

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

**MASTER THESIS**

**THE ROLE OF SPACE AND EMOTIONS IN THE  
EXPERIENCES OF MUSLIM WOMEN:  
HANIMLAR İLİM VE KÜLTÜR DERNEĞİ (HİKDE)**

**NESİBE DEMİR**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR: ASST. PROF. NURSEM KESKİN**

**AKSAY**

**ISTANBUL, 2020**

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**by**

**NESİBE DEMİR**

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in  
Sociology**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR: ASST. PROF. NURSEM KESKİN**

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**ISTANBUL, 2020**

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology.

Thesis Jury Members

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This is to confirm that this thesis/project complies with all the standards set by the School of Graduate Studies of Ibn Haldun University:

Date of Submission

Seal/Signature

## ÖZ

### MEKAN VE DUYGULARIN MÜSLÜMAN KADINLARIN DENEYİMLERİNDEKİ ROLÜ: HANIMLAR İLİM VE KÜLTÜR DERNEĞİ (HİKDE)

Yazar Demir, Nesibe

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Tez Danışmanı: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Nursem Keskin Aksay

Ağustos 2020, 106 Sayfa

Bu tez, Müslüman kadınların Türkiye’deki faaliyetlerinde öncü bir dernek olarak kabul edilen Hanımlar İlim ve Kültür Derneği(HİKDE)’ndeki kadınların deneyimlerini nasıl tanımlayıp anlamlandırdıklarını, İslamcılık ve kamusal alan tartışmaları etrafında incelemektedir. Ana motivasyonları ve referans kaynakları İslam olsa da, kadınlar politik buldukları için ve faaliyetlerinin herhangi bir söylemin ötesinde anlam taşıdığına inandıkları için kendilerine atfedilen “İslamcı” söylemi reddetmekte, bu yüzden kendilerini sadece "Müslüman kadınlar" olarak tanımlamaktadırlar. Bu tez, aynı zamanda alan ve duyguların kadınların faaliyetlerindeki anlamını ve rolünü ortaya koymaktadır. İslam’da bir zorunluluk olarak görülen eylem içinde olmanın Müslüman kadınlar için kamusal / özel alan karşıtlığının ötesinde bir mekan anlayışı gerektirdiği ileri sürülmektedir. Mekan, eylemlerini gerçekleştirmek için bir araç olarak görülürken, aynı zamanda tarihi bir medrese binası olarak İslami pratiklerin gerçekleştirildiği ve vakıf anlayışının sürdürüldüğü bir temsil mekanına karşılık gelmektedir. Ayrıca bu derneğin kadınların eylemlerini kuşatan, belirli nesnelere ve özneler aracılığıyla yaratılan duygulanımsal atmosferle birlikte çok önemli bir rol oynayan duygularının vücut bulmuş hali olduğu iddia edilmektedir. Bu tez kapsamında derinlemesine görüşmeler, odak grupları ve katılımcı gözlemleri içeren bir saha çalışması yürütülmüştür. Ayrıca derneğin ilk yıllarında yayınlanan Şadırvan Dergisi’nin içerik analizi ile diğer yazılı ve görsel materyallerin analizi de yer almaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Duygular, Eylem, HİKDE, “İslamcı Kadın” Söylemi, Mekan, Şadırvan Dergisi.

## ABSTRACT

### THE ROLE OF SPACE AND EMOTIONS IN THE EXPERIENCES OF MUSLIM WOMEN: HANIMLAR İLİM VE KÜLTÜR DERNEĞİ (HİKDE)

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This thesis examines how “Muslim women” in *Hanımlar İlim ve Kültür Derneği* (HİKDE), which is regarded as a pioneer association in the process of Muslim women’s activities in Turkey, define and give meaning to their experiences through the debates of Islamism and the public sphere in Turkey. It is revealed that although their main motivation and reference sources are Islam, women reject "Islamist" discourse attributed to them for the reason they find it political and also believe that their activities have meaning beyond any discourse, hence define themselves as just “Muslim women”. This thesis also reveals the meaning and role of space and emotions in the activities of women. It is argued that for Muslim women, being in action which is regarded as a necessity in Islam, requires a space understanding beyond public/private dichotomy. While space is seen as a tool for carrying out their actions, at the same time as a historical madrasa building it corresponds to a representational space where Islamic practices are fulfilled and the understanding of waqf is maintained. In addition, it is claimed that this association is the embodiment form of women’s emotions that encompass their actions and play a crucial role together with affective atmosphere that is created through certain objects and subjects. For this thesis, a fieldwork is conducted including in-depth interviews, focus groups, and participant observations. Moreover, the content analysis of the *Şadırvan* Journal which was published in the first years of the association, and the analysis of other written and visual materials are included.

**Keywords:** Action, Emotions, HİKDE, “Islamist Woman” Discourse, Space, *Şadırvan* Journal.

## DEDICATION

To all Muslim women of action

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In this thesis journey, my greatest thanks and gratitude goes to my supervisor Asst. Prof. Nursem Keskin Aksay who always encouraged and supported me from the beginning to end in all my ups and downs. If she did not inspired me to study on this subject, and not contribute to every phase of my thesis with her significant ideas and constructive criticisms; also if she did not made me believe myself in the most difficult times by saying "do not worry, you will do it", such a study wouldn't have occurred. Despite her busy schedule, she spent much time as if it is her own thesis by reading line by line and tried to do her best by listening to me patiently and sincerely to the finest detail by tolerating my mistakes. Most importantly, although I dream of being in the academic world, there were many questions and concerns in my mind; in this sense, I am quite grateful her for guiding me to overcome my concerns and decide that I should proceed on this path. I hope I can meet her efforts/expectations by contributing to academia with distinctive, and independent knowledge.

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Nesibe Demir  
ISTANBUL, 2020

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

The main focus of this thesis is the experiences of Muslim women in Hanımlar İlim ve Kültür Derneği (*Wisdom and Cultural Association for Women*<sup>1</sup>)<sup>2</sup> in Fatih, Istanbul. HIKDE was founded in 1973 by Fatma Çalıkavak, Mukaddes Çıtlak, Fevziye Nuroğlu, Gülsen Ataseven, Lale Çavuşoğlu, Halise Kurtulmuş, and Ayla Yalçın. Their aim was to find solutions to social problems in the light of a Hadith of the Prophet, “someone who is full while his / her neighbors are hungry is not from us”. According to Gülsen Ataseven who is the honorary president of HIKDE, this association is roughly from 1973 until today the profile of Turkey's women's movement<sup>3</sup>. The association has been using the Bayrampaşa Madrasa, which was built by the grand vizier Bayrampaşa in the 17th century, since 1975. Within this association, the Şadırvan Journal was published as a knowledge, thought, art, and education (ilim, fikir, sanat ve eğitim) journal with the slogan of “seek the knowledge from cradle to the grave” between 1976-1980 as 18 issues.

I preferred this association due to its rooted history, and it is still continuing its activities; it also published a journal that mirrors the activities of the association and women together with the social and political events of the period and will be later considered as an “Islamist Journal”. Besides this journal, the founders of the association are also generally defined as “Islamist women” in academic studies. Defining women as “Islamist” from the outside is a new discourse especially after the 1980s. Women who adopt an Islamic lifestyle and determine their activities in this direction have been evaluated within this discourse which is discussed with

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<sup>1</sup> I took this translation from promotional video of the association, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NB7Tb2mG-to>.

<sup>2</sup>It will be used as HIKDE in the following pages.

<sup>3</sup>40. year promotion film of HIKDE, visit <https://youtu.be/S5MwaA2fySc>.

many different variables. This connotation has proceeded hand in hand with the discussions of political Islam in Turkey. I noticed that in these studies, women were generally shown as “Islamists” without an ethnographic study that reveals their own expressions or self-identification. Therefore, this thesis seeks an answer to how women in HIKDE define themselves and give meaning to their activities, how they construct their Islamic life practices around the discussions of the public sphere and the "Islamist" discourse attributed to them. Related to this main question, I am asking how did they decide to establish an association? Which motivations did they have? What is the meaning of any space, and public space for them?

The modernization process, which started in the Ottoman period, gained momentum with the declaration of the Republic in 1923, and reforms began to be implemented for an ideal modern, secular society away from religious lifestyle. In this modern nation-state project, the Caliphate was abolished in 1924, and was accepted a new civil code in 1926, all madrasas were closed in 1924 and was created a new system of national education in 1928 and Latin alphabet was adopted (Zürcher 2004). The new government also enacted laws for socially and politically active, visible "ideal woman"; it encouraged woman to adopt a modern-secular dressing style without headscarf, to go to university, to have a profession, to participate in politics (Göle 1996; White 2003; Kavakçı 2010). That is why, “this authoritarian secularist approach of the Turkish state excluded covered women from education, professional life, and politics” (Albayrak 2016, 14). These women, who adopted an Islamic life, tried to continue their activities by creating alternative spaces both to seek their rights and to realize their own goals. The struggles of women, in which areas they were in for their activities, what difficulties they faced, and their dilemmas in this process have been the subject of both social and political research.

When I reviewed the increasing studies on women and Islam in Turkey in the last thirty years, I realized that early studies on women generally revolve around the veiling, politics, modernism, public sphere, secularism, feminism, and identity debates (Göle 1996, 1997; Ozdalga 1998; Erkilet 2004; Secor 2005; Ramazanoğlu 2005; Aktaş 2005). In those years, there are also some ethnographic studies conducted on Muslim women in Turkey that generally focused on gender roles of women, veil, patriarchal hierarchy, identity and politics (Tapper and Tapper 1987;

İlyasoğlu; 1994; Cayır 2000; Raudvere 2002; Saktanber 2002; Arat 2005). Nancy Tapper and Richard Tapper (1987, 88) compare Islamic religious rituals of women and men by arguing there is “an intrinsic relation between gender and religious orthodoxy is a characteristic of practiced Islam everywhere”. This type of evaluation coming from outside and analyzing women as victimized is regarded as an Orientalist standpoint (Onur 2016, 863). İlyasoğlu (1994) deals with the authentic dimensions of the women's identity struggle and its ongoing tradition which is transforming day by day. She claims that Islamist women tend to provide a "liberation" from the limits of tradition and to create a safe space by bringing their own "socialization" concepts within the framework of their Islamic faith (İlyasoğlu 2015, 135).

Saktanber's book *Living Islam: Women, Religion and the Politization of Culture in Turkey* (2002) is an ethnographic study on middle-class people in Ankara reflects the Islamic lifestyle of active “conscious Muslim women” in the process of becoming “other”. Her book is quite valuable in terms of giving an analysis from the self-narratives and self-identification of women, but her analysis portrays women's active roles in domestic space as mother and wife. Catharine Raudvere in her book *The Book and the Roses: Sufi Women, Visibility, and Zikir in Contemporary Istanbul* (2002) reveals the collective identity of Sufi women together with their religious rituals and *zikir* by arguing that women find an emancipatory room for themselves. Although the book gives comprehensive details from fieldwork, we cannot see the feelings and thoughts of the writer about these rituals, and besides, she also does not give enough place to the statements from women.

Yesim Arat in her book *Rethinking Islam and Liberal Democracy: Islamist Women in Turkish Politics* (2005) focuses on women who work in *Refah* (Welfare) Party and tries to understand how Islam gained new meanings through the activities of women in politics. She argues that while the secular state provides some advantages in the society, women were also marginalized within the party politics (Arat 2005, 8). Arat also does not explain the reason of defining women as “Islamist”.

Later studies are diversified and interested in veiling related to fashion, consumerism, neoliberalism, globalization, and civil society (Navaro Yashin 2002;

Gökarıksel and Secor 2012; Yılmaz 2015; Sehlıkođlu and Karakas 2016). Navaro Yashin (2002, 249) claimed that Islamists feed on a consumption market and show their identity through consumer goods. In her book *Diřil Dindarlık*, Zehra Yılmaz (2015), who sees the Islamism as “a political ideology or an alternative for government”, accepts the existence of an Islamist women movement and divides the Islamist women’s movement into two periods. According to Yılmaz (2015, 20), the first generation Islamist women, who put the *dava* among their priorities, did not seek pursuits such as feminism and equal rights, they preferred to be just behind the Islamist men by following them as ‘complementers’. For her, these names who started to be effective in the 1970s are řule Yüksel řenler, Fatma řalıkavak, Gülsen Ataseven, Nuriye řakmak, Hümeıra Ökten, Leyla řonkar, Hicran Göze. Many of these names are the founders of HIKDE. In the second period Islamist women are activists and writers born in the 1950s-60s who criticized Islamist male writers from the inside, hence they did the essential change in the Islamic women’s movement (Yılmaz 2015, 21). Yılmaz lists these names as Cihan Aktaş, Fatma Karabıyık Barbarosođlu, Halime Toros, Nazife řıřman, Hidayet řefkatlı Tuksal, Yıldız Ramazanođlu, Mualla Gülnaz, Sibel Eraslan and Ayře Böhürler. I think that Yılmaz, who stated it was the second generation “Islamist women” who made a real change in the Islamist women's movement and left a mark, was mistaken in this regard. I think the women who started to establish the first associations, and so motivated the next ones and led them in various fields are the first names that Yılmaz mentions. Thus, they made the essential mark if we mention from a movement.

When the studies on women and Islam outlined above are taken into account, the visibility of women in the public sphere generally appears as being the complementers of activities of religious men in society and politics, a struggle to gain an identity between modernism and Islamism, or as new subjects of the liberal consumer society. Due to the reason I am dealing with a rooted association in which their founders are elderly, my other critical view will be on evaluating women as “complementary”. I believe that this kind of approach comes from an understanding of Islam that evaluates woman generally with their roles in their house, as well as the thought of the distance of women from a feminist standpoint that is women are not considered to take any action in their own right. I am not arguing that women did not help men in many areas, instead my criticism is about reflecting women as politic or

modern subjects, and as if they are emancipated afterwards, seeing their position as a paradox in the Turkish modern-secular context. After that, due to the fashionable appearances of the successors of the first “Islamist” women, also seeing them in corruption, criticizing and labeling them in this way is quite thought-provoking. In this sense, I believe evaluating women within their own religious context, lifestyle and period will be a more accurate approach.

I want to open a parenthesis here for the article of Hafize Şule Albayrak (2016) named “A Compressed Identity: Self-Identification of Intellectual Muslim Women in Turkey”. This article is based on an ethnographic study that challenges certain labelings and classifications for women such as Islamist, fundamentalist, and feminist. Albayrak defines (2016, 14) women as “intellectual Muslim women” due to their position as well-educated, urbanized, individualized and professionals. She argues that these kind of labelings are perceived by women as violence. While my arguments for this labeling issue are similar to her, in her study women reject the Islamist discourse due to the reason of “not being a part of global conflict” and also due to their individual activities. In my thesis, women in HIKDE have a group identity and their rejection reasons are related to political connotations in Turkey, and the value they attributed to their actions beyond any labelings.

My intention with this thesis is first to contribute to the ethnographic studies on women and Islam in Turkey by challenging the general assumptions for women as “complementary” of men or “Islamists”. In this way, I contribute to the ongoing conceptualization of women by defining them as “Muslim women of action” to prioritize their efforts which they see as very vital in their life. Referring to Hannah Arendt’s (1998) notion of action, I am trying to understand the underlying reason in all activities of women. The action I am trying to explain here differs from Arendt’s action in that it is much more related to political action in which human beings can only manifest themselves to be emancipated; hence it differs from work or labor. For my interlocutors, it refers to an understanding, movement, or activity detached from any biased political or ethnic labelings; it includes the necessity of being a mentally and spiritually satisfied Muslim individual in the world with the feeling of touching a person's life materially, spiritually or in the sense of knowledge.

Second, instead of approaching their activities from gender, veiling or identity topics that have already been discussed in a comprehensive way, this thesis reveals the meaning and role of space and emotions as embedded elements in the process of their longstanding journey of action in Turkey. While space is seen as a tool for carrying out their actions, at the same time as a historical madrasa building, it corresponds to a representation space where Islamic practices are fulfilled and the understanding of waqf is maintained, and an escape space where there is peace in urban life. Emotions, especially pain and love that motivate them to take action, appear as embedded forces that create an emotional atmosphere by circulating with certain objects that become a part of their experiences over time. Both the perspective of the women to space and their emotions that are integrated with their activities are intertwined with their understanding of Islam. Therefore, women's emotions and understanding of space that take source from religion lead them to the idea that they should be away from discourses that they consider more restrictive.

### **1. 1. Method of This Study**

To conduct my research, I applied qualitative research in order to understand “how meaning is constructed, how people make sense of their lives and their world” (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 15). This is more suitable for my thesis, because I am interested in understanding the meaning women have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in their life related to HIKDE. The qualitative research methods which I applied are participant observation, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. I conducted the majority of my fieldwork from August to October 2019. In total, I interviewed 20 women who are aged between 25 and 87, but mostly over 50. This thesis is also a part of the scientific research project (BAP) titled *Din, Sosyal Alan ve Duygu Bağlamında 1960'lardan Günümüze “İslamcı” Kadınların Deneyimleri* (The Experiences of “Islamist” Women from the 1960s to the Today in the Context of Religion, Social Space and Emotion) under the coordination of Nursem Keskin Aksay at Ibn Haldun University. Therefore, I conducted five of my interviews with the project coordinator and my friend who also writes her thesis within the scope of this project. Most of my interviewees are university graduates. Two of my

interviewees are single, one is divorced, and husbands of five passed away. Except for single ones, all have 2 or 3 children.

I used semi-structured interviews in which the questions are not ordered in any particular order or determined beforehand (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 110). It is more appropriate for me to ask my questions in a flexible way with the questions coming up to my mind during the interviews. I had my certain research questions in my mind and hence asked my related questions to find answers to them. At the beginning of all the interviews, I tried to receive permission to record audio and use their names on my thesis. As I stated in total, I conducted 20 interviews, six of my interlocutors did not allow me to use their full names/surnames and not to record the interview. That is why I will use just the initials for my four interviewees and nicknames for two of them. Five of the interviews have become my main interlocutors as the founder names of the association and its current president, whom I have benefited more from in my thesis.

I was very excited for my first interview. When I called one of the founders for an appointment, I met someone on the phone who stated that she definitely does not want her name to be used, with a harsh tone of voice. We set the date and time of the appointment, but frankly, I was nervous. I was wondering if she would react or question me, and such questions were turning in my brain. When I went, someone who is the helper of my interlocutor opened the door and greeted me with a very friendly smile. At first, they wanted information about where I study, stay, the content of my thesis, and my advisor. After reading my thesis summary in detail, we started the interview. Actually, I felt that I was inspected in a sense. After that, she told her life story and what she experienced at length in a very gentle way. Afterward, she stated that I could go to the association by referring to her and get detailed information from those there. I was relieved, and also believed that I could move forward with confidence in my fieldwork. That is why, I understood that it is difficult to interview people who have been in many places, have a wide circle, and have been interviewed many times before; I also realized that in the fieldwork, primarily first impression and matter of trust of interlocutors to the researcher is vital for the future and content of the study.

Although I gave a good impression to my first interviewee, for my initial observation in HIKDE, I was a little confused and it felt stressful, because I did not know what would happen, whether I would be accepted easily or not. It was difficult to enter their settings as an observer with a research purpose. Fortunately, HIKDE as an association and also as a waqf is trying to open its door for everyone. I was accepted and quite welcomed from the beginning. The president of the association stated that they would help in any matter, and that I could come to the association and participate in the programs whenever I want. They stated that I could come to HIKDE and review Şadırvan journals there. This was a great opportunity for me. I would both examine the journals and observe the association during the day. After that, I went to the association almost every week and stayed there for at least 5 hours every time I went. In these observations, I was not just sitting and watching them. I participated in their breakfast program, their seminars and conferences and helped their regulations in those activities. My position is accepted as a “peripheral membership role” (Adler and Adler 1998) in which researcher can gather wide information by interacting closely with the members of a group.

Based on my observations, I can say that the association was generally calm during the days. People who receive regular help from association come to receive their cash/assistance checks or university students are coming for a scholarship application. In addition, there are *tezhip*, calligraphy, and embroidery workshops during the week and Saturdays. They are organizing a paid breakfast program which they name as the “traditional breakfast program” on the first Wednesday of every month, and the income of this program goes for needers. At the breakfast which I attended, there were about 30 people, and they were mostly old members of the association. They said that they were trying to enrich this breakfast program with music or different activities to attract people's attention. Again, a personal development program given by a psychologist was organized and the participants were generally university students. These programs show that the association is not just a financial aid association. It is aimed to help people's individual development as well. In particular, the first founders emphasize that what is crucial is the spirit of that place and that they should keep it alive somehow as a responsibility.

It is noteworthy that some of the statements of the founders or the members of the association and the current president or the board members differ. Although different discourses about the association are occasionally given and discussed; these differences, the underlying reasons, and the question of whether there is a rupture or a transformation, in general, were not the main aim of this thesis. In order to do this, it is necessary to observe the daily life practices of women both within and outside the association for a long time. That is why, a further research based on differences of the understandings of generations can be conducted.

