rebellion in 1925, had a religious character, rather than a Kurdish nationalist character, which is emphasized by the fact that the rebellion had a religious leader\textsuperscript{70}, Shaikh Said of Palu (Edmonds, 1971). The second rebellion started in 1927, organized by \textit{Khoybun}, which translated means ‘being one-self, did have a nationalist and liberationist character. was in 1930 and the third rebellion, which was around 1937 was an uprising against the repressive policies. Gunes (2012) summarizes it as follows:

\[\text{“[\ldots] the erosion of Kurdish autonomy and the denial of Kurdish identity were due to Turkish nationalism’s restrictive and oppressive attitude to cultural and national}\]

\textsuperscript{70} See ‘Overview of the used terminology’ for a further explanation of this and similar titles.
difference, which was challenged by the Kurds in a series of uprisings during the 1920s and 1930s". (p. 70)

A second important aspect of Kurdish nationalism is the uprisings in the 1970s and 1980. Some Kurdish movements were established in the time period between, yet none of those were able to succeed (Romano, 2006). Romano, for example, makes mention of the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Turkey (KDPT), which was founded in the 1960s, based on the Iraqi KDP. According to Gunes (2012), “the period between 1974 and 1980 witnessed a significant increase in Kurdish political activism” (p. 74). One of the most important movements that was founded around that time, was the Kurdish Workers Party, Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan (PKK)\(^1\). The PKK was founded in 1974 by Abdullah Öcalan, although some reports vary and mention the early 1970s as the starting point (McDowall, 1996; Özcan, A. K., 2006). Akkaya and Jongerden (2011), Casier (2010), Gunes (2018)\(^2\) and Romano (2006) on the other hand, state that the PKK was formally established in 1978. Özcan (2006) however, offers an answer for these differences, explaining that the “‘draft programme’ [was] distributed to prominent members of the group […] in early 1978” (p. 99), which is also stated by Gunes (2012). Romano (2006) underlines this, stating in his notes that it is difficult to retrieve the actual foundation dates of the movements. Additionally, Gunes (2012), states that “from 1978 onwards the group's discourse and political demands for the Kurds became much clearer” (p. 79). Romano furthermore, based on Ismet (1992, as cited in Romano, 2006) gives a list of fourteen other socialist Kurdish movements in Turkey that emerged in the 1980s. Additionally, according to Romano (2006), the PKK and other Kurdish socialist movement were all in some way based on Dev Genc, the Turkish Worker’s Party of the 1960s and the DISK labor union. Nonetheless,

\(^{1}\) The PKK is considered to be one of the most important movements in Turkey by several authors; Akkaya, 2016; Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011; Gunes, 2018 amongst others, as this movement, from a Kurdish perspective, has been able to book many successes, or, as Akkaya (2016) states it in his dissertation: “[the PKK] has acted as the main Kurdish political actor” (p. 6), which is also stated in similar wording by Gunes (2018). The PKK is also considered to be of importance, because the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, has laid the foundations for Kurdish feminism. As such, this movement is specifically for this research of importance and therefore discussed in detail.

\(^{2}\) Gunes’ statement in the book ‘The Kurds in a New Middle East’ of 2018, however, is in contrast with what is stated by Gunes, six years earlier: “The group [the PKK] emerged as a political/ideological group in the early 1970s in Ankara within the left-wing university circles. The leading group members were active within the ADYOD […] in 1974 and 1975.” (Gunes, 2012, pp. 78-79).
the PKK as the other movements, similar as to Jwaideh (2006) already stated and to the Kurdish nationalist movements in the other nation-states, were fragmented (Gunes, 2012; Romano, 2006).

The PKK started out as a Marxist-Leninist organization, a small movement of about twenty people, which, according to Van Bruinessen (2000) started among university students, yet ten years later it would be “a 300-strong trained militant force” (Ismet, 1996, p. 46). Despite the foundation of the PKK in 1974, it was not until six years later that the PKK was able to create drastic changes. These changes were based on three major political events: the Iranian revolution, the military coup in Turkey and the Iraq-Iran war (Van Bruinessen, 1999).

