

*An Alternative Voice: Sabiha (Zekeriya) Sertel as a Woman Translator and a Representative of Nascent Socialist-Feminist Culture Repertoire in the Early Republican Turkey*

*Alternatywny głos: Sabiha (Zekeriya) Sertel jako tłumaczka i przedstawicielka powstającego socjalistyczno-feministycznego repertuaru kulturowego we wczesnej republikańskiej Turcji*

**R. Çiğdem Akanyıldız-Gölbaşı**

DEPARTMENT OF TRANSLATION STUDIES, BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY (ISTANBUL, TURKEY)

INSTRUCTOR, GALATASARAY UNIVERSITY (ISTANBUL, TURKEY)

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**Słowa kluczowe**

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**Abstract**

Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel (1895-1968) was a woman intellectual, journalist, and translator who wrote on politics, society, and culture and translated political and gender-related texts in the early republican Turkey. Although Sertel translated many works that would otherwise have been unknown to Turkish audience, her translation activities have not received much recognition among researchers. This paper attempts to reposition Sertel as a translator and culture entrepreneur who played a seminal role in political and intellectual life in the early republican Turkey. With a particular reference to Itamar Even-Zohar's culture theory, it explores Sertel's agency as a translator within the context of the state-sponsored "culture planning" in the early Turkish republican period. Sertel's translation activities took place in a context where the cultural institutions of a modernizing single-party regime deployed translation as a tool for facilitating the enlightenment of a nation in the making. Although Sertel enthusiastically supported the early republican reforms and the state-sponsored culture planning in the 1930s, her attitude towards the regime and its enlightenment project was not invariable. This study

particularly demonstrates how Sertel sought to import and incorporate egalitarian, feminist, democratic, and class-based concepts and ideas into the state-sponsored acculturation project through translation, which she believed was an important tool to influence political and cultural movements in a country undergoing rapid modernization. Sertel's translation of August Bebel's *Woman and Socialism*, for instance, is one of the earliest book translations on gender, patriarchy and socialism in Turkey. By means of translation, Sertel also intended to express what she could not openly speak as regards fundamental sociopolitical issues in Turkey, as well as what the dominant ideologies excluded from discursive arenas. As a result, this paper seeks to reposition a woman translator who conformed to various aspects of the early Turkish republican regime's cultural planning yet aimed to integrate leftist and feminist perspectives into Turkish political literature.

### Abstrakt

Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel (1895-1968) była intelektualistką, dziennikarką i tłumaczką, która obszernie pisała o polityce, społeczeństwie i kulturze, a także tłumaczyła, we wczesnej republikańskiej Turcji, teksty odnoszące się do polityki lub problematyki gender. Działalność tłumaczeniowa Sertel nie została doceniona przez naukowców mimo faktu, że bez jej tłumaczeń wiele cennych tekstów nie byłoby znane szerszym kręgom tureckich odbiorców. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest przedstawienie Sertel przede wszystkim jako tłumaczki i animatorki kultury, która odgrywała istotną rolę w życiu politycznym i intelektualnym wczesnej republiki tureckiej. Odwołując się do teorii kultury stworzonej przez Itamara Evena-Zohara, niniejszy tekst analizuje również wpływ Sertel jako tłumaczki w kontekście kultury kontrolowanej i finansowanej przez państwo w okresie wczesnej republiki tureckiej. Większość tłumaczeń Sabihy Sertel ukazało się w okresie kiedy instytucje kultury, kontrolowane przez postępowy reżim jednopartyjny, wykorzystywały tłumaczenie jako narzędzie w procesie edukacji powstającego narodu. Chociaż Sertel entuzjastycznie popierała wczesne reformy republikańskie i finansowaną przez państwo planową politykę kultury w latach trzydziestych XX wieku, jej postawa wobec reżimu i jego projektu oświeceniowego nie była jednak niezmienna. Ten artykuł w sposób szczególny skupia się na tym jak Sertel próbowała wprowadzić pojęcia egalitaryzmu, feminizmu, demokracji a także idee oparte na podziale klasowym w obręb finansowanego przez państwo projektu akulturacji, który jak wierzyła był istotnym narzędziem wpływu na polityczne i kulturowe trendy w kraju przechodzącym gwałtowną modernizację. I tak *Woman and Socialism* Augusta Bebela w tłumaczeniu Sabihy Sertel jest jednym z pierwszych tekstów w Turcji, który odnosi się do pojęć patriarchy, socjalizmu i gender. Tłumaczenia pozwalały na wyrażenie tych opinii dotyczących fundamentalnych kwestii społeczno-politycznych w Turcji, których nie można było głosić otwarcie, a także tych, które dominujące ideologie wypchnęły poza pole dyskursu. W rezultacie niniejsza praca ma na celu zweryfikowaniu pozycji tłumaczki, która z jednej strony dostosowywała się do różnych aspektów wczesnego tureckiego reżimu republikańskiego, z drugiej zaś próbowała wpisać lewicową i feministyczną perspektywę w turecką literaturę polityczną.

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### Introduction

Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel (1895–1968) was a woman intellectual, writer, journalist, translator and publisher who wrote on politics, society, and culture and translated political and gender-related texts in early republican, or interwar, Turkey. Sertel has usually been discussed by scholars as a leftist woman writer and journalist who was often critical of the socio-political and cultural environment that she lived in.<sup>1</sup> Although Sertel translated many works that would otherwise have been unknown to Turkish audience, her translations and translation activities have not received much recognition among researchers.<sup>2</sup> This paper attempts to reposition Sabiha Sertel as a translator and culture entrepreneur who played a seminal role in political and intellectual life in early republican Turkey. With a particular reference to Itamar Even-Zohar's culture theory (2005), it explores Sertel's agency as a translator within the context of the state-sponsored "culture planning" in the early Turkish republican period. In particular, the present study aims to show how Sertel imported and incorporated alternative –and somewhat unorthodox– concepts and ideas into the state-sponsored enlightenment and acculturation project through her translations.