There were also some limitations and strengths that I encountered during the fieldwork. Firstly, I had difficulty in arranging interviews because some of the first founders of the association and some of the writers of journal died or some of them are very ill. Nevertheless, I tried to do my best and reached as many of them as I could. Secondly, most of the interlocutors had a very busy schedule, thus it was difficult to allocate suitable time with them. There were also some challenges during the interviews. Especially when women over 70 years of age were telling everything in a mixed way, without a historical order and so it was hard to interrupt their speaking. Obviously, when I finished the interviews, especially after 2 hours, I felt very dizzy due to their dense and complex content. In such cases, I would sometimes listen to a certain point and then politely ask retrospective questions by saying it is my fault. Another problem was perception of some of the questions as too simple or worthless by women. I realized that especially the women did not want to talk much about their own activities because they did not want to be at the forefront. This is also a reason for some of them to not want their names to be used. The last limitation was my mood at that time forgetting to ask some questions because of being fascinated by the flow and spiritual atmosphere of the conversation. I was experiencing this especially during the emotional narratives of women who have a lot of experience. Although at first, such limitations caused my motivation to decrease, over time I realized that they were indispensable for fieldwork and that I had to deal with these limitations in some way.

In this thesis, I am also applying my own feelings and emotions from the field to be able to give a wider account of experience, action and interaction between intersubjectivity and inter-materiality (Davies and Spencer 2010). I believe that this

subjective interaction in the field can provide valuable analysis about the hidden aspects of the group in question (Cook 2010, 262). I am quite aware that if I had not considered my own experiences and feelings in the field, for example, I would miss the emotional dimension of women's activities which is a very deep and encompassing feature. Therefore I gave wide coverage to this issue in my fourth chapter.

In this regard, I have to mention about being an insider or outsider in an ethnographic study. I believe that being an insider that is called the *emic* perspective as the insider to the culture or being an outsider that is called *etic* perspective as the researcher or outsider (Merriam and Tisdell 2016, 30) should be in balance in an ethnographic study. For this thesis, I cannot say that I am fully an insider. I am not a member or constant participant of HIKDE, but I am coming from a religious background, I am veiled and also have sympathy for women who endeavor to live and act according to Islam. Although coming from a religious background and environment has enabled me to understand and evaluate their experiences from the inside, it has also helped me to develop a critical perspective towards them over time. Especially due to the context of my thesis in which I am revealing the spatial and emotional dimension of women's activities that come from my fieldwork data, reflecting my own feelings can be regarded as romanticization. But I think this is inevitable and it is even necessary for scrutinizing these issues in depth.

## **1. 2. Organization of the Chapters and Theoretical Framework**

My thesis consists of three main chapters. In the second chapter, I am discussing the attributed discourses of "Islamist women", "Islamist Journal" and being "complementary" of men. As I stated, the Şadırvan Journal and the founder women of HIKDE have already been positioned as "Islamist" without any contact with the women who established the association, published the journal, and wrote there. My interlocutors' expressions reveal that these women refuse to be called as "Islamist" both for themselves, and for the journal. During this chapter, I am challenging this *interpellation* benefitting from Louis Althusser (1971) through reviewing and discussing the journey of Islamism in Turkey. First of all, I am critically reviewing the process of Islamism in Turkey. I am also giving a background of so-called

“Islamist women” and their struggles in the modernization process of Turkey. After this background, I am trying to analyze the Şadırvan journal, and the expressions of women and reflecting their positioning within these discourses. By challenging the Islamist discourse I am applying to the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe (2001) to grasp the structure and meaning of discourse of “Islamist” within its social context.

There are three reasons for the rejection of Islamist discourse: the discussion of discourse in a more political context, the idea that they can only be defined as Muslims by a higher reference (the Qur'an), and most importantly, the women's belief that all their activities which I will call “actions” have meaning beyond any labeling or defining. Their experiences also show that they decided to establish HIKDE and publish the journal on their own, both intellectually and financially; that is why, reflecting them as “complementary” of men is not a fair approach.

In the third chapter, I am focusing on the HIKDE as an association and madrasa building in an urban setting, and so trying to understand the activities of the women related to space which is generally evaluated in the sense of public/private dichotomy in Turkey. The relation of women's activities with certain spaces and their frequent references to space, also my own feelings on space in the fieldwork has led me to make a theoretical analysis of space. I am benefitting from the space theory of Henri Lefebvre (1991) to scrutinize the space understanding of women. With the “spatial turn” in social sciences, it was argued that we cannot consider any activity out of space and instead of approaching space as a geometric phenomenon, we should handle it with social processes and relations (Urry 1981; de Certeau 1984; Lefebvre 1991). Actually the issue of what is literally place and space is a conundrum. According to de Certeau “space is practiced place” (1984, 117), for Lefebvre it is a “(social) product” (1991, 26). De Certeau (1984, 118) distinguishes space and place as follows:

In our examinations of the daily practices that articulate that experience, the opposition between place and space will rather refer to the first, a determination through objects that are ultimately reducible to the being-there of something dead, the law of a “place” . . . the second, a determination through operations which, when they attributed to a stone,

tree, or human being, specify “spaces” by the actions of historical subjects...

It means spaces are constructed through our interactions with a particular place. This spatial turn is especially seen as it relates to “simultaneous—and arguably interlinked—scholarly interests in the embodiment, performativity, and material culture” (Knott, 2011, 29). Although the question of which is superior is open to debate, there are some who argue that space discussions have forced the place into a more concrete position and that the place has come to the fore again with its social practices recently (Agnew 2011). Since these discussions are longstanding and exceed the scope of my thesis, I will apply the space/place theories here in connection with my thesis topic and thus generally refer to the (social) space theory of Lefebvre (1974-1991), who brings space and place together.

In this chapter, I would argue that interactions of women with space exceed public space/sphere discussions, and this claim leads me to make my own conceptualization. My conceptualization for women in HIKDE will be “Muslim women of action” to highlight their activities that are vital for their life which bring a sense of space. It is to take action that directs them to the public, enables them to establish associations or foundations, and motivates them to publish a journal. Although my reference for action is Hannah Arendt (1998), my understanding of action differs in the sense juxtaposition of Arendt's action with politics. She uses action as a precondition of political life and separates it from other human activities such as work and labor. My interlocutors’ notion of action takes its source and motivation from Islam and finds meaning as a lifestyle. Therefore, I am revealing that space is everywhere that women can express themselves and put forward what they want; but at the same time, the madrasa building, which they have used as the center of the association for years, has the characteristic of representation because it reminds them of the Islamic life and the Ottoman Era. Over time, this experienced space created an emotional atmosphere with the objects in it and turned into a place of escape in the tiring city life for women.

In the fourth chapter, together with the affective atmosphere of HIKDE, I am analyzing the activities of women from the dimension of emotions as driving forces

and embedded elements in their actions. In my fieldwork, I understood that emotions and affective atmosphere of HIKDE has a crucial impact in the continuation of activities. Based on the anthropology of emotions, in which emotions play a crucial role in human behavior and collective action (Solomon 1978; Lutz and White 1986), I reveal the embracing feature of emotions in Muslim women's activities from past to present. Another important point is it is not just emotions as love or pain, it is also the affective atmosphere that these emotions and traces of these emotions on certain objects create. Almost all women in HIKDE talk about their experiences in the madrasa building by referring to certain objects such as journals, its rooms, or memory notebook there. That is to say for them, space, their activities, and emotions are intertwined. In this regard, theoretically I have to clarify the distinction of emotion and affect and how I will use them.

In recent years, interest in emotion and affect has been increasing in social and cultural studies (Massumi 2002; Thrift 2004, 2008; Ahmed 2004a, 2004b, 2014; Clough and Halley 2007, Blackman 2012, Wetherell 2012). The description of “The Affective Turn” was used by Patricia Clough and Halley (2007) following the work of Gilles Deleuze and Spinoza in the book *The Affective Turn: Theorizing The Social*. Taking from definition of Spinoza, they reclaimed that affects are our power “to affect” the world and at the same time “to be affected” by it (Clough 2007, 2). Michael Hardt in the foreword of the book states that thanks to the perspective of affects we can explore the relation between actions and passions, the reason and emotions that are as “unknown powers” (2007, x). For Brian Massumi, affect is different from emotion that is much more personal is “trans-situational”, “post personal”, and an “excess” of progress (2002, 217). Similarly, Nigel Thrift tries to make a distinction and states that “affect is not simply emotion, nor is it reducible to the affections or perceptions of an individual subject” (2008, 116). From this point of view, we can see any space or environment as affective through objects by going beyond subjectivities (Navaro-Yashin 2009).

For Sara Ahmed, a separation between emotion and affect resembles trying to separate the yolk from white of an egg, namely we separate what is not separate in reality (Schmitz and Ahmed 2014, 98). Sara Ahmed in her book *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* gives an analysis of “affective economies, where feelings do not reside in

subjects or objects, but are produced as effects of circulation” that via this circulation we can consider the ‘sociality’ of emotions (Ahmed 2014, 8). Although Ahmed’s arguments on emotions and objects are quite similar to affect theories in terms of relationality between objects and subjects, she prefer using emotion. She generally focuses on hate, fear and bodies of white-black people, hence deals with emotions much more in terms of power struggles in a nation. I found some explanations of Ahmed closer to my fieldwork data as someone examining the collective experiences of a certain group. In my study, women generally refer to their togetherness and love and adherence between them by emphasizing the pronoun “we”. Ahmed also highlights this point and states “emotions are precisely about the intimacy of the ‘with’; they are about the intimate relationship between selves, objects and others” (Ahmed 2004a, 28). When we think about the impact of madrasa that is analyzed in the third chapter, Ahmed’s explanations are quite eye-opening to scrutinize HIKDE with the dimension of emotion.

Although my stance on emotions is significantly shaped by Sara Ahmed (2004a; 2004b; 2014) who says “we need to consider how emotions work, in concrete and particular ways, to mediate the relationship between the psychic and the social, and between the individual and the collective” (2004b, 119), due to her analysis being much more related to the politics of emotions and how emotions create ideals for a nation, and also seeing emotions “as a sign of capital”, my understanding and analysis of emotions differs. My field data shows that women's emotions take source from their understanding of Islam and also related to what they experienced in the modernization process of Turkey, and guides their activities in a positive way.

I will use emotions such as pain and love that are predominant emotions in the activities of women. But I will also use affect for the atmosphere created by objects that carry traces from these emotions over time. Although it is difficult to give a specific definition of affect, I will use it to make an analysis of the subject-object-space relations in HIKDE, unlike the emotions that are generally regarded as located in the human bodies. In this chapter, I will claim that HIKDE is the embodiment form of women’s emotions that encompass their actions and play a crucial role together with affective atmosphere that is created through certain objects and subjects.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DISCOURSE OF “ISLAMIST WOMEN” AND ŞADIRVAN JOURNAL

Allah defines us as a believer and a Muslim in the Qur’an. What does the “Islamist” mean? It reminds me of something very artificial. It does not evoke anything for me. Maybe today's fake, veiled people but inside is immature (*ham*) ... Our litmus paper for a believer or "Islamist" is his/her attitudes towards our Prophet, his family, and companions. If they mention them as they are someone else, I cross out (*çizerim*) them even if he/she is a higher-up professor.<sup>4</sup>

These statements of my interlocutor Reyhan Uzuner who is the daughter of Mukaddes Cıtlak as one of the members of HIKDE reflects her self-definition and reaction to the other labelings by giving reference to the verse from Qur’an:

“Indeed, the Muslim men and Muslim women, the believing men and believing women, the obedient men and obedient women, the truthful men and truthful women, the patient men and patient women, the humble men and humble women, the charitable men and charitable women, the fasting men and fasting women, the men who guard their private parts and the women who do so, and the men who remember Allah often and the women who do so - for them Allah has prepared forgiveness and a great reward” (The Qur’an 33: 35).

All of the interviewed women refuse to be called as Islamists, expressing that they do not like this concept. The names Gülsen Ataseven, Mukaddes Çıtlak, Fatma Çalıkavak as who are the founder names of this association are generally regarded as “Islamist women” in many academic researches (Ilyasoğlu 2000; Çayır 2000; Arat 2005; Yılmaz 2015; Aktaş 2016). It is seen that the names, which are mostly named as the last generation “Islamists” (Yılmaz 2015), prefer to use the concept of "devout" or "religious" by approaching the "Islamist" concept cautiously (Ramazanoğlu 2005; Barbarosoğlu 2016). Zehra Yılmaz (2015) defines women as

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<sup>4</sup> Interview with Reyhan Uzuner. 27.02.2020, Beşiktaş.

Islamists by seeing Islamism as the way religion is used as a political reference. Besides that, the Şadırvan Journal, published by women within the association and as a cornerstone to be able to draw a picture of that time, came to the fore as an “Islamist Journal” after the project of Islamist Journals (IDP) initiated by ILEM (Center for Scientific Studies) in 2013 to record and bring together journals in which considered Islamist thought has found ground. After this project, all issues of journal became digitally accessible.

It was argued that writing for “Islamist women”, which aims to address young women and invite them to live according to an Islamic lifestyle, has been an important tool both to eliminate the unrest of their distance from public life and also to stop the corruption of that period (Cokoğulları and Bozaslan 2014, 848). The Şadırvan Journal which was published as 12 issues between the years 1976-1980 only by women, was quite significant. I noticed that research on women's journals after the Republic; Davaz-Mardin (1998), Akagündüz (2015), Kılıç&Yılmaz (2019), Şahin (2018) did not mention Sadırvan Journal. Considering that Islamism found ground especially after the 1970s, it is also thought-provoking that this journal, which was published only by Muslim women, has almost no mention in detail except for two master's theses of Begüm Hergüvenç Sınmaz (2018) and Sevgi Pınar Zeydan (2019).

The journal was studied as master thesis by Sınmaz (2018) and Zeydan (2019) with the claim that it generally consists of "Islamist" discourse. Sınmaz (2018, 113) concludes that “Islamist women” have a reactive attitude towards the cuts caused by modernism and rising feminism, and they have established their identities by feeding precisely through these cuts while constructing their discourses as a political subject. Sınmaz also mentions Sadırvan as the first journal published by “Islamist women”. The claim that women are political subjects and that they establish their identities based on other discourses is open to debate, and this claim will be discussed in this chapter through the women's own expressions.

In her study, Zeydan (2019) questioned how the identity of the Islamist woman was constructed through the journal and the one of the founders of the association Gülsen Ataseven, and claimed that both the journal and Ataseven as an active role model

contributed to the Islamism project, although they had limited discourse. However, Zeydan adds that her thesis was incomplete since she could not interview anyone from the association and could not ask questions about the discourses in the journal. Fatma Barbarosoğlu, on the other hand, states that although she does not mention in detail, the main issue of *Sadırvan* is to give the headscarf a respectable identity (Barbarosoğlu 2016, 21). Although the headscarf has an important place in the content of the journal, it is certain that the main issue of the journal is not the headscarf, and those who publish it also emphasize this. The journal contains harder and clearer writings on anti-communist propaganda, Westernism, and modernization, whereas the headscarf issue is not taken up thoroughly. The content of the journal will be elaborated thoroughly on the following pages.

It is problematic that Sınmaz and Zeydan approaches the journal from the beginning to understand the identity of the "Islamist woman". How accurate is it to try to understand women who have already been placed in a certain taken for granted pattern? In this sense, how do the women mentioned take place in the "Islamist" discourse? How do they define themselves? Answers to these questions will be sought in the context of the discourses of the *Şadırvan Journal* reflecting the first period of the association and the discourses of women today.

Due to the attributed discourse as "Islamist" both for women and journal, first of all, I want to tackle with this discourse critically. That is why, the aim of this chapter is to discuss the expressions of women in *Hanımlar İlim ve Kültür Derneği* (Wisdom and Cultural Association for Women) which was established in 1973 in Istanbul, and the discourses in *Sadırvan Journal* published from 1976 to 1980 by the founders of association within the scope of Islamism debates in Turkey. In this chapter, I will endeavor to reveal the underlying reasons why these women approach the Islamist concept quite cautiously, do not like, or even hate. Why do these women not want to define themselves in complex discourses, and instead consider it sufficient to define themselves just as "Muslim"? It is crucial to understand this, because although women refuse to be called as Islamist, their purpose is in their own words "Allah's sake", "spreading Islam", "helping people" with reference to the Qur'an and Hadith. I will discuss how the women's objection to the interpellation of "Islamist" is related

to its connotation with politics; and therefore I will reveal that this reaction actually reflects their positioning within the current political and social debates in Turkey.

My approach is trying to understand women from their own world, and their own defining. This thesis examines the work of an association that has been active continuously for 47 years. Therefore, during the fieldwork, 20 interviews were conducted with both women who were born in 1940-1950 and a later generation of women who were generally their children or students who grew up in HIKDE. This situation also gives the opportunity to compare two generations and their changing discourses within the context of “Islamism”. The impact of Islamic thought on this process, the evaluations about the journal in this sense will be analyzed on the basis of the women's own world of thoughts and experiences.

The theoretical basis of this chapter is the discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe. The discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe (1985), which emphasizes the incomplete and non-holistic character of the social phenomenon, emphasizes that the meaning can never be fixed ultimately. Through articulations discourses changes; identifying people in these certain discourses means also to give an identity to them. From this understanding, we can say that the concept of Islamism is not a fully fixed discourse that we can place who we want in it.

As I stated, the Şadırvan Journal started to be publish in 1976. However the Islamism discourse goes back to a much earlier date. In this sense, firstly, the development of Islamism in Turkey and writings on this issue will be examined with a critical perspective. Afterward, a framework will be drawn on the place of the “Islamist woman” in this discourse, and finally, the position of women in HIKDE will be discussed in this “Islamist women” discourse through the light of Sadırvan Journal’s analysis and women’ self-expression.

## **2. 1. Islamism Discussions in Turkey**

When we look at what is written on Islamism in Turkey, it is observed that Islamism is a very complex and ambiguous concept that is related to many other ideologies and concepts, and it also undergoes changes and transformations over time. It is hard

to address the issue of Islamism because it has both its connection with Islam as a religion that originates from the Qur'an and the Hadith, and its relationship with the changing and produced ideology/ideologies. I think the issue of in which of these two dimensions the Islamist debate is handled and evaluated is decisive for a person to define himself/herself as an Islamist. While the ongoing debates between Muslims and non-Muslims are mostly shaped on the axis of “terrorism”, “Islamophobia”, “anti-exploitation” and “resistance”; the ongoing debate among Muslims continues in the context of whether Islamism is a "rupture" or a "renewal" in the history of Muslims (Işık 2016, 164).

Islamism has been associated with other ideological or political discourses and waves such as conservatism, nationalism, leftism, rightism, liberalism, naturalism, feminism, and Kemalism. More precisely, developments in the world, social and political conditions in Turkey have entailed Islamism to be discussed within different discourses. In addition, with both the events in Turkey and in the world, political Islam, radical Islam, Islamic terrorism discussions have come on the agenda. Moreover, starting from the idea that it is a political ideology, it caused controversy after the 2000s of whether Islamism died and transformed into conservatism with the AKP government (Türköne 2012). The difference in the interpretation of the idea of Islamism by different circles and the fact that the groups that are addressed by the "Islamist" definition do not accept this definition, further complicates this task and pushes the researcher to be more cautious.

According to Yasin Aktay (2018, 16), who states that Islamism has a problem of legitimacy, this concept will remain as a label that almost nobody adopts. He argues that this concept emerged as a “statist solution” for the preservation of the state in the late Ottoman period, and after the Republic naming as “Islamism” was generally done by those who were outside of the movement (Aktay 2018, 16). Therefore, Islamism has passed through different periods and ruptures as discourse. It should be seen as the nature of a discourse. Indeed, the definition of Michel Foucault, which has played a central role in discourse theory, points to this situation:

We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation [...Discourse] is made up of a limited

number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form [...] it is, from beginning to end, historical – a fragment of history [...] posing its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality (Foucault 1972, 117).

Islamism as a discourse in Turkey takes shape, changes, and finds meaning with the historical, political, and social events. It is crucial to critically review what is written on Islamism in order to apprehend the ground on which "Islamist women" discourse rests.

There are various debates about when Islamism began as a political ideology, hence it is difficult to produce a milestone. According to Çağan (2008, 81), the history of Islamism cannot be separated from the long history of Islam and likewise that there is no theoretical distinction between the demands of Islam and the demands of Islamism. Discussions in the context of the starting point problem of Islamism is shaped around Cemaleddin Afghani, New Ottomans, Islamists in II. Constitutionalist Era, and Abdulhamit (Mardin 1991; Tunaya 2007; Kara 2013; Bulaç 2018). The general argument is there was the question of how this state could be saved in the Constitutionalist Period. The Ottoman State was in collapse and experiencing a crisis in almost every field. Therefore, ideas have been put forward to get rid of this situation.

### **2. 1. 1. Ottoman Era and Islamism**

Islamism is regarded as one of the three types of politics<sup>5</sup> that emerged in the 19th-century Ottoman period to prevent this collapse of the state by bringing all Muslims in the world together. According to Tunaya (2007), who claimed that the most influential and strongest of the political and intellectual movements in the Constitutional Period was Islamism, Islamists reached the public through preaching and conversation in madrasahs and mosques, for example Mehmet Akif was one of these names. Under the leadership of Mehmet Akif Ersoy and with its quality

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<sup>5</sup>Yusuf Akçura used the concept of Panislamism in his article titled "Three Styles of Politics"(1904) examines the Ottomanism, Panislamism, and Turkism which are three different political understandings.

content, *Sırat-ı Mustakim* (later on *Sebilurresad*) Journal, which started to come out weekly was very influential. In these years, madrasah and lodge circles appear to have separate publications that can be considered partially or wholly within Islamism; *Ceride-i Ilmiye*, *Beyanu'l-Hak*, *Medrese Itikadları*, *Sufism*, *Hikmet*, *Muhibban*, *Mahfil* (Kara 2013, 26). Many beliefs and principles, which are seen as the reasons for the “backwardness” of the Islamic world, have been criticized under the title of historical Islam by proposing a return to “real Islam” with reference to Qur’an and Sunnah (Mertoğlu 2013, 147). It seems that the Islamist discourse based on true Islam / historical anti-Islam was not limited to the Constitutional Period, but became one of the central discourses of Islamists in the following periods as well.