The PKK, often labeled a terrorist or rebel organization, due to its guerrilla wing (Gunter, 2004; Ismet, 1996), is active in Turkey, mainly in south-east regions, but also in Syria and Iraq. Although some will label the group a terrorist organization, others determine it to be an ideological movement (Ismet, 1996). Turkish authorities for example, “have insisted on regarding the PKK purely as a terrorist phenomena allegedly aiming only “to destroy Turkish sovereignty and divide the country […]” (Ismet, 1996, p. 47). Ismet states that similar propaganda “prevent a peaceful solution” (p. 97). Furthermore, as mentioned in chapter 3, Van Bruinessen (2000) determines two departments within the PKK, calling it a military and a civilian (political) PKK. As such, I refer to footnote 43, for a description of the differences between the two departments. The military part of the PKK is responsible for the guerilla activities of the PKK. The second group takes care of the more ‘PR-related’ tasks, such as diplomacy, spreading information, creating contacts, or the publishing of newspapers and journals, as well as the organization of activities (Van Bruinessen, 2000).

According to Gunes (2018), the PKK was able to create a mass movement in 1980 and 1990, in part due to its military wing, but also due to its political focus. A. K. Özcan (2006)

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73 Although to date, the PKK is still perceived by some to be a terrorist organization, perceptions have shifted, specifically because of the part the Kurds played in the war on ISIS. The shift in perception has also partially been caused by the shift in discourse and the participation of women. One has to take the context in which Ismet’s article is written into account. It is written before Öcalan’s arrest, which means it was written before the first clear ideological shifts in discourse.

74 After his arrest in 1999, Öcalan himself indirectly labeled the PKK a terrorist organisation, pleading guilty to the charge of having committed terrorist acts, although he did held others, not himself responsible for these acts (Van Bruinessen, 2000).

75 Van Bruinessen (2000) also states that these two groups both answer to a centralized committee, which in reality means the party answers to Öcalan, as Öcalan is in direct control of the committee.
states that it was the biggest political party in the Kurdish regions of Turkey, through the 1990s. Yet, it has to be noted that, although the PKK did book successes and became the most important political actor, there were three nationalist movements who were more popular than the PKK in the 1970s (Özcan A. K., 2006). First of all, there was The Vanguard Workers Party of Kurdistan, Partiya Pêşenga Karkerên Kurdistan (PPKK), which is also known as Şivancilar. The second party is the Socialist Party of Turkish Kurdistan (TKSP), which later became the Kurdistan Socialist Party. The third party is the Kurdistan Liberation Party, Partiya Rizariya Kurdistan (PRK), which is also known as Rizgari, which translated means ‘liberation’ (Özcan A. K., 2006). Furthermore, the PKK was not only active in Turkey, but also in Lebanon and Syria, and knew of support of European Kurds (Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011; Gunes, 2018; Ismet, 1996). Additionally, the PKK also knows support and has expanded to Iran and Iraq (Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011; Ismet, 1996).

The PKK became the primary Kurdish political party, and became more active from 1984 onwards, as they had their first insurgency (Casier, 2010; Gunes, 2018; İçduygu, Romano, & Sirkeci, 1999; Ismet, 1996) and launched a series of attacks (McDowall, 1996). According to McDowall (1996), the PKK was filled more anger than the Iranian Komala or the PUK in Iraq, and as such, the PKK was considered to be stronger than those movements. Furthermore, the PKK’s ideology was heavily based on Öcalan’s theorizations, who added a class-aspect, and later on, a gender-aspect to the fight (Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011; McDowall, 1996). Öcalan’s theorizations on gender equality also were translated into practice with the added women-only unit (Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011). According to Akkaya and Jongerden (2011), the participation of women within the PKK has a long history. It is stated that the first women’s unit, Union of Women, was added in 1995, and the first women’s party, the Party of Free women in Kurdistan, Partiya Azadiya Jin a Kurdistan (PJAK) was formed in 1999 (Akkaya & Jongerden, 2011). Furthermore, the PKK changed its course with the arrest of Öcalan in 1999 and changed its objectives from an independent Kurdish state to democratic confederalism.