As will be discussed in detail below, Sertel's primary motivation in translating August Bebel's *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (1879), published in Turkish under the title of *Kadın ve Sosyalizm* (Woman and Socialism) in 1935, was to familiarize the reading public a country undergoing rapid moderniza-

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Aksoy 2009; Semiz 2008; Bulut 2002; Uslu 2004; Shissler 2008–2007; Koçak 1988; Ertuna-Biçer 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Deniz İpek's unpublished article (2011) "Babialide Bir Fikir İşçisi-Çevirmen: Sabiha Sertel" (Sabiha Sertel: An Intellectual Labourer and Translator in *Babialı*) is perhaps the first work that examines Sertel as a translator. Karadağ, Bozkurt, and Alimen's article (2015) "Çeviri ve Yönlendirme: Sabiha ve Zekeriya Sertel'in Çeviri Çocuk Edebiyatı Eserleri" (Translation and Manipulation: Translations of Children's Literature by Sabiha and Zekeriya Sertel) examines Sabiha Sertel and her husband Zekeriya Sertel's translations of children's literature published between 1926–1928 and explores how they manipulated target cultural and literary systems by way of translation.

tion with the origins of the so-called “woman question”, the politics of gender discrimination, and the importance of struggle for women’s rights. In fact, Sertel sought to integrate primarily a leftist and gendered perspective into Turkish politics and journalism through her translations as well as her own writings. Her translations of several well-known Marxist texts, for instance, considerably contributed to the newly emerging socialist literature in Turkey. She also initiated the translation and publication of a book series in Turkish under the title of *Pocket Books (Cep Kitapları)*, which consisted of dozens of books published in the USA; thereby, importing a “repertoire” from one cultural context to the other. This study illustrates in detail how Sertel aimed to import egalitarian, feminist, democratic, and class-based perspectives into the Turkish culture repertoire through her translations within the political and cultural context of the 1930s. By doing so, the present study also aims to reveal the transfer of gender-based and socialist concepts and terms from English to Turkish.

It is significant to reposition Sabiha Sertel as an active agent and a ‘woman translator’ in three respects. First of all, as mentioned above, Sertel’s identity as a translator and her contributions to the emerging culture repertoire in the early republican period has not yet been sufficiently investigated. Sertel directly influenced “the selection, production, and consumption of texts to be translated by way of [her] cultural practices” (Tahir Gürçağlar 2005:43) as she translated and personally selected texts-to-be-translated while working as a manager and editor for the newspapers and journals she published in collaboration with her husband Zekeriya Sertel. Second, Sertel was a very productive author and translator who worked among a predominantly male group of intellectuals, authors and journalists. Studying a woman translator’s agency and translation activities can extend our limited knowledge of woman translators in the Ottoman and early Turkish republican periods. Last, but not least, research on translated books and articles on women and gender in Turkish has remained insufficient.<sup>3</sup> In this regard, this paper also hopes to contribute to the history of translation and women’s writing in Turkey. In addition, an examination of the travel of socialist and gender-related concepts, ideas, and terms from English into Turkish can offer an insight into the formation of Turkish terminology and repertoire regarding gender and

<sup>3</sup> As a remarkable exception, Müge Işıklar-Koçak’s doctoral dissertation “Problematising Translated Popular Texts on Women’s Sexuality: A New Perspective on the Modernization Project in Turkey from 1931 to 1959,” deserves particular attention. In her dissertation, Işıklar-Koçak established a database for “non-literary translated and indigenous texts for/on women published between 1828 and 1990.” Her pioneering work has given scholars a food for thought for a research agenda that has not been uncovered yet.

socialism in the early republican period. It should, however, be noted that an analysis and comparison of source and target texts goes beyond the limits of this chapter. Sertel's translations have been entirely involved in the translation corpus presented at the end of this paper; yet some of them, including children's literature and a short history of World War I, have been left out of analysis.

Before moving to the main discussion, I would like to provide a short biography of Sabiha Sertel. Sertel was born in Salonika in 1895 and received formal education there all the way up through high school. Due to the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913, she moved to İstanbul with her family, where she got married to Mehmet Zekeriya in 1915. The couple started to publish a journal titled *Büyük Mecmua* (the Big Review) in 1919. After the closure of the journal by the occupying forces following the Great War, they moved to New York City, the USA, and began to study at Columbia University. Following their return to Turkey, they became involved in publication activities again by publishing another popular political journal, *Resimli Ay* (The Illustrated Monthly) in 1924. Sabiha Sertel also wrote columns under the pen name *Cici Anne* (literally, Sweet Mother) in the journals *Resimli Ay* and *Resimli Perşembe* (the Illustrated Thursday), and in the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* (Republic). In the mid-1930s, the Sertels began to work for the newspaper *Tan* (Dawn), which followed an anti-fascist, anti-war, and democratic line and, therefore, disturbed both the ruling party and nationalist/racist circles in Turkey. Initially, the Sertels regularly wrote articles and columns in *Tan*. By the end of 1938, Ahmet Emin Yalman, the editor-in-chief, left the paper, and the Sertels took over the editorial duties. On 4 December 1945, a lynch mob chanting ultra-right and anti-communist slogans raided the offices of *Tan* and destroyed its printing house, an incident which was a milestone in the history of Turkish journalism. Following that event, the Sertels were tried and faced various forms of oppression, which eventually led the couple to leave Turkey in 1950. After years in exile in Hungary, France, and the Soviet Union, Sabiha Sertel passed away in Baku, Azerbaijan in 1968. Her autobiography entitled *Roman Gibi: Demokrasi Mücadelesinde Bir Kadın* (Like a Novel: A Woman in the Struggle for Democracy) was first published in 1969.

## 1. Culture Planning in the Early Republican Turkey and Sabiha Sertel's Alternative Repertoire of Translation

Even-Zohar defines the "culture repertoire" as "the aggregate of options utilized by a group of people, and by the individual members of the group, for the organization of life" (2005: 69). In Even-Zohar's view, culture planning is "conceived of as a deliberate act of intervention," either by state actors,

official circles or by “free agents”, “into an extant or a crystallizing repertoire” (2005: 97). By way of an effective and successful implementation of planning, planners and/or power-holders try to “reinforce their positions by making an accommodating repertoire acceptable to larger sections of the population”, and as a matter of fact, culture producers involved in culture planning may actually become power-holders “through the acceptance of their products, or obtain the support of those already in power” (Even-Zohar 2005:89). Therefore, the status and position of planner(s) may change, but planning ultimately aims to control the field in which it is implemented.

However, as Şehnaz Tahir-Gürçağlar points out, social and cultural fields should be seen as “sites of struggle among different groups of agents, rather than as sites controlled by unitary and homogenous collectivities” (2008: 38). Therefore, one should bear in mind that cultural repertoires may be shaped consciously or unconsciously by individuals or groups which do not thoroughly conform to the ideology and acculturation project of a given regime. They may rather introduce alternative possibilities into the existing or soon-to-be crystallized repertoires than reproducing and reinforcing dominant discourses. Moreover, as Even-Zohar (2005) points out, culture planning is not only limited to state institutions and can be undertaken by free agents, “individually or collectively at diverse locations, both within and outside of the center of political power” (Tahir-Gürçağlar 2008:38). In this regard, the early republican Turkish “culture planning” should not be taken as solely an initiative deprived of autonomy that had been strictly governed and inspected by a modernizing party, government, and a group of bureaucrats. Such a view allows us to analyze Sabiha Sertel’s position and role in the formation and implementation of the early republican culture planning.