Despite the fact that Islamism in this period was related much more with politics and the state, the idea of Islamism cannot be reduced only to the field of politics. It was argued that Westernization was the main motif that gave color and direction to Islamism that emerged in the 19th-century Ottoman period to prevent this collapse of the state; at the same time, it was claimed that its emergence was a religious project as much as a political one, because it found meaning as an Islamic revival or reform movement (Kurtoğlu 2018, 202). Ismail Kara (2013, 18) also defines Islamism as “a new holistic interpretation of religion and Islam that has been put forward in the modern period”. More broadly, he defines Islamism as follows:

Islamism is a thought and movement in the 19th and 20th century that includes the whole of the political, intellectual and scientific studies or seekings-their activist and eclectic aspects are dominant-that aim to reconstruct Islam as a whole (belief, worship, morality, philosophy, politics, law, education ...), to rescue Muslims and the Islamic world from the western exploitation, cruel and obsolete rulers, captivity, and imitation, in this way to civilize, unite and develop them” (Kara 2013, 17).

That is why this new Islamic interpretation affects the family, relations with non-Muslims, jihad, home, urbanization, architecture, literature, history, philosophy; namely every field also has taken on new dimensions (Ibid, 18). Although Kara’s definition is very broad, we can say that Islamism, which initially set out as a political discourse, was later considered more broadly. This means that any religious group, order, political party, non-governmental organization is Islamist, although it is

debatable seeing Islamism as a modern phenomenon. I do not agree with Kara's view of Islamism as an ideology brought by modernism, but of course, I think there are answers and reactions to modernism.

While Kara's evaluations comprise a broad field, Yasin Aktay (2018, 18) interprets Islamism from a political standpoint and states that we can consider every formation established by Muslims and put Islam in their political practice as Islamism "regardless of what kind of Islamic interpretation they have". I think this statement as "regardless of what kind of interpretation" is ambiguous and open for every evaluation and understanding of Islam. He also states that it can be read as a very Islamist strategy when someone says that he/she is not an Islamist (Ibid, 22).

What is clear, as many researchers have pointed out, is Islamism is a name introduced in the modern world. Some take its beginning date with Tanzimat and New Ottomans, some with 2nd Constitutional Era, but the Islamic world and the history of Muslims are of course much older, and the struggle of Muslims has always been there. In this sense I find Alev Erkilet's evaluation a much more accurate approach to the situation. She explains:

Modernization was realized in these societies by the westernized elites (Middle East) despite the opposition of the people. Although the masses seemed to be silent at first in the face of this difficult situation, the increasing questionings by time, in fact, caused them to move and react in true time and conditions. Therefore, these actions are not the result of later events. Islam was already present in the life and mind of the people. These movements can be reformist or revolutionary, moderate or radical, and can be seen as sect, party, organization or association. Regardless the many differences, the two sources in the common grassroots are the Quran and the Sunnah. If the borders are exceeded, the movement will not be an Islamic movement (Erkilet 2000, 21-22).

From this standpoint, Erkilet sees Islamism-which is separated from Islam with the attachment of '-ism'-as "an answer to the crisis of legitimacy"; this crisis emerged due to the exclusion of the values of Islam within the modernization process that Muslim societies have entered since the 18th century (Erkilet 2015, 89-90). The fine point where Erkilet differs from other explanations is that Islamism emerged in the modern era as a naming, not as a movement or a thought. According to Erkilet Islamism must take its source from the Qur'an and Sunnah, which means that

Islamism and Islamists should have decisive rules. I think confusion occurs due to the ambiguity of these determinants that change for everyone. We can think of the main elements of Islamism as nodal points which Laclau and Mouffe use for their discourse theory. "A discourse is formed by the partial fixation of meaning around certain *nodal points* that are privileged signs around which the other signs are ordered; the other signs acquire their meaning from their relationship to the nodal points" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 112). Although Islamism also seems to contain complex meanings as discourse, it actually has certain nodes and others should be handled with them. Therefore, when calling someone Islamist, it must be well analyzed how far that person is inside or outside of these nodals/borders of the concept.

Vahdettin Işık (2016, 177) emphasizes that the Islamist project builds its existence on two main elements, one is "the belief in the necessity of sense-making and repairing the weaknesses within the internal structure" and the other is "anti-imperialism which is based on being against Western aggression". Although some crucial nodes are determined for Islamism, I suppose these are also confused or interpreted differently. That is why this situation expands the field of discursivity of Islamism.

## **2. 1. 2. Islamism After the Proclamation of the Republic of Turkey**

When the Republican era is evaluated in terms of the relationship between religion and politics and the development process of Islamist thought, it can be divided into three or four periods. While Ismail Kara (2013) divides it into the three periods: Conservatism-Nationalism (1924-1944/1960), Radical and Intellectual Islamism (1960-1980), Harmony and Integration (after 1980); Ali Bulaç (2018) divides it into two periods as 1950-2000 and after 2000. It is interesting that Bulaç almost ignored the years 1924-1950; because doing so means not seeing the important names of that period such as Nurettin Topçu, Necip Fazıl, Said Nursi and their contributions.

The conditions after 1924 were the troublesome and difficult years in terms of Islamic thought and movement (Kara 2013, 27). The founders of the Republic decided to build the political and ideological foundation of the new Turkey on a secular way. Secularisation which is defined as the loss of influence of religion in

social life (Giddens 2006, 553) emerged as the state control of public space in Turkey. It was the control of religion with the intervention of the state rather than the separation of religious organs and the state (Zürcher 2004, 269). That is why, Kemalist elites not only aimed to change the structure of the state but also to penetrated daily life, behaviors and habits of the society (Göle 1997, 51). This modernization process of Turkey has called as laicism.

In this process, the organs of publications were closed, books and all written works became impossible, their thoughts were banned, attempts to intervene in the religious field increased, and religious education at all levels decreased, their cadres are scattered in different directions; Mehmet Akif went to Egypt, Elmalılı Hamdi Efendi was constantly followed after being tried and acquitted in the Independence Courts, Bediuzzaman Said Nursi was exiled, İskilipli Âtif Efendi was executed (Kara 2013, 27). Thus, the authoritarian secular regime created a climate of fear of the state for the formation of obedient citizenship throughout the country (Aras 2019, 5). All of these have led religious people to be "silent" if a phrase is to be used. This shows that Islamism is doomed to silence as well. Therefore, this process also formed the basis for the struggles of the religious people in the following period and the difficulties experienced motivated them to act both individually and collectively.

Ismail Kara (2013) describes this period as the Conservatism-Nationalism period (1924-1944 or 1960). In this period, as it can be seen in the writing and publishing organs of names such as Nurettin Topçu, Sezai Karakoç, and Necip Fazıl, nationalist-conservatives tried to defend religion through history or criticize the Republic ideology through historical people, and to preserve themselves (Ibid, 28). This is the answer to why nationalism and Islamism are often used together during and after this period. Laclau and Mouffe use the term *articulation* for these kinds of relations:

[W]e will call *articulation* any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice. The structured totality resulting from the articulatory practice, we will call discourse (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 105).

Of course, I am not claiming that Islamism is a purely articulated discourse; however, conditions require that discourse be handled in relation to other ideologies and discourses. This shows us “how articulations constantly reproduce, challenge or transform discourses” (Jorgensen and Philips 2002, 30). For example, if we do not understand the nationalist rhetoric of Muslims and their reasons, we cannot understand many important names that are role models for Islamists.

The nationalist rhetoric of names such as Necip Fazıl and Mehmet Akif, who are known as Islamists, especially as role models, reveals this situation more clearly. In this sense, a continuum can be mentioned between the beginning and the end of the century in the view of Islamists towards nationalism (Çetinsaya 2018, 451). What brought Islamism so close to nationalism was, of course, hidden in the conditions of the time. Since the single-party years do not allow any independent Islamic thought and movement in any way, this movement tried to find a place under the “umbrella of conservatism and nationalism” and shape its roadmap in this way (Kara 2013, 289). This opposition and form of existence are soft and indirect rather than harsh, direct and radical. Kısakürek (1968, 334-336) states “we have left behind the race and soil conditions that underpin our gush in the history plan; we are related to all kinds of racial and territorial truths, but we are enemies of all races and territorial bigotry, we are nationalists with an advanced view and understanding”. It seems these words were chosen to distinguish themselves from a racist understanding of nationalism. Although Necip Fazıl's world of thought was nationalist-conservative, the style of the *Büyük Doğu* Journal, which he started publishing in 1943, was “revolutionary and impressive” (Kara 2013, 29). As a matter of fact, since the main axis of Islamism develops as the liberation ideology, it has features that can easily meet the nationalist environment. In this regard, it is noteworthy that the tradition of Islamism in Turkey continues as "National Vision (*Milli Görüş*)”<sup>6</sup> (Mert 2018, 414).

Until the 1950s, and the transition to the multi-party system, the religious people were able to find a place for themselves only in some publications. The statements of

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<sup>6</sup>National Vision (NV) is a conceptualization used by Necmettin Erbakan himself to describe the political movement led by Erbakan. Erbakan as the founder of the movement, describes *Milli Görüş* as the spirit and meaning of the nation, the idea that the nation has found itself, representing the national body (Erbakan 1975, 27).

one of the women in the association "we were in so much a longing for everything Islamic"<sup>7</sup> express very well how effective this period was in the activities of women in the next period<sup>8</sup>. Although it is common for Muslims to express their thoughts in publications, it is understood that they could not write exactly what they wanted. The fact that after the Republic there were people who were sued and prosecuted for what they wrote made them more careful about this issue. Nevertheless, the oppressive and intense secularism practices of the single-party period did not precisely prevent religion from surviving. Şerif Mardin (1991) shows the cultural conservatism, sects and the *Nurcu* movement with Said Nursi as the three channels that make this possible. In this respect, it is wrong to consider the revival of religious movements after 1945 as a "spurt (*hortlama*)" despite all the hard and determined secularism policies (Mardin 1991, 31).

After the 1950s, the Democratic Party's coming into power was seen as a period in which the "religious" section met the relatively specific demands and needs and were able to express themselves to some extent (Zürcher 2004). That's why, it is argued that they started to expand their movement areas and a new period started for them. In this sense, the subsequent years following the establishment of the Republic are quite effective in the meaning of the feelings, thoughts, and activities of the process of Islamism in Turkey. According to Bulaç (2018, 65) in this new period, Islamism as a political and intellectual movement in the Ottoman Empire turned into an "Islamic movement" with the end of the "interregnum (*fetret devri*)". In the Ottoman Empire, the state was already governed by Islamic rules and there was no pressure on the Muslim people. The deprivation of people's religious freedom led them to react individually or collectively.

Towards the end of this period, the number of Islamic publications and associations increased, and the mobility in minds and ideas started to be put rapidly into action. The *Büyük Doğu* (The Great East) journal, published by Necip Fazıl Kısakürek since 1943, is one of such publications. In the one of the first issues of *Büyük Doğu*, it is

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<sup>7</sup> Personal interview with F.A. 19.10.2019, Fatih.

<sup>8</sup> The emotional dimension of their activities will be elaborated in the fourth chapter.

written that: “The false reforms that have been going on since Tanzimat and the false heroes that these reforms derive are the top issue of our case” (Subaşı 2018, 224). *Diriliş* magazine, which was released in 1966 under the direction of Sezai Karakoç, is another important and influential magazine after the *Büyük Doğu* in terms of the history of Islamic thought. *Diriliş* has emphasized Islam and civilization, Ottoman-Seljuk heritage and Sufism; it shows a character with a strong and effective language that cares about opening to the Islamic geography and the Middle East (Kara 2013, 33). During this period, Islamism could not attain a unity of ideas and discourses as a continuum of Islamism in the Constitutional era (Tunaya 2007, 177). Undoubtedly, the role of the revolutions that tried to break ties with the pre-Republic tradition, secularization policies, and pressures had a big role on this situation. In this respect, it is difficult to find a clear, independent, wholeness and simple Islamic discourse in Islamic publications. On the contrary, Islamist discourse as Kara’s (2013) states was built under a “conservative-nationalist” identity.

Towards the end of the 1960s, Islamism began to expand its field towards politics. The change was taking place evidenced by the National Vision Movement (1970) and Necmettin Erbakan, who joined Turkish political life. Their program which includes the interest-free order, and put the emphasis on morality and spirituality, anti-Zionism and anti-masonry, opposition and attitudes such as not going to Anıtkabir, belonging to a rising *tariqa* / *Iskenderpaşa* community made Erbakan and the movement an important figure in the political arena (Kara 2013, 33). Besides, the activities of Islamic movements in Egypt and Pakistan were increasingly continuing. The translation into Turkish of ideologies and thinkers' works of these movements has been thought to have an important place in the context of Islamism in Turkey. Sayyid Kutub and Mevdudi are among them. For example Sayyid Kutub defended the authenticity of Islamic civilization against the efforts of modernists trying to follow the West (Göle 2017, 27). Therefore, this is the beginning of Muslims gaining more courage and being more active outside their homes. Turkish Islamism, whose references consisted of “semi-national, semi-conservative rhetoric” of references such as Mehmet Akif, Necip Fazıl, and later M. Şevket Eygi, has been opened to the world with these translations and has started to put the emphasis on *ummah* again; instead of the discourse of victimization, it started to have a more challenging and constructive emphasis (Aktay 2013, 815).

The Iranian revolution (1979) also had another impact on Islamism discussions in Turkey. Ayatollah Khomeini's victory was welcomed differently in Turkey; as uneasiness in Ankara, silence in traditional religious groups and in the center of the MSP, but it was welcomed with excitement by radical Islamists and religious youth as a victory of Islam (Kara 2013, 34). The 1980 military coup brought a new period for all circles, especially Islamists. After the military coup, the oppressive and intimidating side of the state came to the fore. Many people from all circles were arrested, many media outlets closed, some books banned, some associations and foundations either closed or had to interrupt their activities (Alam 2009, 366). One of the common concepts of this period is “political Islam”, which is newly produced and associated with terrorism, armed struggle, blood, sharia and caliph based political demands, violence, the Islamic state, anti-democracy, radicalism and fundamentalism (Kara 2013, 35).

After the 1980 coup, the state started to use Islam as political leverage to ensure stability. This situation paved the way for Islamic movements to gain a political identity (Kurtoğlu 2018, 214). During the Özal period, liberal policies covering the wider public were effective. With the Özal policies, the initiatives of Muslim businessmen increased, the education services have become widespread for everyone, and girls with headscarves have been seen in universities. MUSIAD (the Association of the Independent Industrialists and Businessmen) was founded in 1990, in Istanbul by a number of young religious businessmen with the aim of establishing “an Islamic economic system as an alternative to the existing capitalist system in Turkey” (Narlı 1999, 40). It is argued that this process led to the burgeoning bourgeois of middle-class Muslims seeking an alternative, rather than transforming the social structure in an Islamic way (Erkilet 2018, 691). That is why, after this process Islamists started to be criticized and evaluated within their economic growth and transformations.

The other two phenomena which are effective in the development and changing process of Islamism are globalization and post-modernism. The hostile relationship between Islam and the nation-state has been reshaped by the globalization achievements of Islamism (Bilici 2018, 803). Bilici says that globalization is liberating in this sense, so it is possible to see Turgut Özal's policies as the result of

this acquisition. Especially after 2002, Islamists experienced power, enrichment, and started to have careers in different positions during the Justice and Development Party (JDP) governments (Duran 2010, 6). With the JDP governments, it is also argued that Islamism in Turkey sought ways to engage with Kemalist modernity, rather than a “rejection of Kemalist secular order” (Alam 2009, 375).

As it is seen the discourse of Islamism in Turkey has gone through many different periods and it continues. It is clear that there are many political stops and interventions in the journey of discourse so far, and this has led to a more dominant evaluation of this aspect for Islamist definition. Laclau and Mouffe (2001, 109) assert that “any discursive formation is never a fully sutured totality, it always has an open and contingent character”. Their assertion is not just valid for what is said or written but also pertinent for practices, institutions and social relations (*Ibid*, 109). Due to the challenging of Islamists with “absolute and official Republican Turkish identity”, Islamic identity must be seen “as a terrain of contestation rather than a fixed ideological or behavioural understanding across time and space” (Alam 2009, 369). Due to this feature of discourse, it seems that the journey of Islamism and Islamists will continue according to the political, social, and economic conditions of the world and Turkey. Subsequent discussions of Islamism will not be discussed herein detail, and rather the state of women in Islamism debates which is the my main subjects of my thesis will be elaborated.

## **2. 2. Islamic / Islamist Movement**

The Islamism debate in Turkey has brought about the discussion of the Islamic movement as well. While Aktay (2018, 20) says that Islamism has turned into a "grassroots movement" after the republic, Bulaç states that this was the case after 1950s. Bulaç explains the difference between the two as follows:

While Islamism has emerged as a reform movement in line with Islamist demands under the broad umbrella of the state, which is already Muslims, the Islamic movement has been shaped as a political orientation from a point far from the state, even against it. Islamism was a central and official reform program, but its intellectual and theoretical emphasis was more important than its political emphasis; the Islamic movement, on the other hand, is the political reaction and demand of the

social edge, the environment, which is deemed insignificant (Bulaç 2018, 66).

The fact that Muslims started some civil society activities after the 1950s and established political parties seems to support this claim. Because of this, Muslims may not accept the term "Islamist" and the Islamic movement may mean more to them. This period has enabled Muslims, who want to see Islam as a lifestyle in every sense, to reveal their will more clearly as a result of the pressure they experienced. While Islamic movements were defined "as anti-modernist, supported by fundamentalist" in the 1980s; together with the 1990s, they started to be defined "as fundamentalist and a threat to the Western world" (Delibaş 2009, 92). Especially the events of 9/11 were effective on this situation.

The question of who can and cannot be included in the Islamic movement is another matter of discussion. If Islamism is an ideology and this ideology is to be brought to life, it must bring along a movement, but should this movement be radical or moderate? Even if the answers are given to this question change, to understand whether the movement is radical or moderate Erkilet lists some major criteria such as the attitude towards the order of society, oppression, the jihad, right politics, obedience to administrators, secularism, Islam itself, and imperial politics (Erkilet 2018, 683-687). According to Erkilet, even if there are some differences in terms of these distinctive criteria, this does not change the fact that all groups (from religious orders to political parties) aiming a lifestyle based on Qur'an and Sunnah are sociologically Islamic movements (Ibid, 688). From this point of view, Islamic movements in today's Turkey differ from the traditional Sufi orders such as the Nakşibendi, the Rukai and the Kadiri to religious movements of mainly republican origin such as the Nurcu, Süleymancı and Isıkçı (Çakır 1991). If we consider a social movement as "a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity" (Diani 2000, 165), all these groups can be seen as a social movement. In this case, the question of whether there is an Islamist women's movement in Turkey or not still remains to be discussed.

### **2. 3. The Discussions of Islamist Women / Movement in Turkey**

Distinguishing a category of "Islamist woman" from "Islamism" within the framework of its unique characteristics is a new phenomenon after the 1980s. This situation can be better understood with the explanation of Ruşen Çakır (2017) who sees the Islamic movement as a "man movement". However, he thinks that it is the Islamist female actors who have made the biggest mark in this movement and who suffered much more (Çakır 2017, 28). What he means with women's suffering is related to the headscarf issue in Turkey. The headscarf is considered as an important indicator that allows Islam to enter the public sphere in terms of publicizing women (Göle 1997). To understand why the headscarf is so closely linked to the public sphere, we have to know the impact of modernization process in Turkey.

After the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, the "Kemalist modernity project used the public visibility of women as a strategic tool to demonstrate Turkey's new secular character" (Ozçetin 2009, 108). Thus, modernizing elites wanted to make women publicly visible as a new rational, modern identity that separated from the Ottoman past to form an ideal society (Gole 1997; Cinar 2008). They thought that these women should be free from all kinds of signs of religion/Islam. A veiled woman was associated with the descriptions of 'backward', 'uncultured', 'traditional', 'uneducated' and lower classes (Gole 1996; Secor 2002; Cinar 2008; Kavakçı 2010). In every field of life, from school to work, from dancing to shaking hands, from eating to playing sports, there was a shift from a Muslim lifestyle to a Western, modern one (Göle 1997, 51). That is why, this understanding started to create an identity problem in addition to making life difficult for women who are tight-knit to their religion.

Although the women with headscarves started to find their way in the relaxing environment that came with the 1950s, the political conditions of the country continued to prevent them from time to time. The problems faced by women with headscarves in education are demonstrated in the experiences of Gülsen Ataseven, who graduated from the faculty of medicine as a top student but her degree was given to the second place candidate, and the dismissal of Hatice Babacan from the Faculty of Theology in 1960s, and the general punitive attitude of the state against

such women have been one of the milestones of the Islamist women's movement (Caha 2011, 118). But at the same time, the headscarf struggle of Hatice Babacan and the conferences that Şule Yüksel Şenler<sup>9</sup> gave to thousands of people encouraged religious women further. It is clear that Şule Yüksel Şenler is a role model for young girls and women with her newspaper articles and conferences and her own style of headscarf. In *Seher Vakti* Journal, she started to present her headscarf model, which she created as "Şulebaş" to her readers. Especially the novel, *Huzur Sokağı*, which was published for the first time in 1970 and had many reprintings, found a great impact in the religious groups. Her aim is to explain the veiling, which she has learned too late, to the society, and to raise awareness of young girls and women, especially with the truth on this matter (Beşinci 2017). Senler narrates her experiences and the conditions of the period:

Our studies under the conditions of that day was not ideal studies in accordance with Islam, but it was in an arid period, especially spiritually. It was the time getting together was almost impossible and Islamic awakening was yet started to emerge. Even the dream of becoming a group of women was not possible. In those years when I veiled; when I went out with a headscarf that covered the hair completely and a overcoat (*pardösü*), everyone was looking me in astonishment as if a bomb had fallen in the middle of the street. I would not give up at all costs, and I would endeavor to be beneficial in the true path for my peers at the cost of my life (Tezcan 2017, 51).

