

Gender Dimensions of the Turkish Modernization Project: For a Social History of the Turkish Republic

Abstract

Many analysts designate Turkish modernization as a top-down process, with the army and state bureaucracy as its main actors, which found the society indifferent or even hostile. This approach ignores or underestimates the internal social dynamics that led to this direction. Gender as an analytic category can broaden our perception of Turkish modernization and help us view it as a field of continuous social negotiations and conflicts over its meaning. The topic of this chapter is the way in which gender shaped these negotiations and conflicts. I examine gender dimensions of Kemalist social transformations in the public and private spheres: the new models of masculinity and femininity that emerged during the Kemalist period, and the new subjectivities they created. I approach those subjectivities as creators of new social and political agencies which signaled new perspectives on gender relations and various social exclusions. I also investigate the social mobilizations that challenged these exclusions over the years and culminated in the crisis Kemalist identity underwent at the end of the 20th century.

Many analysts designate Turkish modernization as a top-down process, with the army and state bureaucracy as its main actors, which found the society indifferent or even hostile. This approach ignores or underestimates the internal social dynamics that led to this direction and the communication between the Ottoman Empire and the West throughout the centuries as factors that contributed to the process of Ottoman and Turkish Westernization. These dynamics were, however, the topic of recent studies in social history mainly of the Ottoman Empire. These studies problematized the very concept of modernization as a mechanistic import of Western administrative and social models and pointed out intellectual currents within the Ottoman territory as well as social phenomena and collective initiatives simultaneous with the West.

Gender as an analytic category is an integral part of such an approach, since it constituted a decisive parameter of the Ottoman and Turkish modernization. Studies on gender dimensions of the Ottoman modernization led us away from the top-down approach and revealed broader social transformations. As far as the Turkish Republic is concerned, the “women’s question” was central throughout the years –and still

is- in the discourses of Kemalists and their opponents. Thus gender can broaden our perception of Turkish modernization as well, and help us view it as a field of continuous social negotiations and conflicts over its meaning. The topic of this paper is the way in which gender shaped these negotiations and conflicts. I will examine gender dimensions of Kemalist social transformations in the public and private spheres: the new models of masculinity and femininity that emerged during the Kemalist period, and the new subjectivities they created. I will approach those subjectivities as creators of new social and political agencies which signaled new perspectives on gender relations and various social exclusions. I will also investigate the social mobilizations that challenged these exclusions over the years and culminated in the crisis Kemalist identity underwent at the end of the 20th century.

Scholarly Approaches to the Gender Aspects of the Kemalist Modernization Project

It has been argued that reform of women's status in Turkey as part of the Kemalist modernization venture was modelled upon the Western patterns, thus being foreign to the "national traditions". However, Ziya Gökalp, one of the leading figures of Turkish nationalism, considered it an integral part of the very "national traditions". Mustafa Kemal claimed Gökalp as his ideological mentor and Gökalp's theoretical elaborations laid the foundations of Turkish History Thesis (*Türk Tarih Tezi*), the official doctrine concerning Turkey's historical past. According to Turkish History Thesis, archaic Turkish tribes moved westwards and eastwards from Central Asia and became central to the development of virtually all ancient civilizations. Gökalp rejected European modernity as a source of inspiration for the modernization of Turkey and shifted the focus on the ancient Turkish past.

According to Gökalp, in ancient Turkish tribes women were equal to men. He generally believed that Shamanism and pre-Islamic customary law gave equal status to men and women. According to Gökalp, the lower status women later obtained was due to Persian, Byzantine and Arab influences. As for the latter, he considered that the ascetic spirit of Zoroastrianism and Orthodoxy penetrated the Arab world during the Abbasid period, moving it away from the earlier egalitarian traditions of "authentic" Islam. Therefore the purification of Turkish culture from Greek, Persian and Arabic elements would lead to the emancipation of women. Conversely, women's emancipation would be a necessary condition for the revival and consolidation of the national culture, but also for the strengthening of the Turkish nation, the lifting to its former greatness.¹

1. Gökalp, *Turkish Nationalism and Western Civilization*, 254, 303. See also, Toprak, «The Family, Feminism and the State», 444-445 and Fleming, «Women as Preservers of the Past».

