

A “Revolutionary” Kurdish *Mullah* from Turkey: Mehmed Emin Bozarslan and His Intellectual Evolution¹

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Mela rabe ji xew iro,
Heta kengi mirîşo bi,
Bî destê dijminê millet,
Ne şerm e, ko tu kaşo bi?

Tu xwenda ye, tu zana ye,
Xulamê şêx û axa ye,
Dixwazim ko li pêş millet,
Tu ronî bi, weki ro bi.²

...

The above-quoted lines are taken from a poem by the famous 20th century Kurdish poet Cegerxwîn, a penname meaning “bleeding heart.” Cegerxwîn (1903–1984), who lived mostly in Syria, was himself originally a *mullah* and was later known for his moving nationalist poetry.³ Titled “*Mela Rabe*” (*Mullah Wake up*), this poem addresses Kurdish *mullahs* and asks them to enlighten the nation.

Mehmed Emin Bozarslan is a shining example of the idealized *mullah* in Cegerxwîn’s poem, precisely because Bozarslan’s life story is one of commitment to voicing his people’s problems. What makes him exceptional is the fact that he had a critical and oppositional voice and was in dialogue and

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debate with various social and political agents and institutions such as *sheikhs*, tribal chieftains, *mullabs/muftis*, leftist intellectual circles in Turkey, the Kurdish left and the Turkish nation-state embodied in such "nation-state apparatus" as the *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı* (Presidency of Religious Affairs),⁴ the courts and prisons. Starting with his first books from the 1960s onward, one can see that Bozarslan's expression of Kurdish concerns was shaped by various social and political developments of his times. In this sense, rather than having an unchanging worldview, Bozarslan went through an intellectual evolution reflective of his inner tensions and, at times, contradictions. It is possible to view these tensions as a result of his attempt to work out through the given legal and constitutional channels to come up with a solution to the existing social, cultural and political problems of the Kurds in Turkey. In this sense, Bozarslan's discourse has been colored by a socialist-revolutionary interpretation of Islam, one that has especially been influenced by the Islamic socialist model promoted by Nasser in Egypt in the 1960s, the leftist discourse in the 1960s and 70s in Turkey, and Western European democratic and multicultural systems after 1979, when Bozarslan left Turkey for Sweden. Despite its different manifestations and articulations, however, the continuous and consistent concern characterizing Bozarslan's work has been to give voice to the oppressed Kurds in Turkey.

Bozarslan was born in 1934 in a village in the district of Lice in Diyarbakır. His father was a village *mullab* as well.⁵ He studied in various *madrasas* in villages and towns and finished his unofficial *madrasa* education in 1956. He also took primary school exams and received his primary school diploma.⁶ In 1959, he started serving as a *mufti* in various districts in the Kurdish regions. His first book called *Allāb'a İman (Belief in Allāb)* was published in 1960. This "traditional" or "conventional" book is about the explanation of the belief in God. Why do human beings believe in God? What are the fundamentals of the belief in God? He addresses these questions with reference to various Muslim and Western scholars and thinkers.

The more controversial book came out in 1964, when Bozarslan was *mufti* of the district of Kulp in Diyarbakır, by the title of *İslâmiyet Açısından Şeyblik ve Ağalık (Sheikbdom and Chieftainship from the Point of View of Islam)*. In this book, he severely criticizes *sheikhs* and tribal chieftains in the Kurdish regions for their oppression and exploitation of poor peasants:

In sum: *sheikhs*, chieftains and landlords have risen and are rising [to power] together by pressing on the heads of our people. The aim of these [*sheikhs*, chieftains and landlords] is nothing but to suck the blood of the people. The wish of all is this [i.e., sucking the blood of the people], but each of them is doing this job by a different way. Nevertheless, put in one single word, all of them are robbing the people.

From all these fakery (*bilebazlık*), our people and our peasants come out injured (*zararlı*). It is the people who work, [and yet] it is them who eat. People are in poverty, [yet] they are in debauch (*sefabat*)! However, their sultanate is gradually collapsing, God willing some time soon it will be equal with the earth.⁷

Referring to the Qurʾān and the sayings of the Prophet, he points to the egalitarian characteristics of Islamic teachings.⁸ In this way he criticizes the *sheikhs*' use of their supposedly "holy lineage," which is traced back to the Prophet or his companions as a source of prestige and superiority against common Kurdish peasants. Furthermore, he indicates that *tariqatism* (*tarikatchılık*) is not something to be found in the original Islam:

If there had been *tariqatism* (*tarikatchılık*) in the religion of Islam, is it not necessary that it should have existed since the time of the Prophet and the companions and it should have come out of Mecca and Medina? Is it possible for an institution to be Islamic, which was founded 5–6 centuries after the Prophet in places that were not the origins of Islam?⁹

This book became very controversial in Kurdish regions at the time. The *mufti* of the province of Diyarbakır, M. Salih Tanrıverdi,¹⁰ wrote a short response to this book called *İnkâr Bulutlarını Sıyran Bir Işık (A Light Tearing the Clouds of Denial)*.¹¹ On the one hand, Tanrıverdi claims that Bozarslan denies *tasawwuf*, which is a branch of Islamic knowledge;¹² on the other hand, he notes that if Bozarslan is against the degenerate *tariqatism*, then he agrees with Bozarslan.¹³ In 1965, Bozarslan published a pamphlet by the title of *Gerçekler Konuşuyor (Truths are Speaking)*, in which he refutes Tanrıverdi's critique. He indicates that he does not deny the Islamic knowledge/science (*ilm*) of *tasawwuf*, but he is against the oppression and exploitation of poor people by *sheikhs* and tribal chieftains.¹⁴

In this pamphlet, Bozarslan indicates that there were some people who asked the PRA to collect all copies of the book, burn them and dismiss Bozarslan from the post of *mufti*.¹⁵ From the memoirs of some Kurdish political activists at the time, such as Mehdi Zana, one can see that this book became very controversial at that time in the Kurdish regions.¹⁶ "A real and revolutionary man of religion," he was dismissed from his post in 1965 "on account of professing Kurdism and leftism."¹⁷ He took his case to the *Danıştay* (Council of State) and won the case. However, he was appointed as the *mufti* of the district of Şarköy in the province of Tekirdağ in the Thrace.

Bozarslan's most interesting book, *Doğunun Sorunları (The Questions of the East)*, was published in 1966. This book is characterized by a social justice-oriented and socio-economic developmentalist discourse.¹⁸ In it, Bozarslan analyzes the social, cultural and economic problems of the Eastern¹⁹

regions of the country. A notable characteristic of the book is that each chapter starts with the citation of the relevant article from the Constitution. To illustrate, at the beginning of the second chapter titled "The Cultural Condition of the East," he refers to Article 50 of the Constitution: "It is one of the primary duties of the state to meet the people's needs of instruction and education (Constitution, Article 50)."²⁰ In the same chapter, he gives the figures regarding schooling in villages in the East. He demonstrates how the East has been underdeveloped in this regard as well.²¹ In fact, he notes that the East has been underdeveloped not only with regard to education, but in all spheres of life. And he indicates that this underdevelopment is interdependent:

The East, before everything else, is a totally underdeveloped/backward (*geri kalmış*: lagging behind) region. Development (*kalkınma*), on the other hand, is a multidimensional question that does not have the possibility of getting realized from one dimension [only]. The development of a country, or a region, is also/simultaneously tied to industry and transportation as much as it is tied to culture; because social, economic and cultural matters are tied to each other . . .²²

In this sense, he notes that economic and cultural developments are the two fundamental areas for the development of the backward Eastern regions of the country. As for economic development, he suggests that land reform should be realized and industrialization projects should be put into effect in the region.²³ Regarding cultural development, Bozarslan emphasizes the need to educate and bring literacy to the peasants. He stresses that primary education in the East should be provided in Kurdish, since most do not know Turkish. He indicates that this is in no way against Turkishness. He gives the examples of Greek, Jewish and Armenian citizens of Turkey. Education in their own mother tongues for Greek, Armenian and Jewish fellow citizens is their constitutional right, since their mother tongue is not Turkish, and this is not offensive to Turkishness. Moreover, he notes that local radio stations should broadcast in Kurdish so that people can be educated by listening to the radio and suggests that Kurdish music also be broadcast.²⁴

