

Kîme Ez?: Navigating and maintaining identity of Kurdish women in the city of Diyarbakir

Kany Abdullah, Geography & International Relations, abdullahkany@gmail.com



Kurdish women attend the International Women's Day March in Diyarbakir, 2016 (Source: AFP)

Background

Using a feminist lense, this thesis interrogates the systems of power in place in Northern Kurdistan (i.e. Eastern Turkey), how it affects the Kurds socially, politically, geographically and economically levels. Moreover it explores how Kurdish women view these systems and combat them by:

- Analyzing the discourses of Kurdish feminism and the Turkish social fabric
- Analyzing the layout of Kurdish cities and the woman's physical movement
Examining the history of the Kurdish women's movement and its ties to
- Recognizing the various ways young women reclaim spaces

Research Questions

- How have Kurdish women maintained their Kurdishness and femininity?
- Has public gender-based violence in Diyarbakir heightened with the rise of a more conservative state Islam? If so, why?
- Which particular spaces in the city are sites of state and gender-based violence? Why?
- How are women navigating and/or resisting this violence?
- What spaces, virtual and material, are women utilizing to resist this violence?

Methods

- Archival work of media stories (print, video)
- Participant observation in important regions in Diyarbakir
- Interviews and surveys with Kurdish women: feminists, organizers, workers, students, etc.
- Literature review of previous work on feminism in Anatolia
- Monitoring social media

Reclamation of Traditional Spaces

This study focuses on how Kurdish women reclaim traditionally male, Kurdish/Turkish spaces, also the usage of social media to connect with other Kurdish women to organize.



Mala Dengbêjan (I house of Dengbêj), a space to showcase Kurdish culture and language, August 2017. (Source: Kany Abdullah)

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Dr. Caroline Faria, the Feminist Geography Collective at UT, and the Institute of Human Geography. Funding was provided by NSF CSS #1461686 and the Institute of Human Geography journal grant.