

“Burcu Yasemin Şeyben highlights the importance of analyzing the theatre milieu to give an account of Turkey’s transformation from an unconsolidated democracy to authoritarian politics. *Struggle and Survival under Authoritarianism in Turkey: Theatre under Threat* is a remarkable collection of stories of targeted artists, their resistance, resilience, exiles, and self-exiles. Şeyben’s book is also a tour d’horizon of the AKP’s inability to impose its cultural hegemony on established cultural institutions and the expanding theatre sector. Hence, *Struggle and Survival under Authoritarianism in Turkey* shows that it is inaccurate to portray today’s Turkey as a place in which everything is determined by authoritarianism.”

—Ömer Turan, Istanbul Bilgi University; Swedish Institute Senior Fellow at Lund University, CMES

“Şeyben offers a timely analysis of a pivotal moment in Turkey’s history, where spaces for independent theatre as well as free thinking and expressing of its diverse cultural heritage have become scarce. She records and criticizes with much fervor how political and social processes under the AKP administration are eroding Turkey’s once rich cultural scene, forcing theatre artists and academics, including herself, into self-exile. This time document is written with much love, dedication, and resilience that will inspire generations.”

—Pieter Verstraete, University of Groningen;
Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at Free University of Berlin

After the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power in Turkey in 2002, the AKP grew into an authoritarian government as it politically and culturally oppressed citizens and institutions. In *Struggle and Survival under Authoritarianism in Turkey: Theatre under Threat*, Burcu Yasemin Şeyben argues that theatre was deliberately targeted because theatre institutions and companies embodied the cultural program of the statist and Kemalist cultural policy that has continually excluded Muslims and various religious and ethnic minorities. Although the AKP claimed to be replacing the top-down, discriminatory, and secular statist and Kemalist theatre system with a facilitative and inclusive one, the AKP gradually adapted a more authoritarian system, as evidenced by their efforts to close and defund theatres, ban plays, and force theatre artists to exile. Şeyben studies contemporary Turkish theatre to establish that a few theatre institutions, companies, and artists have managed to survive and develop democratic cultural policies and strategies that will outlive the AKP government.

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ŞEYBEN

STRUGGLE AND SURVIVAL UNDER AUTHORITARIANISM IN TURKEY

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Theatre under Threat

BURCU YASEMIN ŞEYBEN