Bozarslan points to the particular forms of oppression that Eastern women experience and criticizes the Turkish Women's Union because of their lack of knowledge and insensitivity to this group.²⁵ He notes that the Turkish Women's Union declared the wife of the British prime minister as "Woman of the Year," and yet have not made an effort to raise the social, cultural and economic levels of the poor women who are their fellow citizens.²⁶ Bozarslan's critique focusing on the poor social status of Eastern (Kurdish) women demonstrates that his standpoint was an antecedent to Kurdish women's critiques of Turkish feminist women in the pages of Kurdish women's journals, such as *Roza*, *Jûjîn*

and *Jin û Jîyan*, which were published in İstanbul in the second half of the 1990s.²⁷

Doğunun Sorunları was republished by Avesta Publications in İstanbul in 2002. In the preface to the second edition, Bozarslan provides some interesting autobiographical anecdotes. He indicates that he owned a bookstore by the name of “Şafak Kitabevi” [Şafak Bookstore] in Diyarbakir. His bookstore was a meeting place for his friends, who called it “The academy.” There they used to chat about politics, language, culture and literature. Bozarslan points out that it was the Kurdish question that was at the core of *Questions of the East*, and if he were to write about developments, he would write a separate book and call it *The Kurdish Question* rather than *Questions of the East*.²⁸

Bozarslan published the first Kurdish alphabet in Latin script in Turkey in 1968.²⁹ For this, he was sent to jail for four months.³⁰ In an interview conducted in 1993, Bozarslan relates his memory of the publication of *Alfabe* (Alphabet) and his arrest:

I decided as a Kurdish person and as a Kurdish writer to challenge the undemocratic and inhumane policy of the Turkish state and publish this book. I wrote and published it in 1968 in Istanbul. With the help of my friends I distributed it throughout Kurdistan, Istanbul, and Ankara. It was banned immediately.

When I went to Diyarbakır, they arrested me.

They took me to trial, and the court asked me, ‘Why did you write this?’ I said, ‘This language is a live language and people are speaking this language, and as a person in this area, I wanted to help people learn to read and write.’ But he sent me to prison, and on the paper he signed, he wrote that my crime was to try to divide Turkey. He wrote that I tried to divide Turkey through this book, which is only sixty-four pages. I was in prison for four months. Then they released me but *Alfabe* was still banned. The trial continued for six years, until 1974.

This book continues to be banned in Turkey. It was the first Kurdish alphabet book in Latin in northern Kurdistan, and it is the only alphabet book in the world that is banned.³¹

In 1968, he transliterated the Kurdish romance *Mem û Zîn* (*Mem and Zîn*) into Kurdish-Latin script alongside its Turkish translation. *Mem û Zîn*, too, caused alarm and Bozarslan was summonsed to court once again. Martin van Bruinessen states that Bozarslan’s transliteration and translation of *Mem û Zîn* was the most important Kurdish book to be published in Turkey in the 1960s and that it made a huge impact as it reached a much bigger number of readers.³² Likewise, Muhsin Kızılkaya has said that Bozarslan’s publication of *Mem û Zîn*

is the first bridge between classical Kurdish literature and that of today's generation.³³

In 1969, Bozarslan published *Hilafet ve Ümmetçilik Sorunu* (*The Question of the Caliphate and Ummatism*). In this work, Bozarslan presents a socialist-revolutionary interpretation of Islam. The importance of this book, although it is at most a translation of the Islamic socialism promoted by Nasser in Egypt (particularly through the Azharite *'ulama*), is that Bozarslan's stance was far from "the disdain of the Kurdish left for Islam in the 1970s."³⁴ Instead, thanks to his *madrasa* education and career as a *mullab/mufti*, he emphasizes the egalitarian and social-justice basis of Islamic teachings. In this sense, he argues that Islam is essentially a populist, democratic, republican and revolutionary religion that ended the oppression and exploitation of the poor by the rich in Mecca. The first glimpses of nepotism and favoritism were seen during the third Caliph Uthman's tenure. Starting with Muawiya, the institution of the Caliphate practically and legally became invalid precisely because it turned out to be a tool of exploitation and oppression of the poor at the hands of monarchies. Hence, Bozarslan argues, the Caliphate turned into a monarchy; thus, it became null and void a long time ago.

Like *Doğunun Sorunları*, in *Hilafetçilik ve Ümmetçilik Sorunu*, too, Bozarslan evidences his firm belief in linear historical progress. He praises anti-imperialist nationalist independence movements in Egypt, Algeria and India³⁵ and Nasser for his socialist-revolutionary policies. Moreover, he indicates that all Islamist movements in the Middle East, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, have been at the service of imperialism. He views the establishment of the Republic and the abolition of the Caliphate as progressive historical moments in Turkey. He sees the Republic to be more congruent with the true nature and essence of Islam. He refers to the *Menemen Event* of 1930 as a reactionary movement;³⁶ yet he is silent about the *Sheikh Said Revolt* in 1925. In his later works, however, he indicates that 1925 (the year of the *Sheikh Said Revolt*) is remembered as "*sala şewatê*" (*the year of burning/fire*) among the Kurds.³⁷ Mesut Yeğen indicates that the *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları* (*Revolutionary Eastern Culture Hearths*) (the first Kurdish legal organization in Republican Turkey, founded in 1969 and closed down after the March 12, 1971 Memorandum) viewed the *Sheikh Said Uprising* as "a reactionary and feudal movement."³⁸ Hence, it seems possible to view Bozarslan's initial silence about the *Sheikh Said Uprising* as a reflection of the tension emanating from his *madrasa* education and his relationship with the Kurdish Left at the time.³⁹

One significant observation about Bozarslan's three works -*İslamiyet Açısından Şeyblik ve Ağalık*, *Doğunun Sorunları* and *Hilafet ve Ümmetçilik Sorunu*- is as follows: Bozarslan's basic concern with the Kurdish issue pushed

him to the interpretations of the left, Islam and “feminism” from a perspective informed by Kurdish social structure. It is thus no surprise that such an experience results in a different interpretation of the left, Islam and feminism compared to the Turkish left, Turkish Islam and Turkish feminism. In a way, these three works can be seen as a precursor of the “separation” of Kurdish versions of the left, Islam and feminism from their Turkish counterparts from the late 1960s through the 1990s. This separation started first from the left with the foundation of the *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları* (*Eastern Revolutionary Culture Hearths*) in 1969 and continued in the following decades.⁴⁰ Kurdish women’s independent organization started in the 1990s.⁴¹ As Lale Yalçın-Heckmann’s and Martin van Bruinessen’s works in this essay indicate, there has always been a “Kurdish Islam” different from “Turkified/State Islam,”⁴² primarily because of the continuing *madrasa* tradition in the Kurdish regions, though the foundation of Kurdish Islamic associations and publications can first be seen in the 1990s. In this sense, the *Med-Zebra* association and the publisher and journal *Nûbibar* are the best examples of separate Kurdish-Islamic organizations.⁴³

In 1969, Bozarslan resigned from his post as *muftî*.⁴⁴ In 1971, after the March 12 Memorandum, he was tried in the case of *Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları*.⁴⁵ He was sent to jail once again and spent from 1971 to 74 in a Diyarbakır military prison.⁴⁶ After he got out of the prison, he published his memoirs under the title *İçerdekiler ve Dışardakiler* (*Those Inside and Those Outside*).⁴⁷ Throughout the 1970s, he continued his research and translations. He translated works of Jawaharlal Nehru, Naif Havatme and Jamal Abd al-Nasser into Turkish. He translated *Sharafname* and the American diplomat William Eagleton’s work *The Kurdish Republic of 1946* into Turkish. The first book of Kurdish short stories published in the Turkish Republic is *Meyro*,⁴⁸ written by Bozarslan in 1979. It consists of ten short stories alongside their Turkish translations. These stories are about the oppression, superstitions and poverty of Kurdish peasants. His works prior to 1979 are mainly in Turkish, whereas after that year he mostly writes in Kurdish.⁴⁹

In 1979, Bozarslan left Turkey for Sweden and has been living there since then. His publication and research activities continue. His work since leaving Turkey has focused on the Kurdish language and literature. He has transliterated the Ottoman-Kurdish newspaper *Kurdistan* (the first Kurdish paper in history, published in 1898–1902 in Cairo, Geneva, London, Folkestone), *Kürd Teavün ve Terakki Gazetesi* (*Journal of Kurdish Mutual Aid and Progress*) (published in 1908–1909 in İstanbul) and *Jîn* (*Life*) (published in 1918–1919 in İstanbul) in the 1980s and 90s. He has also been publishing collections of Kurdish oral literature such as folk tales, jokes and animal fables. A consistent characteristic of these collections is that they

include explanations of some vocabulary with reference to and examples from Kurdish classical and oral literature.

