WOMEN IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY: MODERNITY,

FEMINISM, AND ISLAM

IN TURKEY

by

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ABSTRACT

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This research aims to shed light on the problems regarding women in Turkey. Modernity projects have had a great impact on shaping the social structures that affect Turkish women. The feminist movement, which began in the 1920s as a state project, gained its energy and formed its new structure especially after 1980. Following the military coup in 1980, in a very complex socio-political arena, feminists had the chance to promote their movement more openly. Women began searching for more freedom as individuals and also started to call attention to the diversity of women in Turkey. It is not possible to present a feminist manifesto that offers solutions for every woman in Turkey.

After the military coup, rightist movements supported by the government and

the Islamists in Turkey became more visible in politics and the public. On the one side were Kemalist women trying to protect their secular inheritance bequeathed to them by Atatürk, and on the other were Islamists trying to protect their religion. Debates over modernity and Islam became clear.

Turkey has an Islamic past inherited from the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire was ruled according to the Islamic law of Sharia. Although Sharia was annulled in Turkey in the twentieth century, it was not easy for this new separation between state and religion make changes to the daily practices of Muslims. Besides political reforms, the state also wanted the country to present a more modern appearance. Therefore, in addition to public reforms, social reforms were implemented that included even such details as replacing the *fez* with hats. Women also had an important role in this modernity project. The state decided to educate women to a level that would qualify them for professional positions and give them more public exposure. These reforms changed not just the appearance of the whole country, but also the entire lives of Turkish women. They gained most of their new rights even before women living in Western countries.

But women in Turkey still remain secondary to men. They still do not sufficiently exercise their new legal rights, their participation in the workforce remains low, and the division of labor in the private sphere does not favor women. Scholars have argued that patriarchy, tradition, and economic structures are reasons why women have been subordinated in Turkey. But the religion of Islam has also had a great impact on Turkey's social structure, and it gives men a powerful

legitimacy to subordinate women. Islam is usually studied in the context of identity politics, especially since the rise of a new Islamic movement in the 1980s; it affects daily practices to a great extent.

Presenting the effects of religion especially upon the family, gender roles, and the workforce is important. Islam's compatibility or incompatibility with modernization and feminism is one of the most important issues shaping the lives of Turkish women. The aim of this research is to show the obstacles that modernity and feminism face in the secular Islamic country of Turkey from a gender perspective.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 <u>Modernity</u>

Modernity has largely been a process affecting Western civilizations. It begins with a change of thought in understanding daily practices. Modernity "is a paradigm that surrounds democracy in politics, capitalism in economy, positivism in science, and gives its name to the collection of all these" (Dikecligil 1998, p. 1644)[1].

Modernity started with the Enlightenment; it symbolizes separation from the past and requires a process that usually goes from traditional to modern. The word *modern* originates from the Latin word *modernus*, which defined the separation from pagan Rome with the acceptance of Christianity. Today the term *modern* is used to highlight the meaning of "new; being different from the past." The word gained its meaning through the Enlightenment, during which rationality and ideas of liberty challenged the influence of religion over society.

Modernity is considered to be a process that originated from the thought of being modern. The Industrial Revolution of the eighteenth century caused a shift from agricultural to industrial societies in the West. After the Industrial Revolution, the word *industrial* became a synonym for modernity. Modernity also represents the modernization of ideals in non-Western societies. Since modernity is a process that

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[1] Translation from Turkish is my own.

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goes from traditional to modern—if modernity is deterministic, it is accepted that the process proceeds from traditional to modern—it symbolizes the evolution of non-Western societies. The main proposition behind theories of modernity is that every society undergoes a process of transformation in phases and cannot be obstructed. Thus, it is argued that every society will eventually share the same characteristics that present the universal character of modernity (Kongar 1995).

Giddens has related modernity to Westernization of the world and consequently globalization: "'Modernity' refers to the modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from about the seventeenth century onwards and which subsequently became more or less worldwide in their influence" (1990, p. 1). For Giddens, modernity means "institutional transformations that have their origins in the West" (1990, p. 174). Giddens accepts modernity as both a Western and a non-Western project. Institutions such as nation-states and capitalism have their roots in European history; in this sense modernity is a Western project. But since globalization, as a consequence of modernity, eliminates differences between societies, modernity cannot be considered Western (1990). Although we can agree with Giddens that modernity is for Western countries, his position with respect to "otherness" is open to criticism.

Modernity theory is an ideology that emphasizes political differences. Modernity theories primarily concern non-Western countries, and they use terms such as *third world countries, undeveloped countries,* or *developing countries,* which are a consequence of modernity itself.

The political elite are usually the leaders of modernity projects in their respective countries. Improving levels of literacy, education, urbanization, communication, and technological development are said to be the ideals of non-Western countries. In the case of Turkey, bureaucratic elites educated in Western countries have been the leaders of modernity projects. According to Kacmazoglu (1995), modernity theories were developed to put the West in the center and give a new structure to the political conjuncture that followed the Second World War. After the failure of imperialistic politics in non-Western countries, modernity theories gave these countries a new recipe to reach the ideals of Western civilization.

In this context, religion was expected to lose its place in society. But in Middle Eastern countries, the distinction between tradition and modernity manifested itself in the religious context. Tradition presented itself with devotion to religion and modernity with secularism and the nation-state.

According to Mardin (1983), since religion guides people within a society and provides relief for insuperable events, it will not lose its importance. Durkheim also noted the importance of religion in maintaining solidarity and connection for members of a society (Bellah 1973). In addition to mechanical solidarity, religion also acts as a source of organic solidarity. By providing a meaning for life, it strengthens the morals and social norms of a society's members. Durkheim argued that religion plays a critical role in society, and he debated theories that dismissed it. Religion provides control, solidity, purpose, and a way of communication for people, while it reaffirms social norms (Bellah 1973).