These statements show us how the life of a woman who wants to live by choosing clothes according to the orders of Islam turns into a struggle for identity and how this situation shapes her whole life. Especially after the decision of the Council of Higher Education (Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu, YOK) in 1982 that prohibited students with their headscarves from the universities, a great reaction came from the religious groups and demonstrations started in the universities. In 1980, veiled students appeared in the media to express their educational rights (Aktaş 2018, 834). Then, YOK decided that they could call it *a turban* to distinguish it from the Islamic headscarf (Cinar, 2005). Ironically, later on, *turban* was also considered a political

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<sup>9</sup>Şenler was born in Kayseri in 1938 and continued her writing life, which she started by writing a story, in 1967, with an offer from the Newspaper "Today". She wrote her first article in the newspaper with the title "Woman of Islam" and started publishing *Seher Vakti*, which was stated to be the first Islamist women's journal of the Republican Period (Cokoğullar and Bozaslan 2014, 849).

symbol . After the 28 February “postmodern” coup in 1997, the headscarf ban was enforced even more severely and many university students demonstrating against the ban were sentenced to prison. This problem experienced by women was analyzed and discussed many times in many academic studies afterward (İlyasoğlu 1994; Göle 1997; Arat 2001; Secor 2005; Aktas 2006; Kavakcı 2010).

Göle (1997, 5) states that veiling is the most crucial symbol of contemporary Islamist movement which formed in the tension of Islam, modernity and tradition. From her understanding, this type of veiling in universities is different from the traditional one and thus related to the politicization of Islam in Turkey. That is why, it was argued that the tendency to veil, the call to return to Islam to stop the damage caused by the modernization process, and the role of leadership in the public sphere determined with this aim is evaluated as the main elements that compose the identity of “Islamist” women (Cokoğulları & Bozaslan, 2014: 848). I think that the greater focus on the headscarf struggle of these women has led to the neglect of many of their previous studies and their agencies. In this sense, although I believe that the headscarf has a very special and significant place in the understanding of the “Islamist” women’s identity in Turkey, all debates around the headscarf also brought a limitation in comprehending bigger goals and activities of these women. Even if the headscarf has a large share in women's struggles, and strengthen them to criticize religious men within them, the headscarf should not overshadow the general actions of women.

Islamic groups also started to discuss the “issue of women” and together with headscarf issue their situation in society was evaluated within various journals such as *Mektup* (Letter) and *Kadın ve Aile* (Woman and Family) (Caha 2011, 120). Another important point is after the 1980s, Islamist women started to criticize their position in the society, and also Islamist men harshly, with the increasing feminist movements and the cooperation between women groups (Yılmaz 2015). Accordingly, it can be said that the discourse of “believer woman (*mü'mine kadın*)”, which defines her religious position with her home and community-centered activities, has turned into an “Islamist woman” discourse trying to reconcile her religious position with her demands regarding career, social life, and modern public space (Aktaş 2018, 834). Yıldız Ramazanoğlu also supports this idea by saying the

emergence of Islamist women started with the questioning the process of modernization and tradition by 78 generations (Ramazanoğlu 2018, 812). Of course this situation brought some problems. According to Göle (2017, 32) while Islamism causes women to become individualized unexpectedly, at the same time this situation limits them because they continue to live according to Islam and Islamic morality without question, hence this carries a “hidden paradox and tension in itself”.

Zehra Yılmaz (2015) who conducted a comprehensive study about “Islamist women” in Turkey in her book *Dişil Dindarlık: İslamcı Kadın Hareketinin Dönüşümü*, evaluated the Islamist women movement within the concept of globalization because Islamism benefited from the process of neoliberal globalization. Yılmaz tries to answer the question of whether women's empowerment strategies have liberated them, from the perspective of feminist debates. And she claims that women's visibility in the public sphere is a form of reconstructing the sexist distribution of women and men rather than liberating them (Yılmaz 2015, 19). According to her, women are in positions that determine and fulfill needs in associations and foundations, but men find and manage resources (Ibid 239). That is why, when we tackle the discourse of the Islamist women movement we find ourselves in a discussion of politics, gender, and globalization, not just thoughts or activities of women. For this situation Ramazanoğlu (2018, 805) states that although there are no people who say "we Islamists!", women who are peaceful with religion, evaluate modern paradigms by discussing them, and continue their search for authentic identity, were defined as "Islamists" from the outside.

#### **2.4. Şadırvan Journal**

HIKDE which can be considered as the first women's association founded by Muslim women in an environment where these discussions increased. Şadırvan Journal also started its publication life three years after the association was founded. The Journal started its publication in 29 May 1976 with the slogan of “seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave”. This magazine, which was published quarterly, was published as 18 issues and ended its publication life due to financial difficulties.

It can be said that the importance of journals was very great in that period. If there is an Islamic movement, this movement owes its existence to journals to some extent.

After the establishment of the republic, journals have been a tool for religious women both for their first public experience and for the transfer and adoption of religious knowledge (Barbarosoğlu 2016, 164). People were trained by reading journals and through journals, there were fruitful discussions and topics could be handled with more depth. Therefore, journals can be seen as spaces of struggles of religious people.



**Figure 2.1: The First Issue of The Journal.**

The effect of the Şadırvan journal, which has three years of publication, is deep in religious circles and especially for women. The journal gave a place for the thoughts of readers from domestic and abroad under the title of “Voices From Our Readers (Okuyuculardan Sesler)” in every issue, and from them we can see how women follow the Sadırvan. The thoughts in one issue are as follows:

Sadırvan means that the religious Turkish woman becomes conscious of making her pen into a gun. We have to create a cultural environment. You put the Sadırvan school in front of the school that the street and the environment try to build in our house. We are grateful to you. It is our

greatest wish that the journal will be published in less than three months (Yalcin 1977, i.6: 40).

Women see the journal as a school; it means they need thoughts close to their ideas that they cannot find outside. The increase in the number of subscribers to the journal over time and its readership abroad shows this situation. To the question of why you decided to publish such a journal, one of the founders of the association said to “spread Islam” and added:

Obviously, we were trying to do everything that came to our mind, I say no scheduled, planned or never thought first. Okey, we're coming together, but people have to get to know you. What will happen? Let's build an association. How will we introduce ourselves around us after that? Let's publish a journal<sup>10</sup>.

These statements show the desire to do something and make decisions according to the needs of that period. In the first lines of the first issue, they explain their aims:

You will read how we have established our association by integrating with clean, spotless feelings like water. One of the ambitions of young girls, who came together with "love of service"(*hizmet aşkı*) at a young age, was to publish a journal. In this way, we will both make our voices heard to unfamiliar ladies, and have provided the help of our elders and siblings who will enlighten us with their knowledge, culture, and arts (Sadırvan 1976, i.1: 3).

We can see how their emotions are crucial at the beginning of the journal and again the emphasis on *hizmet aşkı* (love of service). In another issue it is again stated, "we publish Sadırvan to make the voice of the religious Turkish woman and help her in every matter" (Sadırvan 1977, i.7: 1). In the first issue of the journal, they also explain their main sources and dominant subject:

Our source of strength is knowledge. We aspire to the power of science, which decorates every page of our Holy Book and is a guide and constructor in every major work in the world. We know Sadırvan is a dumb bowl. It is the water that makes it speak. Venerable reader: We gathered around Şadırvan with our faith in that eternal Mercy(*Rahmet*). We chose the blessed day when Fatih Sultan Mehmet, the eldest of our

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<sup>10</sup> Personal interview with Fadime Hanım. 22.07.2019, Fatih.

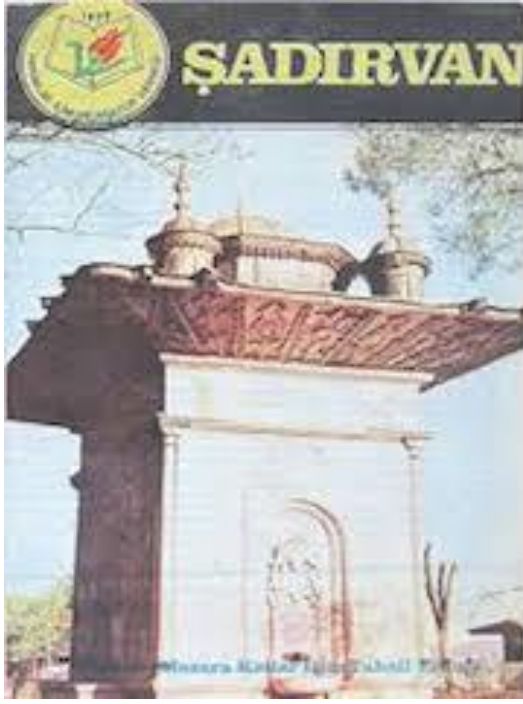
ancestors who announced this faith to four climates, conquered Istanbul, as our publication date (Sadırvan i.1: 3).

As can be seen, women use *şadırvan*<sup>11</sup> and water as a metaphor to describe their goals, and the day of the Conquest which they made a cover photo of the first issue, has also a symbolic meaning. They also put in many writings about the Conquest of İstanbul and Fatih Sultan Mehmed. This situation can be considered as incorporating the Ottoman experience into the national memory and putting a different “founding moment” to establish a new sense of national time (Çınar 2005, 32). Giving such a place to the Conquest is meaningful because it carries the hope that they will be successful in their goals.

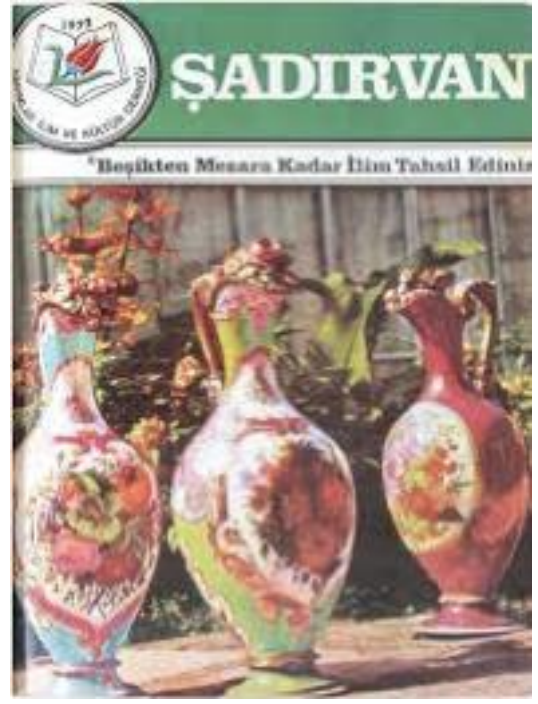
The motto of the journal as the Hadith of “seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave” also reflects their positioning and sources. While the issues in the journal are mostly historical and religious, articles were also written on political, economic, social, scientific, contemporary and cultural issues. In Sadırvan, there are also specific research and analysis articles on important and current issues or people related to Islamic culture and Islamic history. They put the statements and poems of Yahya Kemal, Necip Fazıl, Mehmet Akif Ersoy, Mevlana and Yunus Emre. They also narrated the life of Ottoman Sultans, especially Fatih Sultan Mehmet. This situation is closely related to the recall and revival of the Ottoman Empire's memory due to the Islamic culture. On the cover of each issue, a religious or historical motif such as mosque, madrasah, fountain, prayer rug, tulip, and traditional hand-made products was placed.

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<sup>11</sup>A pool with taps around it, with water flowing from the fountain in the middle, usually located in the middle of the mosque courtyards, with a dome or an open top.



**Figure 2.2: The Cover of The Second Issue.**



**Figure 2.3: The Cover of The Fifth Issue.**

The chapters in every issue are: "From Sadırvan to You" (Sadırvan'dan Sizlere) "We Speak to Ladies" (Hanımlara Sesleniyoruz), "Women's World" (Kadın Dünyası), "Corner of Medicine" (Tıp Köşesi), "Art and Literature Corner" (Sanat ve Edebiyat Köşesi), "Traces from History" (Tarihten İzler), "Our Picks from the Press" (Basından Seçmeler) and "Voice of Youth"(Gençliğin Sesi) which was added in the 5th issue. Fatma Çalıkavak, Gülsen Ataseven, Mukaddes Çıtlak, Hayrunnisa Açıkgöz, Fevziye Nuroğlu, Hicran Göze are among the names who write most frequently in the journal. Some of these names also stated that they used also a nickname in the journal.

All the issues of the journal will not be covered here extensively. Instead, as stated in the introduction my intention is to challenge and discuss the discourse of "Islamist" women/journal and the notion that consider women as "complementary" of men. That is why, the writings on women, Islam, and also the nationalist discourse that take attention in the journal will be analyzed.

#### 2. 4. 1. Writings on Women: The Issue of Being “Complementary”

In the first issues of the journal, there are writings about Fatih Sultan Mehmed, Mevlana, Yunus Emre; waqf culture, and helping. It is seen that the writings about women started to be handled after the 5th issue. Women who put forward their stances under the heading "Our Answers to the Questions on Women's Rights (Kadın Hakları Konusunda Derneğimize Sorulan Sualler ve Cevaplarımız)" states:

The issue of women is built on the wrongs, just like in the rest of the world. It is pushed into dead ends by knotting at an ideological point rather than being scientific ... 'Is there an equality of man and woman?' An answer that we did not give is reserved in the question; it is the acceptance of sex equality. The claim of equality of women with men is out of science. They are both equal to being human only ... We believe in the existence of a personality crisis that includes not only women but also men (Sadırvan i:5, 13).

They generally criticize the discussion on equality in the West and Turkey. Therefore, more attention is given to personality. In the article titled "Mistakes in the Issue of Women (Kadın Meselesindeki Yanlışlar)", Lawyer Hicran Göze says:

If a woman is crushed, despised, uninformed and ignorant, the male is also in a bad situation... We do not say that women should not have a profession and be crushed, but the woman should be the mother first, everything in her life should come after being a mother and wife (Göze 1978, i:10: 3).

There are many other writings such as being abstemious, duties at home, or dressing. However, these two quotations reveal the point of view of women on this issue to a great extent. First of all, they consider the discussions on gender equality from a feminist standpoint is redundant. Because it is a matter of personality for them and this is true for both sexes. Therefore, we can only evaluate these women from this perspective. In other words, if it is not understood where they approached the issue, it will be incomplete to evaluate it in the light of other discussions. Another important point is the emphasis of women about motherhood and being a wife. They explain this again:

Whatever you say, the primary reason for the existence of a woman is that after she knows Allah and realizes her servitude (*kulluk*) to Allah,

she is a wife and mother. Other features may be acceptable if they do not kill or destroy these parts of the woman (Gürsan 1978, i:11: 14).

When we look at the experiences of women in HIKDE, there seems to be a contradiction. Because on the one hand, in the journal, they explain that the Muslim woman should be a good wife and mother affiliated to her husband and children; but on the other hand, they state in our interviews that they worked for the association and journal day and night and hence could not give enough time for their children. Sümeyye Nuroğlu who is the daughter of Fevziye Nuroğlu states this situation:

Of course, if you look at it from the child's side, the mother was far from me. We could have been injured, but if we had not been injured, perhaps the other wounds would not bind up. In terms of the child, I look differently, in terms of case(*dava*)<sup>12</sup>, I see another. I say she should have done it from an Islamic perspective. Of course, it took me a long time to accept this.<sup>13</sup>

These words show how much women are committed to their work and how this is understood by the child over time even if it is hard. Actually the expression above “after she knows her servitude to Allah” can help us to better understand this issue. Due to seeing their *dava* as their duty of servitude to Allah, they tried to achieve both. While doing these, they could not get much support from their husbands. The truth is that from the very beginning, women who set out with their own will and who took action were not complementary to anyone, but on the contrary, men had to complement them or support them in a sense. One of my interlocutor Fadime Hanım<sup>14</sup> explain:

We were very confident in ourselves, but we have no money, no holding behind us, no rich people. Even our own husbands did not believe that we will succeed something. We do not owe anyone any diet. That's why we were able to cope with everyone very comfortably, we could push everyone with the back of our hand. And our only belief is that Allah will help us so long as we can follow Allah's orders. Of course sometimes we

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<sup>12</sup>The expression and defining used by women for all their activities, struggles, and efforts in the name of Islamic life, so *dava* means whole aim of their life in which they breathe.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with Sümeyye Nuroğlu. 01.10.2019, Fatih.

<sup>14</sup>This is a fake name because my interlocutor did not want her name to be used.

had problems with our husbands/children, but they also understood how we are very determined and do not give up.<sup>15</sup>

These expressions show us that women convinced their husbands about their activities and decide everything themselves. They chose an Islamic way of life and expected help just from Allah. Erkilet (2005, 35) explains this by saying “this is the point where the limits of both social position demands and male-dominated structures are exceeded, it is where liberation begins”; the act of this selection itself is a ‘primary’ liberatory, and the agency involved after that is a ‘secondary’ liberatory”. Erkilet's arguments overturn the discussions of being complementary and the debate of emancipation. This situation also clarifies the claim that they were complementary of men (Yılmaz 2015). Women’s rejecting the Islamist discourse and defining themselves as just “Muslim” should also be considered in connection with their reference to a higher value. Since women are considered as complementary of men in the Islamist women discourse, even if they do not express it explicitly shows that it would be an unfair approach to see them in this discourse. So much so that women stated that they organized the activities both as ideas and financially themselves. My interlocutor Fadime Hanım also emphasized how they did not get financially support from men as follows:

We didn't understand, actually, how everything was going on. We said ‘let's make an *iftar* in Ramadan’ to collect money for people in need, and ‘let's also invite the men (*beyleri*)’. There was a restaurant opposite Süleymaniye Mosque, we gave our *iftar* there. Our friends went men for money, but they said ‘Go to ladies’, and women gave again. Namely, a single penny (*kuruş*) did not come from men. We handled all our problems on our own.<sup>16</sup>

Consequently, it would be incorrect to see women as complementary. This approach means to overshadow their agency and struggle, and also not to understand them literally. Although women gave importance to the family, husband, and children and also prioritized them, they also struggled to the end for their own purposes and dreams.

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<sup>15</sup> Personal interview with Fadime Hanım. 22.07.2019, Fatih.

<sup>16</sup> Personel interview with Fadime Hanım. 22.07.2019, Fatih.

#### 2. 4. 2. Nationalist Discourse in The Journal

In the Sadırvan Journal in which women defined themselves as women who are “bound up with national and moral values” (Çalıkavak 1976, 5), it is frequently seen that their identity meets nationalism, and furthermore, when women make definitions about their own identities, they adopt the expression of Muslim Turkish / Turkish Muslims. Fatma Çalıkavak continues:

Homeland enemies are working day and night to demolish the last Muslim Turkish country and smash the core values we give to our children. As patriotic nationalist women, we consider it our most important duty to protect our ladies and girls from this terrible destruction (*Ibid*, 5).

These expressions reflect their position within this nationalist discourse. They found themselves obliged to react to things that threaten the country. My interlocutor Lale Kuran, who worked as the manager of HİKDE for a period, states her thoughts about this situation by giving example from her father:

In my father's youth, religion and everything related to religion were definitely unwelcomed, but people also wanted to do something. They came to the fore with the name of nationalism because they could not say that they are religious or “Islamist” in the concepts of today. The concept of nationalism is something that was put in front of Muslimism as a protective cover (*paravan*).<sup>17</sup>

Besides, the reason why they use the word “lady (hanım)” for the name of the association is explained:

In the word *Hanım* (for the association), we find the virtue, compassion, and renunciation of the Turkish Woman, together with the protective power that ensures the strength and continuity of the Turkish family. According to us, every Turkish woman who considers her nation, state, works for our Turkey, and raises our daughters and sons with this consciousness is the lady (hanım) (Sadırvan 1976: i.1,5).