Bozarslan's most recent book is called *Baxçê Zimên (The Garden of the Language)*.⁵⁰ This book is a kind of "etymological dictionary" of a large number of Kurdish vocabularies which have common but wrong uses. With reference to their uses in Kurdish classical and oral literature, Bozarslan presents and explains why some common uses of these vocabularies are wrong. This huge work, which is approximately 600 pages, includes the vocabulary from the letter A to G. The rest will be published in two or three more volumes. Bozarslan has also been working on a collection of Kurdish idioms and proverbs, a comprehensive Kurdish dictionary and a Kurdish grammar book. He plans to finish writing these works by 2010.⁵¹ All his works after leaving Turkey have been published by Deng Publisher in Sweden. After the ban on publications in Kurdish was lifted in 1991 and increasingly in the 2000s, Deng Publisher's Turkish branch reprinted these works there as well.

Since his departure from Turkey in 1979, Bozarslan's works have focused on the cultivation of the Kurdish language and literature.⁵² The multicultural democratic polities of European countries have clearly shaped his discourse on these issues. He views Kemalist nationalist policies as a total failure in Anatolia, which has been a home to multiple cultures, languages and peoples. He is severely critical of the homogenization and Turkification of different peoples living in Anatolia. A lengthy and concise illustration of Bozarslan's views and suggested solutions based on European examples in this regard is as follows:

How can an ideology that envisages the creation of a 'single nation' (*tek ulus*) be valid in a geography where Kurds, Turks, Lazes, Circassians, Arabs live side by side and at some regions enmeshed (*iç içe*) with one another! How can such an ideology be valid/applicable (*geçerli*) in a geography constituted by a mosaic, colored by different countries and regions, different national and ethnic identities, different languages and cultures, different folklores and musics!

The only system that can be applicable in such geographies is a mode of rule (*yönetim biçimi*) that is far from narrow nationalist doctrines and based on complete equality of peoples, such as the Belgium type, such as the Swiss type. Since all peoples would have equal rights, in such a polity, there would not be a need for one even to throw a stone at another.⁵³

With his emphasis on multiculturalism and the equality of different people from the same polity, Bozarslan's discourse veers from the nationalist; rather, it is shaped by a concern with the oppression and eradication of Kurdish

language, identity and culture in Turkey. This concern found its expression in the translation of the writings of the leaders of the anti-imperialist nationalist movements in the 1970s. After he moved to Sweden, however, he started to refer to political models of Western European countries as a framework for the solution of the Kurdish issue in Turkey.

The historian Hamit Bozarslan makes a distinction between “Kurdish nationalism” and the “Kurdish issue” in Turkey. Although these two are closely interrelated, argues Bozarslan, it is not possible to identify one with the other. While Kurdish nationalism aims at the establishment of an administrative structure based on Kurdishness, the Kurdish issue is a social and national question of Republican Turkey. In this sense, the Kurdish issue is a product of the exclusionary policies of Republican Turkey, which “reserve a place solely to Turkishness in history, culture and education and excludes all sorts of identity and belonging other than Turkishness.”⁵⁴

But what makes Mehmed Emin Bozarslan a noteworthy intellectual?⁵⁵

First, Bozarslan’s *madrasa* education demonstrates that *madrasa* instruction continued in the Kurdish regions well after their closure in 1924 with the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu (Law on the Unification of Education)*. More strikingly, the *madrasas* ensured the survival and transmission of the Kurdish-Islamic belonging against the Turkifying and secularist policies of the state. For a long time, the Kurdish population of the country preferred *madrasas* to modern schools, since the language of instruction was Kurdish in the former.⁵⁶ Even for decades after their official closure in 1924, *madrasa* education continued in Kurdish regions underground.⁵⁷ As Martin van Bruinessen notes, they have been closely associated with Kurdish identity:

The ban in fact may have strengthened the association of the *madrasa* with Kurdish identity, which was suppressed at the same time. Kurdish *mullabs* were prominent among those who kept an awareness of Kurdish identity alive during the years when the state most forcefully imposed cultural assimilation.⁵⁸

Zeynelabidin Zınar, a *mullab* from the province of Batman living in Sweden as well, highlights this point:

Apart from being centers of education in Kurdish, Arabic and to some extent Persian, they [*medreses*] were also the places where Kurdish cultural tradition and an awareness of Kurdish identity were kept alive. Kurdish custom and tradition (*adet*) was maintained in the *medreses*, and it was here that something of a Kurdish national character was forged.⁵⁹

Moreover, as van Bruinessen points out, *mullabs* and *madrasas* contributed to the promotion of “Kurdish national awareness” at the expense of social and regional differences among *madrasa* students:

They [village *mullabs*] played a major role in the emergence of Kurdish national awareness and in integrating different parts of Kurdistan; the students of each *madrasa* came from a variety of regional and social backgrounds, tribal ties were irrelevant, the Kurdish language was cultivated.⁶⁰

Bozarslan's depiction of *madrasas* versus *İmam Hatip* schools is quite interesting. He notes that those who studied in *madrasas* were the children of poor and oppressed peasants. They tended to acquire a more socialist and revolutionary outlook. He notes that there are a large number of young *mullabs* educated in village *madrasas* and that they are participants of "anti-imperialist, anti-feudal, anti-capitalist, anti-Chauvin revolutionary struggle."⁶¹ This observation gives us a sense of Bozarslan's sense of self. Hence, one can argue that the *madrasas* in the Kurdish regions in the post-1924 period have functioned as sites of resistance and survival for Kurdish-Islamic belonging against the forceful imposition of nationalist and secularist policies of the Turkish nation-state.⁶²

However, the facts that *madrasas* and *mullabs* have been sites and agents of resistance and survival for Kurdish-Islamic belonging against the state does not necessarily mean that the state and Kurdish *mullabs* were mutually exclusive. On the contrary, the relationship between the state and the Kurdish periphery is one of cooptation and incorporation as much as it has been one of contestation and conflict, as was seen in "the civil-war like situation in the 1920s and 1930s."⁶³ As can be seen in Bozarslan's books *Doğunun Sorunları* and *Hilafet ve Ümmetçilik Sorunu*, the process of incorporation worked well to a certain degree, since his discourse was shaped with frequent references to the constitution and citizenship rights for "Eastern citizens of the state" (*doğulu vatandaşlar*).