As such, it can be stated that Kurdish nationalism in Turkey has a turbulent, but continuous history. It started soon after the formation of the Turkish nation-state, and the movement, specifically the PKK, is active till today.
Appendix C: The Komala, Committee for the Rebirth of Kurdistan

The Iranian Komala is represented in the literature in multiple ways. Different spellings and translations of the name exist, and similarly, scholars point to different starting dates. This appendix gives an overview of the different spellings and presents why it is likely that all the scholars refer to the same Komala. Additionally, this appendix is also included to show how many incongruences can be found in the existing literature on the Kurds.

Ahmadzadeh & Stansfield (2010) describe the Komalay Jiyanaway Kurd/Kurdistan, the Society for the Revival of the Kurds/Kurdistan. Romano (2006) offers a second spelling and translation, namely Komala Jiyaneway Kurdistan, Committee for the Rebirth of Kurdistan. McDowall (1996) gives a third spelling and translation, namely Komala-I Jiyanawi Kurdistan, which means the Committee for the Revival of Kurdistan. Additionally, the name of the committee was also shortened to JK or JK Society. A fourth possible spelling is the Komalai Zhiani Kurdistan, or the Committee for the Resurrection – or life – of Kurdistan, as presented by Koohi-Kamali (2003), and Edmonds (1971) simply refers to the committee as The Society for the Revival of Kurdistan (JK).

These different spellings could raise the question if the same Komala is discussed. Yet, Koohi-Kamali (2003) also refers to the committee as the Komala J.K and refers to the same founding date as Romano (2006). It supports the assumption Koohi-Kamali that indeed refers to the same organization. Another organization appears in the literature however, the Komala-i-Zhian-i-Kurd, which is the Committee of Kurdish Youth, founded in August 1943, as mentioned by Roosevelt (1947). As the spelling of the name of this committee corresponds with the spelling that Koohi-Kamali (2003) uses when referring to the Committee for the Rebirth of Kurdistan, it is assumed by the researcher that Roosevelt describes the same organization. Despite a difference in translation and in the date of the establishment of the organization, there are several reasons to assume that it is the same organization as the aforementioned Komala Jiyanewey Kurdistan. First of all, the description of the committee, its organization structure, and its ending is similar as described in other sources. For example, both McDowall (1996) and Roosevelt (1947) describe the Komala to be organized in cells. Secondly, Ahmadzadeh & Stansfield (2010), McDowall (1996) and Roosevelt (1947) all make mention of collaborations and contact with Kurdish movements in other areas, such as in Iraq and Turkey. Thirdly, Roosevelt (1947) mentions that the Komala-i-Zhian-i-Kurd was absorbed by the Kurdish Democratic Party Iran, which is similar to what happened to the Komala Jiyanewey Kurdistan (Gresh, 2009; Romano, 2006). As a fourth and last argument, Van Bruinessen (1986) also makes note of the Komala and describes it as one of two powerful political organizations in
Iran, the other one being the KDPI. The same is true for Mojab (2000), who also mentions the Komala, although rather as a branch of the Communist Party of Iran. It is likely that both Van Bruinessen (1986) and Mojab (2000) refer to the Komala Jiyanewey Kurdistan, because of the mentioned connection to the Kurdish Democratic Party of Iran, which we also find with the Komala-i-Zhian-i-Kurd. Possible explanations for these different accounts of Kurdish nationalist movements in Iran can be found in the following. McDowall (1996) states that the election of the first central committee happened in April 1943, which could possibly explain why Roosevelt (1947) states a different starting year. Furthermore, Koohi-Kamali (2003, p. 100) states that: “there are few documents about the history of this underground organization. Some of the [...] information was revealed much later by one of its founders, Mullah Qader Modarresi.”. Its underground character could explain why there is uncertainty about some details.
Appendix D - Rojava, or the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria

Rojava, or the Democratic Federation of Northern Syria (DFNS), is the Kurdish independent society, located in the North of Syria, and was established in January 2014 (Gunes, 2018). It has to be noted that some scholars claim that Rojava was established in November 2013 (Federici, 2015; Leezenberg, 2016). The DFNS’ objective is in line with Öcalan’s ideology, which is “to be a territorially contagious but multicultural self-governing region within a democratic and federal Syrian state” (Gunes, 2018, p. 62).

It is interesting that it is in Syria that Kurdish nationalist finally succeeded in completing their objective of a Kurdish nationalist state, as Federici (2015) states that: “in comparison to other Kurdish populations, Kurds in Syria have had a much quieter history of nationalist mobilization, lacking powerful symbols of national struggle that could compare with the Halabja genocide in Iraq or the Mahabad Republic in Iran.” (p. 85), which is also underlined by Gunes and Lowe (2015): “Kurds in Syria had a weaker history of nationalist mobilization compared with Kurdish populations in Turkey, Iraq and Iran” (p.7). Edmonds (1971) explains that the position of the Kurds in Syria is different, as their population is smaller, compared to Kurdish populations in the other nation-states. Furthermore, based on the available literature, the Kurdish-Syrian nationalism appears to be more recent, compared to the history of nationalisms in Iran and Iraq. Despite the creation of an autonomous area, the Syrian Kurds however, have not booked many other successes.

Syrian-Kurds were able to establish the DFNS, with the help of the Democratic Union Party, Partîya Yekîtî ya Dêmokrat (PYD), which was established in 2003 (Federici, 2015; Gunes, 2018). Eventually, according to Federici (2015) and Plakoudas (2017), the PYD, thanks to its military wing, the YPG, was able to take over the northern area of Syria with the withdrawal of the Syrian’s army on July 2012. As Federici (2015) states: “in late 2013, these developments culminated in the creation of the autonomous Kurdish administration of Rojava [which means] (Western Kurdistan) in northern Syria.” (p. 82). The DFNS has been independent ever since the PYD took control over the area (Gunes, 2018).

Whereas Rojava had been split up into three cantons, namely Jazira, Kobani and Afrin (Bengio, 2016; Gunes, 2018), these cantons were united under the DFNS in 2016 (Gunes, 2018).

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76 According to Bengio (2016), Gunes (2018), and Gunes and Lowe (2015), the translation of Rojava from the Kurdish language to English is ‘West’, although Federici (2015) translates it as Western Kurdistan. This however, is accurate in that Rojava is often used to refer to the Western parts of Kurdistan, as earlier presented on map 1, chapter 1 (Gunes, 2018; Gunes & Lowe, 2015).
Cemgil and Hoffman (2016) furthermore discuss the way the DFNS is structured and its inspiration, stating that:

“[The DFNS has] a local, anti-authoritarian, anti-hierarchical and communitarian approach […]. Based on the theories of Bookchin, a US thinker frequently labelled ‘eco-anarchist’, [and the theorizations of Öcalan] the Rojava model is a radical departure from the hierarchical global growth regime. This ‘democratic confederalism’ or ‘libertarian municipalism’, entails elements such as community-based, cooperative production and trade as social ecology, radical gender equality, and local forms of direct democratic political rule.” (p. 54).