When I asked women why the Turkish emphasis is quite dominant in the journal, they referred to the conditions of the difficulty of the period and said that it was not

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<sup>17</sup> Personal interview with Lale Kuran. 26.11.2019, Kadıköy.

possible to speak about Islam directly. These kinds of evaluations were given above within the Islamism discussions as well. This situation and the fact that many things are not said implicitly in the content of the journal can be seen as a kind of *tactic* that “is a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus” and hence behaving according to circumstances determined by power (Certeau 1984, 37). In other words, since the nationalist discourse was more prominent at that time, women also tried to reveal their own discourses together with it. Even if the predominant Turkish emphasis in the journal is related to the conditions of the period, I realized that women's national feelings always continue. Reyhan Uzuner’s statements reflects this:

The people who do not have national feelings are really lacking also religious feelings. We are not fascists, we are not racists, but are we a nation like the British, who destroy Islam (Islam'ın köküne kibrit suyu döken bir ulus mu), or a nation carrying its flag? I will be glad, I will be proud, but I do not raise this above my religious effort. Nothing can happen above religion.<sup>18</sup>

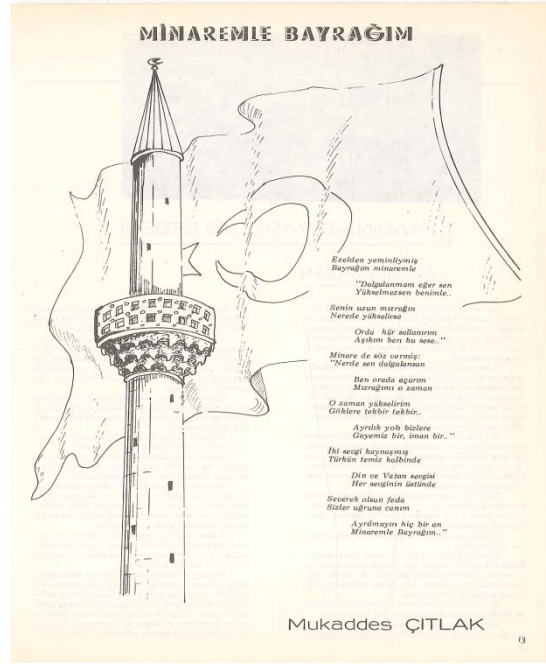
Therefore, it can be said that they have an understanding of nationalism in terms of loving and protecting their country. They also emphasize this situation in the journal:

In Islam, there is love and respect for the nation to which someone belongs, not racism. Hz. Prophet did not declare Arabs as the supreme nation. The Quran has also declared to all humanity that there is not any nation that is superior to others, without any doubt...Islam has accepted that people can only be superior in the sense of taqwa (Sadırvan 1978, i.8: 3).

It is obvious that their understanding of Islam gives direction to their understanding of nationalism and according to this, they are intertwined. The photo and poet titled as “My Flag with My Minaret (Minaremle Bayrağım) in figure 1.4 below also reflects this situation:

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<sup>18</sup> Interview with Reyhan Uzuner. 27.02.2020, Beşiktaş.



**Figure 2. 4: The Poem of Mukaddes Cıtlak (Sadırvan 1978, i:11).**

### 2. 4. 3. Writings on Islam and Refusal of the “Islamist” Discourse

It is seen that the emphasis of Islam started to increase in the following issues of the journal:

It is never the spokesperson of any thought and of a congregation. Our goal is to be only uniting for the right (*hak*), in the right way (*hak yol*), to help those who suffer the spiritual emptiness and separation in our beautiful homeland as much as we can. We are believers that Islam will remain until the Day of Judgment. But this is the noble Turkish nation who has been a flag-bearer of this faith and Islam for centuries (Şadırvan 1978, i:8:1)

In the article titled "Islam Against the Moral Understanding of Our Age", Doctor Fatma Betül says: “As we are Muslim Turkish mothers who try to teach our morality that we inherited from our ancestors to our children we ask the state for help to teach ‘Turkish Islamic morality’ instead of moral lessons that are not based on solid foundations in our schools” (Sadırvan 1978, 45). As it is seen, they try to teach the moral understanding of Islam and that is very crucial for them. Mukaddes Cıtlak mentions in her article that the West is seeking salvation in Islam and emphasizes that Islam means “life” and therefore, states that it is necessary to try to live in the most correct way (Cıtlak 1979, 4).

The articles criticizing the West, the introduction of books with Islamic content even in the book promotion section, the longing for the Islamic society in the Ottoman era, and the criticism of the reforms of the Republican era even if not too harsh and explicit caused the journal to be considered as the carrier of "Islamist" ideology. If it is thought the Islamism discussions and what Islamism generally means in Turkey which was tackled at the beginning of this chapter, accepting this journal as "Islamist" cannot be deemed unfair. But if those who publish this journal define neither the journal nor themselves in this way, should we insist on labeling them as Islamists? My interlocutor F.A<sup>19</sup> who is 71 years old and wrote in Şadırvan three times states:

We do not get a separate name, our sister Gülsen(Ataseven) would not tolerate it. When I got to know them for the first time, I was a first-year high school student. She asked me something about how I like people to define me. I said that they can say the student of Nur or "Nurcu". Because she is also religious, so I don't care what people say. She said no, you are Muslim. "We are Muslim". "We have no other name". I accepted it in that way. The journal is a "Muslim Journal". Where we are attached is Allah, we adhere to Allah and Prophet Muhammed. This is enough for us. Not "*şucu*", "*bucu*". We believe in this<sup>20</sup>.

One of the founders of the association, who says that she does not like the term Islamist at all, explains its reason in a similar way:

Like "sucu"(water seller), like "şekerci"(candy seller). In other words, even if they do not live Islam, they use it and seem as if they live. They humiliate people by saying Islamism. This statement reduces the value of the work done by intimate people<sup>21</sup>.

When I asked women why they refused this definition, they either said it was an expression that degraded the value of their activities, or they emphasized that it had a political meaning. For example, Reyhan Uzuner remembers radical groups in Turkey after the Iranian Revolution and criticizes them:

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<sup>19</sup> I am using the initials due to the request of my interlocutor.

<sup>20</sup> Personal interview with F.A. 19.10.2019, Fatih.

<sup>21</sup> Personal interview with Fadime Hanım. 22.07.2019, Fatih.

When was this Islamist word taken out? 20, 30 years ago. Why did such a thing come out? It was at the time I was at university. There were friends who closed their mouths, nose, and eyes. There were those who completely rejected the sects, who were disrespectful about our prophet, those who were veiled but careless about prayer (lay lay lom). There were people who were very keen to be Iranian. We have our own beautiful, immaculate Sunni tradition, it is not clear what they are.<sup>22</sup>

With these statements, women distinguish themselves from this kind of radical group, and for them, the Islamism seems to evoke those groups. Any of my interlocutors did not define herself “Islamist” and do not want them to be defined with this discourse. On the other hand, although these women do not define themselves as “Islamists”, the Islamic emphasis is very strong both in the Sadırvan and in the statements of the first founders. In addition, the current members of the management of the association insist that they follow the footsteps of first founders and that their goals have not changed essentially; but with changing discourses. They insistently emphasize that they have no religious missions and that their aim is to help people. The current president of association Ayşe Uğuz explain this:

We have not done anything under the name of religion and politics here. The reason we are here is entirely service, that is, what we have to do is the debt of our body, so after that, it is something that is between you and Allah, what should I do if I pray, fast? So, of course, there could be something as a friend, but there was never such a mission here neither religious nor political. In fact, we have hosted many leftists here, they were leftists and communists. I do not remember their name right now, but who came and passed. A lot of different people came, but they all went happily and love us. Our concern is to treat people like human and do what suits us. At first, the religious thing might have been more dominant because there were more bans at that time. For example, in the headscarf ban, we too gave support. We even gave a notice in the newspapers, and we asked them to publish it, but it was not an activity of the association. Despite the fact that almost all of our friends are almost veiled, nobody could directly say that you are from this party or you are from this thought. Think, they didn't even have such courage<sup>23</sup>.

This statements shows the changing discourse in time. Ayşe Uğuz is not a veiled woman and I noticed that she does not want to state a religious purpose for HIKDE.

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<sup>22</sup>Interview with Reyhan Uzuner. 27.02.2020, Beşiktaş.

<sup>23</sup> Personal interview with Ayşe Uğuz. 07.10.2019, Fatih.

It can be also a kind of strategy to be able to attract more people. Nevertheless, what is obvious is from the founders to the current women in HIKDE, there is a rejection of the Islamist discourse for women and for the journal. I realized that an Islamist discourse does not make sense to women as much as a nationalist discourse. Although some of what is written on Islamism emphasizes the encompassing feature of it as a lifestyle (Kara 2013; Erkilet 2018), this is not what is understood by the women in HIKDE. That is why, I believe that imprisoning people in a certain discourse like Islamism will always cause them to be evaluated by certain patterns such as being complementary of men as discussed below. This may cause some valuable findings to be overlooked, especially in ethnographic studies. Approaching the women as Islamists from the beginning will be a very top down and external view. This view resembles the *interpellation* of Louis Althusser who refers to the process of making someone an ideological subject through language (Althusser 1971, 174). According to him, the position of the individual in discourse is certain and he/she cannot resist it, people who are the subjects of ideology accept this situation. My fieldwork reveals that women oppose this situation, and instead of answering "yes, I am" to the interpellating as "Hey, you Islamist", they react by asking "what do you mean" with this labeling.

As a result, as a researcher who conducts an ethnographic study and applies self-narratives, I believe that preferring self-referential defining is more suitable and also ethical. That's why, I will follow this line of understanding and only use "Muslim" when I refer to these women in the following chapters. I will also add "action" to this due to their significant focus on their activities rather than discourses, and I will define them as "Muslim women of action" which will be elaborated further in the coming chapter. It will be better understood in other chapters that the women's perceptions of space/place and their emotions support why they do not agree to fit into a particular pattern/discourse and attach importance to their actions.

## CHAPTER III

### THE ROLE OF SPACE ON THE ACTION OF WOMEN

Despite the fact that space/place was not at the center of my research at first, apart from public sphere/space that is thought a focal point as many questions/dilemmas occurred for Muslim women in Turkey, my observations and in-depth interviews revealed the founding and transformative role of space and place. Actually, my own experiences and feelings also compelled me not to overlook the impact of space. On the day, I made an appointment for my first interview, I had the excitement and the stress of starting an ethnographic study for my thesis. I was going to the association for my interview and the association was in Fatih. I found myself in *Haseki Woman Street (Haseki Kadın Sokak)*, where the historical buildings are located.



**Figure 3.1: Haseki Women Street in Fatih/Istanbul.**

As soon as I stepped from the door of the association (HIKDE), all my stress was gone.



**Figure 3.2: The Entrance of the Association**

A calm, very green garden greeted me. There was a children's park on the right of the entrance, besides trees and roses/flowers were around. Then I moved on to the inner courtyard; the *sadırvan* in the middle with small madrasa rooms around. I felt not just that I was in a place, but rather I felt like I was in a different time as well. Because this type of building was not one of the modern buildings that I was used to seeing in my daily life. While I was looking around, at the same time, questions of the why and the how of this place arose in my mind. That is to say, all my questions and considerations on space began after my interaction with this place. What was the meaning of this place/space that impressed me so much in terms of its meaning for these Muslim women? Where have they been before this place? Then, the references the women I interviewed made to space/place and memoirs/writings in diaries which

I had chance to see in the association, impelled me to ask deeper questions about this matter. I realized that if I endeavor to understand Muslim women's activities in all dimensions, it is crucial to consider spaces that the women interact with.



**Figure 3.3: The Inner Court of the HIKDE.**

Later on, I broadened the questions about space/place in my thesis and evaluated the responses of my interlocutors considering this dimension. I sought which cultural/religious/political factors were effective in the preference of these places and how spaces, where the ideas are shaped, have an impact and meaning in all activities of Muslim women. My main question in this chapter is how Muslim women in HIKDE experience and define their activities related to space and place.

In the light of these questions, in this chapter, I will try to explain how space/place works for Muslim women in HIKDE, what it means, and in fact, how women's understanding of space/place pushes them to avoid from all labels and definitions such as "Islamist" which was discussed in the second chapter. In the second chapter,

I tried to propound and argue that although Muslim women reject to be *interpellated* as “Islamist”, their explanations about motivation sources and discourses in Sadırvan Journal designate to an Islamic path. What the main argument they emphasize is a limpid and authentic<sup>24</sup> understanding of Islam detached from all complex notions and defining. In this chapter, I will render how this understanding is associated with space by considering the discussions of public/private dichotomy in Turkey as well.

Activities of women, who are far from the public sphere in Turkey until a certain period and hence are looking to share their ideas with the community indicate certain spaces and places. Of course HIKDE as an association is one of the very early examples of this. My intention here is not merely to integrate the space with the women's understanding of Islam but also to reveal how women perceive, transform the space from the beginning of their activities in general, taking into consideration their reciprocal relation and the effect and meaning of the space and place. I am both using the notion of space and place because although they differentiate at many points, they are quite intertwined with each other and HIKDE as an association with its historical building and as a location in Istanbul can be analyzed with space and place theories. I will argue that space/place has a broader meaning for Muslim women in HIKDE that cannot be confined in labels/discourses, and it is just a mediator in the manifestation of their objectives, and actions. That is why I will assert that space/place is not only a part of the public space required for women to be visible in social life, but also provides the reconstruction of the process, Islamic ideas, and practices.

For Lefebvre (1991, 132) every discourse is related to space and tells us something about space. That is why every society/group produces its own space and this production is reflected in different ways. Lefebvre states that:

Every social space is the outcome of a process with many aspects and many contributing currents, signifying and non-signifying, perceived and directly experienced, practical and theoretical. In short, every social space has a history, one invariably grounded in nature, in natural conditions that are at once primordial and unique in the sense that they

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<sup>24</sup> Göle uses “sahici” for this understanding (2004, 36).

are always and everywhere endowed with specific characteristics (site, climate, etc.) (Ibid, 110).

In this sense, it is significant what a social group understands from which space. I will benefit especially from Lefebvre's spatial triad which refers to the perceived, conceived and lived models of space (Lefebvre 1991, 40). The experiences of women also tell us which processes lead to different understandings and perceptions of space, and at the same time, how space guides the activities, and therefore it appears as an embedded indicator in the actions of Muslim women.

I will first address the problems experienced by these women in the public sphere in Turkey. I will examine how these problems lead them to search for new solutions with new spaces/places. Then, I will reveal the meaning of the association/foundation as a space and place for women through-specific to-HIKDE and scrutinize this with space theories.

### **3. 1. Public Sphere/Space and Muslim Women of *Action*<sup>25</sup> in Turkey**

While trying to explain the social existence, position, and actions of women, the concept of public space has always been a reference point. The concept of the "public sphere" has become a key element of discussions on civil society and democracy since Jurgen Habermas introduced it as an ideal realm in which "private people come together as a public" and debate the issues of "common concern", hence it brings emancipation (Habermas 1989, 27-30). This notion of the public sphere of Habermas is criticized by other scholars due to its exclusion of women, working-class, or other identities in society (Fraser, 1990; Benhabib, 1992). For example, Fraser (1990, 67) argued that in bourgeois public sphere there is hegemonic domination and that is why people create new publics which she calls "subaltern counter-publics" as "parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs". Hannah Arendt generally uses

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<sup>25</sup> It will be used with a different reading and understanding of the action that Arendt explained as one of three main human activities that form *vita activa* that means "human life in so far as it is actively engaged in doing something" (Arendt 1998, 22).

“realm” instead of sphere or space to give her own arguments. Public realm means everyone can see and hear everything seen in public and also it refers to a common world apart from our private place (Arendt 1998, 52). This kind of explanation seems also ideal, and for Arendt, this type of public/private distinction disappeared in the modern era.

The private and public distinction actually corresponds to the households and political spheres that have been regarded as separate since the ancient city-state era; but the social realm which emerged in the modern era and found its political meaning in the nation-states are different from private and public (Ibid 28). That is why, this rise not only blurred the old boundary line between the private and the public but also changed the meaning of these two terms. Actually what happened later is this distinction of public/private space in bourgeois society has become vague and meaningless with the capitalization process which brought about the mass media (Erkilet 2015, 51). Nevertheless, it is not an ended discussion and still debates on this public/private dichotomy is going on.

There is also a challenge in the conceptualization of public sphere and public space. While the public sphere is seen as "normative and embedded in historical and political practices", public space is regarded as "a site of political practices that go beyond the politico-philosophical notions associated with the public sphere and overcomes some of its limitations" (Low 2015, 4). From my understanding, public space has a broader meaning than public sphere. If a sphere is much more related to civil society and state in which people can discuss common interests (Habermas 1989, xi), how can we analyze digital platforms where people can share their ideas? Whereas today, almost every institution as a part of civil society uses many virtual platforms as well. Therefore, I will use both when I endeavor to understand the experiences of Muslim women in HIKDE.

The dichotomy of public/private has been debated in Turkey since the late Ottoman period. Publicity<sup>26</sup> was created by the families of the palace, first by the Tanzimatçı, then the Constitutionalist and Unionist elites, but then it became synonymous with the state (Akşit 2009, 8). At the same time through association, journal, school, party and women this publicity entered the houses; then with the establishment of the Turkish Republic, women became the new faces of the state (Ibid 10-11). Alev Çınar (2005, 40) argues that we have to consider public spheres as “fields of performances, appearances, images and displays”, thus it should be understood in terms of who is seen how, where and doing what. What happens in Turkey is instead of providing political liberties, the public spheres functions “as a form of subjugation” (Çınar 2008, 892). The establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 was based upon a “West-oriented modernization project, thus a new national identity that was designed as Western, modern, secular, and nationalist” (Ibid 897). This project was much more related to the visibility of women in the public realm. The state’s encouragement of women in the public sphere interpreted as “being active agents in the building of a modern nation” (Göle 1997, 67). Providing compulsory education for girls and boys (1924), giving women basic rights such as the right to elect and to be elected (1934) were the struggles to increase the public visibility of women. This visibility which is generally shaped over cities was problematic. Especially veiled women were excluded from the public sphere until relatively recently.

It was stated in the second chapter that with the transition to the multi-party system, after the 1950s some steps had been put forward which were positively welcomed by religious people. This situation is closely related to the religious content of writings in books and journals many of which are translated; at the same time, the ongoing urbanization process since the 1950s forced religious women to go out from a lifestyle limited to home (Aktaş 2018, 829). Actually, I will discuss in the coming pages, how the home was not merely a private space, and how it gained a public feature before the 1960s.

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<sup>26</sup> It is generally used in the same meaning with public or public sphere as “carrier of public opinion; its function as a critical judge is precisely what makes the public character of proceedings-in court, for instance-meaningful” (Habermas 1989, 2).

Erkilet has criticized discussions of woman issues in Turkey in the context of public/private dualism; and she suggested focusing on how this can be dealt in the sense of the issue of “humanity and freedom as it existed before, during, and after the capitalist world-order” (Erkilet 2015, 29). She is quite right in her criticisms because the entering of religious women in the public sphere in Turkey is generally evaluated on their physical appearance, particularly with their headscarves which is related to public/private separation. No one has literally addressed the desire of these women to act with their own individual beliefs on behalf of society, which is always within them and whenever they find a chance to show their action/reaction, they tried to do their best. I believe this focus on their appearances serves the statist public/private understanding. Due to this reason, I will try to evaluate the debates on public sphere/space of Muslim women from this standpoint. I will do this via a different reading of the *action* which Hannah Arendt (1998) emphasizes in her famous book *The Human Condition*.

I will argue that for Muslim women public space/sphere became a tool for their *action*. Of course, their experiences, and emotions due to this experiences—this will be elaborated in the fourth chapter—encouraged them to take any action, but apart from these experiences they believed that taking action is a need, responsibility, and beyond; it is the meaning of their life. The pressure on many families for many years because of their Islamic thoughts and lifestyles, their exclusion, and their inability to share their ideas with people have motivated more them to act. Their families felt the pursuit of the regime at their backs throughout their lifetimes; for example, Fatma Çalıkavak's father Hayri Çalıkavak was opposed to the hat revolution, Gulsen Ataseven's pharmacist father Colonel Niyazi, did not consent to his wife's dancing with other men and so these were problems to them (Barbarosoğlu, 2016, 18). Women believed that they had to start from somewhere and take an *action*, due to the problems they struggled with and the increasing problems in society. When I asked “why did you decide to establish such an association?”, Reyhan Uzuner responded “we wanted to help poor people”<sup>27</sup>. They knew that poverty is one of the main problems at that time. Beside this, they already believed that they have to help poor

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with Reyhan Uzuner. 27.02.2020, Beşiktaş.

people according to Islam. Therefore, I believe that the public space for these women, I will refer to as “Muslim women of *action*”, has been transformed with their differentiating understanding of space and place. The following statements show how they see this as a necessity:

You need to be useful to people and strive for the sake of Allah. When you look, many women companions worked and served during the time of the Prophet by doing their best. They were models and so this is a responsibility for us. It is necessary to feel more responsible and peaceful. That's why I tried to do all the duties that I had within the association. Because there was no other, HIKDE was the first in this sense.<sup>28</sup>

We can say that for Muslim women, especially for the pioneer names such as Şule Yüksel Şenler, Fevziye Nuroğlu, Gülsen Ataseven the action is to reveal their will/resistance/agency without looking at who is around them. Arendt defines: “to act, in its most general sense, means to take an initiative, to begin (as the Greek word *archein*, "to begin," "to lead," and eventually "to rule," indicates), to set something into motion” (Arendt 1989, 177). In other words, the individual can express herself by action and be free.

Sümeyye Nuroğlu narrates her mother Fevziye Nuroğlu, who was mentioned as a leading name in associations and foundations in my many interviews and passed away in 2017, as follows:

My mother used to say her holiday is in paradise. She used to say that Muslims would not have a holiday in the world. It was the times when the youth was in a fight. She said, "we are losing the youth, thus something should be done". My mother was the only girl who took headscarf at their university. Because of this, other students had mocked a lot. In chemistry class, she prayed during the exam time and they could not say anything. Her life was like this. For her, she could breathe thanks to her case (*dava*).<sup>29</sup>

These statements manifest how women see action as something very vital for the sake of their belief in Islam and as the lifestyle within which they breathe. The

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<sup>28</sup> Personal interview conducted with F.A. 19.10.2019 in Fatih.