The modernization project and reformation endeavours in the early republican Turkey provided a backdrop for social and cultural planning initiatives and the making of culture repertoire(s). The early Turkish republican regime aimed to construct a secular nation-state and a homogeneous community of citizens based on national, secular and modernist ideals through a radical transformation of socio-economic, political, and cultural structures in the country. Under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, the republican regime undertook a series of modernizing reforms, which above all aimed at a comprehensive secularization of all aspects of sociopolitical life in Turkey (Zürcher 2003: 186-192). In fact, political, educational and legal institutions were secularized at a quite dramatic pace. As part of these secularizing reforms, Islamic law was completely abolished and a new Civil Code, which was based on the Swiss model, was adopted. This new Civil Code introduced for the first time the equality of women by law into Turkish politics and society. In addition, suffrage was extended to women in 1934, marking a turning

point in the history of women and politics in Turkey. The adoption of the European clock and calendar in 1926, European numerals in 1928, and European measures and weights in 1931 were other reforms that aimed to westernize the country, which meant a dramatic rupture with “traditional Islamic culture.” (Zürcher 2003: 186–192; Azak 2010: 10–13; Cagaptay 2006: 13–14).

From the beginning, language was at the heart of the Kemalist goal of forging a new national identity and creating a hegemonic culture in a nationalized and secularized public sphere. Education campaigns, the standardization of education under a secular curriculum, language reform (or “purifying” the Turkish language), and the adoption of the Latin script, which marked a sharp break with the “Islamic” (non-national) Ottoman past, were deployed as instruments that would help foster a national and secular collective identity and consciousness (Zürcher 2003: 186–192; Cagaptay 2006: 54–56; Lewis 1999: 40–56). In support of nascent Turkish nationalism and the project of modernization, language was mobilized to create a Turkish cultural repertoire in an effort to control, arrange, and dominate cultural elements, which were expected to help cultivate a modern Turkish nation as a part of the Western civilization (Berk 2002: 511–517).

During the late Ottoman and early republican periods, translation played a crucial role in introducing and disseminating modern ideas, knowledge, concepts and practices both through official channels and individual efforts. Particularly in the early republication period, translation was intended to be a tool for facilitating the modernization and enlightenment of a nation in the making. The new republican regime in Turkey vigorously took institutional steps to mold the reading public within their modernizing project by way of translation. In addition, in an organic relationship with the regime, intellectuals and writers were occupied with producing literary, political, and scientific translations, at times closely attached to the institutional framework set by the regime but also independently of it on other occasions.

Sabiha Sertel enthusiastically supported the early republican reforms and the state-sponsored culture planning in the 1930s. Like many intellectuals of the period, Sabiha Sertel and her husband sought to legitimize and defend the Kemalist reforms undertaken by the single-party regime. They attempted to locate themselves as active participants in the nation-formation and modernization project. For Sertel, with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, the country acquired a place among modern, secular, western civilizations, drifting away from the “dark eastern civilizations”. In her article “Atatürk ve Gençlik” (Atatürk and the Youth), which was published in the newspaper *Tan* on November 15, 1938, Sertel criticizes the Ottoman past:

Atatürk ended one era in history and ushered in a new era in Turkish history. The era that was brought to an end had been the sultans' reign of decaying from the inside and lagging behind on the way to progress and civilization, in which sultans, greedy for a primordial imperialism, raged to invade the world. The new era being introduced is the republican era that has helped a nation left behind at peace and quiet attain the utmost levels of progress and civilization and established public sovereignty<sup>4</sup>. (Sertel quoted in Ertuna 2008: 347)

Sabiha Sertel and her husband also joined the regime's efforts to illuminate its citizens about the goals of the republican reforms and the significance of modernization for the future of the country. In other words, they assigned themselves a mission to acculturate the citizens of a modernizing country through education and publication. In this respect, Sertel considered the Ministry of Education, *Halkevleri* (People's Houses), and *Köy Enstitüleri* (Village Institutes) as the most important cultural institutions that would accomplish the mission:

The policy adopted by the Republican Party in order to strengthen the Republic and reforms in the eyes of the public is to establish People's Houses as a social center in their neighbourhood. The People's Houses played a significant role in various cities. They administer training centers that help young people improve their cultural level; social welfare centers that meet requirements of needy people; and centers that deal with daily problems of villagers and the people. They are not the institutions founded by the republican government only to spread its ideology, but they are the institutions through which the government directly satisfies people's needs<sup>5</sup>.

Sertel, however, believed that it would not be sufficient to solely rely on state institutions and top-down reforms as to enlighten public, and insisted on the necessity of a reading campaign and cultural propaganda. She argued

<sup>4</sup> All translations are mine, unless otherwise indicated. "Atatürk tarihin bir devrini kapadı, Türk tarihine yeni bir devir açtı. Kapanan devir, iptidaî bir emperyalizm hırsı ile dünyayı istilâ savaşına çıkan sultanların, içinden çürüttükleri, terakki ve medeniyet yolunda geri bıraktıkları bir padişahlar saltanatı devri idi. Açılan devir, sulh ve sükûn içinde geri kalmış bir milleti terakki ve medeniyetin en ileri derecelerine erıştiren, halk hâkimiyetini hâkim kılan Cumhuriyet devri idi."

<sup>5</sup> "Halk Fırkasının, Cumhuriyet ve inkılabı halk arasında kuvvetlendirmek için takip ettiği siyaset, Halkevlerini buldukları muhitin içtimaî bir merkezi haline getirmektedir. Birçok şehirlerde bu Halkevlerinin oynadığı rol çok büyüktür. Gençlerin kültür seviyelerini arttıracak dersaneleri, fakir halkın ihtiyaçlarına cevap verecek içtimaî yardım şubeleri, köylünün ve halkın günlük dertleriyle alâkadar olan şubeleri vardır. Bu müesseseler, Cumhuriyet hükümetinin yalnız ideolojisini yapmak [sic; yaymak] için kurduğu müesseseler değil, doğrudan doğruya halkın ihtiyaçlarına cevap verdiği müesseselerdir." Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel, "Halkevleri", *Tan*, 18 Mart 1939 (quoted in Ertuna 2008: 354).



that even though “all the powers of the homeland gathered to write and translate books incessantly,” but “did not organize publications and disseminate published books or newspapers all the way to the smallest village,” they would be of no use.<sup>6</sup> In a column published again in the newspaper *Tan*, she explains briefly yet finely the importance that she attributes to “acculturating” the public and what programme she suggests to this end:

Cultural propaganda should function like a missionary organization under the administration of a general directorate for public propaganda... If we do not educate the people, inculcate them with the pleasure of reading, make reading enjoyable and useful for them, our culture could only raise a small class of enlightened individuals as a neglected tree bearing fruit poorly<sup>7</sup>.