As such, Kurdish nationalism as lived out in the DFNS shows a changed approach, from nationalism to democratic confederalism, which is also visible in the PKK. Furthermore, in line with democratic confederalism, it is important to note what Gunes (2018) points out, which is that “although the Kurds are the main force behind the DFNS, it is not organised along ethnic lines and aspires to be a multi-ethnic entity with decentralized administration and representative bodies to accommodate all of the ethnocultural groups in northern Syria” (p. 69). Neven and Schäfers (2017) state that Rojava is not constructed of one nation, it is a society of multiple nations who are self-governed, the epitome of Öcalan’s concept of ‘democratic confederalism’. By this is meant that Rojava is not just for Kurds, but it is encompassed of Arabs, Assyrians, Turkmens, and others (Neven & Schäfers, 2017). This is underlined by Küçük and Özselçukon (2016), who state that the DFNS aims “to create conditions of equality between different groups in Rojava, in particular, and the Middle East” (p. 186). The importance of a democratic society rather than a democratic state is also underlined by the establishment of the Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK), in 2005. The KCK had as its mission to create “a borderless confederation between, and implementation of, democratic confederalism across all four Kurdish regions.” (Gerber & Brincat, 2018, p. 6). The KCK’s mission was brought to life in the foundation of the Democratic Federation of Rojava (Gerber & Brincat, 2018). In sum, Rojava or the DFNS is a result of Kurdish nationalism, yet is structured in accordance with Öcalan’s ideology. As such, the DFNS also knows a focus on

77 The change in ideology and approach, as well as the concept of Democratic Confederalism as inspired by Bookchin and Öcalan are discussed in chapter 3 of this research.

78 In this context, nation refers to groups of people from different ethnicities or countries. It does not refer to a nation in the sense of a nation-state or country.
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gender equality (Knapp, Flach, & Ayboğa, 2016; Küçük & Özselçuk, 2016), which is also part of Öcalan’s ideology. This is shown by Qeredaxî, a member of the Jineology movement, who states that Rojava knows many Jineology movements (Neven & Schäfers, 2017). As such, Qeredaxî explains how Rojava lives out the difference between the Kurdish nationalist movement and the Kurdish freedom movement as Rojava is considered to be engaged in the struggle, but “parallel and together with the Kurdish [nationalist] movement”. As such, the DFNS is thus organized within and next to the Kurdish freedom movement, rather than under the Kurdish freedom movement. Rojava’s struggle as such is understood to be a democratic struggle, which shows the difference between a nationalist struggle and a democratic struggle or a struggle for freedom.

Thus, Rojava of the DFNS is a Kurdish independent state, which aims to live out Öcalan’s ideology. As such, Rojava clearly shows how the Kurdish nationalism movements and the Kurdish liberation movements are intertwined.
Appendix E – List of inaccessible sources

The following list gives an overview of (most) of the sources that could not be found. The sources as mentioned could not be found, either due to limited access or due to language barriers. Nonetheless, based on the titles and abstracts of the articles, the sources did appear to be relevant. Some sources could be accessed in part, for example via Google Books. The use of a source via Google Books allows for partial access to the source, with some pages or chapters redacted.

The overview is not a complete overview, yet functions as an indication of one of the limitations of this research. It shows that creating a full overview requires knowledge of multiple languages and extensive access to databanks. As such, this overview gives an indication of sources that could not be accessed.

Partially inaccessible sources


Inaccessible sources


Kurdish feminism and the Kurdish nationalist movements


➢ Based on Sheyholislami (2011), the title translates to ‘Kurdistan and its revolution: A series of lectures delivered in German, in Berlin, in 1971 for the Kurds and friends of the Kurds. Translated into Kurdish by Ali Kurdo.


➢ This article is cited by Düzgün (2016), yet could not be accessed, as the site was no longer available.


➢ Based on Çağlayan (2012), the title translates to ‘Woman and Family Question’.


➢ The title of this article translates to ‘Ecofeminism in Rojava: towards the construction of an alternative model of economic development in the Syrian territory of Kurdistan’79.

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79 Translated with the use of Google Translate.