<sup>29</sup> Interview with Sümeyye Nuroğlu. 01.10.2019, Fatih.

reason that the new beginning principle we witnessed at birth is valid at any moment in the world is that every person who comes into the world has the capacity to start something new, that is, to take action (Arendt 1989, 9). Muslim women make a start with every new association or waqf they establish, with every action, and this chain of innovation continues forever. For this, first of all, their homes became the starting point of their actions, and then this space expanded with associations or other institutions.

I have to clarify that the action of these women differs from the action of Arendt. For Arendt the action, on the other hand, creates the *bios politikos* (political life) as an activity-oriented towards humanitarian issues through free choice (Arendt 1989, 15). More precisely, in her understanding, this action is the beginning of the political life of an individual and therefore she separates it from work and labor. I disagree with Arendt at this point, thus I believe that the idea that the action is only for a political purpose or prerequisite is closely associated with the political philosopher identity of Arendt. The idea of action that I have reached based on the self-narratives of my own interlocutors is rather a human condition and also seen as a necessity of being a Muslim. The action of women is more inclusive in this sense. It takes reference from religion, hence has a side that encompasses life and combines labor and work when it is necessary. For example, women cook in the association, they do cleaning, and these are a part of their actions as well. This is especially finds meaning for the first founders. The expressions of Fadime Hanım<sup>30</sup> supports this: "we used to work until 2 o'clock at night, we were interested in everything from the association and the journal, we were running from there to there." It was stated that as the number of volunteers increased in the following years, this density decreased as the division of labor increased. The following statements also reflect how all their daily works or labor turns into a part of their actions:

I liked to serve. Because I have missed such an association service for years. There was no one in the neighborhood. For the first time, Gülsen Ataseven and Fevziye founded an association. When they founded the first association, I was in Edirne yet. My sister was with them. She said "you want to serve a lot, you can do something on your sewing

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<sup>30</sup> Personal interview with Fadime Hanım. 22.07.2019, Fatih.

machine”. My machine was a normal sewing machine actually, but why not? I had 5 gold coins and changed them and bought picos (*piko*), just to serve to the association<sup>31</sup>.

In other words, their understanding of religion that permeates all areas of life also shapes their understanding of action. That is why, my conceptualization of action refers to an understanding, movement, or activity detached from any biased political or ethnic labelings; and it includes the necessity of being a mentally and spiritually satisfied Muslim individual in the world with the feeling of touching a person's life materially, spiritually or in the sense of knowledge. This conception of the idea of action brings an understanding of space in which they can share their ideas, contemplate the problems of society and endeavor to find solutions. This space can be their home, a cafe, a wedding-ceremony hall, or an association.

### **3. 2. Bringing the Public Sphere to Home**

What makes space home is the solidarity it provides and thus home should be approached as an “embryonic community” (Douglas 1991, 288). In addition, we have to look at everyday spaces such as homes, streets to explore embodied practices of women such as praying or contemplation with spiritual symbols or rituals (Klingorová & Gökarıksel 2018, 50). The house which is generally considered as private is actually not a fixed space and meaning of it differentiates through various attributions to it. On the other hand, this privateness of home has changed as a result of the loss of the ideal features of public spaces by different authority struggles and domination and has now gone beyond these borders.

As I stated above, taking action is quite vital for Muslim women in HIKDE and their homes became the starting space for their action. Therefore, women with their *performative* acts experienced their first public space experiences in their homes (Yılmaz 2015, 231). The home, which is the only space where women will express themselves at the beginning, has actually crossed the boundaries of the house we

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<sup>31</sup> Personal interview with F.A. 19.10.2019, Fatih.

physically think of. Its meaning has been extended and has become a liberating space for them.

Aynur Mısıroğlu who was born in 1937 and one of the first names of HİKDE, stated that she was actually very far away from Islamic knowledge and life at first, but later she became familiar with these and came together with the names Gülsen Ataseven and Fevziye Nuroğlu. Mısıroğlu narrates how home was the center of everything:

At first, we used to hold our meetings in our homes. We were making speeches, reading books, summarizing books. We were telling from Islamic information. We were discussing what we can do. Then we started writing letters to Anatolia with friends from home. We were dividing 5 or 10 people per person to be contacted in Anatolia. As they corresponded, they were giving another address, gradually such a chain and spreading were happening.<sup>32</sup>

For some women who could not continue their education life due to the headscarf, it can be said that these gatherings were also very effective in their educational nutrition. According to Zehra Yılmaz (2015, 231) the home was used by women “not only as a place of closure but also as an intermediate space for the transition to outside, where women received education and socialize with their *performative acts*”. The home environment, where several friends came together and chatted became a space where over time more participation was provided, and where they tried to produce solutions to these issues.

Ayşe Uğuz<sup>33</sup> states that the founders of the association started these works by distributing food from their homes to the poor. In fact, at the beginning of a meeting of what was to be done, they accidentally went to the door of the opposite apartment, and they noticed that there was a family in a very difficult situation in which there were three children, and the father was bankrupt. After that, they returned to the meeting very upset, and each person met a need of the family. This narration is an indication that women's actions began from their homes towards their closest neighbors. That is to say, the women had already experienced their first public space experiences in their homes by organizing their meetings there. Whether the public

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<sup>32</sup> Interview with Aynur Mısıroğlu. 24.09.2019, Üsküdar.

<sup>33</sup> Personal interview with Ayşe Uğuz. 07.10.2019, Fatih.

sphere is outside or not at this point does not actually concern women. What interests them is where they can provide ground for their own works, therefore initially, their home met this need. They stated that after a while the house turned into a restrictive area for them, that it was insufficient for their activities and they decided to establish an association.

### 3. 3. Associations and HIKDE as a Representational Space<sup>34</sup>

Association activities are based on the period before the Republic. Especially with the enactment of the 1907 Associations Law, many women's associations were established. According to Serpil Çakır's book (2016) *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (Ottoman Woman Movement), approximately 40 associations were established in the 2nd Constitutional Period, led by names such as Fatma Aliye, Emine Semiye, and Halide Edip. Women were organized for the first time by gathering around charities; although *Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyeti* (Compassion Society of Ottoman Women) is at the top of these organizations, their number increased especially towards the First World War (Çakır 2016, 43). It is possible to say that the political demands of women became clear in the post-republic period. For example, the role of the *Kadınlar Birliği* (1924) (Women Union), which is the expression of women's political demands in this period, is quite significant (Çaha 2017, 117).

Institutions established by Islamic women can be grouped into two main categories; institutions aimed at aid and solidarity, and institutions that have political features. Institutionalization by religious women started with the first one. HIKDE, which was founded by women such as Gülsen Ataseven, Fevziye Nuroğlu, Mukaddes Çıtlak, Sabahat Boynukalın in 1973 was one of the organizations of this type and was a pioneer for the others (Çaha 2017, 315). These first charity institutions are evaluated from different perspectives. Yılmaz (2015) defines the association/foundations as "feminine spaces", saying that aid activities give women the opportunity to prove their usefulness in "feminine" areas, and argues this situation keeps patriarchal power

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<sup>34</sup> One of the three aspects of Henri Lefebvre's conceptualization for space which are spatial practice (perceived space), representations of space (conceived space), and representational spaces (lived space) which provide resources for thinking about how people experience, use, and represent the spaces they live (Lefebvre [1974] 1991, 38–40).

relations sustainable. She asserts that while men are in a resource-finding position, women deliver need to its owner (Yılmaz 2015, 239). This issue was discussed in the second chapter and how this claim does not reflect how the reality for women in HIKDE was manifested.

İpek Göçmen (2014, 97) on the other hand, explains the relationship between the dissolution of the social state and the increase in the activities of social assistance organizations as “religiously-motivated associations”. This evaluation highlights the rise of religion in the political arena of Turkey after 1980s. One close explanation comes from Dursun who sees HIKDE as a conservative women’s organization and also argues that charity NGOs like HIKDE “contribute to the constitution of neoliberal-conservative patriarchy in Turkey on several levels” by extending the 'private' sphere (Dursun 2019, 8). I agree that such charities are supported by being seen as an advantage/tool for the governments, and the idea that religious/conservative men also approve these organizations by seeing them as a safer area for women. One of my interlocutor stated that “my husband knew, I am doing everything for the sake of Allah, he also knew the place I went to is trustworthy”.<sup>35</sup>

However, regardless of the way they are seen, women have established this association by putting forward their will and agency under troublesome conditions in order to reach their own wishes and goals, and later, they went further and opened different institutions as well. For example, one of the women established schools and focused on them. Therefore, women continued their actions without giving up their determination towards their own goals. As it is said in many studies, although the association/foundation activities of women seem to strengthen Islamists in the big picture due to their discourse coming from Koran, Hadith, Sunnah and their wish for the consent of Allah; I think it is not a fair approach to reduce women's own targets and emotions to a struggle for hegemony, hence to reflect them as passive subjects by labeling them in this way. Evaluating the women who said that they do not have any political objectives in their activities within the increasing Islamism debates after

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<sup>35</sup> Personal interview with Lale Kuran. 26.11.2019, Kadıköy.

1980s that go simultaneous with the political Islam in Turkey is not adequate in this sense. What does association mean for Muslim women and why did they need it? One of my interlocutors Halime Uyulan explains the requirement for space, as follows:

The government does not open the institutions you want and does not implement a program in their own institutions according to your wishes. We need to find a space. The places were in houses and mosque courtyards with few people, but what happens when a lot of demand starts, you need institutions.<sup>36</sup>

My other interlocutors also emphasized the necessity of an association for the reason that they started to become very crowded in their activities and the demand from people increased. The association was founded to find solutions to social problems in the light of the Hadith that is “The person who is full while his / her neighbors are hungry is not a Muslim”.



**Figure 3.4: The Logo of HIKDE**

The association offers various seminars for students in the conference hall of the building such as personal development and etiquette seminars, as well as giving financial support to university students in need. They provide monthly food, clothing, stationery and cash aid to poor families. In addition, traditional breakfasts, *iftar* programs, activities for children, art courses such as *tezhip*, calligraphy, painting; cultural and historical excursions are other activities. Especially, in the first years of the association’s operation they used it as a school.

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with Halime Uyulan. 14.09.2019, Fatih.



**Figure 3.5: Activity for Children**



**Figure 3.6: Activity for Children**

The association organized entertaining and training activities for children as is seen in figures 2.5 and 2.6. Ayşe Uğuz, who is currently the president of the association, explains how she experienced her childhood years in this association and what it represents for her:

There would be fairy tale hours, theater, etc. in the hall. It was very crowded. There were groups named Tomurcuk, Gonca, Filiz. Children from small age groups to younger were taken care of in these groups. They used to get on us to the stage, we used to play extemporarily. There were clowns in the courtyard. That is to say, it was a huge world for me.<sup>37</sup>

It is a space for them, where "the material and spiritual hunger are satiated, national and spiritual values are preserved, Islamic practices are lived, it is the home, it is

<sup>37</sup> Personal interview with Ayşe Uğuz. 07.10.2019, Fatih.

more than the home, it is the father's home (*baba ocağı*)”<sup>38</sup>. Therefore, HIKDE as a space is the representation of many things. This is a “symbolic representation” which “serves to maintain social relations” in the sense of “coexistence and cohesion” (Lefebvre 1991, 32). According to Lefebvre, the experience of space includes three basic components as perceived, conceived, and lived; he suggests to us the trio consisting of “spatial practice, representations of space and representational spaces” in his spatial conceptualization of these components (*Ibid* 38-39). He describes representational spaces:

Representational space is alive: it speaks. It has an affective kernel or centre: Ego, bed, bedroom, dwelling, house; or: square, church, graveyard. It embraces the loci of passion, of action and of lived situations, and thus immediately implies time. Consequently it may be qualified in various ways: it may be directional, situational or relational, because it is essentially qualitative, fluid and dynamic (*Ibid* 42).

The fact that the same association for women has different meanings reveals this fluidity and also its representation of subjectivity. According to what they have experienced there, it represents the home for some, the school for some, and the playground/theatre for some. “Space is a practiced place” (Certeau 1984, 117) and the changing practices reveal the changing representations of space.

### **3. 4. Bayrampasa Madrasah as a Place and Spatial Practice**

When you enter from this door, it is as if the concept of time and space is removed. It always seems to me like a different place in the sky, in space, away from everything in the world. It is like there is no foundation, something in the air. All the material and moral problems stay outside.<sup>39</sup>

This quotation of Ayşe Uğuz is related to the building used as the center of the association. To be honest, what I felt in my first visit to the association is similar to this statements. Since 1975, the association has been using the *Bayrampaşa*

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<sup>38</sup> Personal interview with Nevriye Demir. 29.07.2019, Fatih.

<sup>39</sup> Personal interview with Ayşe Uğuz. 07.10.2019, Fatih.

*Madrasah* that is a part of Islamic-Ottoman social complex (*külliye*)<sup>40</sup>, built by the Grand Vizier *Bayrampasa* in the 17th century. One of the founders stated that they learned that a hotel wanted to build in this place and so they took action to make this madrasah the center of their activities which they already needed and searched for their association. According to women in HIKDE, the madrasa initially was inactive, very dirty and in ruin. Therefore they told how they endeavored too much to make this place useable. This situation is narrated by Fatma çalıkavak in Şadırvan Journal:

When Bayrampasa Madrasah came to HIKDE, it was an heirloom from our ancestors that was in need of attention with its electricity, water, garden with a pool, and a *sadırvan*, 15 room, a large hall, and bathrooms. Our association has attached great importance to the revitalization of this historical building. Especially since there is a problem with warming in the winter, it was decided to install the heating system, considering that it will remain after us. If we can complete this year, our madrasa will start to serve as a Higher Education Girls Dormitory for our children coming from Anatolia (Calıkavak 1976, 4).

When I asked why this place is quite meaningful and valuable for them, they state “the atmosphere in this building reminds/tells you the Ottoman abundantly (*buram buram*). Although the winters are very cold, we love this place and continue our activities. Mystic air of it is very pleasant”<sup>41</sup>.

These statements refer to *Bayrampaşa Madrasa* as a ‘place’ which is a "meta-concept that allows for the telling of particular stories associated with specific places" (Agnew 2011, 318) rather than HIKDE in general as space. According to Agnew, the place is much more interrelating with the world of the past and that is why it is "nostalgic, regressive or even reactionary" (Ibid 319). From this point of view, madrasa as a place embodies the Ottoman times when the place was used as a madrasa and the experiences of the first founders. Women re-arouse this nostalgia (by as giving traditional art courses such as hat and tezhip, organizing trips to

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<sup>40</sup> Look more information about the building: M. Baha Tanman, Diyanet Vakfı İslam Ansiklopedisi, “Bayram Paşa Külliyesi”, v: 5; 267-268.

<sup>41</sup> Personal interview with N.S.B. 04.12.2019, Gaziosmanpasa.

historical places, writing articles about the Ottoman period and sultans in Şadırvan Journal) and reconstruct the place.

The atmosphere of madrasa also refers to “affective atmospheres” which is “between presence and absence, between subject and object/subject and between the definite and indefinite” that allow us to cogitate about affective experience taking place around/along or beyond the subjectivity (Anderson 2009, 77). Anderson says that the “atmosphere” of an aesthetic building reveals the space-time of an ‘expressed world’ and creates a space of intensity that exceeds a “represented world organized into subjects and objects or subjects and other subjects” (Ibid 79). Through this atmosphere, this building gains its meaning. Due to new experiences that will occur in this place, this atmosphere never finishes and gives inspirations to the newcomers. This affective atmosphere will be explained again in detail together with emotional objects, in the fourth chapter.

One of my interlocutors Nurzan İshakoğlu who is 81 years old, very excited and cheerful to take part in the activities of the association as far as I observed, expressed her thoughts about the madrasa very loudly in a seminar as follows:

This was a very blessed (*mübarek*) place, actually. These small windows were places where always Kur'an was read, people need to know this. We always try to keep this place alive, young people should come, this place is the ancestral heirloom (*ecdad yadigari*), so we have responsibility.<sup>42</sup>

We can consider these explanations in the sense of place, but also in the sense of *spatial practice* which is perceived, observed and described from architecture to urban reality in the organization of everyday life, hence it is “empirically observable” (Lefebvre 1991, 414). This spatial practice encompasses production and reproduction, also specific locations and spatial clusters unique to each social formation that ensures continuity in a relative cohesion (Ibid 33). This historical building for women is also a place where Islamic practices are experienced, so it embraces the experiences of Ottoman times, and therefore it means creating an

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with Nurzan İshakoğlu. 02.10.2019, Fatih.

ongoing commitment by pursuing different time experiences. In this sense, we can also claim that spatial practice has a restrictive feature. A woman in the association said that they could not act/ behave against the "spirit of this place". For this reason, they stated that they do not organize extreme music activities in the association and do not allow such events. They think these kind of activities are not suitable for a historical madrasa building.

### **3. 5. A Historical Ottoman Building in Metropol Istanbul**

This historical building is located in Istanbul, the metropolitan city where reinforced concrete buildings are increasing day by day and where more than 15 million people live. We know that city life bombards the human mind with images, impressions, sensations, and activities (Simmel 1903, 24). There is also "superficiality, the anonymity, and the transitory nature of urban-social relations" (Wirth 1938, 34). In this environment, this madrasah building is a physical escape and shelter for Muslim women in the city where they think that it loses its spiritual atmosphere with each passing day. Nevriye Hanım who is the current vice president of the association states this with the following words: "This place means psychological treatment for me. When I enter the door there is peace and quietness. I am getting away from all the noise of outside. I could also bring my children and they can play in this garden"<sup>43</sup>. When they come to this madrasa building they think that they are away from the crowded and tiring atmosphere of the city and they feel peaceful.

As Turgut Cansever (2016, 34-37) states, despite the modest and decorative character of the Islamic architecture, the Western and Christian architecture is characterized by bleak, contrived, ostentatious, dramatic, restless, and individualistic style. Hence, coming to this madrasa is even more important than going to their homes. I believe that especially in recent times, the more peaceful aspect of such historical places has become more valuable and preferable. The history of the madrasa, the courtyard of it, being on a single-floor are reasons for them to escape to this place from the high-rise buildings and crowds of the city. For the first founding

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<sup>43</sup> Personal interview with Nevriye Demir. 29.07.2019, Fatih.

women, I realized that every place which they can do their activities is suitable and crucial; but especially the younger ones and the women who joined the association afterward emphasized the tiring, overwhelming aspect of the city. I saw that they are much more impressed by the atmosphere and friendship here, the spirit of solidarity. According to them, this is no longer easily achieved in big cities such as Istanbul, and so stated this as a reason why they are part of this association. That is why, Çaha (2000, 289) states that especially associations that have a rooted past and that are pursuing the philosophy of "come no matter what you are" is becoming an "important psycho-social shelter for those who experience a sense of loneliness in urban life". On the one hand, while the understanding of following the path of their ancestors and keeping this spirit alive is noticeable, on the other hand, being in such a building meets the needs of today's people both with its physical environment and also the feeling of doing activities together. This madrasa building is quite valuable for women both physically and psychologically.

This situation shows us that this place also has turned into a place that is consumed both in terms of physical and symbolic meaning of madrasa. With John Urry's (2005, 21) terms this is—as a type of the consuming of place—"anthropological gaze" which means interpreting a place within its historical meanings and symbols. My first gaze on madrasa also can be considered as a kind of consuming of place. This consumption makes the association a center of attraction, but besides that it contains the danger of moving away from its main original target. In this regard, I think this issue cannot be fully comprehended without mentioning the understanding of the waqf that women underline again and again, as one of the main missions of the HIKDE.

### **3. 6. Women and Waqf: Haseki Kadın Vakfı/Haseki Woman Waqf (HAKVA) in the Same Place**

HIKDE has included the waqf feature under the name Haseki Kadın Vakfı (HAKVA) in 2013 and both the association and the waqf carry out their activities under the same building. The waqf is a rooted historical institution that is defined as the permanent allocation of any personal property for a charity, religious, social, and humanitarian purpose under certain conditions (Cansel 1988, 321). Although its

history dates back to very old times, it achieved its real development with its religious, social, cultural, economic and spatial dimensions during the Ottoman Empire (Aksoy & Carol 2015, 107). In Ottoman times, many madrasas, schools, libraries, hospitals, mosques, caravanserais, business centers (hans), bazaars, fountains, bridges, soup kitchens or almshouses (darülaceze), tombs, and aqueducts were founded as waqf. Many of these waqfs were also established by women. Across time and space, waqfs have fulfilled various economic, political, and social roles connected to “religious salvation, poverty alleviation, urbanization, colonization, and strengthening of the new ruler's power” (Zencirci 2015, 536).

A waqf means not to serve for a limited time, instead, there is endlessness that cannot be destroyed by any power. Another main feature of a waqf is serving everyone without looking at her/his ethnicity, religion or political thought. Women frequently refer to this understanding/culture of waqf in their speeches, and writings also in Şadırvan Journal under the title of “Women Establishing Waqf in Our History (Tarihimize Vakıf Kuran Kadınlar)”. Lawyer Hicran Göze as the broadcast chief of the journal writes:

The waqf consciousness in Turks fed, grew, and ramify from the Islamic source. In the Quran, Allah's command to believers that "unless you help others with your beloved property, you cannot have the reward of the hereafter" has paved the way of waqf. The Messenger of Allah (Prophet Muhammed) is always an example of everything. He is also the pioneer of the waqf. He devoted seven-date orchard in Madinah for the benefit of Muslims in the 32nd year of the Hejira (Sadırvan 1976, i.3: 17-18).

