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# Revisiting feminist historiography on women's activism in Turkey: beyond the grand narrative of waves

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## ABSTRACT

Recent contributions in feminist historiography challenge the reading of women's movements through the waves metaphor and destabilise rigid periodisations. These contributions have triggered debates about the way feminism and women's activism are analysed in the West, but their implications for feminist historiography in non-Western contexts have yet to be discussed. New studies, including our own, on Kemalist and socialist women's activism suggest that the agendas affiliated with the post-1980 'second wave' of feminism in Turkey had been raised prior to the 1980s. These findings call for critical engagement with the long-established idea that there have been two waves of women's movement in Turkey with a period of 'barren years' in between. In this article we explore the formation and scholarly implications of the waves analysis as a grand narrative in feminist historiography on women's activism in Turkey. We argue that the literature on feminism and women's activism must be rewritten, by not only incorporating the previously omitted histories of women's activism but also challenging the salient assumption that women's organising must be independent and position itself in opposition to the state to qualify as feminist.

## KEYWORDS

Women's activism; feminism; feminist historiography; waves metaphor; Turkey; Kemalist women's activism; socialist women's activism

Our definition of feminism is intimately tied to our adherence to the waves metaphor. [Pre-milla Nadasen, *Feminist Formations* 22(1), 2010]

## Introduction

Understanding different periods in the history of women's activism in terms of 'waves' and the debate on the uses and shortcomings of the waves metaphor have their origins in the anglophone North American context. After it emerged in the late 1960s, feminists active through the 1970s employed the waves metaphor to differentiate

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themselves from what they characterised as the ‘first wave’ of feminism—the period spanning from 1848 (the Seneca Falls Convention) to 1920 (the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution) and foregrounding the right to suffrage.<sup>1</sup> The waves metaphor was then adopted with similar motivations to identify different phases of women’s activism elsewhere, including non-Western contexts such as Turkey.<sup>2</sup> In addition to functioning as a framework of periodisation in feminist historiography, the waves metaphor has also been used to indicate the changes that occurred over time in the feminist agenda. In so far as it implied a selection, identifying some women’s activisms and groups as composing a wave, the metaphor has also had significant theoretical implications in terms of what counts as feminism and what does not.

Since the 2000s, a significant body of literature has challenged the reading of feminist history through the waves metaphor by integrating women’s activisms that fall under a broader definition of feminism into the historical narrative, thereby destabilising rigid periodisations.<sup>3</sup> Feminist historians have criticised the metaphor for homogenising different brands of women’s activism ‘under the banner of a single wave in which a diverse range of individuals, events, and ideas are transformed into a monolithic group with the same public face’.<sup>4</sup> Unable to ‘fully capture these multiple and overlapping movements, chronologies, issues, and sites’, Nancy Hewitt argued, the metaphor has misrepresented ideological differences between women as discord between different generations.<sup>5</sup> It was applied in a way that ‘foreshortened the issues that define the feminist agenda’, highlighting the issue of suffrage in the first wave at the expense of, for example, racial justice, labour rights, and sexual freedom; and that of welfare and reproductive rights in the second wave at the expense of, for example, sexual harassment at the workplace, lesbian rights, and women of colour critique.<sup>6</sup> Importantly, the waves narrative has also been criticised for imposing a certain definition of feminism, assuming that there is one form of it that is peaking and plunging at different points. In doing so, the narrative has obscured the complexity of continuities and breaks within the history of women’s activism as well as the diversity of strategies women have adopted to pursue their interests.<sup>7</sup>

Outside of anglophone North America, scholars’ engagement with waves has mostly been about the metaphor’s applicability in their respective contexts. Several contributions have emphasised the transgenerational aspect of feminism and differences across national and regional borders.<sup>8</sup> Yet, debates around the waves narrative are still predominantly limited to Western and European contexts. Their implications for feminist historiography in non-Western contexts are yet to be discussed.

The aim of this article is to revisit feminist historiography on women’s activism in Turkey in the light of these recent debates around the waves metaphor and examine how the adoption of the waves analysis created a grand narrative in the Turkish context.<sup>9</sup> This grand narrative depicts the history of women’s movements, often used interchangeably with feminism, as composed of essentially two main waves. The first started with the Ottoman women’s movement in the late-nineteenth century and lasted until 1935 when the Turkish Women’s Union (*Türk Kadınlar Birliği*—TKB) was forced to disband under the single-party regime in the Republic of Turkey (est. 1923), and the ‘second wave’, according to this long-established narrative, began in the 1980s. The period in between these two waves has thus been considered ‘barren years’ in terms of women’s activism.<sup>10</sup> By contrast, recent research, including our own, suggest

that the agendas affiliated with the post-1980 'second wave' of feminism had already been raised by various groups of Kemalist<sup>11</sup> and socialist women activists in the decades prior to the 1980s.<sup>12</sup> These findings call for critical engagement with the idea that there have been two waves of women's movement in Turkey. In this article we respond to this call, exploring the dynamics and formation of this grand narrative and discussing its implications for feminist historiography. We do this by introducing new literature on women's movements and drawing on our respective research on Kemalist and socialist women's activism covering the period from the 1950s to the 1970s.

The article is structured in two main sections. In the first section, we look in detail into the formation of the grand narrative of waves in the case of Turkey and analyse the underlying local and transnational dynamics that made a fairly straightforward adoption of the waves analysis possible and feasible. Next, based on recent research on the period in between the 'waves', we outline what the waves analysis overlooked: Kemalist and socialist women's activism. We conclude the article with a brief reflection on how to go beyond the waves analysis and build a more inclusive feminist historiography.

Our goal is not to deny the relevance of the waves metaphor for understanding women's movements and feminist history in Turkey. The exchange of ideas and transnational encounters between Western and Turkish feminists have resulted in common agendas and forms of organising throughout the late Ottoman and republican periods.<sup>13</sup> The metaphor was helpful to articulate that synchronisation. It also helped feminist historians of Turkey to evaluate change over time and map the history of women's activism onto the broader (national and global) political history. However, as we demonstrate in this article, the adaptation of the waves analysis to the Turkish context had significant implications for feminist scholarship. Our findings point to three shortcomings in particular, all of which resonate with the criticisms being directed at the metaphor in Western and European contexts.

First, echoing critiques in the West that the waves metaphor highlighted mainly activism led by white, middle-class women at the expense of those by women of colour and working-class women,<sup>14</sup> the waves-based analysis in Turkey has placed emphasis mainly on the activism of urban, well-educated, middle-class women belonging to Turkish and/or Sunni-Muslim communities. Despite extensive documentation since the 2000s of the diversity of women's activism in the late Ottoman, early republican, and post-1980 periods,<sup>15</sup> the literature has continued to rely on the waves metaphor and to refer to 'feminists' in a homogenous way, privileging women's activism that upheld gender-specific agendas. It has thus excluded from 'feminism' the activism of those who politicised the intersections of gender with class, nation, ethnicity, and religion.

Second, the waves-based analysis in Turkey has prioritised the study of mass mobilisations, street action, and intellectual work as the main forms of activism. Community activism, professional women's organising via associations, as well as women's activism in mixed-gender organisations and movements were mostly neglected. The activism of women's organisations that worked with the state has been equally overlooked. As we discuss below, activist relations with the state have become a particularly crucial litmus test of what can be considered feminism.

Finally, an exclusive focus on certain periods (pre-1935 as the 'first wave' and post-1980 as the 'second wave') reduced the history of women's movements to periods of

progress followed by periods of backlash. This reduction underestimated the ability of women's activism to adapt to different political environments and survive, albeit perhaps in less radical or more subtle ways and by using diverse strategies (often more mainstream and institutionalised).<sup>16</sup> In the Turkish case, neglecting the period between the 'waves' resulted in a perception of discontinuity or rupture in feminist history, indeed dismissing the resilience of women's activism.