Although Sabiha Sertel enthusiastically advocated the secular and national reforms implemented by the Turkish single-party regime, her attitude towards the republican regime’s cultural propaganda and enlightenment project was not unchanging. In fact, as the regime was gradually becoming more authoritarian and repressive, she took a critical and opposing position against it. In addition, due to her engagement in class-based and socialist theories, particularly with respect to the so-called “woman question” and gender inequality, she strongly criticized what she regarded as the bourgeois women’s movement which flourished in the late 1920s and 1930s. Particularly, Sertel’s education in the USA<sup>8</sup> helped her develop her cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu 1984; 1993)<sup>9</sup> and acquire reputation as a “leftist intellectual” who

<sup>6</sup> Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel, “Neşriyat Kongresi”, *Tan*, 25 Nisan 1939 (quoted in Ertuna 2008: 355-356).

<sup>7</sup> “Kültür propagandası, umumî bir propaganda umumî müdürlüğünün teşkilatı altında, tıpkı bir Misyoner teşkilatı gibi çalışmalıdır... Halkı okutmazsak, halka okuma zevkini vermezsek, kitabı onun zevkine ve faydasına yarar hale getirmesek, yalnız küçük bir münevver sınıfı yetiştiren kültür, az meyve veren bakımsız bir ağaç mevkiinde kalır. Kültürün kökünü halkın içine indirelim. Bugün memleketin en büyük davası budur. İçtimai inkılâbımızın en büyük temeli halktır.” Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel, “Memleketin Büyük Davası”, *Tan*, 5 Mayıs 1939 (quoted in Ertuna 2008: 357).

<sup>8</sup> In her article “Transatlantic Connections in the Making of a Socialist-Feminist Framework for Social Welfare in Turkey: The Legacy of Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel”, Kathryn Libal (2012) examines Sertel’s training in community organizations at the New York School of Social Work. Libal establishes “transatlantic connections” in Sertel’s professionalization and argues that her career “yielded a legacy that deserves recognition in the history of feminist and international social work” (328, 330).

<sup>9</sup> As literary and cultural agents, translators have different forms of “capital.” According to Bourdieu (1984; 1993), “economic”, “cultural”, “social”, and “symbolic” capitals cannot be reduced to one another; yet they may concomitantly or individually influence a translator’s career. In fact, an amalgamation of different forms of capital may define the position of an individual in the power relations and social hierar-

advocated social equality, freedom and independence against fascist and imperialist currents. In defense of democratic, egalitarian and libertarian ideals against authoritarian and fascist tendencies, she attempted to introduce an alternative repertoire of texts written by socialist authors. As seen in her indigenous writing and translations in the first place, Sertel sought to import and integrate into Turkish political literature an array of concepts, ideas, and theories which were never an intrinsic part of the values and projects of the republican regime.

Sertel's critical attitude towards the regime's socio-political and cultural endeavours may well be explained on the basis of the concept of culture planning as used by Even-Zohar. Among other numerous writers, journalists, and intellectuals from every walk of life, Sertel did not appreciate all the options offered as part of culture planning undertaken by the regime, culminating in resistance in the form of "unwillingness towards the advocated, or inculcated, repertoire" (Even-Zohar 2005:101). While accepting and confirming some options of the new repertoire, Sertel (and others) also ignored or refused to implement "some... bulks of the made repertoire(s)," and actually with an "active resistance" they were involved in an "overt and straightforward struggle against the planned repertoire" (2005: 101-102). In Zohar's terms, she sought to build a "socio-cultural cohesion" where "a widespread sense of solidarity, or togetherness, exists [...], which consequently does not require conduct enforced by power" (2005: 81).

In this sense, I describe Sertel as a "cultural entrepreneur" actively generating ideas and introducing alternative concepts for the repertoire of culture by way of translation, teaching, writing, and publishing. Although she was not supported by the power of state authority, she was engaged in culture planning through alternative options she offered for the repertoire. I argue that Sertel, in "active resistance," endeavored to develop and maintain an alternative repertoire as she expressed her thoughts to the public and contributed to the enlightenment project on the basis of her own theories and thoughts through translation when she considered the republican regime in-

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chy. Cultural capital denotes the accumulated social assets through socialization and involves qualities acquired in family life and educational background. It refers to the aptitude for and familiarity with "high aesthetical values" that include artistic, literary, and linguistic abilities. Rather than properties inherited by an individual, symbolic capital refers to the resources acquired by an individual on the basis of honor, prestige or recognition. In connection with our discussion, Bourdieu also talks about "linguistic capital" and defines it as the mastery and use of one language or more self-confidently, accurately, gracefully. Although individuals do not possess high financial assets, they can attain high social positions or enjoy higher social prestige by means of aptitude, skill, knowledge, and/or familiarity (Bourdieu 1993).

sufficient or she came into conflict with the regime. In the following section, I examine Sertel's translations on gender and politics within this context.

## 2. Sertel's Motivation for the Translation of *Woman and Socialism*

Sabiha Sertel published her first articles on the social conditions of women in Turkish society and gender inequality in the magazine *Büyük Mecmua*. The magazine, the first issue of which came out on March 6, 1919, lasted about nine months. The Sertels (Sabiha and her husband Zekeriya Sertel) published seventeen issues under the political conditions of the Armistice Period in cooperation with university instructors, poets, writers, and intellectuals so as to "stir up hope, encourage and awaken the public" (Sertel 1987: 15). From the very first issue, the magazine invites the public to "cooperate" and announces that it would try to ensure "cultural advancement of the nation, thereby building a true nation" (*ibid*: 15). The magazine, which gathered writers from different political backgrounds, discussed Turkism, nationalism, and new Ottomanism and gave wide coverage to political currents from socialism and feminism to anti-imperialism<sup>10</sup> (*ibid*: 16). Although Sabiha Sertel did not find herself experienced enough to join ideological discussions in the early stages, when her husband Zekeriya Sertel, the concession holder of the magazine, was arrested, she took it over.

From first to last, Sertel advocated women's rights in her column "Kadınlığa Dair" (On Womanhood),<sup>11</sup> praised worldwide suffragette move-

<sup>10</sup> In addition to political and social issues, *Büyük Mecmua* gave coverage to literature, namely a wide variety of poems, novels, stories, and plays. Though they were not related to the "women question," indigenous texts by writers and poets as well as translations were published in the journal. In issue no.12, Jack London's short story "The Madness of John Harned" started to be serialized in Turkish translation as "John Harned." In issue no.17, a story translated from English as "Adam Öldürmek" (Homicide) was published to be serialized but could not make it to the end as the journal was closed down. We do not know the source from which the translation was done. It needs to be revealed on the basis of a comparative textual analysis. Nor is there any reference to the translator(s). Translation methods used in these target texts may reveal a lot about translation practices and methods of that period, yet this requires a separate study.