The first systematic assessments of the transformation of the position of Turkish women following the Kemalist reforms were carried out by women social scientists who had themselves been involved in the Kemalist modernization project in one way or another, such as the historian and sociologist Ayşe Âfet İnan, one of Atatürk's adopted daughters, as well as the sociologist and philosopher Tezer Taşkıran, one of Turkey's leading educators and a member of Parliament in the 1940s. Their texts could be considered official propaganda. Both were published by state institutions - Ayşe Âfet İnan's book by the Ministry of Education and Tezer Taşkıran's respectively by the Ministry of Culture.² In these narratives, the rights that Turkish women acquired during the Kemalist period - both civil and political, as well as increased access to public life- were part of Atatürk's and some of his associates' modernizing vision and reflected their desire to impose it on a backward society. Both authors underlined the beneficial traits of the reforms, thanks to which Turkish women were emancipated and acquired a social status equal to that of men. These positions were subsequently reproduced by social scientists, such as the sociologist Nermin Abadan-Unat.³

The dominant interpretive scheme in these texts is that of cultural dualism between an enlightened elite and a culturally backward social majority whose inertia is mobilized to explain the limited social impact of reforms regarding the status of women. This interpretive pattern is embedded in the socially prevailing perception of the character of the Kemalist reforms as a set of top-down changes imposed on an indifferent or passive society. It is a hitherto universally accepted scheme, explicitly or implicitly, and reproduced even by historians with a critical stance towards Kemalism.⁴

The second generation of social scientists - sociologists and political scientists, for the most part - who approached the issue of Kemalist reforms in respect to women comprised activists involved in the feminist movement of the 1980s. Their approach thus stemmed from the criticism this movement exerted on Kemalism.⁵ Şirin Tekeli, a political scientist and emblematic figure of this movement, underlined the repression that women's movement underwent during the single-party period.⁶ The political scientist and professor at the Bosphorus University, Yeşim Arat, as well as the sociologist Ayşe Durakbaşa, highlighted the restrictions patriarchal order imposed on the daily lives of even the educated and politically-active women of the Kemal-

2. İnan, *Atatürk ve Türk Kadın Haklarının Kazanılması*; Taşkıran, *Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında Türk Kadın Hakları*.

3. Abadan-Unat, «Social Change and Turkish Women»; idem, «Söylemden Protestoya»; idem, *Kum Saatini İzlerken*. See also Saylan, *At Kız*.

4. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (Greek Edition), 252, 261.

5. Çakır, «Feminism and Feminist History- Writing in Turkey», 62-63.

6. Tekeli, «Tek Parti döneminde kadın hareketi».

ist era. They stressed that while young women who took on a public role during this period were encouraged to obtain an education and be politically active, they were simultaneously subjected to traditional codes of conduct in their relations with men, which resulted in particular oppression in this field. In addition, this conditional emancipation of the daughters of the Turkish modernists was forbidden to their mothers and wives. Thus traditional roles were perpetuated in a modern context.⁷ “New men” continued to define the frameworks of actions and behavior of women, while the latter were expected to live solely for the others and be sacrificed for their family and nation. Thus women of the early Turkish Republic were emancipated but not liberated, to use the words of Deniz Kandiyoti, professor emerita of Development Studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies of the University of London and a leading scholar of gender relations in the Muslim world.⁸ In addition, Fatmagül Berktaş, also a political scientist and professor emerita at Istanbul University, emphasizes the continuities in patriarchy between the Ottoman and the Republican periods. Of particular interest is her remark that the founders of the Turkish Republic sought the alliance of their sisters to shake off the custody of the father and the Sultan. Women supported them in the hope of becoming equal citizens in the new state. These hopes were dashed and women were again limited to their traditional roles.⁹