Addressing these shortcomings, we argue that the history of women's movements in Turkey must be rewritten to go beyond the grand narrative of two main waves in Ottoman/Turkish history. A broader definition of feminism is needed to acknowledge the diversity of women's activisms and account for the complex ways in which they were intertwined to create a resilient movement that endured more than a century. In her discussion on women's mobilisation around the 1979 Sandinista Revolution in Nicaragua, Maxine Molyneux differentiates between women's 'practical' and 'strategic' gender interests. Practical gender interests are those that 'arise from the concrete conditions of women's positioning within the gender division of labour ... [often as] a response to an immediate perceived need,' without necessarily targeting women's emancipation as a strategic goal.<sup>17</sup> By contrast, strategic gender interests are derived 'from the analysis of women's subordination and from the formulation of an alternative, more satisfactory set of arrangements to those which exist.'<sup>18</sup> Strategic objectives towards this end can concern a broad range of issues, from elimination of women's double burden to legal reform and reproductive rights. Drawing on Molyneux's differentiation, we define as feminist activism efforts and actions that seek women's strategic gender interests. In light of this definition, we also argue that simply adding the previously omitted histories of women's activism into the narrative, while a significant and necessary endeavour, would be insufficiently comprehensive. Rather, the salience of certain assumptions in feminist scholarship should also be challenged, such as the assumption that women's organising must be independent, gender-specific, and positioned in political opposition to the state as a prerequisite to qualify as feminist. As Dorothy Sue Cobble argues, feminism 'need not require an unwavering single focus on gender, nor does gender-conscious reform reside only in all-female organizations. ... For a reform agenda can be quite feminist in its conception and impact without being gender-specific'.<sup>19</sup> Therefore, a broad notion of feminism should be inclusive of women's activisms that aim at a strategic transformation of the gender order, regardless of whether they take place in women-only or mix-gender forms of organising or seek policy change through negotiations and dialogue with the state.

In adopting a broadened definition of feminism, we do not mean to impose the label of 'feminist' onto women activists who do not self-identify as such. Women belonging to different political struggles across many contexts have refrained from associating themselves with feminism for various reasons.<sup>20</sup> In non-Western contexts, the perceived imperialist connotations of feminism and, indeed, its very association with the West have been particularly crucial deterrents.<sup>21</sup> This was the case for Kemalist and socialist women in Turkey, for example, in the 1950s–1970s. Still, we uphold a broad definition of feminism because it enables us to not only question the criteria by which scholars recognise and periodise women's movements, but also write a more inclusive history of women's activism.

## Waves-based analysis in the Turkish context: the formation of a grand narrative

The localisation of the waves metaphor in the Turkish context resembled the North American context in that the 'first wave' was formulated in retrospect by those who called themselves the 'second wave'. For example, as Nicholson suggests, the waves metaphor was useful in the U.S. at the time not only for implying that the women's movement of the 1960s and '70s was part of a larger history but also for asserting that women's activism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were indeed a movement 'more historically significant than ... had been taught'.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, in Turkey, the waves metaphor became a common way of periodising feminisms retrospectively. From the late 1990s onwards, feminist scholars started referring to the feminist movement that emerged in the early-1980s as the 'second wave'. Although a number of 'second wavers' were among these scholars, the metaphor was embraced most enthusiastically by a younger generation of feminist researchers as a way of acknowledging the long history of feminism that stretched back into the nineteenth century. There were, we argue, two main dynamics that enabled the widespread and relatively smooth adoption of the waves analysis and produced a hegemonic narrative of the history of women's movements: the impact of Western feminist scholarship and the ideological debates in the post-1980 Turkish political landscape.

Feminists of the 1980s' Turkey were in dialogue with and influenced by activists and scholars in Europe and North America. This influence was especially strong when it came to discussions around women's political autonomy; the post-1980 political conjuncture in Turkey, marked by the military regime (1980–1983) and the crackdown on left-wing activism, and the emergent feminist literature raised important questions about women's independent organising. Throughout the 1980s, self-identified feminists in Istanbul and Ankara organised women-only consciousness-raising, reading, and translation groups, demonstrations, and campaigns, and founded independent feminist organisations.

An otherwise heterogeneous group of people, this generation of feminists shared some common features. They were predominantly in their mid- to late 30s, highly educated, middle-class, urban women, mostly with a background in left-socialist circles. Those who had first-hand experience in Western countries (mainly France and the UK) or were familiar with the feminist debates in the West translated these debates into Turkish. For example, the Women's Circle publishing group (*Kadın Çevresi*, est. 1984) introduced works such as Andree Michel's *Feminism*, Lee Comer's *Wedlocked Women*, and Juliet Mitchell's *Women's Estate* to the Turkish-speaking audience.<sup>23</sup> Drawing on their knowledge of 'second wave' Western feminist literature and experiences, feminists in the 1980s and early 1990s argued that male-dominated leftist movements hindered the simultaneous emergence of Turkish feminism with Western feminisms and that, as a result, feminist activism materialised only in the 1980s (as the military regime established after the coup d'état of 1980 suppressed all other oppositional movements).<sup>24</sup>

Western feminisms also impacted Turkish women's organising in the form of small-scale, non-hierarchical, issue-based, informal structures.<sup>25</sup> By organising themselves in these structures, women intervened in Turkish politics in two novel ways. First, in synch with the main issues of debate among 'second wave' feminists in the West, they politicised matters that were still popularly considered to be private, such as sexual

harassment, rape, sexuality, and the gendered division of labour in the domestic sphere. Second, they openly challenged the Turkish state by criticising its legal framework for maintaining women's subordination to men in the private and public spheres. With these distinguishing features, the protagonists of this activism referred to their movement as the 'new feminism' (so not yet the 'second wave').<sup>26</sup>

From the mid-1990s onwards, feminist historians researching women's history in universities based in Turkey and Western countries documented women's activism in the late Ottoman and early republican periods. The findings of scholars like Aynur Demirdirek, Serpil Çakır, Nicole van Os, Yaprak Zihnioğlu, and Aslı Davaz paved the way for the localisation of the waves metaphor; they pointed at women's sustained demands for equality and public inclusion in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. 'Feminism' was part of the discursive repertoire in discussions around the 'woman question'. Contrary to state discourse that praised the founders of the new republic for granting political rights to women 'on a golden plate', research showed that women had collectively struggled for suffrage only to be marginalised and excluded by the Kemalist cadres. At a time when, in the 1980s and 1990s (i.e. the aftermath of the 1980 military intervention), Kemalism was discussed in liberal and left intellectual circles mainly as an expression of the authoritarian Turkish state and military, identifying this 'new feminism' as the successor of activism that was suppressed by the Kemalist regime in the 1930s was a source of legitimacy for feminists.

The work of feminist historians in the 1990s helped feminist activists of the post-1980 era to identify their own politics as the continuation of this newly discovered 'first wave' in the Ottoman/Turkish context. As the waves metaphor entered feminist scholarship and political vocabulary in Turkey, 'second wave' replaced the 'new feminism' of the 1980s. Şirin Tekeli used this metaphor in 1998 in her comparative analysis of the late Ottoman—early republican and post-1980 feminisms.<sup>27</sup> From then on, an analysis of the women's movement that started in the late Ottoman Empire as the 'first wave' and the movement that emerged after 1980 as the 'second wave' of feminism in Turkey has prevailed. This also led to the conflation of the women's movement with feminism or the feminist movement in the scholarship, so much so that the argument was not just that there were two waves of feminism but also that there were no women's movement in between the waves. Tekeli, for example, would suggest that the closing down of the TKB in 1935 was 'the end of the women's movement for 40 years to come'.<sup>28</sup> In the past two decades, feminist scholarship in general and feminist historiography on women's activism in particular has seen a reproduction of this periodisation. The second generation of feminist scholars, like their predecessors, were exposed to dominant, Western-centric narrations of the history of women's movements with the waves metaphor at their core while studying in degree programmes at home and abroad. They've integrated the metaphor into their teaching, treating the Turkish case as a lagging but natural continuation of dominant feminisms in the West.