<sup>11</sup> Sabiha Sertel wrote about women's rights and problems in almost every issue of *Büyük Mecmua*. The following are the articles that came out by her name Sabiha Zekeriya: In issue 1, "Türk Kadınlığının Terakkisi" (The Progress of Turkish Women); issue 2, "Kadınlığın Hukuki Bahsi" (Legal Discussion on Womanhood); issue 3, "Hilal-i Ahmer Hanımlar Cemiyeti" (The Red Crescent Women's Society); in issue 4, "Türk Feminizmi" (Turkish Feminism); issue 5, "Kız Darülfünunu Meselesi" (The Question of Girls' University); issue 8, "Sütnine ve Dadı Mektebi" (The School for Wet Nurses and Nannies); issue 11, "Kadına Çalışma Hakkı" (Women's Right to

ments,<sup>12</sup> striving for the “emancipation of women from social oppression, sharia oppression in particular” (*ibid*:19). Sabiha Sertel’s writings in *Büyük Mecmua* conveyed her egalitarian and feminist thoughts on women’s right to vote and stand for election, their education, and their visibility in the public sphere. Likewise, she aimed to raise women’s awareness in her writings on marriage, gender relations, pregnancy, motherhood, daily life and women’s problems in their careers.<sup>13</sup> It seems that that she was influenced by the First Wave feminists as she put gender equality in the center of gender issues and referred to it as the primary and the most important objective of women’s emancipation.

As mentioned above, the early Turkish republican regime implemented a series of secularizing and modernizing reforms with respect to political institutions, education, civil rights and public life. As Yeşim Arat (2010: 39) points out, “Arguably, the women of the country were the most important beneficiaries of these reforms. Within a decade or two, women gained a series of rights comparable to those of women in most progressive democracies of the day. Not only were they set free from the restrictions of the Islamic legal code, but they were also enfranchised as citizens equal to men.” In fact, the institutional and legal reforms initiated by the Kemalist regime altered the role and position of women in society and expanded women’s political and civil rights. The government-initiated reforms improved women’s social standing in society, helped increase the engagement of women in the pub-

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Work) on the page titled as “Kadın/Kadınlık Sahifesi” (Woman/Womanhood Page) instead of “Kadınlığa Dair” (About Womanhood); issue 13, “Kadınlar ve İntihabat” (Women and Elections); issue 15, “Pamuk Ayşe Hanım’la Mülakat” (Interview with Pamuk Ayşe Hanım) on the page renamed as “Kadınlık Şuûnu” (Women’s Affairs); issue 17, “İngiltere’de İlk Kadın Mebus” (The First Woman Member of Parliament in England) on the page titled “Kadınlık Âleminde” (In Women’s World). There were other writings on women such as “Saç Tuvaleti” (Hairdo), “Gelin Tuvaleti” (Bridal Gown).

<sup>12</sup> In her memoirs, Sabiha Sertel tells that she had been following and writing in the journal about suffrage movements across the world; however, she does not mention which sources she had read and been inspired by. Except for canonical works she was assigned to read in her classes in the USA, I was not able find much reference to these sources in the biographies, memoirs, and academic studies on Sertel (Sertel 1993, Sertel 2008, Erduran 2004, Ertuna Biçer 2010). If we could find out more about what she had read and how she had benefited from her readings, we would be in a better position to offer an insight into her approach to the so-called “woman question.” As for translation studies, it would be another question to raise in order to understand how Sertel incorporated these sources into her own writings.

<sup>13</sup> About Sabiha Sertel’s articles in *Büyük Mecmua*, see Zafer Toprak, “Sabiha (Zekeriya) Sertel ve Türk Feminizmi” (Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel and Turkish Feminism),” *Toplumsal Tarih* 51 (March 1998): 7-14.

lic sphere, and created new opportunities for them in education and professional life. Although one should not ignore the agency of women in the process of modernization and the advancement of women's position, these deliberate government efforts to improve women's social status, educational opportunities and civil rights have usually been conceptualized by scholars as "state-feminism."<sup>14</sup> For Kemalist elites the image of an educated, modernly-dressed, and secular woman symbolized the early republican modernization project, indicating that Turkey attained the level of contemporary civilizations (Tekeli 1995; Arat 1997). Such an image of woman was presented as a new role model for the country's women as well as the symbol of the nation's modernity.

On the one hand, Sertel strongly appreciated the state-sponsored modernization project and believed that the republican regime was a great opportunity for Turkish women.<sup>15</sup> But, on the other hand, she remained distant from the mainstream women's movement in the early republican Turkey although she was not a self-declared radical feminist. From the mid 1920s, she apparently took patriarchy and women's secondary position in the society not as part of the so-called "woman question" but rather of a systemic problem. From such an ideological and intellectual perspective, she approached the so-called "woman question" from an ideological combination of socialist and feminist perspectives although she lacked an invariably consistent theoretical framework. The so-called women question, indeed, was a structural problem for Sertel. She believed that, in Marxist terms, the economic structure would transform what are widely referred to in Marxist literature as "social and cultural superstructures." In her opinion, for instance, women's economic independence and employment were of great importance:

Women complain about lack of freedom and inequality. It is the society itself that deprives women of these rights. Against this tough enemy, women suppose that they can prevent slavery and oppression by way of some changes in the superstructure. No... Many of the societies about which they complain have given women quite a few political and social rights today. The number of the countries that give [women] equal education, political rights, and civil rights has been increasing day by day. However, it does not suffice to stop their complaints. Every year women are still gathering to cry out that they have been oppressed and overpowered.

Today the Anglo-Saxon women are the ones that have the most rights in the world... And they have been complaining about the exploitation of the employed women, white woman trafficking, and what not. So it is not a question

<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Tekeli 1995.

<sup>15</sup> See, for instance, Sabiha Zekeriya Sertel, "İnkılabın Kadını" (Woman of the Revolution), *Tan*, 16 September 1938 (quoted in Ertuna 2008: 290).

of gaining political rights or attaining equality before the law... Then what is the cause of this oppression and slavery? We need to get to the root of it.<sup>16</sup>

Indeed, Sertel's prioritization of employment and economic independence was closely related to her pro-modernization attitude. Yet, Sertel drew the line against the mainstream women's movement in the early republican period, which she regarded as a bourgeois women's movement. She complained that this movement led by "wealthy and idle women" in pursuit of the "emancipation of women" was irrelevant to the problems of the majority of Turkish women. She insisted that these bourgeois women could not offer a convenient political program for a large group of oppressed lower class women that would help solve their problems. She criticized Turkish feminists in organizations such as the Turkish Women's Union or the International Alliance of Women (IAW) for ignoring "people's real materials needs – men and women alike – and wast[ing] their time pursuing a 'peace agenda' that would have little impact on world powers". Ultimately, she suggested that they were "out of touch' with the realities of everyday Turkish life" (Libal 2008:43).