Göze continues to explain this understanding of waqf with the examples from the Ottoman period mothers, wives, and daughters of sultans under the same title in the following issues of the journal. Again, this issue is reinforced by verses from the Qur'an and Hadith that advise helping and the donation. Ayşe Uğuz explains why they established a waqf in the same building as follows:

It was the understanding of waqf that has been here since the beginning. Even if the first name was an association, first founder names constructed the spirit of the waqf too much with their body language. You could not eat any fruit from one of the trees in this garden. If you charge your own phone here, you have to give your money, these are small but important things. In the beginning, food was collected for the poor, even if we were

very hungry, we could not eat one of that olive. Thus, we strive not to change this. It is very important for us to continue that waqf spirit.<sup>44</sup>

Therefore, women try to maintain this understanding of waqf by holding this madrasa in their hands. In this sense, this madrasa integrates with their activities and they think by this their effectiveness increases. Zencirci (2015, 537) states that in the 1930s, waqfs came to be praised as “national treasures” while their social and religious functions were ignored. In the beginning, waqfs were just a part of property, they were reorganized as “philanthropic foundations” in the 1960s, and after the 1980s they started to be considered as non-governmental organizations (Ibid 549). The important thing here is that women who set out with the Hadith that “someone who is full while his/her neighbor is hungry is not from us” practice and reconstruct the understanding of waqf that they see as a continuation of an Islamic tradition in this place. Gülsen Ataseven accentuates this understanding in the book “Waqf and Woman (Vakıf ve Kadın)”:

As we experience the spirit of the waqf, an increasing circle of love and trust has formed around us. Again, this soul gave love and enthusiasm to any of our women and people. It was the waqf spirit that we rediscovered, providing us with such energy resources. It is the soul with the consent of Allah, the admiration of the Prophet, the love of humanity and homeland, being remembered with charity (*hayır*), and eternal happiness. The spirit that comes from the belief that “the best of us is the one who touches someone the most” (Ateseven and Erdoğan 1999, 12).

Actually, their view on the association is almost the same. It is very obvious that they keep this understanding by their spatial practices in the Bayrampasa madrasah. This is precisely about the production and reproduction that Lefebvre says for spatial practice. This understanding of waqf can be embodiment in the body, and the body can be a space in this sense as well. For example, the daughter of Fevziye Nuroğlu describes her mother as the “walking waqf (*yürüyen vakıf*)”<sup>45</sup>. She stated that her mother was running from one place to another, she was helping people as much as she could, was listening to the troubles of them, in this sense, she served as a waqf with her body.

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<sup>44</sup> Personal interview with Ayşe Uğuz. 07.10.2019, Fatih.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Sümeyye Nuroğlu. 01.10.2019, Fatih.

Embodied space means revealing the importance of the body as “a physical and biological entity, as lived experience, and as a center of agency, a location for speaking and acting on the world” (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003, 2). If we set out from here, it is seen that women's understanding of space varies. What the truth is women’s understanding of waqf shapes their view on the space, on the body, and hence plays a significant role in the defining of themselves.

As a result, HIKDE, as a representational space, as a spatial practice and as a historical place in city life provides/enables Muslim women to make sense of their Islamic practices, their lives, activities, and identities through the understanding of waqf. In addition, the reciprocal relationship between space and women on the one hand paves the way for women to rebuild their activities, on the other, women transform space as well.

## CHAPTER IV

### AN AFFECTIVE LIFE: THE IMPACT OF EMOTIONS AND COLLECTIVE FEELINGS ON WOMEN'S ACTIONS

It was a very tiring and hard day for me. I had to go to a school for my interview, but the weather was rainy and windy. When I looked at the location, it would take at least two hours. I thought to postpone the interview, but I gave up on this idea because I knew that my interlocutors were generally very busy and arranging an interview was not easy. The woman I was going to interview - who did not want her name to be used - has been in the association since elementary school and has been a manager for many years there, and is currently on the board of the school where she is. The rain got stronger on the road. I got wet because the bus I was waiting didn't come in time and my feet were in the water. I finally arrived at school, but the road lasted 3 hours and I was very tired and nervous as well, also there was a pain in my head because of the severe wind. When I entered the school, they asked me whether I was hungry and they insistently brought me food even though I said I was not hungry. Then they brought me slippers by seeing my wet shoes. Frankly, this warm welcome made me very happy. My interlocutor told me she is very pleased to have done such a study. Besides, during the interview, students often came. They stated that these students are from the 'waqf club' (*vakıf kulübü*) in the school and told about their activities within this club. What I noticed is there was a 61-year-old woman in front of me, but she was quite excited and happy when she was narrating her experiences from past to today, such that, I could see everything from her shining eyes. She was also guiding her students quite willingly and lovely to give the understanding of waqf by getting involved in aid activities together. In front of me they organized some food to distribute people who need help. I did not understand how the interview lasted for three hours, and I felt that all my tiredness and headache had gone. I was very happy to have this topic for my thesis.

I took these expressions from my fieldwork notebook where I wrote all my feelings, experiences and thoughts just after my interviews or observations. I experienced these kind of feelings almost in all my interviews. For example, I was a guest at lunch in HIKDE for my first visit and I still remember the taste of the salad I ate there; it was really delicious. I am still not sure whether the salad was really so delicious or whether it was the atmosphere I was in that made me attend to the taste like this. Then I thought about what impressed me so much. Although many of these women are elderly and have serious illnesses, the energy and love they have,

scattered in the environment and are transmitted to those in the environment. Indeed, these feelings and the atmosphere made my fieldwork and my thesis more meaningful. I realized that these kinds of emotions, which are surrounding my thesis in terms of willingness, are also very effective as a driving force in women's activities.

Many women I met at the association were talking about this emotional atmosphere and its impact on their actions. I noticed that there were women who came to the association and participated in the activities only because of this environment. The head of the association, Ayşe Uğuz, was talking about the taste of the pilaf she ate as a child, and the love and compassion of Gülsen Ataseven and Fatma Çalıkavak at that time. Similarly, a woman who came to the seminar stated that she decided to come constantly to the madrasa because of the love and sincerity of women. Therefore, I realized that these affective experiences should be a theoretical analysis of my thesis.

In the beginning of the third chapter, I argued that the madrasa is quite significant with its emotional atmosphere as a place in the Metropol and its representation of history. I also mentioned how much the madrasa affected me when I entered there for my first interview. The other important point was that the people inside welcomed me quite nicely and behaved warmly from the beginning. I felt as if I had been there many times before and had spoken to those people. This situation relieved me during my fieldwork of my thesis. Meanwhile, it also opened the door to a deep matter. When we say Islam, association, activities, public space, there was another thing that penetrates into all of them, and circulates around. At the end of the third chapter, I talked about the understanding of the *waqf* and how it affects and guides women's activities. Actually, it is not just the understanding of *waqf*, instead it is emotions that enable women to act and continue their activities despite all the struggles they faced. Their feelings, their desires, and passions are always with them. From my observations and interviews, I understood that they will never give up from acting, serving, and being a part of a help or education movement until they leave from this world because the emotions surrounding them from the beginning increase with the participation of other women and continue to motivate them by being reproduced through new actors.

Apart from my own feelings and emotions, what pushed me to scrutinize the dimension of emotion is the fact that women could not fully express some of their situations/experiences during the interviews as well. When explaining their motivations in activities, and when narrating their intimate friendships with each other, I witnessed frequently their expressions of "How can it be explained?". It was for both their experiences in the process of HIKDE and thoughts about madrasa. Many times the gestures of my interlocutors, their smiling faces also tells many things. Statements of my interlocutors such as "it makes feeling different tranquility when it is entered. When we enter from the door, all our problems are left behind, we feel as if we are in a different realm. It actually sounds like a psychological treatment"<sup>46</sup> and "they always made us feel special here"<sup>47</sup> reveals the centrality of emotions and affective atmosphere in their activities. I knew that I could only explain this situation with the anthropology of emotions and the affect theory that is considered as a *turn* (Clough and Halley 2007), a new rising trend in social and cultural studies.

That is why in this chapter, I will focus on the dimension of emotions in order to better understand all these activities of Muslim women in Turkey. Trying to grasp one person's emotional life means totally understanding of his/her viewpoint of the world (Solomon 2008, 187). Emotions put women into action in difficult times; enable them to continue their activities for 47 years in an association, and also help them to make sense of space/place in the ways I mentioned in the third chapter.

In this chapter, I will argue that HIKDE is the embodiment form of women's emotions and affective actions, both as space/place and with their activities. That is why I will refer to emotions as that which finds meaning in practice and experience, and also that which requires relations with other people and thus penetrates certain kinds of objects. As Solomon points out (1978, 187) "as the focal point of a world view, an emotion is a network of conceptual and perceptual structure in which the objects and people in our world, others' actions and our own, are given significance, meaning, a place in a dramatic scenario". It means our emotions and experiences are

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<sup>46</sup> Personal interview with Nevriye Demir. 29.07.2019, Fatih.

<sup>47</sup> Personal interview with Ayşe Uğuz. 07.10.2019, Fatih.

intertwined. In anthropology of emotions although there is a feeling/meaning dichotomy, we should not reduce emotion to one side (Leavitt 1996, 525). Our actions are shaped not only by our thoughts but also by how we feel and how we respond to these feelings with our bodies (Gorton 2007, 345). Sometimes 2 hours of conversation with a friend we love may seem very short to us, or a very nice place can give us deep unrest because of a person we do not like at all. That is to say, our emotions can change our world of thought, our perceptions and behaviors. Solomon argues that through emotions we conceptualize our experiences (1978, 187). Emotions are also the "glue of solidarity and the energy of the mobilized groups" (Collins 1990, 28). That is why, trying to give an ethnographic analysis for any social group requires taking consideration of this dimension.

This association emerges as a combination of all the emotions of nostalgia, pain, fear, love, and compassion that women have from the very beginning. Namely, I will also examine how HIKDE and madrasa became an object of women's emotions. In this sense, the way I will pursue in this chapter is firstly analyzing the pain (not physical, but as deep and psychological), nostalgia, and love as main motivating emotions, and also reveal their collective feature in the activities. Then to give an account how these emotions create certain objects that carry traces of these emotions; lastly to mention the affective atmosphere due to the circulation of emotions. I will also emphasize that these feelings occur within a religious context, hence they are not independent from the women's understanding of Islam. In the second chapter, I highlighted that the essential thing that guides the activities of women is Islam. Therefore, the emotions I will focus on in this chapter is again to find meaning in an Islamic discourse and in the willingness of women to actualize Islamic practices.

I will mainly use the term emotion instead affect by agreeing with Ahmed's accounts that take emotion as much more familiar term and consider affect "as a part of what emotions do" (Schmitz and Ahmed 2014, 97). She says "emotions, in other words, involve bodily processes of an affecting and being affected, or to use my own terms, emotions are a matter of how we come into contact with objects and others" (2014, 208). Actually this relationally is almost the same with what the affect theorists state, but in terms of collectivity and her greater focus on the circulation of objects, I prefer emotions. My perspective on emotions finds meaning in the actions of women who

by taking source from Islam and affect their activities in the sense of collectivity and continuity. These emotions also create an affective atmosphere by certain objects and hence differ from Ahmed's account and contribute to the ongoing discussions about affect and emotions.

#### **4. 1. Pain (*Act*) as Driving Force for Togetherness**

Especially the founder names of HIKDE talk about struggles and pains experienced at the beginning of their decision to establish institutions:

It was the time I was going to meetings at the association. My eldest son is going to primary school yet. I turned on the radio, while listening to the news, there were alcohol advertisements in ad breaks. My son turned to me and said, "isn't mother drinking *haram* (forbidden) in Islam?". I said *haram*, he said, "do not we live in a Muslim country?" The child could not comprehend somethings in his head. And I came to the meeting, I was very sorry. I said, how do we raise these children according to our belief? What a difficult thing for us! I said to Fevziye (Nuroğlu), I'm so sorrowed today. I explained the situation and asked what are we going to do? My sister said let's open a school, I said how will we open a school? She said "we will establish a waqf and we all put forward whatever we have". "Fevziye, (*gözünü seveyim*), how are we going to get over it? She said "Allah will help my sister".<sup>48</sup>

These statements reflect the pain of women not being able to live according to their beliefs and raising their children accordingly. Ahmed (2014, 4) asks the question of "what emotions do" instead of asking what emotions are. Pain is difficult to understand and express when talking about a present or past pain experience (Ibid 30). Even if the pain is defined as private, this privacy brings with it the experience of being with others, therefore this loneliness looks for people who will witness this pain (Ahmed 2014, 29). The exclusion of Muslim women who struggles for an Islamic life from the public sphere caused them to come together with one another and share their troubles, their pains. Their pains indicate to a deep and psychological feeling, instead of physical pain. Apparently, every one of them experiences their own pain, but when they learn that there are others like them they started to search for a way to come together and take action.

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<sup>48</sup> Personal interview with Fadime Hanım. 22.07.2019, Fatih.

Aynur Mısıroğlu explains their situation “when two veiled women passed in the street, my children would say ‘mom, is your friend passing?’. We were the *yiiz karası*<sup>49</sup> of Beşiktaş, there was nobody like us”. She continues:

Beşiktaş did not accept me. It was the first time I prayed, I came home, my mother is crying. I said why are you crying? She said 'you are mad' (*delirmişsin*). I said ‘why do I go crazy?’ All her friends had told her about my readings (I was reading too much about religions, Islam). First I used to finish my readings and then I would do my other works. She was saying that after this age, she would not want to go to the madhouse because of me. Whereas I was just praying, nothing else. I had a lot of trouble with that.<sup>50</sup>

These statements reveal how they experience the pain of loneliness when they started to live according to Islam and also how they were not understood. She adds after that they started to gather at homes, support each other and share their ideas. Ahmed emphasizes this sharing situation and hence the “sociality of pain”:

While the experience of pain may be solitary, it is never private. A truly private pain would be one ended by a suicide without a note. But even then one seeks a witness, though a witness who arrives after the anticipated event of one’s own death. Perhaps the over-investment in the loneliness of pain comes from the presumption that it is always ‘my’ pain that we are talking about (Ahmed 2014, 29).

This togetherness made them stronger and more focused on their activities and they could establish an association, and also published a journal. For this consequence of pain Ahmed says “the contingency of pain”:

The contingency of pain is linked both to its dependence on other elements, and also to touch. The word ‘contingency’ has the same root in Latin as the word ‘contact’ (Latin: contingere: com, with; tangere, to touch). Contingency is linked in this way to the sociality of being ‘with’ others, of getting close enough to touch...so what attaches us, what connects us to this place or that place, to this other or that other is also what we find most touching; it is that which makes us feel. The differentiation between attachments allows us to align ourselves with some others and against other others in the very processes of turning and

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<sup>49</sup>It is a metaphorical expression used for people in the sense of disgraceful.

<sup>50</sup>Interview with Aynur Mısıroğlu. 24.09.2019, Üsküdar.

being turned, or moving towards and away from those we feel have caused our pleasure and pain (Ahmed 2014, 28).

Hence the experienced pain necessitates being with one another, to share, and to take a position against others. My other interlocutor Reyhan Uzuner (who is the daughter of one of the founders, Mukaddes Çıtlak) also states “when a person feels lonely, she wants to establish such teamwork”<sup>51</sup>. It is understood that when they establish HIKDE, they thought that they were not alone and contrary; they had the power to accomplish great works. Halime Uyulan, who said that although she was always with women in HIKDE at first, she had some disagreements later on and continued on her own way, explains how the pain works:

Our friendship continues with all of them though because we shared a lot of pain(*acı*) together, for instance for days we waited until the morning in the headscarf issue; therefore even if we, each of us have a different character, we do not speak behind each other back.<sup>52</sup>

The emphasis here is on the fact that women survive difficult times together and that these times and shared emotions have a strong function even in keeping their current relationships as well. “Sharing many pains” prevents them from talking something bad about each other, even if they cannot maintain a close relationships. Many of my interlocutors narrated about how much they cried at nights at those hard times. It is obvious that the pain, distress, and trouble they experienced made them stronger and more bonded. That is why, shared pain turns into a feeling that encourages them more, and hence makes individual pain to be felt less. Sara Ahmed (2004a, 26) says that “together we hate and this hate is what makes us together”. They together suffer, together they have pain and this makes them together and stronger.

They also frequently mention about the difficulties at the beginning of HIKDE and of making the madrasa suitable for their activities. How valuable those periods in which they withstood difficulties together and shared pain are described as follows:

In those early times ... It is very hard to express. There were families who were helped and distributed to them. Everything was distributed with

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with Reyhan Uzuner. 27.02.2020, Beşiktaş.

<sup>52</sup> Interview with Halime Uyulan. 14.09.2019, Fatih.

sacks and bowls. The provisions were prepared, the names were written on them, and distributed. But how? Cold, winter ... It's an old building. It was very harsh times, but those were the times when I felt we were doing favor till our bone and marrow.<sup>53</sup>

Ayşe Uğuz has difficulty while expressing that period and states that HIKDE has a different place and she cannot leave there due to these unforgettable experiences. Perhaps this is the reason why women who come to the association in the next period describe their commitment to the association with reference to the first periods and founder names in general since they did not experience the same difficulties, the same pains. Because the women who are younger at the association use such expression of "what difficulties, pains our elders have experienced here" referring to the first period of the association and its founders. In a sense, these experienced pains in the past continue to feed women who come to the HIKDE later on, in the sense that they have responsibilities and should keep HIKDE always alive. Whenever they are about to give up; these times of pain and troublesomeness become a reminder for them. With Ahmed's statements this "contingency of pain" still works. That is to say, we can say that due to this circulation of pain, it turns into affect.

#### **4. 2. Love and Importance of *Hal Dili*<sup>54</sup>**

It is very difficult to describe that process, full of love, full of attachment, totally devoted, just focusing on what you do. When we saw each other, our hearts would hit, we were so fond of each other.<sup>55</sup>

When I asked how the association was founded and how you would define your activities at that time, Lale Kuran responded in this way. It is quite normal loving each other for people who share the same pain and struggles. What was an important point that caught my attention in the fieldwork was that women referred to each other with this love:

I was the only child, and I was also doing all kinds of crazy things. But after I came here at the first time, I was always here. Do you know what?

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<sup>53</sup> Personal interview with Ayşe Uğuz. 07.10.2019, Fatih.

<sup>54</sup> Women use this expression for women who are role models with their attitudes and behaviors.

<sup>55</sup> Personal interview with Lale Kuran. 26.11.2019, Kadıköy.

They always made you feel special here. We were always doing a different job here, they were giving us different tasks, they were always putting us in an important place, they were very fond of us and love us. In addition, that was also very important that every month meals were served here, for help, for scholarships, for families, and so on. All of those very serious name ladies have their own efforts here. One of them doing baklava, the other börek, frying and all of them made such heavy dishes here.<sup>56</sup>

This statements of Ayşe Uğuz indicates another dimension, that is love and sincerity. When she was talking about her childhood in HIKDE, she is remembering this love which she can see this love from the women's actions which they describe as *hal dili* this means the founders of HIKDE show their sincerity and love through their actions/activities and behaviors.

The *hal dili* is a term mostly used in Sufism. In the *hal dili*, which is considered as a more comprehensive form of body language, the impression, and interpretation that the appearance of being, matter, and what nature gives to the mind is very important (Zavotcu 2014, 139). "Making you feel special" is manifested as embedded in the women's behavior and attitudes towards others. What is significant in *hal dili* is showing everything with your behaviors:

For example, poor families come to us, we get the address, we look at how much they need. I remember, I was just thirteen, we have donation day once a month. Families would come to get their supplies. I was at the head of olives, I never forget. I was putting as many kilos of olives according to number of people. For example, I was putting five kilos of olives in a family of five, I was told that. Then I can never forget the spiritual pleasure I took at that time. How important it is for a teenager. Instead of saying to someone "Be patient or don't waste it", show it in this way.<sup>57</sup>

My other interlocutor also emphasized the importance of this *hal dili* what "really affects" her. She did not want her name to be used but underlined the sincerity that came with this *hal dili*:

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<sup>56</sup> Personal interview with Ayşe Uğuz. 07.10.2019, Fatih.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Reyhan Uzuner. 27.02.2020, Beşiktaş.

What really attracted me here was *hal dili*. The intention of everyone there was the consent of Allah. It was very sincere for me the expression of "my dear sister". This was not just an expression left in the tongue. You could feel it from their behaviors. When everyone's intention was the same, the collectivity also would occur and this surrounded every one of us. That is why, at first, it was versatile complementation. Everyone was hand in hand. I think it is something lost now. I think the former respect has also diminished.<sup>58</sup>

These statements actually contain different issues. The love that is manifested in the *hal dili* and actually comes from the intention of the consent of Allah; the collectivity that came with gathering around the same purpose; and another important point is the idea that all these started to be lost recently.

Ahmed examines love as a bonding way for an ideal and its role on shaping collectivities (2014, 124). Ayşe Uğuz as a president of HIKDE highlights the significance of this collectivity:

It is a great honor for me to be the president of this place, but I do not think of myself as something important, it shouldn't be, and it did not fortunately; because it is a team so we got used to doing this in this way for years. Nobody was coming here and doing something alone. We decided everything together, thus our all works went well, and it was fertile. We approach each other always with love and respect.<sup>59</sup>

This collectivity and respect, which Ayşe Uğuz believes to continue, seems to have decreased according to the first founders. I need turn to Sara Ahmed's understanding of love. Ahmed's focus is mostly on the national ideal and she criticizes this kind of politics of love by stating "a politics of love is necessary in the sense that how one loves matters; it has effects on the texture of everyday life and on the intimate 'witness' of social relations" (Ahmed 2014, 140). Accordingly, we can think this situation for any bonded group. The consent of Allah and constructing an ideal Islamic life brings women together, but it seems women do not do this as a politics of love. In other words, as Ahmed means, this is not a love that is born of hate and shaped according to the otherness. This love is a love that brings the person to action

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<sup>58</sup> Personal interview with N.S.B. 04.11.2019.