The adoption of the waves analysis into Turkish feminist scholarship, however, did not emerge from a simple and uncritical assumption of equivalence between Western and Turkish feminisms. Feminist activists were wary of their relationship with Western feminist ideas and activism, not least because their own movement was accused of being an import, an expression of Western bourgeois ideology. Scholars debated the suitability of applying Western feminist lenses to the study of women's



history.<sup>29</sup> The wide acceptance of the waves analysis was rather the combined result of the impact of the dominant Western feminist views on women's autonomy and feminist politics and the local dynamics stemming from the post-1980 political atmosphere in Turkey. The first of these dynamics was the widespread questioning of Kemalism, particularly the early republican period when the 'Kemalist state' was established. The anti-Kemalist turn in Turkish politics became hegemonic across the political spectrum, from Islamists to the leftist opposition circles to which many feminists belonged. This political turn overlapped with an equally critical take on Kemalism in academic scholarship. Kemalism, especially the early republican era as the foundational period of the new state, came under scrutiny as the ultimate reason for Turkey's lack of democracy.

It was in this political conjuncture that the feminist scholarship of the 1980s developed to be critical of Kemalist modernisation and what it had to offer for women's emancipation. While acknowledging certain achievements of the 'Atatürk period' such as the adoption of a secular Civil Code in 1926, feminist scholars nonetheless maintained that the reforms the Kemalists had introduced in the name of women's emancipation were essentially symbolic, benefiting only a small elite minority and thus falling short of any substantial challenge to patriarchal social relations.<sup>30</sup> At the core of this analysis was the characterisation of the Kemalist project of women's emancipation as 'state feminism', as first formulated by Şirin Tekeli, a prominent member of the 'second wave'.<sup>31</sup> According to Tekeli, Kemalist gender reforms were instrumental in nature. The Kemalist elite had used these reforms to underline the modern and democratic aspirations of the new state and differentiate itself from single-party dictatorships like Nazi Germany and fascist Italy.<sup>32</sup> Positioning itself as the guardian of gender equality, the Kemalist state had in fact impeded the development of an independent feminist agenda of women's liberation. The suppression of 'first wave' feminism was read by feminist scholars as the beginning of a troublesome relationship between the women's movement and the state in Turkey, putting the critique of the state (and particularly its ideological manifestation, Kemalism) at the core of feminist politics and scholarly inquiry. This reading of Kemalism and the early republic made a feminist reckoning with Kemalist women indispensable. Seen as allies of the Kemalist state, Kemalist women's rights activists were considered to be non-feminist, and their activism in between the 'waves' was thus conveniently excluded from feminist historiography.

The second local dynamic of the post-1980 period that made the adaptation of the waves analysis convenient for feminist scholars was closely intertwined with the first: the celebration of civil society as the primary force for democratisation in Turkey. Parallel to the global neoliberal (and subsequent NGO) boom, a liberal understanding of civil society as a sphere autonomous from the state became prominent in Turkey's democratic opposition and academic circles. In this political atmosphere, the anti-state stance of the feminist movement of the 1980s fortified the idea that feminism required an oppositional position vis-à-vis the state, therefore excluding any possibility of working with the state for improving women's rights. From this angle, too, Kemalist women's organisations, so long as they were willing to collaborate with the state, could not be seen as part of feminist politics.

These two dynamics account for the ready adoption of a waves-based analysis by feminist scholars, but the exclusion of socialist women's activism in the 1960s and 1970s from feminist historiography needs further explanation. After all, socialist women

activists were also critical of Kemalism and were surely anti-state—in fact, this was one of the core definitions of being a socialist in 1970s Turkey. The reason that socialist women's activism did not count as part of the women's movement or feminism in the eyes of the 'second wavers' was their involvement in mixed-gender organisations. As with 'second wave' feminism in the West, feminists of post-1980 Turkey found women's autonomy to be essential, which made women-only organising a requirement to qualify as feminist. Socialist women's activism in and around mixed-gender organisations was thus left outside of feminist history.

Early feminist scholarly and activist critiques of women's activism in mixed-gender organisations partly originated from their own experiences, as many of them were first politicised in the leftist organisations of the 1970s. A foundational tenet of their feminism was critically reflecting on the sexism prevalent in those organisations and the preaching of male ideologues that only the revolution would emancipate women.<sup>33</sup> Feminist scholars of the 1980s, then, identified the socialist politics of the 1960s and '70s as one of the reasons that feminism was delayed in Turkey. Invited to fight against class exploitation side-by-side with men, Tekeli indicated,

many young women students, academics who were potential supporters of the new feminist ideology developing in Western countries, became active in small, ultra-leftist groups, fighting each other on many issues – except the “woman question”, where they united on the same sectarian anti-feminist approach.<sup>34</sup>

Feminists of the post-1980 period perceived such strong opposition between socialist and feminist politics that they 'forgot', when writing the history of feminism, that some of their feminist demands had already been voiced by socialist women in the 1970s.<sup>35</sup>

In sum, the impact of Western feminist analyses and the local dynamics of the post-1980 Turkey combined enabled the integration of a waves-based analysis in Turkey, resulting in the formation of a grand narrative based on a narrow reading of what qualified to be included in feminist history. Today, one can still see the dominance of this grand narrative in feminist scholarship on Turkey, albeit with nuances. While some look at everything in the post-1980 period as the 'second wave',<sup>36</sup> others view the 1990s as already belonging to a third wave, wherein new brands of feminism emerged at the intersection of gender and religious/ethnic belongings (e.g. Kurdish and Islamic feminists).<sup>37</sup> Yet, both perspectives recognise late Ottoman-early republican activism as the 'first wave' of feminism in Turkey and accept that the women's movement withdrew with the suppression of women's autonomous organising by the Kemalist regime in 1935 until it re-emerged in the 1980s. The decades between the early republic and 1980s, therefore, continue to be largely ignored, omitting important brands of women's activism from feminist historiography. In the next section, we turn to these important brands: namely, the activism of Kemalist and socialist women.

### **Not so barren years: Kemalist and socialist women's activisms**

In the past decade, emergent literature has destabilised the reading of the women's movement in Turkey in terms of waves and a period of silence/stagnation in between the waves. Offered by a younger generation of feminist researchers (to which we belong), recent research not only shows a plethora of activisms taking place in the period from

the 1950s to 1970s, locally as well as transnationally, but also calls into question the assumptions of women's autonomy from the state and mixed-sex organisations as pre-requisites of feminist politics.<sup>38</sup> For example, focusing on Kemalist women's gazettes and journals published in the 1950s and 1960s, Sarıtaş and Şahin suggest that quests for women's rights and equality in this period were a continuation of the early republican period rather than a rupture.<sup>39</sup> Activists of the 1950s and 1960s saw themselves as the successors of late Ottoman-early republican women who struggled for equality and public inclusion. Meanwhile, Azak and de Smaele's research on the Ankara branch of the International Council of Women reveals that Kemalist women's associations in the 1950s and 1960s played a critical role in sustaining the relationship between Turkish and international women's movements.<sup>40</sup>

As for left, socialist, and trade union women's activisms, recent research, such as Çakır-Kılınçoğlu's work on women activists in radical left movements and Satı's on those in the *Tekstil* trade union, reveals that the agendas adopted and demands raised by these women not only resembled those of the 'second wave' feminists in Turkey but were also shaped by feminist, socialist, and communist women's organising on a global scale.<sup>41</sup> Moving beyond the dominant thesis of 'barren years between the two waves', what these studies have in common (despite the variety of their methodologies and empirical focal points) is that they underline the ways in which women intervened in public debates on matters related to gender equality and women's rights. These interventions, regardless of whether they were individual or collective, institutionalised or informal, and intellectual-oriented or community-based, make it possible for us to address the 1950s–1970s period as a period of activism akin to those in the so-called first and second waves.<sup>42</sup> Contrary to the argument that there was a clear rupture and contrast between pre- and post-1980s periods in women's activism, some of the building blocks of the post-1980 feminist agenda emerged throughout the multi-party period.