In 1919, the Sertels decided to move to the USA to study at Columbia University on Halide Edip's (one of the most prominent women writers of the time who also wrote for *Büyük Mecmua*) recommendation (Erduran 2004:47) after the journal *Büyük Mecmua* was closed down by the British, French, and Italian forces occupying Istanbul following the Armistice of Mudros. She attended sociology classes at Columbia University and practical sociology classes at the New York School of Social Work affiliated to the university. During her stay and education in the US, Sertel had a chance to reflect closely on the roots and politics of gender inequality, sociopolitical discrimination against women, and women's rights in addition to socialist ideas and theories (Sertel 1987). One of the readings assigned was August Bebel's *Woman and Socialism*. It could be argued that the book that she had

<sup>16</sup> "Kadın hürriyetsizlikten, müsavatsızlıktan şikayetçidir. Kendisini bu haklarından mahrum eden cemiyettir. Bu zorlu hasım karşısında kadınlar, superstructurede bazı değişiklikler yapmakla esaret ve tazyikin önüne geçeceklerini zannediyorlar. Hayır... Bugün onların şikayet ettikleri bu cemiyetlerin birçoğu kadınlara siyasi, içtimaî birçok haklar verdiler. Müsavi terbiye, siyasi hak, medeni haklar veren memleketlerin adedi günden güne çoğalıyor. Fakat kadının şikayeti bitmiyor. Gene her sene toplanıp bizi eziyorlar, bizi tazyik ediyorlar diye ciyak ciyak bağıryorlar. Bugün Anglosakson kadınları dünyanın en çok hakka sahip kadınlarıdır... ve memleketlerindeki iste çalışan kadınların istismarından, beyaz kadın ticaretinden, daha bilmem nelerden şikayet ediyorlar. Demek ki siyasi haklarını almakla, kanun nazarında müsavi olmakla, mesele bitmemiş... O halde bu tazyik ve esaretin kökü nerede? Onu bulmak lâzım." Sabiha Zekeriya, "Yanlış Yolda Giden Bir Feminizm," (A Feminism on the Wrong Track) *Cumhuriyet*, 23 April 1935.

read bearing “a grudge against oppression and exploitation” (Sertel 1987:15) was an essential theoretical source which gave her food for thought on the so-called “woman question.” Not content with classes and readings at the university, she sought to put the theoretical principles into practice. Having studied community organizing, she started to hold interviews with Turks who had migrated and settled in her neighbourhood and established a community society named Turkish Welfare Association (*Türk Teavün Cemiyeti*), which started to operate as a social center in defending the union rights of the Turkish citizens residing in the US. The association also collected donations for the Turkish Liberation War. Meanwhile, Sertel was also actively engaged in supporting the National Struggle, or the War of Independence, in Turkey (1919–1922), which resulted in the establishment of the Republic of Turkey under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal (Sertel 1987:51–54).

When Sabiha Sertel visited the US again after years, she learned that the associations had still been operating and young people had taken the lead. It can be said that, as a cultural entrepreneur, Sertel had succeeded in building a strong “socio-cultural cohesion” (Zohar 2005f:81) among the groups of Turkish migrants residing in the USA. Standing up to exploitation and supporting their labour, these individuals were going on strike and fighting for their rights without any reference to identity of their fellow friends. All this, Sertel said, was “the fruits of their labour” (Sertel 1987:60).

The Sertels returned to Turkey in 1923. After the closure of the journal *Resimli Ay* (the Illustrated Monthly) that they had been publishing since their return, Zekeriya Sertel founded a daily paper named *Son Posta* (The Last Post) with Selim Ragıp, Ekrem Uşaklıgil, and Halil Lütfi Dördüncü. The partners objected to Sabiha Sertel writing in the paper as “her articles and columns in *Resimli Ay* and the associated trials were so controversial” (Shissler 2007:25). For this reason, she stopped writing in the paper and decided to work as a freelancer. From the appearance of the very last issue of *Resimli Ay* on January 1, 1931 and of the column “Cici Anne” in *Cumhuriyet* on May 24, 1931 to the founding of *Tan Gazetesi* in 1934, she did not have a regular job in a newspaper or journal (*ibid.*). From 1930 to 1936, she also regularly did translations.

Following the Şeyh Said rebellion (a rebellion of a religious character led by Şeyh Said and a group of former Ottoman soldiers attempting to bring back the caliphate system) in 1925, the government started to exercise strict press censorship and punishing any dissident voice. Criticism, even of a friendly kind, was silenced by the government that established a single-party regime. Sabiha and Zekeriya Sertel were supporters of the republican regime and stood against all the opponents that strived to change the regime or sug-

gested the revival of traditional institutions. However, they also criticized the regime for its censorship and policies, and even though they had no intention of subverting the regime, they could not escape harsh censorship exercised over the press, including their own publications. In the mid-1920s, the single-party regime closed down almost all newspapers and magazines with leftist and liberal tendencies (Zürcher 2003: 172). At a time when the freedom of thought and expression was abridged, immediately squelching leftist movements of any kind that were considered 'dissident' and 'separatist', it is not so hard to guess that it was not really possible to make these movements heard, not even by means of translation. Considering that even in our day and time translators face the risk of standing trial due to the translations from sources perceived as a 'threat', it is not surprising at all that translations of a similar kind were banned and pulled off the shelf while translators, similarly, were put on trial in a regime where one could not really enjoy any freedom at all.

In the early 1930s the single-party regime loosened restrictions on freedom of the press and expression, and encouraged the founding of a new but loyal political party, taking into considerations political and social discontent prevailing in the country. This process led to the establishment of Free Republican Party (*Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası*) in 1930 under the leadership of Fethi (Okyar), who was approached by Mustafa Kemal to found the party (Zürcher 2003: 177-179). Although it was not so extensive and remained short-lived, this period of relative freedom facilitated Sertel's translation work. Taking advantage of a relatively free press and of freelancing, Sertel started to translate socialist works, among which was her translation of Bebel's *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* (1879) from its English translation.<sup>17</sup> It is important to highlight that *Women and Socialism* is the first translated text in the translation category of "woman and politics" in Turkey, and there was no other translated text that fell in this category up to 1966 (Işıklar-Koçak 2007: 85-86).

<sup>17</sup> Originally written in German, August Bebel's *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* was first published in 1879 by Verlag der Volksbuchhandlung. Sabiha Sertel says in the "Translator's Preface" that she translated the book into Turkish from the fiftieth edition of its English version. Sertel's translation of *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* was first published in 1935 as part of *Dün ve Yarın Tercüme Külliyyatı*, which consisted of "the first series of translated western classics after the alphabet reform [the adoption of the Latin alphabet as to replace the Perso-Arabic script in 1928]" (Tahir-Gürçağlar 2008: 158). In 1976, another publishing house, Toplum Yayınevi, simplified and republished Sertel's translation. Later, Saliha Nazlı Kaya translated Bebel's *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* from German into Turkish. Kaya's translation, based on the 1985 edition of the book printed by Verlag J. H. W. Dietz Nachf GmbH, was published in 1991. Another Turkish publishing house, Agora Kitaplığı, republished the book in Turkish based on Kaya's translation from German in 2013.