On the other hand, a new generation of scholars, historians this time, approaches Kemalism -and thus the reforms in women’s status- from a different aspect. Specifically, Hale Yılmaz and Alexandros Lambrou formulate some alternative positions on the Kemalist modernization project. Yılmaz and Lambrou envisage Kemalist reforms not as a top-down process but as a result of daily negotiations at a micro level between groups maintaining different value systems. Instead of drawing a vertical distinction between “modernists” and “traditionalists”, these scholars emphasize the fluidity of this distinction at the level of everyday life.¹⁰ For instance, when they address issues such as the participation of women in the Halk Evleri [People’s Houses]¹¹ or the anti-veiling reforms, they outline a game of daily bargaining where, apart

7. Arat, *The Patriarchal Paradox*, 28-46; idem, «From Emancipation to Liberation», 111-112 and 116-117; Durakbaşa, «Kemalism and Identity Politics», 149-150.

8. Kandiyoti, «Kurtulmuş ama Özgürleşmiş mi?», 78 (English version: «Emancipated but Unliberated? »); Köksal, «Yeni Adam ve Yeni Kadın», 34.

9. Fatmagül Berktaş, «Osmanlı’dan Cumhuriyet’e Feminizm», 106-110; Kandiyoti, «Slave Girls, Tempresses, and Comrades», 35-50.

10. Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish*; Lambrou, *Nation-Building in modern Turkey*, 153-183.

11. *Halk Evleri*: state training centers established from 1932 onwards in Turkish cities, in order to spread the values of the Kemalist regime (Turkish nationalism, secularism, Westernization) through sports and cultural activities, such as theater, cinema, classical music concerts etc. They were expected to limit the influence of traditional values associated with Islam. They were banned in 1951 by the Democratic Party, which saw them as centers for the spread of

from state intervention, local traditions and power balances, social networks, as well as the individual factor, determined each time the limits of the socially permissible and the impact of the decrees.¹² They realize, therefore, that the reforms were felt throughout the country to a large or small extent, as a result not only of acceptance or resistance, but also of a wide range of intermediate reactions. In this context, changes in the position of women are seen as a game of day-to-day negotiations, where concepts such as center and periphery are relativized.

Nation Building and Public Sphere: New fields of Action for Women

Obviously gender dimensions of the Turkish modernization venture acquired many different meanings that varied according to factors such as social status, education or contact with Western culture. Gökalp's views alongside the official historical narratives which presented the Turks as the originators of human civilization, created historical subjects, men and women, who sought not to imitate the West, but to help the Turkish nation rise to the level of its old self. Thus the reform of gender relations was an integral part of this endeavor. Opinions about it were anything but uniform. Some intellectuals regarded it as the equality between male and female members of the new Turkish nation, who shared the same ideals and duties in the process of national building. Still others believed that women's main role in the new Turkish Republic was to "scientifically" perform household and maternal duties. This certainly does not mean that those who were in favor of each point of view formed groups with clear and vertical boundaries: many writers occasionally expressed different and even contradictory views.¹³ In any case, wide sections of the literate population realized the need for radical changes in gender relations, something which brought them into conflict with conservative groups within the state mechanism. I believe that the struggles of the women's movement of the early Turkish Republic for civil and political rights are inscribed in this context. Thus, it becomes clear that when we refer to Kemalism, we do not only mean the person Atatürk, but also a social movement with priorities which often differed from his and those of his associates.

Under those circumstances some educated women from the middle and upper classes were gaining significant career opportunities. They were encouraged to become professionally active, i.e. teachers, doctors, lawyers, etc. This was to a large extent due to the elimination of many working-age men in the battlefields of the years 1912-22, the high illiteracy rate, as well as the exclusion of non-Muslim or religious

communist ideas, only to reopen in 1963 and operate until the 1980 coup. After a seven-year ban, they reopened in 1987.

12. Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish*, 107-120.

13. Köksal, «Yeni Adam ve Yeni Kadın», 34-35.

men from the state apparatus and the prestigious occupations.¹⁴ This tendency towards social reproduction becomes evident by the fact that female students in Turkish universities were hitherto coming from the middle and upper classes to a much greater extent than male ones. It is true, however, that educated women, though few in number during the early Turkish Republic, served as role models for some groups of women beyond a narrow elite.¹⁵

Educated women mainly worked in the male-dominated state bureaucracy, where nonetheless high-ranking officials were men for the most part. This was considered a national mobilization - a mobilization for the economic reconstruction of the country and at the same time a practical promotion of the new female role models, something which was also a female duty. Professional activity was complementary to their political action in institutions and organizations supported by the Kemalist regime.¹⁶ The need for women's labor and political mobilization on the one hand, and for the upbringing of young Turkish patriots on the other, at a time when the newborn state was economically decimated and Turkishness still an unestablished concept amid the population, explains why the Kemalist apparatus was forced to accept the demands of the Turkish women's movement despite its initial reluctance.¹⁷ Thus the state enacted the new Civil Code upon the model of the Swiss one in 1926 and recognized women's political rights in 1934. Under the 1926 Civil Code, polygamy was abolished and the responsibility for family and inheritance law passed from the religious authorities to the state. The 1934 regulations resulted in the inclusion of women in the political community, which thus expanded. This was actually meant to counterweigh the authoritarianism with which the Kemalist reforms were implemented and the state used it as an element of domestic and international legitimation. It was also crucial for the regime, being in need of building social consensus against the religious milieu it envisaged as a threat to its secularization policies.¹⁸ Educated women who found the opportunity to access public domain on equal terms to men constituted a group *par excellence* loyal to Kemalism, still being among the main pillars of the Kemalist traditions.¹⁹

14. Deniz Kandiyoti underlines the suspicion of the Turkish leaders of that period towards the men who came from the lower strata; Kandiyoti, «Cinsiyet Roller ve Toplumsal Değişim», 45.

15. Kandiyoti, «Kurtulmuş ama Özgürleşmiş mi?», 77.

16. Sirman, «Feminism in Turkey», 14.

17. For the reactions of the Kemalist state to the Turkish women's movement for the suffrage, see Zihnioğlu, «Kadınsız İnkılap», 220-247.

18. Kanner «Transcultural Encounters», 82.

19. Sirman, «Feminism in Turkey?», 14.

Modernization project and new bodily practices

These transformations signaled a radical break from the previous status of women being exclusively perceived as the carriers of sexuality which they had to conceal from public view through the veiling (tesettür). In the Republican period, the female body began to be considered as the bearer of national vigor, a sign of the progress accomplished in medicine, hygiene and physical education and a guarantee for a healthy new generation. The female body thus became the starting point for the “medicalization” of the human body as a whole, and the abandonment of its religious views. This was of critical importance in two ways: both in terms of the goal of demographic growth as a means of Turkification, and in terms of eugenics gaining ground in the medical community of the time.²⁰ The presentation of the first beauty pageants in the press as a symbol of a physically strong and modern, civilized Turkey is indicative in that respect.²¹

Atatürk, unlike Reza Shah in Iran, never outlawed Islamic women’s veiling. His personnel, however, carried out extensive campaigns in favor of Western women’s clothing which was actually mandatory for those working in the public sector, the employer of most wage-earners in the single-party period. But apart from that, the promotion of the western dress code countrywide was entrusted to the local governors of the provinces, who tackled the issue as they saw fit. Hale Yılmaz cites the examples of some provincial governors who enacted decrees on the abandonment of Islamic veiling with limited success. In general, the most drastic measures concerning women’s clothing seem by and large to have been taken by local authorities or local Republican Party officials. However, it becomes clear in their correspondence with the central government, that the latter usually recommended the avoidance of enforcement measures that would cause discontent and tension, emphasizing instruction and propaganda.²²