Bozarslan's case also shows us that the study of Kurdish *ʿulama* is a crucial contribution to existing studies on *ʿulama* in contemporary Muslim societies. The main reason is that Kurdish language and identity have been denied and marginalized in the four nation-states under whose rule the Kurds have been living. Muḥammad Qasim Zaman, in his work on *ʿulama* in contemporary Islam, indicates that:

Yet we should also be wary of the temptation to reduce the *ʿulama*'s activism to either the failed manipulation of the governing elite or to the ambiguities of the latter's ample rhetoric. We need to give more credit, as it were, to the *ʿulama* themselves, to their efforts in the cause of what they take to be the imperatives of the Islamic tradition and what they regard as their own proper role in upholding those imperatives. The same, *mutatis mutandis*, is true of other contemporary Muslim societies.⁶⁴

Although Zaman's emphasis on giving credit to the *ʿulama* themselves is well-taken, in the context of Kurdish *ʿulama*, one can see a different picture emanating from the specific social, political and historical context of the Kurdish issue: alongside their engagement with upholding and promoting Islamic ideals as the "traditional intelligentsia" in their society, the Kurdish *ʿulama* have dealt with the question of their people's oppression brought about by the Turkish, Arab and Iranian nation-states. Bozarslan is not an exceptional *mullab* in this regard, as previous references to various studies by Bozarslan, Zinar and van Bruinessen show.⁶⁵ Indeed there is also a very interesting example from Iranian Kurdistan: Sheikh Ezeddin Hosseini:

Shaikh Ezzeddin Hoseini was born in Bane in Iran in 1921. As a young *mullab* in 1942 he joined the first Kurdish nationalist organization in the Mahabad region, Komala J-K, which later merged into the more broadly based Kurdistan Democratic Party of Qazi Mohammad. In 1967 he became the *imam* of Mahabad's principal mosque. During the Iranian revolution he emerged as a charismatic leader speaking for Kurdish rights. In 1979 he negotiated with Tehran on behalf of the Kurds. The government offensive of 1980 forced him to flee Iran. He currently lives in Sweden.⁶⁶

Sheikh Ezeddin Hosseini views himself as a "*roobaane-ye mutaraqqi va rowshanfekr*" (*a progressive and enlightened cleric*). He taught for about 30 years in *madrasas* in Iranian Kurdistan and disagreed with Khomeini about whether clerics should have political power and is of the persuasion that religious and state affairs should be separate from each other and clerics should not hold political power. Also, he emphasizes that the Kurds of Iran must have autonomy. Hosseini left Iran for France in 1982.⁶⁷ The Kurdish intellectual and political activist Naci Kutlay, from the province of Ağrı, notes that he met with Hosseini in the 1980s in Uppsala. He reports from Hosseini that the latter raised an armed revolt against Khomeini when he turned down Kurdish democratic demands.⁶⁸

The importance of Kurdish *ulama* can also be seen in Syria. Harriet Montgomery in the work about Kurds in Syria notes the following: Lieutenant Muḥammad Talib Hilal was the figure who was in charge of domestic security of the al-Hasaka region under the Ba'ath rule in Syria. In 1963 he prepared a secret report on the Kurdish question in the Jazira region. One of the strategies of the report was to exchange the Arab *ulama* with the Kurdish ones. Moreover, it was proposed that: "Religious titles should be taken from Kurdish *ulama* and these *ulama* should be sent to inner regions in Syria. Arab nationalist *ulama*, on the other hand, should be sent to the Kurdish regions."⁶⁹

Having looked at different examples of Kurdish *ulama* as agents of Kurdish social and political concerns in the Middle East in general, now let us again turn to the discussion of Bozarslan. Earlier it was noted that Bozarslan's

work in 1964 became very controversial in the region. Thus, a closer look at the reception of Bozarslan's works amongst Kurdish *literati* and political activists would be useful. Mehdi Zana, the mayor of Diyarbakır in the late 1970s, in his memoirs notes that Bozarslan's book aroused so much controversy that there were even *fetwas* given for Bozarslan's death. Zana also adds that he and his friends invited Bozarslan to Silvan, a district of Diyarbakır for a debate with other *mullabs* about his book *İslamiyet Açısından Şeybliik ve Ağalık*. The other *mullabs* could not win the debate and some of them even became convinced of Bozarslan's arguments. A Kurdish writer and journalist by the name of Abdurrahman Efem also wrote a response to Bozarslan.⁷⁰ Efem totally dismisses Bozarslan's work as being written under the influence of three ideologies that are deviant from a religious point of view. These ideologies are Wahhabism, Masonry and communism. He also adds that Bozarslan's aim is to use religion as an instrument at the service of some of these ideologies.⁷¹ He attacks Bozarslan for being an enemy of religion who "interprets verses of the Qur'ân for the propaganda of communism as can be seen in Bozarslan's approach to the question of land reform."⁷²

A later work referring to Bozarslan's works is Müfid Yüksel's book *Kürdistan'da Değişim Süreci (The Process of Change in Kurdistan)*, published in 1993. This book provides valuable information about the history of the *madrasa* in the district of Norşin in the province of Bitlis and the spread of Naqshibandiyya in the Kurdish regions alongside *madrasas*. Throughout the book, one can see that Yüksel sounds impatient with the process of change that has been under way in the Kurdish regions. There is a strong resentment originating from the gradual disappearance of the "Naqshibandi Sheikh aristocracy in Kurdistan," a process which, Yüksel points out, corresponds to the 1950s and 60s. Yüksel says there are several "atheist, nationalist, Marxist-Leninist" *mullabs* such as Cegerxwîn, Bozarslan and a few others acting as leaders of Kurdish nationalism.⁷³ Yüksel's argument, however, is seriously misleading. Based on a reading of his writings in the 1960s and 70s, it seems completely inaccurate to call Bozarslan an "atheist, nationalist" and it is a total misrepresentation of what Bozarslan has been trying to do.⁷⁴ In none of his works can one see Bozarslan propagating atheism. Likewise, it is not possible to call him a Kurdish nationalist either, as his main concern since the 1960s has been to voice the denial, oppression and marginalization of Kurdish identity, culture and language.⁷⁵

Finally, Bozarslan's intellectual evolution from the 1960s through the 2000s is interesting because it is one of the many different manifestations of responses from the Kurdish periphery to the modernization project. These responses have ranged from armed uprising to successful assimilation to Turkishness, from the contestation of the state through the circulation of oral

literature to legal party politics in the 1990s and 2000s. Bozarslan has always been a socially and politically engaged intellectual writing works on Kurdish history, language and literature. He has voiced Kurdish concerns from within a legal, democratic and constitutional framework. However, his proposals were not paid any attention by the ruling center of the country. What Bozarslan's *Doğunun Sorunları* in 1966 could not, unfortunately, achieve seems to now be a hot topic on the social and political agenda of the country in the 2000s, mostly, it seems, as a result of European Union requirements. Yet the losses remain incalculable: tens of thousands of people were killed, tens of thousands were wounded and millions have been displaced in the last three decades of armed conflict. What Bozarslan's works did result in, however, was that he was subjected to different sorts of violence instead, which is why he had to leave such an "insecure environment"⁷⁶ as Turkey. Nevertheless, Bozarslan has not stopped voicing Kurdish concerns. On the contrary, since his departure from Turkey in 1979, he has made invaluable contributions to research on Kurdish history, language and literature.