It is significant to note that Sertel had to pay for the publication of her own book translations that she did between 1930-36, among which was *Kadın ve Sosyalizm* (Women and Socialism). In fact, like many intellectuals of her generation, she never expected to earn money by producing translations. As it should be evident by now, her primary motivation in creating translations arose from her critical engagement with sociopolitical issues of the era. When Sertel finished the translation of *Kadın ve Sosyalizm*, she was not able to afford the cost of publication. Having heard that Sertel had translated the book yet was not able to get it published because of financial problems, Haydar Rifat Bey, who was an author, translator, publisher, and a legist, approached her to publish the book (Sertel 1987:185). This is how Sertel's translation *Kadın ve Sosyalizm* was first published within *Dün ve Yarın Tercüme Külliyyatı* (Translated Works of Yesterday and Tomorrow) in 1935.

As Sertel mentions in the translator's preface to the book, she excluded about one-fifth of the original text in English, including statistics, from her translation on the grounds that the original version "was too long."<sup>18</sup> Sertel's abridged translation was harshly criticized and even condemned in the editor's note to the translation into Turkish of *Die Frau und der Sozialismus* from its original language, i.e. German, which was done by Saliha Nazlı Kaya in the 1980s. The editor does not acknowledge Sertel's work as a translation but a "summary," blaming her to abridge, summarize, or exclude certain parts almost in all sections. There is also a list of "translation errors" and of titles and subtitles that have been excluded in Sertel's translation in the editor's note to Saliha Nazlı Kaya's translation.<sup>19</sup>

The fact that Sertel chose to translate Bebel's *Woman and Socialism* rather than a cult feminist or proto-feminist work, like Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), stemmed from her explicit or implicit interest in Marxism and socialism. In the first edition, she wrote a preface to her translation entitled "Birkaç Söz: "Kadın ve Sosyalizm"i Niçin Türkçeye [sic] Çevirdim?" (A Few Remarks: Why did I translate "Woman and Socialism" into Turkish"), where Sertel says that she translated this book to show the true origins of the "woman question" to those who have come to misinterpret it (Sertel 1935: 4). Her translation addresses, she says, women "working at home, at work, at machines, and in the office" (ibid). The following

<sup>18</sup> It should be noted that, in the so-called "simplified" 1966 and 1975 editions of the book, a few paragraphs, including the one where Sertel explains why she chose to exclude some parts of Bebel's book in her translation, were curtailed.

<sup>19</sup> It requires further analysis to reveal what and why Sertel had excluded from the English source text in her translation, which definitely falls beyond the scope of this paper.

paragraph from the preface encapsulates for whom and why she had translated the book:

I have translated the book to show women who are exploited at home, at work, at machines, in the office that they are not destined to live that way and that they will be capable of subverting it when they consciously understand where their true interests lie. I wanted to show where the real problem [i.e. the “woman question”] originates from and which front in the fight for emancipation suits women’s interests to those who still think they advocate women’s problems by clinging like a kite tail to the women’s organizations that have become a puppet manipulated by imperialists and capitalists.<sup>20</sup>

Expressing her motives of translating the book as such, Sertel called on women to struggle against exploitation and assert their rights. The day they achieved awareness, she wanted to prove, they themselves would be capable to shatter the order based on exploitation and injustice (ibid.). In this respect, Sertel primarily aimed to bring socialist concepts and ideas to the fore of discussions about the so-called woman question, women’s rights, and gender discrimination by way of translation.

### 3. Sertel’s Motivations in Translating Marxist Texts into Turkish

Other than *Women and Socialism*, Sertel translated several Marxist texts such as Karl Kautsky’s *The Class Struggle*, Vladimir Viktorovich Adoratsky’s *Dialectical Materialism* and Vladimir Lenin’s *War and Socialism*.<sup>21</sup> She also translated the Constitution of the Soviet Union from English into Turkish in 1936. It should be noted that one can hardly find Marxist concepts, ideas and theories in Sertel’s own writings. The language that she used in her Marxist translations is much different from that of her writings she penned as a productive author and journalist. This difference partly originated from the authoritarian character of the single-party regime, as seen in many other countries in the interwar period. However, it was primarily related to her commitment to the modernization project and ideology of the early republi-

<sup>20</sup> “Evde, işde, makinede, dairede çalışıp istismar edilen kadına, bu hayatın, mukadderatın alınına çizdiği bir damga olmadığını, bu hayatı, menfaatinin nerde olduğunu şuurla kavradığı gün, kendisinin yıkmağa muktedir olduğunu göstermek için tercüme ettim. Kadın sorununu, hâlâ emperyalistlerin ve kapitalistlerin ellerinde bir kukla gibi oynattıkları kadın örgütlerine, bir uçurtma kuyruğu gibi, yapışarak savunduklarını sananlara, gerçek hastalığın nerede olduğunu, kurtuluş hareketinde çıkarların hangi cephede bulunduğunu göstermek istedim.” (Sertel 1935: 4)

<sup>21</sup> There is no link to indicate that Sertel’s translation *Harp ve Sosyalizm* (War and Socialism) was published.

can political elites. Then it is important to ask the question as to why she felt the need to translate these works.

Like many other socialists of her time, Sertel believed that Turkey had been going through a national democratic revolution – not completed yet. In this respect, it was not a coincidence or an unconscious choice of her at all to translate a cult book of Marxism, Kautsky's *The Class Struggle*. Sertel herself chose all the texts that she translated, aiming to import unknown concepts and theories for the reading public in Turkey at a time when class-related concepts and theories of class struggle were never widely discussed. So to speak, the texts she translated were either unknown to the reading public or excluded from discursive arenas by the dominant ideological currents in Turkey in the 1930s. By means of translation, Sertel also intended to express what she could not openly and sharply speak about the political regime and social order in Turkey.