### ***Kemalist women's activism***

Following World War II, Turkey's gender politics and women's activism took on new directions. The transition to a multi-party system in 1946 and the electoral success of the Democrat Party in 1950 ended the nearly three-decade Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*—CHP) rule. Turkey's alignment with the West against the 'communist threat' posed by the Soviet Union gave Turkish modernisation a right-wing, conservative twist. Broader sections of the population embraced a Turkish nationalism that now had a more Sunni Islamic than secular tone. No longer considered by politicians as a marker of Turkey's democratic advancement, women's representation in the parliament dropped to a record low.<sup>43</sup> Gender policies shifted focus from women's inclusion in the public sphere to emphasising their role in the family as modern mothers and wives.<sup>44</sup>

At this juncture, Kemalist women mobilised to defend the rights women had acquired, which they saw as being jeopardised. They aimed to raise awareness among women in matters related to citizenship, the nation, and the modern family. The Turkish Women's Union was re-established in 1949. Some of the founding members of the new TKB had served as members of the parliament during the time of Mustafa Kemal.<sup>45</sup> In many of the associations founded in the 1950s, such as the Association of

Turkish University Women (*Türk Üniversiteli Kadınlar Derneği*, 1949), the Organisation for the Investigation of Women's Social Life (*Kadının Sosyal Hayatını Tetkik Kurumu*, 1953), the Turkish Mother's Association (*Türk Anneler Derneği*, 1953), and the Association for the Preservation of Women's Rights (*Kadın Haklarını Koruma Derneği*, 1954), there were women who had participated in struggles for women's rights and gender equality during the Turkish War of Liberation (1919–1922) and early republican periods. The Organisation for the Investigation of Women's Social Life, founded in 1953 by Afet İnan, Mustafa Kemal's adopted daughter, published important research at a time when research on women was barely visible in Turkish academia.<sup>46</sup> Other publications problematised women's disadvantaged position and raised demands to eliminate gender oppression, such as İffet Halim Oruz's *Kadın Gazetesi* (Women's Newspaper). Criticising the decline in women's political representation, in the 1950s Oruz advocated for women's independent organising as an indispensable aspect of a democratic society.<sup>47</sup>

Yet, there was a contradiction in the politics of these organisations: on the one hand, they embraced the official discourse of the 'Turkish woman' that placed modernity at home and defined women's modernisation through marriage and raising children.<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, they held men responsible for women's secondary position in society and in the family and defended women's right to work.<sup>49</sup> This contradiction, our research implies, was a consequence of Kemalist women's strategy to participate in gender politics at a time when rights-based organising could only legitimately exist in the political sphere if it did not openly challenge the Turkish state and its gender politics. The emphasis on women's familial responsibilities was also in line with Turkey's positioning in the Cold War context, wherein Kemalist women's organisations aligned their agendas with those pursued by Western-dominated international organisations such as the International Council of Women and Women's International Alliance that saw the complete overthrow of traditional gender roles as an expression of the communist threat.<sup>50</sup>

With the 1960s, the 'woman question' resurfaced in the political field in Turkey. The Democrat Party period (1950–1960) ended with a military coup and the 1961 Constitution, prepared by a group of distinguished Kemalist jurists, brought considerable freedom to political organising and expression, creating fertile ground for left wing, Islamist, and ultra-nationalist movements to flourish. As women's interests differentiated along lines of class, culture, and religion, Kemalist women activists were motivated to pursue the struggle for women's rights and gender equality more collectively. Throughout the 1960s, Kemalist women mobilised as professionals and problematised gender inequality in paid employment through organisations such as the Zonta Business and Professional Women's Association (*Zonta İş ve Meslek Kadınları Derneği*), the Association for Progressive Women of Turkey (*Türkiye İleri Kadınlar Derneği*), and the Turkish Association for Women in Legal Professions (*Türk Hukukçu Kadınlar Derneği*). In 1969, TKB started the campaign 'Women Demand Full Equality' (*Kadınlar Tam Eşitlik İstiyor*), asking for amendments in the Civil Code to make women's access to the labour market easier.<sup>51</sup> Such initiatives by Kemalist women's organisations demanding reform of the Civil Code continued throughout the 1970s. The Association of Turkish University Women, the Organisation for the Investigation of Women's Social Life, the Turkish Association for Women in Legal Profession, and the Association for the Preservation of Women's Rights were particularly active in publishing reports, organising conferences, drafting bills, and promoting the involvement of women lawyers and law

professors in the official commissions established to discuss the reform bills.<sup>52</sup> Preceding the amendments demanded by the 'second wave', Kemalist women's systematic work on the Civil Code in the 1970s contributed to women's movements' knowledge and legal repertoire and helped prepare the ground for the full-fledged feminist campaign for reform that emerged in the 1990s.

One factor behind Kemalist women's collective organising and their focus on social inequality from the mid-1960s onwards was the repositioning of the Kemalist CHP as the 'left-of-centre'. Women members of the CHP, including prominent names such as Nermin Abadan Unat, had indeed played an important role in the party's lean towards the left.<sup>53</sup> Rather than envisioning a cross-class coalition that would enable the development of a welfare state, the left-of-centre approach sought to counter Islamist currents and notions of social justice, highlighting secularism more than other tenets of Kemalism.<sup>54</sup> This shift encouraged women who saw secularism as a prerequisite of women's rights (as per Kemalism's gender project) to participate in CHP politics in greater numbers. Reports from the general congresses of the women's auxiliary in 1968 and 1970 indicate, for example, that delegates argued for gender equality in terms of democracy, equal opportunity, and social justice while opposing ultra nationalist and radical left politics for attributing a secondary role to and undermining women's struggle for equality.<sup>55</sup> In the 1970s, CHP's women's auxiliaries became synchronised with Kemalist women's associations, blurring the boundary between women-only and mixed-gender organising and allowing for women's demands to make their way into party politics. For example, TKB's demand for the recognition of housewifery as a profession and early retirement for women as an acknowledgement of their unpaid work at home were mirrored in the recommendations generated by the general congress of the CHP women's auxiliary in 1974. The left-leaning current in Kemalist women's activism also enabled exchange and collaboration between Kemalist and socialist women on shared demands, as we discuss further below.<sup>56</sup>

Alongside domestic developments that shaped Kemalist women's agendas and forms of organising in the 1970s, the rise of a UN-led global gender equality agenda and the emergence of women's studies as an interdisciplinary field of research have been turning points for Kemalist women's activism. For example, in line with the International Women's Year in 1975, Kemalist women organised the Women's Year Congress in Ankara, gathering nationwide for the first time to discuss women's problems and prepare a National Action Plan focusing on the fields of education, art, law, economy, and health, and offering (feminist) solutions to women's problems.<sup>57</sup> Following the congress, in 1976, several organisations established the first nationwide umbrella organisation, the Federation of Women's Associations of Turkey (*Türkiye Kadın Dernekleri Federasyonu*), to push for and follow up on Turkey's commitment to gender equality in line with the UN Decade for Women (1976–1985). Relatedly and inspired by the emergent field of women's studies as a form of institutionalising feminist movements in the West,<sup>58</sup> a number of Kemalist scholars engaged in gender research. These scholars published edited volumes, such as Nermin Abadan Unat's *Türk Toplumunda Kadın* (Women in Turkish Society, 1979) and Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı's *Sex Roles, Family and Community in Turkey* (1982), which brought together academics researching matters related to women in their respective disciplines for the first time. Some of the contributors of these

volumes, for example Şirin Tekeli, later became prominent feminist scholars in the post-1980 period, i.e. the ‘second wavers’.

As we discussed earlier, feminist scholars of the 1980s and ‘90s held Kemalism (and socialism) responsible for women’s distraction away from feminism and dismissed Kemalist women’s activism as celebrating the Turkish state instead of transforming the patriarchal structures in Turkish society. Taking a closer look at Kemalist women’s activism in the 1950s–1970s, however, shows that Kemalist women sought women’s rights and gender equality while remaining loyal to the Kemalist political framework, already expressing ideas and demands that are today associated with ‘second wave’ feminism. Recognising the persistence of patriarchal relations in Turkish society, they were politically mobilised for gender equality even though they did not use a feminist vocabulary. Kemalist women’s organisations engaged in activities ranging from organising conferences and street demonstrations to publishing journals and documents with which they sought to improve women’s status. Instead of limiting their activism to women-only organising, Kemalist women pursued gender politics in both woman-only and mixed-sex organisations, which helped them to carry their demands into parliamentary debates and thereby to shape policy making.