"A guide for poor Kurds," Mehmed Emin Bozarslan has been a *hışyar* (awake), a *zana* (wise, learned) and thus, a revolutionary *mullab*:

Tu rêberê Kurdên reben,
Ma nabêni zıncır û ben?
Dımırın lı çolan bê kefen
Disa tu ranabi, mela
...
Gava ku dezgeh hin bîbi
Qey gawır û bê din dîbi?
Yan rengê Rûs û Çin dîbi
Hışyar û zana bi, mela?⁷⁷

Appendix 1: Bibliography of Mehmed Emin Bozarslan

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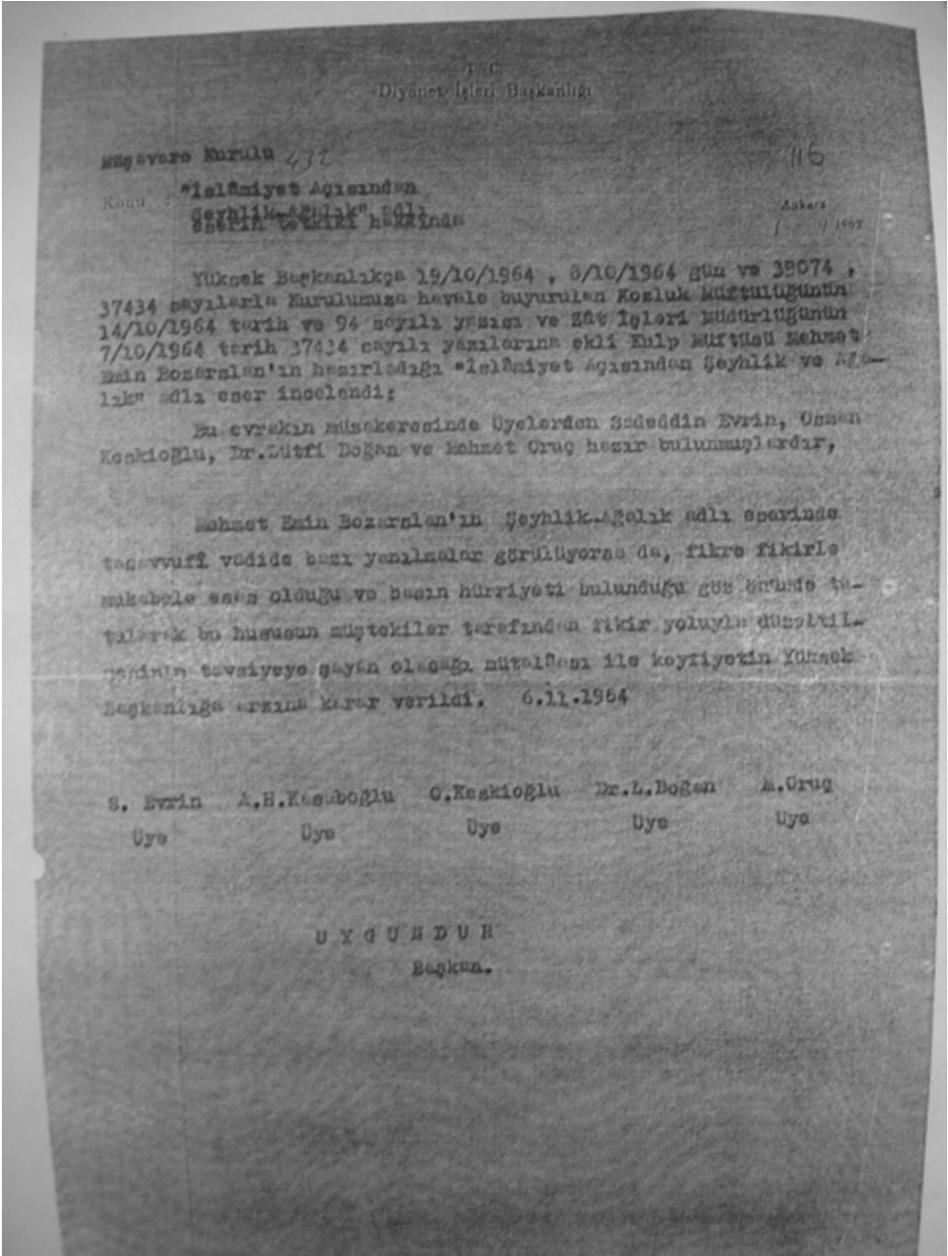
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Appendix 2: The Report of the Presidency of Religious Affairs on Bozarslan's book, November 6, 1964



Appendix 3: M. Salih Tanrıverdi and P. Aziz Günel's letter to the prime minister, dated November 13, 1965

Dosya *Cemaat Reisi*

13-11-1965
Diyarbakır A7

Çok Sayın
Genç, Dinç ve Enerjik Başbakanımız.

Maiyetinizle beraber DOĞU EKİSPRES Tetbikatını gözden geçirmek üzere, İhtiyar DİYARBAKIR'ımıza şeref vermiş olmanız, size Ümit bağıliyan her Vatandaş gibi bizide Çok memnun ve Mütenassıs etmiş olduğuna emin olabilirsiniz.

Demokrasi cephesinin Kudret ve Azametini göstermek ve Allahsızları yıldırmak üzere NATO tetbikatının bu defa D.Bakırımıza nasip olması ayrıca ve mümtaz bir karakteri taşımakta olduğuna inandığımız ve bu şerefın Başbakanlığınız zamanına tesadüf etmesi bizler için bir Fâli-hâyar olmuştur. Onun içindir ki, İslâm Cemaatının ve Türk Süryani-Kadim Cemaatının Din adamları olarak, Zati Devletleriyle teşerrüf etmek üzere İstikbâlinıza gelmiş olduk, Kalabalığın fazla olduğundan ve Gâilelerinizin çokluğundan dolayı Arzu ettiğimiz şekilde kıymetli Sohbetlerinizden faydalanamadığımız üzüntüsü içindeyiz.

Bilvesile, Sonsuz ve Sarsılmaz Saygılarımızı sunar Memleket hizmetinde başarıya kavuşmanıza Duacı olduğumuzu arz ederiz.

P. Aziz Günel
TÜRK SÜRYANİ KADİM CEMAATI
RUHANI REİSİ
P. Aziz Günel

M. Salih Tanrıverdi
DİYARBAKIR MÜFTÜSÜ
M. Salih Tanrıverdi

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Endnotes

1. This article is an expanded version of the research paper I wrote at the University of Chicago in Professor Malika Zeghal's class "Islamic Education, 'Ulama and Religious Authorities in the 20th Century." An earlier version of this study was presented in the Persian Circle and at the 23rd Annual Middle East History and Theory Conference at the University of Chicago in 2008. I am grateful to Mehmed Emin Bozarslan who kindly responded to my queries on the phone. I am thankful to Malika Zeghal, Hamit Bozarslan, Mesut Yeğen, A. Holly Shissler, Orit Bashkin, Cihangir Gündoğdu, F. Müge Göçek, Melissa Bilal and Mezher Yüksel for their feedbacks and comments. Thanks also to the staff at Prime Ministry Republican Archives and Presidency of Religious Affairs in Ankara. I thank all other friends, colleagues and professors who provided helpful ideas and feedbacks.

2. Cegerxwîn, "Mela Rabe" in *Hêvi (Diwana 7'a), Aşti (Diwana 8'a)* [Hope (7th Diwan), Peace (8th Diwan)] (Stenbol: Weşanên Deng, 2000), 17. (Throughout the text, translations from Kurdish and Turkish into English are mine.)
The translation is as follows:

Mullah, wake up from sleep,
Till when will you be a corpse-washer,
In the hands of the enemies of the nation,
Is it not a shame that you be a mallet?

You are learned, you are wise,
You are the slave of sheikh and chieftain,
I want that in front of the nation,
You be bright like the sun.

3. For his memoirs, see Cegerxwîn, *Hayat Hikâyem [My Life Story]* (İstanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayın, 2003).

4. The articles in the following volume of *The Muslim World* are devoted to the Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı: *The Muslim World*, 98/2–3 (2008).

5. Thanks to Hamit Bozarslan who provided me with this piece of information.

6. Back cover of *Hilafet ve Ümmetçilik Sorunu [The Question of the Caliphate and Ummatism]* (İstanbul: Ant, 1969).

7. *İslâmiyet Açısından Şeyblik ve Ağalık* (Ankara: Toplum Yayınları, 1964), 127.

8. *Ibid.*, 120.

9. *Ibid.*, 73. Two years prior to the publication of this book, another Kurdish *mullah* wrote a book that criticized "bigots" who played with religious values and in the name of these values, they attributed superstitions to Islam and how they changed "*tasawwuf*" to "*tariqatizm*" (*tariqatçılık*). He calls these bigots "bearded snakes" (*sakallı yılanlar*).

Abdurrahman Dürre, *I. İslamiyet'in Hakiki Mahiyeti ve Felsefi Rubu; II. Din Perdesi Altında Sakallı Yılanlar* [I. *The True Nature of Islam and its Philosophical Spirit; II. Bearded Snakes under the Guise of Religion*] (Ankara, 1962).