<sup>59</sup> Personal interview with Ayşe Uğuz. 07.10.2019, Fatih.

with the aim to be beneficial to someone else and thus to gain the consent of Allah. Their understanding of love is also expressed in the writing of Sadırvan journal titled "The Understanding of Love in Islam" and it is stated that the principle of love is "for God" and expecting not any interest (Ataseven 1979, 16).

On the other hand, the thought of what is "lost" that is in the last sentence of the above quotation, and the frequent mention of the love and sincerity of founder women by women who came to the HIKDE in recent times will make us consider a kind of politics of love. To be more precise, the love without any interest that initially mobilizes women may be applied by women who want to continue with the same ideal over time. Sümeyye Nuroğlu's following sentences related to the current situation of the association will help us better understand this issue:

Maybe there is no old love, but it continues. But there is no former spirit, compassion in anybody. The hijab started to adapt to fashion and then behaviors also started to become fashionable. 'We are here, we took a picture here, we gathered here'. My mothers (Fevziye Nuroğlu) never had such things. Everything has been the case of show off. *Ye kırkım ye olmuş diye düşünüyorum*. You need endless love and compassion. This remained in very few people, but they were opening their arms to everyone.<sup>60</sup>

The comparison here is between the attitudes of the founding names and the attitudes of the current women in HIKDE. Their thought is that there has been a change. In other words, there is a criticism that what is said and done is different. Is this change really a contradiction with the fundamental principles, or is it an effort to keep up with the changing conditions? Although it is not correct to generalize these statements which contain reproach, for everyone, I think referring to the founder names in the way of following their footsteps and trying to be more active in the association together with this heritage is conceived as normal by younger women. According to their understanding, this helps them to keep the HIKDE always alive as a sense of responsibility; besides remembering them with respect and love. However, the issue of showing off and behaving according to the day's condition (fashion and taking photos) is of course open to criticize. While this situation considered a

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<sup>60</sup> Interview with Sümeyye Nuroğlu in 01.10.2019, Fatih.

rupture for some women, it seems that for the current board of HIKDE, these changes are seen as a necessity to continue their activities within the changing conditions and expectations of society. Because, according to them, almost all associations today have a social media account, and the sharing of activities there makes the association much more preferable. Ayşe Uğuz explains this need “now expectations of everyone differs, we need new breathes, new names or changes in our some programs. Now there are too many NGOs and so people have many options”<sup>61</sup>.

Is it a contradiction while talking about love and sincerity of the founders and their modestness, at the same time trying to keep up with the conditions of the day? My own observations show that women generally try to maintain their first intentions and desires with the same determination. The fact that they gathered together and exchanged ideas at breakfasts and seminars held at the association indicates this situation. I observed how the current administration and younger women show their respect and love to the founding/older names at a breakfast table, and how they pay service to them. I also witnessed how respectfully they welcome their reproaches and criticisms. For instance, at a breakfast table, Nursen Hanım criticized the programs held outside of madrasa by saying “Why do not you do all your programs at this building? You are doing wrong. We have to bring people here and continue this tradition”. Ayşe Uğuz responded “You are quite right my auntie, but we need some changing to attract people here”<sup>62</sup>. Therefore, it is difficult to make a judgment for this issue without making a more detailed observation of women's daily life.

#### **4. 3. Objects as Carriers of Emotion and Memory**

It is noteworthy that when women talk about their activities and their feelings, they also refer to certain objects. For example, the name of the journal belongs to an object and it also has a story. Mukaddes Çıtlak describes this event as follows:

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<sup>61</sup> Personal interview with Ayşe Uğuz. 07.10.2019, Fatih.

<sup>62</sup> The breakfast program in HIKDE. 02.10.2019, Fatih.

There is Şadırvan in the courtyard of Beyazıt Mosque, and there is also book-bazaar(sahaflar). I still keep the books I bought from there. In my dream, I saw that şadırvan. It was like a rectangular prism, not round. It's a big şadırvan, but none of its taps flow. I put the pen into the tap, then water started to flow, that's the dream. Then, when we decided to publish a journal, I told my friends that dream and said 'why do not we call it as Şadırvan?'.<sup>63</sup>

Mukaddes Hanım remembers this event whenever she sees a *şadırvan* and feels again what she experienced at that time. When I went to ask for Sadırvan Journal to the association, I saw that all the issues of Sadırvan were kept as properly wrapped. They allowed me to read and review them only inside the madrasa building. Sadırvan, which reminds one of the memories and emotions of that period, was especially valuable for women who published it and wrote in the journal. During one of my interviews, I witnessed how a written object became an emotional thing. I was asking my interlocutor about Şadırvan Journal and her article there. She brought her file in which there are all her articles and found her article titled “Çanakkale Kimin? (Who does Çanakkale belong to?)” which was selected as an editorial for Şadırvan Journal’s eighth issue. She started to read her article loudly and very emotionally. It was a very long article but she read all of it as well by adding her comments and said that “I felt like the first time I wrote”.<sup>64</sup>



**Figure 4.1: The Issues of Sadırvan Journal that Smell of Moisture.**

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Mukaddes Çıtlak as online. 15.05.2020.

<sup>64</sup> Personal interview with F.A. 19.10.2019, Fatih.



Figure 4.2: A Room from Madrasa

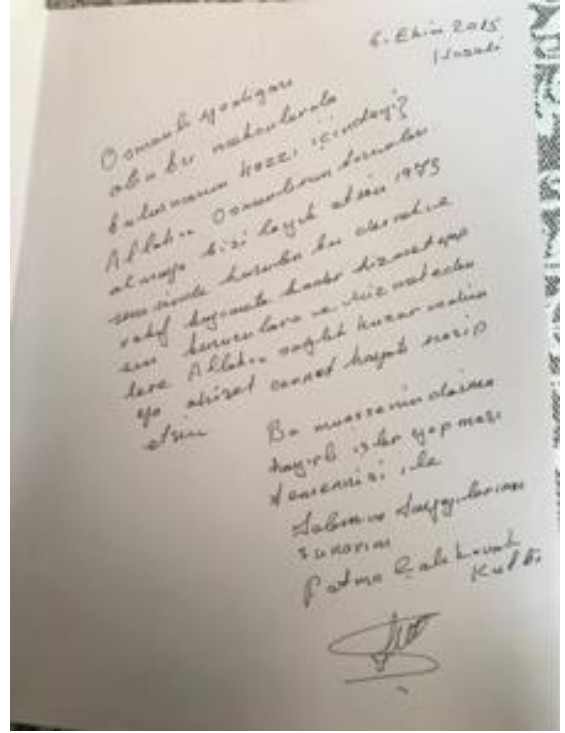


Figure 4.3: A Page from Memory Notebook

Similarly, in one of the seminar program for university students in HIKDE, I witnessed a founder's name heated speech that interrupted the speaker. Nurzan İshakoğlu who is a very cheerful woman stated that “this a very blessed (*mübarek*) place, actually. These small windows were places where always Kur'an was read, people need to know this”. The madrasa rooms emphasized by Nurzan İshakoğlu; the memory notebook which Ayşe Uğuz showed by referring to the speakers who came for the conference to HIKDE and wrote their emotions or thoughts about HIKDE; and the rice with chickpeas (*nohutlu pilav*) that she mentioned while remembering the years of her childhood in the association appears as other objects of women's emotions and memories. I noticed that when women came to the madrasa building, reading writings from the journal or memory notebook, or looking at objects from past times, certain emotions come back and circulate in the current space.

Sara Ahmed who is interested in how objects become emotional things says that “the circulation of objects allows us to think about the ‘sociality’ of emotion” and through the circulation of objects emotions can move” (2014, 8-11). Bayrampasa madrasa with its small rooms, courtyard, and conference hall reminds one always of women’s emotions and past experiences. It is not just the madrasa, experiences before it also are remembered with certain objects:

At first, the main center of HIKDE was in the basement of Oz Apartment in Fatih. HIKDE was founded there. Even before this place was a sewing workshop of Fatma Calıkavak, and she taught her students there, the basement you know. When she left, they made it an association center. There was no window of this place. We always made the informative programs there in every month. We also had a duplicator machine, and then monthly programs as bulletins were printed every month. Think like Sadırvan. We sent them by mail every month. When we went home, we used to see our faces black. Sometimes our duplicator machine was broken. It was such a nice time that we enjoyed it very much.<sup>65</sup>

This is one of the reason why journals from 50 years ago are not thrown away and photos are archived. Women who desire to continue their activities in HIKDE, try to keep their past alive and hence reproduce it by circulating certain objects. Sara Ahmed comes up with “happy objects” and explains this situation in that way:

If the same objects make us happy –or if we invest in the same objects as if they make us happy- then we would be directed or oriented in the same way. To be affected in a good way by objects that are already evaluated as good is a way of belonging to an affective community. We align ourselves with others by investing in the same objects as the cause of happiness (Ahmed 2010, 38).

It means when women gather around the same objects such as a journal which they believe had a crucial mission at that period, they have become part of a collective and affective group. Actually HIKDE as an association with its historical building is the biggest object of all activities and emotions. In this regard, we can also look at HIKDE as an ideal object of women’s thoughts in the sense of recreating a kind of waqf culture that they consider a tradition and heritage from the Prophet Muhammed and the Ottoman Empire era. With its openness to everyone, it became an ideal for

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<sup>65</sup> Personal interview with Ayşe Uğuz. 07.10.2019, Fatih.

Muslim women. In HIKDE what keeps women together is the love for an ideal. This love for ideal is quite different from Ahmed's love for ideal nation which is misleading and shapes political visions (Ahmed 2014, 141). That is why, we can say that HIKDE as an ideal object gives hope and together with every experience in every corner of madrasa, they recreate its affectivity and at the same time are ready to construct its new emotional objects through new actors. Navaro-Yashin (2009) mentions "melancholic objects" to discuss the Turkish-Cypriots' interaction with left objects of Greek-Cypriots and how these objects create an affective space. Therefore, I also want to give an analysis of the affective atmosphere of HIKDE.

#### **4. 4. HIKDE with Its Affective Atmosphere**

In the third chapter, I tried to analyze HIKDE and the madrasa within space theories. In this chapter, I focused on emotion and its circulation with objects, by also including my own feelings during my fieldwork. This led me to the atmosphere we already use for spaces that affect us in our daily life. In my conversations within the association and during the interviews, the discourses of "the atmosphere of this place is very distinctive and special" required me to write on this subject. The atmosphere they talked about was a situation that also contained emotions. Anderson examines affective atmosphere by taking advantage of Karl Marx's comments on "revolutionary atmosphere" and states that:

As a term in everyday speech, atmosphere traverses distinctions between peoples, things, and spaces. It is possible to talk of: a morning atmosphere, the atmosphere of a room before a meeting, the atmosphere of a city, an atmosphere between two or more people, the atmosphere of a street, the atmosphere of an epoch, an atmosphere in a place of worship, and the atmosphere that surrounds a person, amongst much else. Perhaps there is nothing that doesn't have an atmosphere or could be described as atmospheric...Atmospheres are the shared ground from which subjective states and their attendant feelings and emotions emerge (Anderson 2009, 78).

It seems an atmosphere almost corresponds to the understanding of space, but is more related to emotions. Navaro Yashin uses "affective spaces" and gives explanations for Greek-Cypriots' left objects of their relations and the memory of the past by focusing on the melancholy of those objects and spaces which feed affect (2009, 2). While Navaro Yashin's analysis is much more related to materiality,

Anderson's reflections on atmosphere are much more related to subjectivities and emotions. According to Anderson, "the emergence of affect from the relations between bodies, and from the encounters that those relations are entangled within, make the materialities of space-time always-already affective" (Anderson 2006, 736). From this point of view, we can argue that in every space, there is a different atmosphere due to the diverse encounters of people and objects.

If we consider HIKDE with its representational space, it also creates its own atmosphere and this atmosphere is felt by everyone within it. When women, who generally experienced the same events and struggles, come to the madrasa even after many years, this atmosphere reactivates through their existence and the objects within it. The high number of subjects and objects increases more of this affectivity. For example, in the breakfast I attended within the association, I sat down at the table of women who are over 70 years old, who witnessed the first period of the association. What attracted my attention in the conversation of women who experienced more events together was their very exciting speeches. One woman said that "every time I come here, old memories come alive in front of my eyes, I wish we could come more often" and told others that the association should organize more activities. They then continued to talk about what could be done differently in HIKDE. I even forgot that I was an observer there, influenced by their exciting speeches, and realized that I started to give them ideas like members of the association. This shows how the affective atmosphere is diffused around as energy.

It is necessary to mention here the praying that also creates an affective atmosphere. I realized that praying has an important place in women's activities, and it has an emotional side that motivates them even more for their works. For example, while one of my interlocutors was talking about Fevziye Nurođlu she stated that her pray was much more effective than her labor in their activities. Fadime Hanım continues:

Whenever we had some problems or we were about to start something new, I was saying Fevziye "take your prayer rug and start to pray". And then we saw all the troubles gone, the whole problem was solved. So her prayer was really important, and strengthen us even if she did nothing<sup>66</sup>.

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<sup>66</sup> Personal interview with Fadime Hanım. 22.07.2019, Fatih.

The reason I consider women's praying in this section is because of the effect of such narrations on people. If it is mentioned in the speeches that the energy of the prayer affects the activities positively, this indicates that the prayer ceased to be personal. There are also articles in Sadırvan journal that explains how the praying is not only a personal ritual. Dr. Alexis Carell's writing titled "Pray is Strength", the following statements are included:

Prayer is not only worship but also an invisible distribution and spread of the human spirit. This is the strongest of the energies that can be created ... prayer is a real force as much as gravity ... it is the only power that can deal with the laws of nature. But the real and constant miracle emerges in the hearts of people who discover that it is the source of a strength that supports daily life (Sadırvan 1976, i.3: 16).

As can be seen, there is an emphasis on the power that comes from praying, and praying has an indispensable place in women's daily activities. The importance of "taking a person's praying" is mentioned in the charity activities carried out within the association, and it is said to be worth many things. One of my interlocutors says "prayer is one of the most vital things that keep us alive"<sup>67</sup>. Therefore, prayer is more than just a religious ritual between Allah and a person; it has a dimension that permeates the lives and actions of women. The other thing that caught my attention was that women often pray to each other when they come together and this give them more determination, patience and willingness. For example, prayers such as "May Allah accept", "May Allah help you", or "May Allah make easier" create an affective atmosphere and give them motivation in their activities.

The role of emotions that I have tried to analyze in this chapter shows us how reality is multi-layered and that it includes a material, non-material, and divine level (Şentürk 2019, 41). Even though it looks material when emotions turn into action, there is a strong link with religion that regulates women's lives. Ignoring religious rituals and this divine dimension means missing the essence of a social phenomenon. Women with their *hal dili* and prayers show their love to each other and this creates a collectivity between them and guides the activities positively.

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<sup>67</sup> Personal interview with N.S.B. 04.12.2019, Gaziosmanpasa.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I focused on the experiences of women in a specific association HIKDE that was established in 1973 in Fatih/Istanbul. Although there are many studies on women who are defined as Muslim, Islamist, devout or religious and who try to live according to the principles of Islam, my endeavor was to reveal their central element in their experiences and also to analyze other hidden dimensions that are overlooked in their activities. For this purpose, I first had to discuss how discourses such as “complements” or “Islamists” have been attributed to women and decipher their reaction and meaning for the women in my study. This situation actually showed me the advantages of the ethnographic fieldwork that I was carrying out. My fieldwork revealed how both two attributions do not reflect the reality adequately or do not have a meaning for women in HIKDE. I also analyzed their journal Şadırvan which was published between 1976 and 1980 and regarded as an Islamist Journal. It was clear that they rejected the Islamist definition and discourse, both for the journal and for themselves.

It was revealed in the second chapter that the content of the Sadırvan and general aims of women in HIKDE actually includes a lot of Islamic emphases from verses in the Qur'an to the Hadits of Prophet Muhammed. In addition, nationalist rhetoric in the journal is also very evident. It is noteworthy that this situation is related to the conditions of the period, but is also related to the intense national feelings of women. Due to the journey of Islamism it has changed in accordance with the social and political environment in Turkey, hence it is defined in various ways. In addition to those who consider it strictly a political ideology, there are also broader definitions as a way of life. The Islamist discourse is understood in the light of discourse theories and the underlying reasons of why all women directly refuse this discourse is sought. This questioning actually led me to bring forward my own conceptualization that is “Muslim women of action”. Women oppose Islamist

discourse for three reasons. First, the Islamist discourse is shaped and recalled around more political events in Turkey; the second one, the belief of women that they already accepted and defined themselves as believers and Muslims by Allah in Our' an; and the third one, the value they give to their activities that is beyond all labelings and discourses. These are the reasons that arise from women's own statements. Another important point is that women are declared as complementary to men in the Islamist movement or as active subjects of their political projects in Turkey. Women's life stories reveal that they were both intellectually and financially organizers at the foundation of the association. Therefore, defining them as Islamists would mean involving them to such an Islamist understanding, which covers and shadows women's subjectivity and agency. Here, there may be criticism that their rejection is not important and that Islamism is not what they understand. But how accurate would it be in an ethnographic study to constantly call people with a discourse they do not feel close to? My preference here is defining them with their self-identification or with what they see crucial in their life.

From their standpoint, I tried to examine the experiences of women related to space and positioning of themselves within the ongoing public/private discussions in Turkey. I argued that their understanding of space exceeds the discussions of public/private dichotomy and spaces are tools to put their actions forward. Benefitting from Hannah Arendt's action that is necessary for political life, I claimed that the action of Muslim women follows an Islamic way and embraces their whole life. At this point, I think that I have contributed to the action that Arendt sees vital for humanity in the sense of it has a religious dimension and an encompassing aspect of life. Muslim women used first their homes, then expanded their spaces and established HIKDE.

Another remarkable point I emphasize is that although women have the ability to use and transform each space for their own purposes, they are close to the places that have historical and religious representation and they prefer these places. Because the central building of the association is a madrasa built during the Ottoman period and as space was used by religious groups. At this point, it is seen that the meaning and representation of Islamic architecture for a Muslim person gains importance. At the same time, the calmness of this place is also an escape in city life, which is thought

to be crowded and tiring, and it becomes privileged. The question of what exactly an Islamic architecture means in urban life, where artificial and multi-story buildings are increasing, and how it is experienced by Muslims awaits new researches. The value attributed to space is expressed by almost all members and it creates an affective atmosphere by integrating with the understanding/culture of waqf that directs women's actions.

It is actually the emotions that motivate women from the beginning and the circulation of objects that carry the traces of these emotions creates this affective atmosphere. That is why, I argued that HIKDE is the embodiment form of emotions of women as embedded elements in women's actions. At first, the deep sense of pain caused by being excluded and being unable to be found in the social space according to their religion brought them together and made them stronger for what they want to do. An understanding of love that should include everyone is already key to their actions. I touched upon the emphasis of women on the *hal dili* of founder names of HIKDE, which has a meaning beyond the body language, and its role in loving each other. I believe that my analysis of this *hal dili*, and also the effect of prayer that is also crucial, has a strong role in the activities, and creates an affective atmosphere, will open the door to further research.

As a result, this thesis as an ethnographic study of women's experiences in Turkey contributed to academic studies in terms of revealing the action of Muslim women together with space and emotions that are not well studied subjects. With this study, I tried to show that human actions and social reality are not one-dimensional, but require the coexistence of many components. I understood that evaluating Muslim women within a certain discourse is to limit this reality which is why we can only reach the existence and surprise of other components through such an exploratory studies. Of course, the scope of my thesis is limited to an association and the claims made here and cannot be generalized for other religious women or associations. However, since this association has a rooted history and has guided many different associations, it has a central importance in making sense of the activities of other women in general. It is valuable in the sense that it contains data that will support future academic studies on Muslim women and concepts that will open up new fields of study. There is a need for further comprehensive studies that compare past

activities, life practices of founder religious women, and current successors of them in new-established associations or waqfs. Similarities and differences, underlying reasons for the changes should be analyzed by ethnographic studies that focus on the daily life practices of women. In this thesis, just one madrasa building was analyzed as space. In this sense, comprehensive studies can be conducted about what Islamic architecture means for Muslims and how space is envisioned in Islam. Especially in religious orders, where prayers and religious rituals are applied more, the emotions of women also seem open to study.

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APPENDIX: List of Respondents

<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Education</b>
Mukaddes ıtlak	80	High School
Halime Uyulan	64	High School
Sümeyye Nurođlu	47	University
Ayşe Uđuz	53	University
Aynur Mısırođlu	83	University
Tülay Yiđit	60	Master
Reyhan Uzuner	57	University
Nevriye Demir	58	University
Lale Kuran	74	University
Fadime Hanım (nickname)	77	University
Esmâ Hanım (nickname)	54	University

Nurzan İshakođlu	81	High School
Seda Hanım	25 (Approximately)	University
Nehir Akhan	74	High School
N.S.B	62	University
F.A	71	High School
Nursen Gökçek	75	Secondary School
B.Ö	38	University
A.Y	87	University
Sema Hanım	40 (Approximately)	University

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