Our focus on these findings is not meant to obscure the fact that Kemalist women expressed an unconditional and continual loyalty and gratitude to Mustafa Kemal Atatürk for initiating Turkey’s modernisation and granting rights to women. Kemalist women were also predominantly from upper class backgrounds and/or had high levels of cultural capital and prescribed corporatist ways of addressing women’s oppression wherein they would maintain their mission to modernise and educate lower class and traditional women. Most of them likewise subscribed to Turkish nationalism and did not seek to eliminate inequalities based on ethnicity and religion. However, as noted earlier, the problem with many of the feminist scholarly accounts of Kemalist women’s activism before 1980 is that they conceptually position Kemalism and feminism as antithetical to each other, drawing on dominant Western frames of feminist politics as women-only and anti-state, which results in a narrow analytical window through which to look at both Kemalism and feminism. Our research widens that frame, instead showing that for Kemalist women, there was a mutual relationship between Kemalism and the ideas around women’s emancipation. Drawing on this perceived mutual relationship, Kemalist women collaborated with the state and strove to influence gender politics at the state level, paving the way for gender egalitarian legislation in the post-1980 period.

### ***Socialist women’s activism***

The most significant development of post-1960 Turkish politics in terms of women’s political participation and activism for gender equality was the proliferation and diversification of women’s organisations. While the Kemalist women’s organisations that were established in the post-WWII years remained active and became much more visible and prominent throughout the 1960s and 1970s, other women increasingly politicised and mobilised within the flourishing left-wing movements as part of Turkey’s own ‘global 1968’.<sup>59</sup> In accordance with the global trend of women’s movements gaining momentum in the context of the student and labour movements of the 1960s and the introduction of ‘personal’ issues such as housework and women’s everyday experiences



into political debates,<sup>60</sup> 'women's emancipation' emerged as an agenda within the Turkish left.

Left-wing women's mobilisation matured into an actual socialist women's movement in the 1970s, when the proliferation in women's organisations that had started in the 1960s not only accelerated but changed in character. Women active within the socialist left increasingly embraced the idea that 'mainstream' women's organisations, marked by the women's rights discourse of the Kemalist women's movement, were insufficient and inadequate to address the social and political problems of women in Turkish society.<sup>61</sup> The idea of building a separate socialist women's movement prominently occupied the political and intellectual debates within the left that revolved around the 'woman question' and its 'solution' from a Marxist perspective. Limited as they were (with the classical analyses of Marxist writings about women's exploitation within the traditional patriarchal family), these debates nevertheless played a role in putting women's problems onto the political agenda of the left.<sup>62</sup>

A number of socialist women's organisations were established in Turkey in the 1970s, either as part of socialist political parties and associations or as initiatives affiliated with a certain fraction within the left. In other words, socialist women's organisations were not 'independent' in the sense that came to be emblematic of the post-1980 feminist movement. They organised women-only meetings and demonstrations, did community work among women, and published journals for women, but were nevertheless directly or informally linked to a wider and gender-mixed political body. The biggest and politically most influential of such organisations was the Progressive Women's Association (*İlerici Kadınlar Derneği*—İKD), which was linked (though never admittedly) to the then clandestine Communist Party of Turkey (*Türkiye Komünist Partisi*—TKP). In the four years it was active between its foundation in 1975 and dissolution by the Martial Law Command in 1979,<sup>63</sup> the İKD established 33 chapters and 35 representative offices nation-wide, gaining broad-based popularity with fifteen thousand active members.<sup>64</sup> It had its own news agency and published a newspaper called *Kadınların Sesi* (Women's Voice), which reached a total circulation of thirty thousand copies per issue by the late 1970s.<sup>65</sup>

The unprecedented mass mobilisation of these women was possible thanks to the initial efforts by leading İKD members to create as broad-based and independent a women's organisation as possible.<sup>66</sup> While the organisation was ultimately not fully autonomous due to its complicated relationship with the TKP,<sup>67</sup> İKD succeeded in carving out a political presence for itself that went beyond being simply an offshoot extension of the party. İKD's political presence was marked by a number of campaigns that together created a pivotal momentum for women's activism in Turkey, doing the groundwork for some of the demands and ideas that were later articulated by and came to be associated with the 'second wave'. These campaigns centred around women's labour rights and domestic labour, such as women's right to early retirement and maternity leave and domestic workers' right to social security. Two of them, the 'Equal Pay for Equal Work' campaign and the 'Nursery for Every Workplace' campaign, were especially effective in turning women's activism within the socialist left into a broad-based mobilisation around gender equality, which expanded beyond the political reach of İKD when such demands were also raised by other socialist women's organisations. For example, the Ankara Women's Association (*Ankaralı Kadınlar Derneği*),

established in 1976 by women affiliated with the movement Revolutionary Path (*Devrimci Yol*), initiated a campaign asking for a nursery for every workplace and neighbourhood.<sup>68</sup> Several other women's organisations affiliated with the same movement were united in 1978 under the Federation of Revolutionary Women's Associations (*Devrimci Kadın Dernekleri Federasyonu*). The Democratic Women's Union (*Demokratik Kadın Birliği*), which was formally established in 1979 in the province of Bursa by a group that split from the İKD, was active from 1977 through the newspaper they published, *Kadın Dayanışması* (Women's Solidarity), until 1980. They also organised activities focusing on equal pay for women, the right to abortion, and Civil Code amendments.<sup>69</sup> Likewise, even though it was İKD that organised the first International Women's Day celebrations,<sup>70</sup> other socialist women's organisations and circles joined the effort to popularise the 8th of March as a platform to voice women's demands in the 1970s.<sup>71</sup> The proliferation of different socialist women's organisations—formed both in major urban centres and in the provinces throughout the country—helped popularise the women's rights struggle. Although the socialist women's movement was fragmented along different subsets of the left, this fragmentation did not overshadow the various socialist women's movements' abilities to mobilise around the same issues, which ultimately helped politicise those issues.

Socialist women's mobilisation and the demands they put forward throughout the 1970s also brought about a qualitative shift in the overall political discourse of the women's movement. Whereas women's activism of the 1950s and '60s was confined to what could be characterised as the 'preservation of women's acquired rights' (a more defensive position against the conservative backlash fuelled by right-wing governments after the transition to multi-party system), socialist women's activism embraced and promoted a more proactive stance that sought new rights for women. This stance coincided with the fresh outlook of the Kemalist women's movement, which also became more proactive in the 1970s. As mentioned above, the main Kemalist party, the CHP, had adopted a left-of-centre position from the mid-1960s onwards. In the context of political polarisation along the left/right political axis in the 1970s and the political hegemony of the left in terms of 'politics of the street', CHP's lean towards the left became especially apparent with the election of Bülent Ecevit, the former Minister of Labour and representative of the left-wing fraction within the party, as its president in 1972. This reinforced the space and opportunity for the Kemalist women's movement to strategically cooperate with socialist women's organisations, creating an overlapping base and dynamics in the women's movement that were historically unparalleled. On 31 January 1976, for example, different socialist women's organisations participated in a mass women's protest organised by the İKD in the capital that urged the government to put an end to political violence and the killing of the youth.<sup>72</sup> CHP's women's auxiliary joined socialist women in this protest. The main slogan of the protest, 'Put an End to Mothers' Pain of Child Loss', later became a common slogan of the women's movement and was adopted by the CHP in its own party meetings.<sup>73</sup> The fact that the next women's protest with the same call was co-organised in 1977 by the women's auxiliary of the CHP's Istanbul branch and the İKD indicates the extent of the political rapprochement between the socialist women's movement and left-leaning segments of the Kemalist women's movement.<sup>74</sup> It should also be noted that such demonstrations emphasising women's voices as mothers, which originates from the activities of socialist women's organisations like the Revolutionary



Women's Association of Turkey (*Türkiye Devrimci Kadınlar Derneği*, 1969), resulted in women's further politicisation in the 1970s through their roles as mothers, opening up a channel for them within human rights politics.