10. Tanrıverdi was the *mufti* of Diyarbakır from 1960 until 1981, when he died; cited in Sadreddin Öztoprak, *Şark Medreselerinde Bir Ömür [A Life in the Madrasas of the East]* (İstanbul: Beyan, 2003), 57.

11. M. Salih Tanrıverdi, *İnkâr Bulutlarını Sıyran Bir Işık* (Diyarbakır: Yeni Şark Postası Matbaası, 1964).

12. *Ibid.*, 3.

13. *Ibid.*, 5.

14. *Gerçekler Konuşuyor* (Ankara, 1965), 2, 5.

15. *Ibid.*, 7.

16. *Ibid.*, 1; Mehdi Zana, *Bekle Diyarbakır* [Diyarbakır, Wait] (İstanbul: Doz, 1991), 42–44.

17. Back cover of *Hilafet ve Ümmetçilik Sorunu. Din İşleri Yüksek Kurulu (The Higher Commission of Religious Affairs)* at the Presidency of Religious Affairs prepared a report about the work under consideration. The report indicates that “although there are some mistakes concerning the issue of *tasawwuf*, the complainants are advised to respond to the book by their ideas.” The interesting point about this report is that the local branch of the PRA in the district of Kozluk (*Kozluk Müftülüğü*) put forward a complaint to the PRA about Bozarslan and his work. A copy of this report is included in the Appendix 2. This is the only document that I was able to have access at the PRA.

18. As a *mufti/mullah*, Bozarslan’s emphasis on social and economic justice and equality as was manifested in his works in the 1960s evokes Ferhat Hoca, the bandit *boca* (imam/preacher) in the classical Turkish novel *İnce Memed* written by Yaşar Kemal. Ferhat Hoca takes money from the rich and redistributes it to the poor. See especially the fourth volume: Yaşar Kemal, *İnce Memed 4* (İstanbul: Toros Yayınları, 1987).

19. By the “East,” what he meant was Southeastern and Eastern regions of the country, which are predominantly populated by Kurds.

20. *Doğunun Sorunları* (Ankara, 1966), 48.

21. *Ibid.*, 49.

22. *Ibid.*, 51.

23. *Doğunun Sorunları* (İstanbul: Avesta, 2002), 202–217.

24. *Ibid.*, 217–225.

25. *Doğunun Sorunları* (Ankara, 1966), 90–91.

26. *Ibid.*, 91. By underlining the specific oppression and exploitation of Kurdish women, Bozarslan’s approach markedly differs from the Kurdish nationalist romanticization of women in Kurdish society and culture. For an example of this kind of representation of Kurdish women, see Kamiran Ali Bedir-Xan, “La Femme Kurde” [The Kurdish Woman] *Hawar*, No. 19 (April 17, 1933), pp. 6–8. Also see the following article by the same author: “Les Coutumes du Pays des Kurdes” [The Customs of the Country of Kurds], *Hawar*, No. 26 (August 18, 1935). Memduh Selim was another Kurdish intellectual who argued that “the Kurdish woman is free and the leader of the house.” Cited in Jordi Tejel Gorgas, *Le Mouvement Kurde de Turquie en Exil: Continuités et Discontinuités du Nationalisme Kurde sous le Mandat Français en Syrie et au Liban (1925–1946)* (Peter Lang: Oxford, 2007), 214.

27. For a content analysis of these journals, see Necla Açıık, “Ulusal Mücadele, Kadın Mitosu ve Kadınların Harekete Geçirilmesi: Türkiye’deki Çağdaş Kürt Kadın Dergilerinin Bir Analizi” [National Struggle, Woman Myth and the Mobilization of Women: an Analysis of Contemporary Kurdish Women’s Journals] in *90’larda Türkiye’de Feminizm [Feminism in Turkey in the ‘90s]*, eds. A. Bora and A. Günel (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), 279–306.

28. *Doğunun Sorunları* (İstanbul: Avesta, 2002), 9–14.

29. It should be noted that it was Celâdet Âlî Bedirkhan who for the first time introduced the Kurdish-Latin script in the pages of his Kurdish-French literary journal *Hawar* published in Damascus in the years 1932–1935 and 1941–1943. All the issues of *Hawar* were reprinted in two volumes by Fırat Cewerî in Sweden. See *Hawar*. (Stockholm: Nûdem, 1998).

30. For some interesting memories from prison at that time, see “Zimanê Kurdî jî wek Çaket e” [The Kurdish Language is like a Jacket, too], in M. Emin Bozarslan, *Kemal Paşa Weledê Kê Ye?* [Whose Child is Kemal Paşa?] (Uppsala: Deng, 1993), 60–62.

31. Susan Meiselas, *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 234. Four decades after the publication of Bozarslan’s *Alfabe*, a state-owned Kurdish TV channel by the name of TRT-6 started Kurdish broadcasts on

January 1, 2009. Also Kurdish Language and Literature departments will be founded in universities in Turkey. See <http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetay&ArticleID=915362&Date=04.01.2009&CategoryID=77>.

32. Martin van Bruinessen, "Ehmedê Xanî'nin Mem û Zîn'i ve Kürt Milli Uyanışının Ortaya Çıkışındaki Rolü" [Ehmedê Khanî's Mem û Zîn and its Role in the Emergence of Kurdish National Awakening], in *Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri [Origins of Kurdish Nationalism]*, ed. A. Vali (İstanbul: Avesta, 2005), 78.

33. Muhsin Kızılkaya, "Hendeği Atlayan Deve veya Kürtçe Yazmak!" [The Camel Jumping over the Ditch or Writing in Kurdish!], in *Sürgün, Göç ve Ölüm: Çağdaş Kürt Edebiyatından Seçme Hikâyeler [Exile, Immigration and Death: Selected Stories from Contemporary Kurdish Literature]*, ed. M. Kızılkaya (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004), 19.

34. As Martin van Bruinessen observes: "The Kurdish left of the 1970s shared the disdain of the Kemalists for anything religious . . .". Martin van Bruinessen, "The Kurds and Islam," in *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics: The Role of Religion in Kurdish Society: Collected Articles*, ed. M. van Bruinessen (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2000), 52.

35. At this point, it should come as no surprise that Bozarslan was critical of the NATO as an organization that was "established with aggressive goals by the American imperialism" (*Hilafet ve Ümmetçilik Sorunu*, 385), whereas M. Salih Tanrıverdi, the previously mentioned *mufti* of Diyarbakır in the 1960s, viewed NATO as a force that would intimidate the "Godless." In 1965, Tanrıverdi and P. Aziz Günel ("the spiritual leader of the Turkish-Assyrian ancient community") wrote a letter to the then-Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel on account of his visit to Diyarbakır for NATO's military maneuvers which would take place in Diyarbakır. As the religious men of the communities of Islam and Turkish-Assyrians, they express their pleasure for the fact that this time the military maneuvers of NATO would take place in Diyarbakır, "in order to show the power and greatness of the democracy front and to intimidate the Godless." See Appendix 3 for a copy of the letter.

36. *Hilafet ve Ümmetçilik Sorunu*, 300. Menemen is the name of a district in the province of İzmir in western Turkey. In 1930, "a young Kemalist officer's (by the name of Kubilay) head was cut off by a mob led by a sheikh." Bernard Lewis, *Modern Türkiye'nin Doğuşu [The Emergence of Modern Turkey]* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2000), 412.

37. For instance, see M. Emin Bozarslan, *Kemal Paşa Weledê Kê Ye?* [*Whose Child is Kemal Paşa?*] (Uppsala: Deng, 1993), 77.

38. Mesut Yeğen, *Devlet Söylümünde Kürt Sorunu [The Kurdish Question in the State Discourse]* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003), 256.