In any case, there was not one single attitude of the population towards the dress reforms, either in the urban centers or in the provinces. In several provincial towns such as Trabzon, Tirebolu, Aydin, Muğla or Gaziantep, Western clothing was adopted by local elite men and women who saw it as a sign of high social status along with dance parties or classical music concerts. It was linked to the importance which some social groups attached to the education and public presence of women. Also, factors such as the cosmopolitan tradition of an area -commercial development or the presence of non-Muslim communities in the past- seemed to play an important

20. Atabay, *Eugenics, Modernity and the Rationalization*. It also should be noted that the Young Turks’ utter admiration for social Darwinism prepared the ground for such a development. See, Hanioğlu, *The Young Turks in Opposition*, 12-13, 21, 208-209.

21. Durakbaşa, «Kemalism and Identity Politics», 145; Shissler, «Beauty Is Nothing to Be Ashamed Of».

22. Yılmaz, *Becoming Turkish*, 90-91.

role in the adoption of Western clothing on a local level. Moreover, women and men of the local elites often adopted the Western dress code imitating their counterparts in Istanbul, Izmir or Ankara.²³

While the adoption of the Western dress code became a symbol of the “new woman” in the early Turkish Republic, the abandonment of Islamic veiling by urban women produced new standards of decency. Women were forced to invent new “symbolic shields” to distance themselves from anything that referred to a sexual self. Only in this way could they secure a place in public space while avoiding any harassment. Severe suits and even stricter behavior were the means for this. Thus, there was a transition to a new form of sexual morality (*namus*), a new moral code, the observance of which was the responsibility of each woman individually in contrast to the veil that was a social institution. In brief, the traditional notion of *namus*, which was identified with female sexual abstinence and legitimized the surveillance of female sexuality, was reproduced in different terms. In this way the old patriarchal norms, to which women were subjected, took on a new form.²⁴

New models of masculinity

The model of female a-sexuality also determined men’s attitude towards women. Men had, in turn, to adopt a behavior of patriotic companionship towards women, which meant to control their own sexuality. The open display of male sexuality in public, through harassment or anything else, was condemned as backward and uncivilized. This is a persistent feature in Turkish public discourses to this day. Its continuous and intense presence however implies the constant co-existence in the public space of women and men of rural or semi-rural origin, who are not at all accustomed to the a-sexual model of gender relations. The wide use of terms referring to kinship – *abla* [elder sister], *bacı* [sister], *oğlum* [my son], *kızım* [my daughter], *anne* [mother] – in the cross-gender communication indicate a perpetual concern for the maintenance of a neutral sexual character in social relations, which is always at risk.²⁵

The role of men in public space acquired other symbolic dimensions as well. The paternal figure of Atatürk as the father of the nation and especially of the newly emancipated women is indicative of this gender dimension. Moreover the dress reforms, while leaving women’s veiling legally untouched, were applied with particular rigor to men’s clothing. In Ottoman society, dress differences were indicative of class and religious disparities; since Ottoman women had limited institutional place in public life, their dress did not acquire similar social significance. The adoption of uniform

23. Ibid, 107-110.

24. Kandiyoti, «Patterns of Patriarchy»; idem, «Gendering the Modern», 126-127.

25. Kandiyoti, «Gendering the Modern», 126-127.

western clothing meant the elimination of class or local differences within the new Turkish nation.²⁶ Men's clothing thus became the bearer of the Kemalist principle of *halkçılık*.²⁷ In this way, the adoption of the Western dress code also differentiated urban masculinities from rural ones, identified with backwardness. The eradicable agricultural culture acquired male focused gender dimensions. It was symbolized by the traditionally dressed man who was followed by his veiled wife. In various figures the traditional man sits on the donkey, while his wife follows him on foot. In public discourses, the backward rural culture – precisely the Kurdish one- is still symbolized by abusive men.²⁸