#### **4. Single-Party Regime, Democracy, and Sertel's Translation of *Modern Democracies***

In the 1930s, the Sertels were still vigorous Kemalists and loyal advocates of the republican reforms. However, as already mentioned above, they criticized the single-party rule as the Kemalist political elites failed to form a democratic and egalitarian system. The Sertels were obviously at odds with the regime and, therefore, faced trials and punishments against their journal. Although Sabiha Sertel believed in the leftist, or rather progressive, character of the republican reforms, she criticized the ruling elites for failing to establish a democratic political regime and to make strides in bringing improvements for lower classes. In the 1930s, she expressed an ambivalent attitude in her writings toward the Kemalist establishment: on the one hand, like many other Kemalist intellectuals, she highly praised the Atatürk reforms, appreciating what she believed these reforms brought in the country – republican values, secularism, women's political and civil rights etc. But, on the other hand, she voiced her disappointment about the regime (Ertuna 2008: 304) without opposing it openly in her writings. Sertel highlighted the need to deepen and extend the reforms in a way that they should produce improvements particularly for disadvantaged groups of society such as women and the poor. Yet, in the mid-1940s, Sertel started to directly criticize the regime and clearly state that a revolutionary government turned into an oppressive regime over time:

No matter whose fault it is, the Republic has not completed the democratic revolution. On the contrary, it established state sovereignty but not people's

sovereignty in the course of development. It ended up securing the interests of a privileged class and exploiting the people for the benefit of the privileged. After Europe was invaded by totalitarian movements such as fascism and Nazism, it changed its course, shifting away from reformism to these movements.<sup>22</sup>

Sertel rejected the idea that legal amendments of the government guaranteed the transition to democracy and the democratization of society as well as political institutions. She strongly believed that state institutions and intellectuals should raise awareness among people about democracy to build and maintain a democratic system. Therefore, she went on to do what she thought would help enlighten people and introduce them to democratic ideas and ideals. Relying on these grounds, she decided to translate James Bryce's *Modern Democracies* – another work which was unlikely to be part of the state-sponsored acculturation and enlightenment project. Sertel published the translation of Bryce's *Modern Democracies* in 1939 under the title of *Demokrasi Ne Demektir?* (What is Democracy?) in Turkish as part of a pocket book series named *Pocket Books*. In the preface to the first volume of the book, Sertel emphasized that she intentionally chose the issue of “what is democracy” in Bryce's two-volume book. She explains the background and purpose of this translations project as follows:

These books were published on a variety of topics in America under the title of “A Hundred Books a Year.” I translated these books into Turkish, which dealt with [a variety of topics such as] revolutions carried out in any period, and included literary works from different countries as well as writings on economic and social issues. I rather chose the progressive ones among them.<sup>23</sup>

As is seen from these lines, her main purpose and motivation in translation was to integrate, in her words, progressive works into Turkish political literature.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> “Hatalar kimin olursa olsun, Cumhuriyet, demokrasi inkılâbını tamamlamadı. Bilâkis inkişaf seyrinde halkın hâkimiyetini değil, devletin hâkimiyetini sağladı. İmtiyazlı bir sınıfın menfaatlerini müdafaa eden, halkı bu imtiyazlılar hesabına istismar eden bir mahiyet aldı. Faşizm, nazizm, gibi totaliter cereyanlar Avrupa'yı istilâ ettikten sonra dümen kırdı, inkılâpçı rotasını bu cereyanlara çevirdi.” Sabiha Sertel, “Zincirli Hürriyet” (Chained Freedom), *Görüşler*, 1 Aralık 1945 (quoted in Ertuna, s. 341).

<sup>23</sup> “Bu kitaplar Amerika'da “Senede Yüz Kitap” başlığı altında çıkıyor, çeşitli konuları ele alıyordu. Ben bu kitapları Türkçeye çeviriyordum. Bu kitaplarda her devirde meydana gelen devrimler, çeşitli memleketlerin edebiyatına ait eserler, ekonomik ve sosyal konulara ait yazılar yayınlanıyordu. Ben bunlardan daha ziyade ilerici olanları seçiyordum.” Sertel, *Roman Gibi*, s.174.

<sup>24</sup> It requires further research and analysis of the reception and the influence of her translations to understand if she was successful in promoting ideas, changing atti-

## Conclusion

Sabiha Sertel's strong commitment to gender equality, enlightenment, and socialism defined her political and intellectual agenda, approaches and activities throughout her writing and publishing life in the early republican Turkey. Her engagement in translation and use of it as an activity to help transform the Turkish society was directly related to this political and intellectual background. Sertel's translation activities took place in a context where the cultural institutions of the single-party regime and the individuals who conformed to the official project of acculturation deployed translation as an effective tool to acculturate "a nation in the making" and to facilitate what is widely referred to as the westernization process as the main political and social project of the early republican Turkish regime. Nevertheless, her relation to the official cultural planning and the Kemalist acculturation project was not so clear cut. Sertel was involved in translation activities due to her own political and intellectual agenda rather than an institutional framework and a state-sponsored project. She deliberately chose the texts that she translated in accordance with her political concerns and engagement. Instead of creating an official or independent translation movement, Sertel sought to introduce the Turkish reading public to some of the ideas, concepts, and theories that she believed were understated in the country.

Throughout this study, I aimed to indicate the role that Sertel played as a woman translator who was actively engaged in producing and promoting ideas through translation. As a culture entrepreneur, Sertel imported and introduced to Turkish political literature a combination of an unfamiliar system of thought, socialism, and an alternative perspective on the so-called woman question by way of translation, teaching, and indigenous writing. In particular, as a "patron" of a particular ideology (Lefevere 1992:18-23), she consciously integrated a leftist and feminist perspective into Turkish political literature. As a result, Sertel sought to articulate her own ideas and attempted to express through translation what she believed the dominant ideological currents lacked or suppressed during the period in question. In other words, it would be fair to argue that Sertel sought to speak through translation, which she believed was an important tool to influence political and cultural movements in a rapidly modernizing country.

Sertel's attitudes toward the early republican ruling elites, or the Kemalist establishment, changed throughout her intellectual life. On the one hand, she widely praised all the "benefits" of the republican regime and got on with the single-party rule, which she believed was driving the country towards mod-

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tudes, or raising awareness through her translations, which falls beyond the scope of this paper.

ernization and the consolidation of secular and republican values. Therefore, she refrained from a direct opposition against the regime until the early 1940s. Yet, on the other hand, she sought to express through translation what she could not explicitly state in her own writings about the single-party regime and fundamental sociopolitical issues in Turkey. In other words, for Sertel translation was a way of telling what she avoided stating in her own writings as well as of introducing to the Turkish reading public what the single party regime failed to bring in or regarded as politically “dissident.” In conclusion, this paper has aimed to reposition Sabiha Sertel as a woman translator and author who conformed to various aspects of the early Turkish republican regime’s cultural planning yet aimed to import socialist and feminist tones into the state-sponsored enlightenment project.

### Sabiha Sertel’s Translations

Though this paper has mainly focused on Sertel’s translations of works on gender and socialism, the corpus presented below encompasses all her translations I have traced.

- Adoratski, V. (1936). *Diyaletik Materyalizm, Marksizm Leninizm’in Nazari Temeli*. Trans. Sabiha Zekeriya. İstanbul: Yeni Kitapçı.
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\* In her memoirs, Sertel explains that she translated these books during the Second World War but couldn't get them published and that she left the books to her brother Neşet Deriş when she left Turkey in 1950 with her family. There is no clear link for us to find what exactly happened to the translations after Deriş's death in 1956.)

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