The rapprochement between socialist and Kemalist women should also be understood in the context of an emerging global gender equality agenda that became prevalent following the 1975 UN International Women's Year and during the UN Decade for Women (1976–1985). With the help of this momentum, many women's organisations in Turkey strengthened the links with the international women's movement as well as among themselves. Although this involvement was not marked by an open, self-declared feminist position in the Turkish case, this should not overshadow the existence of a fragmented yet vibrant, mass-based women's movement throughout the 1970s. In addition, the intellectual roots of 1980s feminism can be traced back, at least partially, to the academic research and literary works published in the late 1970s by women scholars and authors who were part of the socialist left. From ground-breaking novels that problematised the Kemalist discourse of women's rights and criticised patriarchal control over women's sexuality<sup>75</sup> to academic publications that helped establishing women's studies as an area of research in Turkey,<sup>76</sup> the intellectual heritage of socialist women intellectuals of the 1970s paved the way for a radical feminist agenda to flourish in the 1980s. Socialist women left an important legacy of women's rights struggle for the feminists of the 1980s to build upon, despite the fact that they were not organised 'independently' and were born out of mixed-gender organisations and parties, hence not confining themselves to a gender-specific agenda. Having anticipated some of the most important feminist demands of the post-1980 period and popularising them among wider segments of women, the mass-mobilisation they cultivated around women's rights was indeed a movement, and as such, needs to be seen as part of the feminist history of Turkey.

## Conclusion: beyond the waves

In her book on working class women's activism in the U.S. in the decades following the Great Depression, Cobble argues that there were 'multiple and competing visions of how to achieve women's equality', labour feminism being one of them.<sup>77</sup> Acknowledging multiplicity, Cobble maintains, enables us to see 'the missing wave' in the history of American women's movements and to situate labour women's activism as part of the prevailing feminist movement of the 1960s, the 'second wave'. Criticising the literature that limits feminist history to two main waves in the U.S., Cobble's suggestion is to adopt a broader, more inclusive perspective. In her analysis, women who struggled for women's rights within the labour movement, who looked at the state to help them reform the conditions that discriminated against them, and who were thought to be lacking 'feminist consciousness' because of the tactics they embraced should be seen as part of an expanded feminist history.

This article's point of departure has been derived from a similar critique of the existing feminist scholarship in the case of Turkey. We have argued that the adoption of the waves metaphor by feminist scholars and activists in the 1990s Turkish context resulted in the creation of a grand narrative in feminist historiography. The feminist embrace of a waves-based analysis in Turkey was enabled by the influence of Western feminist scholarship as well as the ideological positionings and dynamics unique to Turkish politics of the post-1980 period.

Theoretical and ideological inclinations of the feminist scholars of the 1980s and '90s, both in terms of their reading of the Western feminist scholarship and their positioning vis-à-vis Kemalism and the socialist left in Turkey, played a decisive role in the smooth and rigid way that they adapted this analysis to their own context. The grand narrative that was established based on this analysis imposed a periodisation that overlooked those women's activisms that emerged between the 'waves', emphasised certain types of women's activism and organising at the expense of others, and ignored the diversity of the strategies employed by women activists to promote a women's rights agenda in different times and political circumstances. This resulted in a history of women's movements in Turkey that is characterised more by ruptures, discontinuities, and silences than by continuities, overlaps, and a 'wavy' yet ongoing resilience. Despite the criticisms the waves metaphor has received in North American and European scholarship in the last decade, this grand narrative has retained its hegemony in the literature on Turkey to this day.

In this article we argued that the need to revisit the usefulness of the waves metaphor is relevant and urgent beyond Western contexts. Since the metaphor has also shaped the way feminism and women's activisms are analysed in non-Western contexts, as we have demonstrated in the case of Turkey, the discussion around its implications for feminist historiography has global resonances as well, and the non-Western feminist histories that have been written using this waves-based analysis should also address its shortcomings. We have shown a remarkable continuity in women's movement in Turkey for more than a century, albeit in diverse organisational structures, different ideological framings, and changing levels of political effectiveness. Our analysis of Kemalist and socialist women's activisms from the 1950s to the 1970s, activisms that were excluded from the waves-based feminist historiography, has revealed that Kemalist and socialist women kept the gender equality struggle going in terms of organisational continuity and agenda building. They anticipated and prepared the ground to further many of the feminist demands that came to be associated with the so-called second wave in the post-1980 period, such as equal pay for equal work, reproductive rights, universal childcare, reform of the Civil Code, and the recognition of women's unpaid work at home. The continuity we have traced is not only confined to the survival of women's organisations and gender equality agendas. Kemalist and socialist women cultivated a movement that not only was programmatic and held a significant public, but also succeeded in reaching broad circles of women. This was especially the case in the second half of the 1970s when there was a visible rapprochement between their activities. Therefore, we also argued that the assumption in the feminist historiography of Turkey, which sees women's independent organising and positioning in opposition to the state as prerequisites for their activism to qualify as a movement, should be questioned.<sup>78</sup>

The grand narrative established based on the waves-based analysis came to ultimately define what feminism is or what constitutes a women's movement and thus deserves to be included in feminist history. This has left us with a narrow and fixed understanding of feminism and made it difficult to see the 'missing waves', as Cobble puts it. By imposing a particular definition of feminism and employing it to select what should go into feminist history, the narrative has been misleading. As we investigated in this article how and why certain women's activisms were excluded from feminist historiography in Turkey, we shared the ambition of those feminist scholars who recovered the history of 'forgotten' activisms and reconstructed the relationship between different women's movements and organisations, whether they self-identified as feminist or not.<sup>79</sup> Such an inclusive

history of women's activism, we contend, requires going beyond the rigid periodisations entailed by the 'waves' and adopting a broader definition of feminism to capture the continuities across generations of women's activisms that contributed to building a gender equality agenda and raised feminist demands, even though they did not call themselves feminist. Only an expanded feminist historiography can acknowledge and map their multiplicity as well as overlapping agendas and chronologies.

## Notes

1. Barbara Molony and Jenifer Nelson, 'Introduction', in *Women's Activism and 'Second Wave' Feminism Histories*, ed. Barbara Molony and Jenifer Nelson (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), 2.
2. For examples of the adoption of the metaphor in non-Western contexts, see Şirin Tekeli, 'Birinci ve İkinci Dalga Kadın Hareketlerinin Karşılaştırmalı İncelemesi Üzerine Bir Deneme', in *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler*, ed. Ayşe Berktaş (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), 337–47; Sonia L. Alvarez, 'Translating the Global: Effects of Transnational Organizing on Local Feminist Discourses and Practices in Latin America', *Meridians* 1, no. 1 (2000): 26–67; Rita Stephan 'Four Waves of Lebanese Feminism', *E-International Relations*, 7 November 2014. <https://www.e-ir.info/2014/11/07/four-waves-of-lebanese-feminism/> (accessed on 7 March 2023).
3. Kathleen A. Laughlin et al., 'Is It Time to Jump Ship? Historians Rethink the Waves Metaphor', *Feminist Formations* 22, no. 1 (2010): 76–135; Nancy Hewitt, ed., *No Permanent Waves. Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010); Kathleen A. Laughlin and Jacqueline Castledine, eds., *Breaking the Wave: Women, Their Organizations, and Feminism, 1945–1985* (New York and London: Routledge, 2012).
4. Astrid Henry, 'Waves', in *Rethinking Women's and Gender Studies*, ed. Catherine M. Orr and Ann Braithwaite (New York: Routledge, 2012), 107.
5. Nancy A. Hewitt, 'Introduction', in *No Permanent Waves: Recasting Histories of U.S. Feminism*, ed. Nancy A. Hewitt (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 1.
6. Ibid., 5.
7. Linda Nicholson, 'Feminism in "Waves": Useful Metaphor or Not?', *New Politics* XII, no. 4 (2010), [https://newpol.org/issue\\_post/feminism-waves-useful-metaphor-or-not/](https://newpol.org/issue_post/feminism-waves-useful-metaphor-or-not/) (accessed June 2, 2022); Laughlin et al., 'Is It Time to Jump Ship?'.
8. Pauline Cullen and Clara Fischer, 'Conceptualising Generational Dynamics in Feminist Movements: Political Generations, Waves and Affective Economies', *Sociology Compass* 8, no. 3 (2014): 282–93; Agnieszka Graff, 'Lost between the Waves? The Paradoxes of Feminist Chronology and Activism in Contemporary Poland', *Journal of International Women's Studies* 4, no. 2 (2003): 100–116; Clare Hemmings, 'Telling Feminist Stories', *Feminist Theory* 6, no. 2 (2005): 115–3.
9. Although this grand narrative was essentially produced in Turkey, by feminist scholars and activists writing in Turkish, it has also been dominant in the international literature. Therefore, our analysis also applies to the international scholarship on women's activism and feminism in Turkey.
10. Tekeli, 'Birinci ve İkinci Dalga', 337.
11. Named after Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, leader of the Turkish nationalist struggle and the country's first president, Kemalism is recognised as the founding ideology of modern Turkey.
12. For example, see Birsan Banu Okutan, *Women and Nation in Turkey: Kadın Gazetesi (1947–1950) and Kadın Sesi (1957–1960)* (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2010); Emel Akal, *Kızıl Feministler: Bir Sözlü Tarih Çalışması* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2011); Ezgi Sarıtaş and Yelda Şahin, 'Ellili Yıllarda Kadın Hareketi', in *Türkiye'nin 1950'li Yılları*, ed. Mete Kaan Kaynar (İstanbul: İletişim, 2015), 627–66; Umut Azak and Henk de Smaele, 'National and Transnational Dynamics of Women's Activism in Turkey in the 1950s and 1960s: The