Private sphere: new expectations

With the 1926 Civil Code which abolished polygamy, the monogamous nuclear family became the model of the “national family” (*milli aile*).²⁹ Moreover, in the rhetoric of the single-party period the family was presented as the foundation of the nation, and thus both notions were envisaged as integral parts of the “natural order”. Thus the acknowledgement of the utmost importance of women's education and professional activity was not incompatible with the emphasis on their domestic and maternal role. On the contrary, they acquired the imperative task of being “scientific” mothers and housewives, that is, to be aware of the most recent developments in home economics and pedagogics, in order to nurture the future rational Turkish patriots. Their role in the private sphere acquired, in other words, a public character, since a healthy and comfortable home was envisaged as a guarantee for the psychological balance of men, in order for them to perform professionally and beyond, and above all a guarantee for a physically and mentally-healthy younger generation. The importance of this role must be assessed given the epidemics of that time and particularly child mortality, as well as population losses in the previous wars. Through their domestic role, women thus became the conveyors of a new technology of the self, a new relationship with the body, which was an element of social engineering. This was apparently related to the emergence of certain new disciplines. For instance, the use of chairs and beds or the matching of each body function with a specifically designated place in the house (e.g. eating and sleeping, with the dining room and bedroom respectively), unlike the traditional Ottoman use of home space,

26. Ibid., 122.

27. Halkçılık (Populism): one of the basic principles of Kemalism symbolized by the so-called six arrows (*altı ok*) and incorporated in the Turkish Constitution of 1937. It is the perception of the Turkish nation as a monolithic body free from internal conflicts and therefore a field of solidarity between various social groups united in the common national interest.

28. See, Kandiyoti, «Gendering the Modern», 122; Karalis «Η βία κατά των γυναικών στις τουρκικές τηλεοπτικές σειρές».

29. Özbay, «Women, Gender and Household», 260.

were considered prerequisites for disciplining the bodies upon the western models; this kind of discipline would be extended to the public sphere - to the secondary and tertiary sectors. It was considered, in other words, an integral part of the formation of the Turkish national bourgeoisie, the central Turkish nationalist goal of the time.

Women –and specifically the middle class- were considered responsible for this process. This rhetoric of course perpetuated the traditional connection of women with the domestic space, despite the Kemalist emphasis on their public role. On the other hand, however, it acknowledged the importance of home for men as well. Home space should be for them a place of rest and refuge from the cruelty of the professional world and therefore the locus *par excellence* of building an urban self. Building a domestic masculinity had been a central aim in the West since the 19th century and was associated with the prevalence of the nuclear family. In Turkey, the attachment of men to the domestic space was expected to displace points of male sociability such as *tekkes*, taverns and coffee shops which were regarded as places of potential social turmoil. In that sense, the importance of the domestic space for the formation of the Turkish bourgeoisie and the suppression of forms of sociability that were considered threatening for the state signaled an alliance between middle class women and the Kemalist regime.³⁰ The latter offered them a significant role in the family unit and a power unknown in the past: the success of modernization in the private sphere presupposed the empowerment of women so that they could gain the necessary prestige to impose their choices. This meant more egalitarian couple relationships and the emancipation from the power of the elders - mothers and mothers-in-law - who had hitherto the first say in the management of the household of young couples, even when they lived separately.

Apparently, the expected changes in the private sphere also concerned conjugal relationships. Emphasis on marital companionship within the nuclear family was commonplace in the public discourses of that time, evolving from the social debate that had taken place in the late Ottoman period. Women were no longer regarded as submissive but as companions despite the fact that men were still legally considered to be the family heads. They were called upon to offer their husbands not only sexual pleasure, but also communication and friendship, which men also had to seek in marriage.