39. At this point, it seems necessary to point to the discrepancy between the memories of the *Sheikh Said Revolt* in the discourse of the modern, secular-educated Kurdish intelligentsia of the 1970s on the one hand, and madrasa-educated Kurdish *mullahs* and mostly illiterate Kurdish oral poets (called *dengbêjs* in Kurdish), on the other. In contrast to the secular intellectuals; *mullahs* and *dengbêjs* have produced and transmitted laments about Sheikh Said. For an example of such a lament, see the piece "Mîrê Min" by Dengbêj Maruf in the following CD: *Mîrê Min [My Amir]*, (İstanbul: Kom Müzik). For the lyrics of a poem about Sheikh Said produced by Kurdish mullahs, see Mehmet Bayrak, *Kürtler ve Ulusal-Demokratik Mücadeleleri Üstüne Gizli Belgeler, Araştırmalar, Notlar [Kurds and Secret Documents, Researches, Notes on Their National-Democratic Struggle]* (Ankara: Özge, 1993), 407–411.

40. For an analysis of the Kurdish Left in Turkey, see Hamit Bozarslan, "Türkiye'de Kürt Sol Hareketi" [The Kurdish Leftist Movement in Turkey] in *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Sol [Political Thought in Modern Turkey]*, ed. M. Gültekingil (İstanbul: İletişim, 2007), 1169–1205. For an article on the relationship between the left and the Kurdish question in Turkey, see Mesut Yeğen, "Türkiye Solu ve Kürt Sorunu" [The Left in Turkey and

the Kurdish Question] in ed. M. Yeğen, *Müstakbel Türk'ten Sözde Vatandaş: Cumhuriyet ve Kürtler* [From the Future Turk to the So-Called Citizen: the Republic and Kurds] (İstanbul: İletişim, 2007).

41. For a comprehensive study on Kurdish women's political participation in Turkey in the post-1980, see Handan Çağlayan, *Analar; Yoldaşlar; Tanrıçalar: Kürt Hareketinde Kadınlar ve Kadın Kimliğinin Oluşması* [Mothers, Comrades, Goddesses: Women in the Kurdish Movement and the Constitution of Woman Identity] (İstanbul: İletişim, 2007). Also see L. Yalçın-Heckmann and P. van Gelder, "90'larda Türkiye'de Siyasal Söylemin Dönüşümü Çerçevesinde Kürt Kadınlarının İmajı: Bazı Eleştirel Değerlendirmeler" [The Image of Kurdish Women in the Framework of the Transformation of the Political Discourse in Turkey in the 1990s: Some Critical Evaluations], in A. G. Altınay (ed.), *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar* [Homeland, Nation, Women] (İstanbul: İletişim, 2000), 308–338.

It should also be noted that an absolutely mandatory reading for especially those interested in the history of Kurdish women in Republican Turkey is Sevim Yeşil's fascinating MA thesis on *Girls' Vocational Boarding School in Elazığ (Elazığ Kız Enstitüsü)*. Based on in-depth interviews with a number of Kurdish-Alevite women graduates of this school from the late 1930s through the 1950s, Yeşil demonstrates that "these women have successfully been integrated into the Turkish culture and they have become representatives of the Republican ideology." Sevim Yeşil, *Unfolding Republican Patriarchy: the Case of Young Kurdish Women at the Girls' Vocational Boarding School in Elazığ* (Unpublished master's thesis, Middle East Technical University: Ankara, 2003); available at: <http://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/688036/index.pdf>

42. The origins of the difference between "Kurdish Islam" and "State Islam" seem to be traced back to the late Ottoman Empire. Fuat Dündar's interesting work unearths a sociological survey conducted under the rule of the Committee of Union and Progress to find out about tribal, economic and religious organization in Kurdish society. Prepared by Ziya Gökalp, this survey was sent out to the administrators in Kurdish regions in 1914. This survey clearly shows that the difference between "Kurdish Islam" and "State Islam" in the late Ottoman Empire, too, has been an important difference as two of the questions inquire about the "influence of the stated-appointed mullahs on the people and the attitude of the religious leaders of Kurdish society towards the state." Fuat Dündar, *Modern Türkiye'nin Şifresi: İttihat ve Terakki'nin Etnisite Mübendisiği (1913–1918)* [The Code of Modern Turkey: Ethnicity Engineering of the Union and Progress (1913–1918)] (İstanbul: İletişim, 2008), 404–409; 494–498.

43. For an informative article on the Med-Zehra, see Fulya Atacan, "A Kurdish Islamist Group in Modern Turkey: Shifting Identities" *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3 (July 2001), pp. 111–144. The following study touches upon Nûbihar: Serdar Şengül, "İslâmcılık, Kürtler ve Kürt Sorunu" [Islamism, Kurds and the Kurdish Question], ed. Y. Aktay *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasî Düşünce: İslâmcılık* [Political Thought in Modern Turkey: Islamism] (İstanbul: İletişim, 2004), 525–543.

44. Şevket Beysanoğlu, *Diyarbakırlı Fikir ve Sanat Adamları* [Men of Thought and Arts from Diyarbakır] (Ankara: Diyarbakır Tanıtma ve Turizm Derneği Yayını, 1978), 385; Şükran Kurdakul, *Şairler ve Yazarlar Sözlüğü* [Dictionary of Poets and Writers] (İstanbul: Ataç Kitabevi, 1971), 102.

45. Bahoz, *Sen Faşist Savcı İyi Dinle! Dünyada Kürt Vardır: DDKO'nun Savunması* (Uppsala, 1973), 9–10.

46. *Doğunun Sorunları* (İstanbul: Avesta, 2002), 272. He wrote a poem in 1971 while in prison, see M. Emin Bozarlan, "Bı hıstrên çavan tên nvisin helbestên me" [By tears are written our poems] *Nûbihar* 105 (Havîn 2008), 22.

47. *İçerdekiler ve Dışardakiler* [Those Inside and Those Outside] (İstanbul: Koral, 1974).

48. *Doğunun Sorunları* (İstanbul: Avesta, 2002), 273.
49. Some of his works were also translated into Swedish. *Meyro* was the first Kurdish book of stories that was translated into Swedish. Titled “Malaria-Amuletten,” it was published in 1994. Cited in *Doğunun Sorunları* (İstanbul: Avesta, 2002), 273.
50. *Baxçê Zimên [The Garden of the Language]* (Amed: Deng, 2008).
51. *Serketina Mışkan [The Victory of Mice]* (Stenbol: Deng, 2005), 122.
52. Martin van Bruinessen indicates that the Turkish state, with its own style, contributed to the revival of Kurmanji [the Kurdish dialect mostly spoken in Turkey] literature. He indicates that following the military coup of September 12, 1980, the bans on the Kurdish cultural expression forced Kurdish intellectuals to leave the country for a more secure environment in European countries, such as Sweden and Germany, in order to write and publish in Kurdish. Martin van Bruinessen, “Ehmedê Xani’nin Mem û Zîn’i ve Kürt Millî Uyanışının Ortaya Çıkışındaki Rolü” in *Kürt Milliyetçiliğinin Kökenleri*, ed. A. Vali (İstanbul: Avesta, 2005), 81–82.
53. M. Emin Bozarslan, “Sunuş” [Introduction] in *Taribteki İlk Türkçe Ansiklopedide Kürdistan ve Kürdler [Kurdistan and Kurds in the First Turkish Encyclopedia in History]*, ed. M. Emin Bozarslan (Stenbol: Deng, 2001), 16.
54. Hamit Bozarslan, “Kürd Milliyetçiliği ve Kürd Hareketi (1898–2000)” [Kurdish Nationalism and Kurdish Movement (1898–2000)], *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasi Düşünce: Milliyetçilik [Political Thought in Modern Turkey: Nationalism]*, ed. T. Bora (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002), 841.
55. For the complete list of his works and the works discussing or referring to his works, see Appendix 1.
56. Bahoz, *Sen Faşist Savcı İyi Dinle! Dünyada Kürt Vardır: DDKO’nun Savunması [You Fascist Prosecutor Listen Well: There are Kurds in the World: The Defense of the DDKO]* (Uppsala, 1973), 228.
57. Very useful and informative pieces about *madrasas* in the Kurdish regions can be found in the following issue of the journal *Nûbihar: Ji Destpêkê beta îro Medresên Kurdan [Madrasas of the Kurds from its Beginning until Today]*, *Heziran/Tirneh*, No. 63/64, 1998. Also the Kurdish mullah Mehmet Çağlayan’s biographical dictionary of Kurdish ‘*ulama*’ provides a good picture of *madrasa* education and circulation of *madrasa* students and teachers all over Kurdish regions especially in the post-1924 period in Turkey. Mehmet Çağlayan, *Şark Uleması [Ulama of the East]* (İstanbul: Çağlayan Yayınları, 1996).
58. Martin van Bruinessen, “The Kurds and Islam,” in *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics: The Role of Religion in Kurdish Society: Collected Articles*, ed. M. van Bruinessen (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2000), 49.
59. Zeynelabidin Zınar, “Medrese Education in Northern Kurdistan,” in *Islam des Kurdes*, eds. M. van Bruinessen and J. Blau (Paris: Equipe de recherche interdisciplinaire sur les sociétés méditerranéennes musulmanes, 1998), 40–41.
60. Martin van Bruinessen, “The Kurds and Islam,” in *Mullas, Sufis and Heretics: The Role of Religion in Kurdish Society: Collected Articles*, ed. M. van Bruinessen (İstanbul: The Isis Press, 2000), 48.
61. *Hilafetçilik ve Ümmetçilik Sorunu*, 361.
62. At this point, it should be noted that the Turkish nation-state has also tried to develop a ‘domesticated’ Islam at the service of the state. The best embodiment of this fact is the existence of the *Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*. Therefore, Islam has been a crucial site of contestation between the Kurds and the state. Based on her fieldwork in the province of Hakkari, Lale Yalçın-Heckmann notes that the villagers’ perception of a state-appointed *imam* is different from that of a *madrasa*-educated *mullah*, as the former is “most often identified with the ‘religion of the state’”. Lale Yalçın-Heckmann, “Ethnic Islam and