- Story of the ICW Branch in Ankara', *Journal of Women's History* 28, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 41–65; Selin Çağatay, 'The Politics of Gender and the Making of Kemalist Feminist Activism in Contemporary Turkey (1946–2011)' (PhD diss., Central European University, 2017); Yelda Şahin and Ezgi Sarıtaş, 'Altmışlı Yıllarda Kadın Hareketi: Süreklilikler, Kopuşlar ve Çeşitlenme', in *Türkiye'nin 1960'lı Yılları*, ed. Mete Kaan Kaynar (İstanbul: İletişim, 2017), 727–58; Sevil Çakır-Kılınçoğlu, 'The Radicalization of the Left in Turkey and Iran in the 1970s and a Comparative Analysis the Activist Women's Experiences' (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2019); Sevgi Adak, 'Yetmişli Yıllarda Kadın Hareketi: Yeni Bir Feminizmin Ayak Sesleri', in *Türkiye'nin 1970'li Yılları*, ed. Mete Kaan Kaynar (İstanbul: İletişim, 2020), 609–30; Büşra Satı, 'Working-Class Women, Gender, and Union Politics in Turkey, 1965–1980', *International Labor and Working-Class History* 100 (Fall 2021): 87–108; Elife Biçer-Deveci and Selin Çağatay, eds., 'A Century of Gender Equality Struggles in Turkey: Feminist History Revisited', special issue, *Diyâr. Journal of Ottoman, Turkish and Middle Eastern Studies* 4 (forthcoming in 2023).
13. Nükhet Kardam, *Turkey's Engagement with Global Women's Human Rights* (London: Routledge, 2005); Aslı Davaz, *Eşitsiz Kız Kardeşlik: Uluslararası ve Ortadoğu Kadın Hareketleri, 1935 Kongresi ve Türk Kadın Birliği* (İstanbul: İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 2014); Azak and Smaele, 'National and Transnational'.
  14. Molony and Nelson, *Women's Activism*, 2.
  15. See, for example, Aksu Bora and Asena Günel, eds., *90'larda Türkiye'de Feminizm* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002); Mithat Kutlar, *Nuriye Ulviye Mevlan ve 'Kadınlar Dünyası'nda Kürtler* (İstanbul: Avesta, 2010); Alexandre Toumarkine, 'Hayriye Melek (Hunç), a Circassian Ottoman Writer between Feminism and Nationalism', in *A Social History of the Late Ottoman Women: New Perspectives*, ed. Duygu Köksal and Anastasia Falierou (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 317–37; Hülya Osmanağaoğlu, 'Önsöz', in *Feminizm Kitabı: Osmanlı'dan 21. Yüzyıla Seçme Metinler*, ed. Hülya Osmanağaoğlu (İstanbul: Dipnot, 2015); Lerna Ekmekçiöğlu, *Recovering Armenia: The Limits of Belonging in Post-Genocide Turkey* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016); Feryal Saygılığil and Nacide Berber, eds., *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 10: Feminizm* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2020).
  16. Henry, 'Waves', 113; Laughlin et al., 'Is It Time to Jump Ship?', 78.
  17. Maxine Molyneux, 'Mobilization without Emancipation? Women's Interests, the State, and Revolution in Nicaragua,' *Feminist Studies* 11, no. 2 (1985): 233.
  18. *Ibid.*, 232.
  19. Dorothy Sue Cobble, *The Other Women's Movement: Workplace Justice and Social Rights in Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 8.
  20. Cobble, *The Other Women's*; Myra Marx Ferree and Aili Mari Tripp, eds., *Global Feminism: Transnational Women's Activism, Organizing, and Human Rights* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).
  21. Kumari Jayawardena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World* (London: Zed Books, 1986).
  22. Nicholson, 'Feminism in "Waves"'.
  23. Prior to this, books by Kate Millet, Shulamith Firestone and Simone de Beauvoir were also translated into Turkish in the 1970s. Yet, *Kadın Çevresi* was influential in the making of the feminist historiography in Turkey as several members of the circle were or had become academics in women's and gender studies.
  24. Nükhet Sirman, 'Feminism in Turkey: A Short History', *New Perspectives on Turkey* 3 (Fall 1989): 1–34; Şirin Tekeli, 'Europe, European Feminism, and Women in Turkey', *Women's Studies International Forum* 15, no. 1 (1992): 139–43.
  25. Sirman, 'Feminism in Turkey', 7.
  26. Tekeli, 'Europe, European Feminism'.
  27. Tekeli, 'Birinci ve İkinci Dalga'. This was, as far as we could locate, the first time the waves analysis was used in Turkey.
  28. Şirin Tekeli, 'The Turkish Women's Movement: A Brief History of Success', *Quaderns de la Mediterrània* 14 (2010): 120.

29. Emek Ergun, 'Türkiye'de Feminizmin Çeviri Kokan Tarihi', in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 10: Feminizm*, ed. Feryal Saygılıgil and Nacide Berber (İstanbul: İletişim, 2020), 691; Aksu Bora, 'Feminizmin "Dalgalar"ı', in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce Cilt 10: Feminizm*, ed. Feryal Saygılıgil and Nacide Berber (İstanbul: İletişim, 2020), 507–8.
30. Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case', *Feminist Studies* 13, no. 2 (1987): 317–39; Şirin Tekeli, 'Introduction: Women in 1980s Turkey', in *Women in Modern Turkish Society: A Reader*, ed. Şirin Tekeli (London: Zed Books, 1995), 1–22; Yeşim Arat, 'The Project of Modernity and Women in Turkey', in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 95–112.
31. The origins of the state feminism analysis can be seen in Tekeli's academic work as early as 1977, which was eventually published as a book in 1982. Şirin Tekeli, *Kadınlar ve Siyasal Toplumsal Hayat* (İstanbul: Birikim Yayınları, 1982).
32. *Ibid.*, 217.
33. Fatmagül Berktaş, 'Has Anything Changed in the Outlook of the Turkish Left on Women?', in *Women in Modern Turkish Society: A Reader*, ed. Şirin Tekeli (London: Zed Books, 1995), 250–62.
34. Tekeli, 'Introduction: Women in 1980s', 13.
35. Berktaş, for example, claimed that socialist women organised in separate women's groups under left-wing organisations only from the mid-1980s onwards. Berktaş, 'Has Anything Changed', 251.
36. See, for example, Osmanağaoğlu, 'Önsöz'.
37. Bora and Günel, *90'larda Türkiye'de*; Çağla Diner and Şule Toktaş, 'Waves of Feminism in Turkey: Kemalist, Islamist and Kurdish Women's Movements in an Era of Globalization', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 12, no. 1 (2010): 41–57. Several recent works continue characterising the second wave by a time lag in comparison to the West. See Osmanağaoğlu, 'Önsöz'; İnci Özkan Kerestecioglu and Aylin Özman, 'The Historico-Political Parameters of Academic Feminism in Turkey: Breaks and Continuities', in *Universities in the Neoliberal Era: Academic Cultures and Critical Perspectives*, ed. Hakan Ergül and Simten Coşar (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 181–216.
38. This literature mostly concerns Kemalist women and women organised in left, socialist, and trade union politics (see footnote 12). Research on Kurdish women's activism in the pre-1980 period is significantly missing.
39. Sarıtaş and Şahin, 'Ellili Yıllarda'; Şahin and Sarıtaş, 'Altmışlı Yıllarda'.
40. Azak and de Smaele, 'National and Transnational Dynamics'.
41. Çakır-Kılınçoğlu, 'The Radicalization of the Left'; Büşra Satı, 'Working-Class Women'.
42. The history of women's activism from the dissolution of the Turkish Women's Union in 1935 until the late 1940s when women's associations re-emerged has not yet been recovered in feminist historiography. While we acknowledge the unfavourable conjuncture of the WWII years for many forms of activism, this should not lead to the assumption that women in this period were absent in the political field.
43. Yeşim Arat, 'Women's Movement of the 1980s in Turkey: Radical Outcome of Liberal Kemalism?', in *Reconstructing Gender in the Middle East: Tradition, Identity, and Power*, ed. Fatma Müge Göçek and Balaghi Shiva (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 100–112.
44. Serpil Sancar, *Türk Modernleşmesinin Cinsiyeti: Erkekler Devlet, Kadınlar Aile Kurar* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012).
45. Davaz, *Eşitsiz Kız Kardeşlik*, 781–6.
46. Kadının Sosyal Hayatını Tetkik Kurumu. *Aylık Konferanslar 1953–1964* (Ankara: Kadının Sosyal Hayatını Tetkik Kurumu, 1967); *Aylık Konferanslar 1966–1972* (Ankara: Kadının Sosyal Hayatını Tetkik Kurumu, 1973).
47. Ayşegül Yaraman, *Türkiye'de Kadınların Siyasal Temsili* (İstanbul: Bağlam Yayıncılık, 1999), 94.
48. Sancar, *Türk Modernleşmesinin Cinsiyeti*, 208.
49. Çağatay, 'The Politics of Gender', 118; Sarıtaş and Şahin, 'Ellili Yıllarda'.