Men's emotional and practical involvement in childrearing was sought after too, something which, sometimes, became the practice. Thus the distant, authoritarian paternal figure gave way to the loving father who cared about his children as individuals, especially his daughters. Atatürk's choice to adopt daughters instead of sons in an overwhelmingly patriarchal society had, in that respect, a strong symbol-

30. For a similar current in the West of the 19th century, which mainly concerned the popular strata, see Donzelot, *La police des familles*, 38-48.

ic significance. Moreover, women who received school and university education in the first years of the Republic emphasize in their life stories the encouragement and support of the father, in contrast to the discouragement of the mother. Interestingly this was also the case with less educated fathers.³¹

Gender Kemalist principles over the years

Although women's education, employment and political rights, along with the elevation of their position in the family, were regarded as indicators of modernization in Turkey, Turkish modernization, throughout its course, was accompanied by confirmation of gender hierarchy, which involved various forms of exclusion for women in those fields. These phenomena were actually interconnected. Social exclusion from education (with regard to gender, ethnicity or class) as well as gender stereotypes in school curricula, in combination with the rural population's skepticism or hostility towards the educational policy of the Kemalist state, prepared the ground for gender based exclusions and hierarchies in the Turkish labor market. As far as the latter is concerned, it is noteworthy that internal migration from the 1950s onwards, urban growth and industrialization led to a sharp rise in undeclared labor, where women dominate. This resulted in the continuous drop in registered employment for women. In other words, Turkish industrialization and economic development in general was based to a large extent on the informal, cheap and uninsured female workforce. In the last years the state showed signs of intervention in order to rationalize and control the labor market. These interventions, however, mainly aimed at keeping women at home and promoting family values, which had, in the first place, resulted in their categorization as second or third class members of the workforce. On the other hand, the Kemalist traditions, among other factors, resulted in Turkey's presenting one of the highest numbers of women in prestigious occupations around the world. These women acted as role models for political Islam activists who claimed university education and professional prospects denied to them by the Kemalist state, as well as by the patriarchal mindsets of their male comrades-in-arms.³²

Moreover, most Turkish citizens' wedding strategies remained for decades entrenched in traditional practices: according to a 1968 nationwide statistic, 78% of weddings were arranged by the bride and groom's families, with or without the consent of the bride. These circumstances did not seem to leave much room for

31. Kandiyoti, «Gendering the Modern», 123; Arat, «Educating the Daughters of the Republic», 166-167.

32. İlkkaracan, «Why So Few»; «Ulusal İstihdam Stratejisi İhtiyacının Ortaya Çıkış Süreci»; DİSK/ Genel İş, «Kadın İşçilere Yönelik»; Kağıtçıbaşı, «Türkiye'de Kadın», 10-12; Göle, «The Quest for the Islamic Self», 87; White, *Islamist Mobilization*, 234; Eraslan, «Uğultular.... Silüetler...», 253-259, 268-269.

marriage out of love or even mutual respect and created, in the majority of cases, problematic marital relationships since, again, in most cases, emotional closeness between the spouses was considered unnecessary, or even, inappropriate.³³

Perceptions of the family as a place of preparation of future Turkish citizens for the public sphere had brought about various state interventions with it since the Young Turk period. The family therefore became a privileged place of state intervention in the citizen's private life. Additionally, the widespread image of the nation as an extended family and the state as a strict punishing father (*devlet baba*) legitimizes family control over women's lives with state support. A glaring example, aside from the growing number of femicides which are treated with scandalous indulgence by the courts, are virginity tests which many unmarried young women undergo and which have not, so far, been banned, despite recent legal restrictions. Furthermore, state and family endorsement had implicitly been for years a necessary condition of eligibility for membership of the Parliament, hence the small number of female deputies despite the fact that Turkish women gained political rights in 1934, earlier than many of their European counterparts.