Nationalism among the Kurds in Turkey," in *Islam in Modern Turkey: Religion, Politics and Literature in a Secular State*, ed. R. Tapper (London: I. B. Tauris, 1991), 111–112.

A recent example of the contestation over Islamic symbols can be found in the two different reactions by a Turkish *mufti* and a retired Kurdish *imam*, during the operation of the Turkish military in Iraqî Kurdistan in the beginning of 2008. The *mufti* of Bolu, Yaşar Yaprak prayed for "the Turkish military, soldiers, gendarmerie and police, who have been defending the homeland and the flag against the traitors." See <http://www.haberler.com/bolu-muftusu-nden-aglatan-mehmetcik-duasi-haberi/>

The Kurdish retired *imam* Muhittin Eryılmaz, on the other hand, was seen in a protest rally organized by the pro-Kurdish Demokratik Toplum Partisi (DTP) (Democratic Society Party). This rally was protesting the Turkish military's operation in Iraqî Kurdistan. He was seen with a Qur'an in his hands, holding over his head and shouting, "For the sake of the Qur'an, stop this war. Do not let people die any more." After his trial in Diyarbakır, he was sent to jail for 3 years. See <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/news/446132.asp>; <http://www.tumgazeteler.com/?a=2597963>.

63. Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek-Partili Yönetimin Kurulması (1923–1931)* [*The Establishment of Single-Party Rule in the Turkish Republic (1923–1931)*] (Ankara: Yurt Yayıncılık, 1981), 127.

64. M. Qasim Zaman, *The Ulama in Contemporary Islam* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 151.

65. An earlier Kurdish nationalist *mullah* is Mela Enwerê Mayî who lived in Syria. He was one of the contributors to the Kurdish monthly *Ronabî (Light)* published by Celadet Âli Bedirkhan in Damascus between 1942 and 1945. For his biography, a list of his works and one of his interesting poems by the title of *Serbesti [Freedom]* see "Mela Enwer" *Ronabî*, No. 12 (March 1, 1943), 10–11. (The monthly *Ronabî* was reprinted by Jîna Nû publisher in Uppsala, Sweden in 1985.)

66. Susan Meiselas, *Kurdistan: In the Shadow of History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 390.

67. See the following interview with him: <http://kurdistanrh.com/> Also see Rafet Ballı, "Şeyh İzzettin Hüseyini" [Sheikh İzzettin Huseynî] in Rafet Ballı, *Kürt Dosyası [Kurdish File]* (İstanbul: Cem Yayınevi, 1991), 519–525.

68. Naci Kutlay, *Türk Siyasal İslamcılığında Kürt Damarları [Kurdish Veins in Turkish Political Islamism]* (Ankara: Beybun, 2005), 121–122.

69. Harriet Montgomery, *Suriye Kürtleri: İnkâr Edilen Halk [Kurds of Syria: a People Denied]* (İstanbul: Avesta, 2007), 60.

A well-known Kurdish *alim* in Syria is Muḥammad Said Ramadan al-Buti. His father *Mullah* Ramadan al-Buti was also a respected *alim*. *Mullah* Ramadan migrated from Cizre, today a district in the Kurdish southeast of Turkey, to Damascus in 1933 partly due to the repressive secularist policies put into effect by the regime. In addition to his acknowledged authority on the Shafii school of law by other *ulama* in Damascus, it is quite notable that *Mullah* Ramadan also published "works on the Kurdish language and history." M. Said Ramazan el-Buti, *Babam Molla Ramazan el-Buti: Hayatı, Düşünceleri, Mücadelesi [My Father Mullah Ramadan al-Buti: His Life, Ideas, Struggle]* (İstanbul: Kent Yayınları, 2008), 36–59. (The Turkish translation is based on the second edition in Damascus, by the title of "Haza Walidi Hayat al-Sheikh Mulla Ramadan al-Buti min Wiladatihi ila Wafatihi".)

70. Abdurrahman Efem, *İslâmiyete Yöneltilen İftiralara Cevap [Response to the Slanders Directed at Islam]* (Ankara: Kardeş Matbaası, 1966). Thanks to M. Şefik Korkusuz, who drew my attention to this work and provided me with it alongside M. Salih Tanrıverdi's work, both of which would otherwise have remained beyond my reach.

71. *Ibid.*, 3.

72. *Ibid.*, 44–45.

73. Müfid Yüksel, *Kürdistan'da Değişim Süreci [The Process of Change in Kurdistan]* (Ankara: Sor, 1993), 65, 117.

74. Needless to say, if one is voicing a certain injustice and oppression, his/her political, philosophical or theological convictions do not and should not matter.

75. As I mentioned in the previous pages, Bozarslan's intellectual evolution can be located mostly within the "Kurdish issue" rather than "Kurdish nationalism."

76. Ahmet İçduygu *et al.* "The Ethnic Question in an Environment of Insecurity: the Kurds in Turkey" *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22/6 (1999): 991–1010. The peak of this violence was that Bozarslan's son Gani Bozarslan, who was a poet, writer and translator, was murdered in 1978. Bozarslan talks about this in the following book: *Gani Bozarslan: "Kalemim Silahımdır" [Gani Bozarslan: "My Pen Is My Weapon"]* (ed.) (İstanbul: Çıra, 1979). Gani Bozarslan translated the works of Cegerxwîn and the Kurdish novelist Erebê Şemo (from the Soviet Armenia) into Turkish.

77. Cegerxwîn, "Mela Rabe" [*Mullab, Wake up!*] in *Kime Ez (Diwana 3'yan), Ronak (Diwana 4'an) [Who am I (3rd Diwan), Light (4th Diwan)]* (İstanbul: Weşanên Deng, 1993), 44.

You, the guide of the poor Kurds,
Do you not see the[ir] chains and bonds?
They are dying in the wilderness without a shroud
You still do not wake up, *mullab*

...
If you learnt about institutions,
Would you become infidel and irreligious?
Or would you be of the color of Russia and China,
If you were awake and wise, *mullab?*