50. Francisca de Haan, 'Continuing Cold War Paradigms in Western Historiography of Transnational Women's Organisations: The Case of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)', *Women's History Review* 19, no. 4 (2010): 547–73.
51. Serpil Çakır and Hülya Gülbahar, 'Türkiye'de Kadın Hareketinin Yüzyılı Kronolojisi', in *Kadın Hareketinin Yüzyılı Ajandası* (Istanbul: Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Vakfı Yayınları, 1999), 239.
52. Adak, 'Yetmişli Yıllarda', 617.
53. Ayşe Güneş-Ayata, 'Laiklik, Güç ve Katılım Üçgeninde Türkiye'de Kadın ve Siyaset', in *75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler*, ed. Ayşe Berktaş Hacımırzaoğlu (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), 238.
54. Sinan Ciddi, *Kemalism in Turkish Politics: The Republican People's Party, Secularism and Nationalism* (London: Routledge, 2009).
55. Rahmi Kumaş, *CHP'nin Soyağacı* (Istanbul: Çağdaş Yayıncılık, 1999), 184, 202.
56. Not all Kemalist women were left leaning. Some leading figures in Kemalist women's activism participated in right-wing parties, such as Günseli Özkaya, TKB president between 1961 and 1980, who became an MP representing the Justice Party (*Adalet Partisi*).
57. Türkiye Ünitelili Kadınlar Derneği, *Türkiye Kadın Yılı Kongresi* (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası, 1978).
58. See Bonnie G. Smith, *Women's Studies: The Basics*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2019).
59. On '1968' as a transnational movement, see Gerd-Rainer Hord, '1968: A Social Movement Sui Generis', in *The History of Social Movements in Global Perspective: A Survey*, ed. Stefan Berger and Holger Nehring (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 515–41.
60. Sarah Colvin and Katharina Karcher, 'Introduction: 1968 – The Year That Rocked Whose World?', in *Women, Global Protest Movements, and Political Agency: Rethinking the Legacy of 1968*, ed. Sarah Colvin and Katharina Karcher (London: Routledge, 2018), 5.
61. Şahin and Sarıtaş, 'Altmışlı Yıllarda', 727; Adak, 'Yetmişli Yıllarda', 613.
62. Translations of Western socialist literature on women, such as August Babel's *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* and Jean Fréville's *La femme et le communisme* were widely circulated in Turkey of the 1970s and composed the main sources in these debates.
63. Martial Law, imposed in thirteen provinces in December 1978, was later extended and used to crack down on left-wing groups and organisations.
64. Birsan Talay Keşoğlu, '1970'lerin En Kitlesel Kadın Örgütü: İlerici Kadınlar Derneği', *Kültür ve Siyasette Feminist Yaklaşımlar* 12 (2010): 72.
65. Akal, *Kızıl Feministler*, 176, 192.
66. See the İKD documents outlining such an aim published in Muazzez Pervan, ed., *İlerici Kadınlar Derneği (1975-80): "Kırmızı Çatıklı Kadınlar"ın Tarihi* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2013).
67. Akal, *Kızıl Feministler*, 135–61.
68. Zerrin Ediz, 'Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye'deki Kadın Örgütlenmeleri: Kadın Hakları Açısından Bir İnceleme (1923-1993)' (PhD diss., Istanbul University, 1994), 147.
69. Ibid., 153.
70. The İKD mobilised thousands of women for these celebrations, not just in urban centres but also in small towns and even villages. See Emel Akal, 'Yetmişli Yıllarda Yıgınsal Bir Kadın Örgütü: İlerici Kadınlar Derneği', in *Türkiye'nin 1970'li Yılları*, ed. Mete Kaan Kaynar (Istanbul: İletişim, 2020), 636.
71. Democratic Women's Union, for example, was one of them. Ediz, 'Cumhuriyet Döneminde', 153.
72. The clashes between the left- and right-wing militants reached an unprecedented level in the late 1970s. Although this clash is often represented as a symmetrical one, in reality, the far-right groups had links with the state and functioned as paramilitary structures organising attacks against members of the left-wing youth and ethnic/sectarian minorities associated with the left, e.g., the Alevis. Benjamin Gourisse, 'In the Name of the State: The Nationalist Action Party (MHP) and the Genesis of Political Violence during the 1970s', *Turkish Studies* 23, no. 1 (2022): 56–76.

73. Tuba Demirci, 'On the Margins of Politicised Motherhood: Mothers' Human Rights Activism in Turkey from the 1970s to the 1990s', in *Mothers in Public and Political Life*, ed. Simone Bohn ve Pınar Melis Yelsalı Parmaksız (Bradford, ON: Demeter Press, 2017), 212–50.
74. Adak, 'Yetmişli Yıllarda', 619.
75. Notable among them were Adalet Ağaoğlu's *Ölmeye Yatmak* published in 1973 and Sevgi Soysal's *Yürümek* published in 1975.
76. Early studies of the pioneering feminist scholars of the 'second wave', such as Deniz Kandiyoti, Şirin Tekeli and Ferhunde Özbay, were published in the second half of the 1970s. These scholars also collaborated with Kemalist feminist academics like Nermin Abadan Unat, e.g. in her edited volume *Türk Toplumunda Kadın* (1979). For the English edition of the volume, see *Women in Turkish Society* (Leiden: Brill, 1981).
77. Cobble, *The Other Women's*, 1.
78. Kemalist and socialist women's activism remained active in the following decades as well, which also renders depicting the type of feminist activism that came to be defined as the 'second wave' in a rather exclusive way as the only feminism in the post-1980 period. The emergence of Kurdish and Islamic women's movements in the same period further enriched this multiplicity.
79. For recent examples of such efforts, see Chiara Bonfiglioli, 'Revolutionary Networks: Women's Political and Social Activism in Cold War Italy and Yugoslavia (1945–1957)' (PhD diss. Utrecht University, 2012); Zsófia Lóránd, *The Feminist Challenge to the Socialist State in Yugoslavia: Genders and Sexualities in History* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Zheng Wang, *Finding Women in the State. A Socialist Feminist Revolution in the People's Republic of China, 1949–1964* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2016).

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