The Turkish women's movement has challenged all these exclusions throughout its history and claimed for women an equal position in the public and private sphere alongside religious citizens and Kurds who were also excluded within the Kemalist state. The multiple exclusions which signaled Turkish modernization -exclusion of women, religious citizens, non-Muslim minorities and Kurds- led to the delegitimation of the Kemalist narrative from the 1980s onwards, and the emergence of movements which claimed identities distinct from the Turkish one, though not always incompatible with it: the new autonomous feminist movement, political Islam, and the Kurdish movement. In all three cases gender dimension was of primary importance. In the first case, this is self-evident. In the other two the mass mobilization of women was decisive in their emergence as social movements. These movements radically challenged in the 1980s and 1990s -and still challenge- Kemalist modernization, emphasizing its repressive aspects and advocating more inclusive social models. Political Islam proposed a Western model of economic growth adapted to Islamic moral values. At the dawn of the 21st century, the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi / AKP*) emerged as a *par excellence* conveyor of this model. AKP came to power in 2002, under the banner of the coexistence of Islam with political and economic liberalism (in its neoliberal version), European perspective for Turkey and separation of religion and politics. Even today, when AKP as the ruling party has abandoned most of these principles and joined the most extreme nationalist and fundamentalist circles, the women's movement, which includes secular and religious women, is one of the few democratic voices in the coun-

33. Kandiyoti, «Kurtulmuş ama Özgürleşmiş mi?», 80.

try. It has to face the growing gender-based violence and particularly murders of women that reached unprecedented numbers in the last years. The Turkish state's stance towards the problem consists in the country's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention and efforts to ban women's organizations fighting against femicides. Secular and religious women join forces against gender repression claiming at the same time broader political changes. Women's movement became in this way an important democratizing force in the country, since it represented –and still does– a democratic version of Kemalism and political Islam.³⁴

Conclusion

The control and social exclusion women experienced throughout the modernization venture are not, of course, peculiar to the Turkish case, something which challenges once more the nationalist narratives on the exceptionalism of the latter. The process of modernization did, nevertheless, have a specific character in Turkey, as everywhere: this consists of the fact that in its very inception, in the Ottoman Reform era, modernization came as a response to the weakening of the Ottoman Empire, as an aim to reverse this course. This had significant consequences in the long run: it made Turkish modernists descendants of the imperial Ottoman tradition, even when they renounced the Ottoman past (as Kemalists did). The revival of the old greatness in new terms –Turkification, abandonment of territorial expansion, secularization, a shift towards Western standards– required the mobilization of all available social forces, women, of course, being among them. The need for middle class women's mobilization necessitated their access to public life and satisfaction of their demands, which were based on the Western value system. Thus, modern Turkey emerged as a country that differed from both the Western states and the peoples who experienced colonialism and would later form the so-called Third World. Moreover, it aimed to set for the latter an example of liberation and economic development – as occurred to some extent.³⁵

I consider these observations necessary since the Turkish women's movement emerged in this context. I am not suggesting that it was a mere aspect of Turkish nationalism. The latter legitimized the articulation of alternative gender discourses and claims which enabled women to challenge the exclusion the very modernization brought forth, and to demand equal rights. These autonomous discourses, as an outcome of individual intellectual elaborations, constituted the legacy for the second and third wave of feminism in Turkey which emerged at the end of the 20th century and demanded the expansion of women's rights in completely different circumstances.

34. Arat, «Women's Call for Democracy»; Kanner, «Κίνημα κατά της έμφυλης βίας και πολιτικές από τα κάτω».

35. For this example for the colonized peoples, see Dumont, *Mustafa Kemal invente la Turquie moderne*, Greek edition, 207-208; Hanoğlu, *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography*, 189.

Therefore, the way in which women and men perceived themselves as gendered subjects and acted accordingly in society largely determined the process of Turkish modernization. Contrary to the perception that defines the latter as the result of imposition from above or as a conflict between a modernizing elite and obscurantist religious masses, it emerges as a process of wider social struggle and a multi-layered conflict of social interests. This conflict, beyond the duality oppressors/oppressed, took –and continues to take- place over the relationship with the state, access to wealth, the economic and political perspectives of the country; in other words the very meaning of modernization.

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