1.2 Modernization and Islam

With the effects of globalization, Third World countries now face the consequences of modernity. Their degree of interaction with modernity affects different cultures in many aspects of life. The consequences of this encounter will vary, since different cultural and religious backgrounds have different norms and values that form the social structure. Especially in the Middle East, the interaction between religion and modernity has given rise to debates in many different areas. One of the most important and complex fields of study related to religion and modernity in the Middle East is that of women's studies.

Studies by different disciplines regarding the Middle East have begun with theories of modernity. With the revival of Islam, academic interest in Islamic societies has increased. Islamic movements have set themselves against Western culture and criticized its universal character. Their alternative modernization discourses and rejection of Western ideals, such as rationalization and positivism, have led scholars to formulate a dichotomy of two different worlds, East and West (Saktanber 2002). Western modernization has been criticized for imposing its ideals on the East and for creating hegemony. Since the Enlightenment, the superiority of Western culture has been accepted without questioning its consequences for different societies. The linear development theory of modernity has been unquestioned and may be applied to any culture; it has been accepted that development shows a process going from traditional to modern. But Islamic movements have challenged this progress theory of modernity and have offered a new form with alternative

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traditional ideals of modernity. The impositions of Western morals and norms have had a reverse impact on Muslim societies. The definitions of *traditional* and *modern* have grown vague since modern lifestyles have interfered with traditional norms. Debates over modernity within the West have also made it possible for Islam to criticize Western norms and values. The complete rejection by Islamist movements of the West, its norms and values, and the institutions that practice these values, makes their position more threatening than any other fundamentalist ideology (Saktanber 2002).

In the beginning, the confrontation of the Middle East with modernity forced Muslim countries to develop modernization projects. In Egypt, Iran, and Turkey, efforts took place toward modernization. The notion behind nation-state projects was to combine traditional institutions with new, modern practices. Developments in family law, women's rights, and the political arena were the main goals of these modernization projects. Within these projects, according to Abu-Lughod (1998), the way to become modern, the role of Islam, and the degree of Westernization and modernization that were to follow were doubtful and controversial. Ideologies within these societies put women in the center of the debate rather than discussing aspects of modernity. Although these ideologies wanted to liberate women by supporting their unveiling, education, and participation in the public sphere, they also supported women's domestic roles in the private sphere. Nationalism was the central ideology both for legitimizing public appearance and domestic adhesion; women were placed in the middle of these projects. Being a good citizen and being a good mother to raise

good citizens were legitimized with the idea of nationalism. The interaction between modernity and the public sphere regarding women's status mainly consisted of applying new, scientific techniques to domestic roles, such as being an educated mother who uses her knowledge to raise her child according to new developments. Furthermore, with education and knowledge women were expected to become good citizens of the nation. But these practices, according to Hatem (1993), were not practical and did not influence all classes; rural and working class women, with their limitations on receiving education, went unnoticed. According to the literature, these women became the driving force of the Islamist women's movements.

Turkey, being a Muslim country between the Middle East and Europe, was also affected by ideas of modernization. In the nineteenth century, with ideas of modernization current among elites, projects of modernity began to develop. These ideas first started with the suggestion of using new techniques in the military, and then spread to socio-economic and cultural areas. Women's status in society also drew attention from supporters of modernity, and women themselves protested against their unequal treatment. In the first phase of modernity, these projects were not sufficiently successful to begin transforming the country (Sirman 1989). The transformation that carried Turkish society to new opportunities was generated only after the 1920s. This transformation became the key moment for women's rights and their liberation in Turkey. When we look at the modernization struggles and women's liberation in the Middle East, Turkey holds a very critical place. Being a Muslim country, it has managed to become a secular, democratic supporter of

women's rights.

Besides the criticisms and opposition to the modernization project and its achievements, it is important to present the transformation of Turkey and of the status of women under this project. Turkey is one of the most important countries to have made an ideal of becoming modern. Turkey has had the most successful modernizing project among Muslim countries and has achieved its goal of modernization. The controversies within the modernity project and the criticisms of practices during this transformation do not undermine the importance of its achievements regarding women's rights. Both the criticisms and the deifications of the modernity project and its operators have contributed to history and to social change.

It is important to present the history that has carried Turkey to its present social conjuncture regarding women. The modernity project and its consequences, which serve as a background to today's structures, have enlightened the policies and practices that have shaped Turkish society. Islam as a religion, modernity as an ideal, and feminism as the driving force of women's rights are all interrelated. The interaction among Islam and these two ideologies are the three important elements of the debates concerning women's rights in Turkey. But studies regarding religion and women are hard to find in Turkish literature. The main reason for their absence has to do with the control of the state over religion starting from the early republican era. Although religion maintained its place as an untouchable subject for many years, Turkish scholars such as Mardin, Kandiyoti, Durakbasa, Gole, and Kasaba

eventually established religion as a subject for research. Islam as a religion and an ideology is an important part of Turkish culture, and it is inevitable that an institution that has such an impact on society should come under study. Especially when it comes to research on women in Turkey, it is impossible to ignore such an impact. The dictates of Islam, its contributions to and effects on women's lives, and the dichotomies of East/West, Islamist/secular, veiled/unveiled, and traditional/modern make it convenient to understand the struggles women face in Turkey. It is also important to include identity politics regarding women, since it is impossible to study women and Islam in Turkey without reference to them.

Women's struggles and their fight for their rights in Turkey and the dichotomies of feminist/non-feminist and Islamist/secular within a patriarchal country highlight the importance of their liberation.

Religion is being used as a tool for politics, and the Muslim identity of society has been carried into the public domain. Veiling has become a symbol, and "modern" women have become the target of these groups. Although identity politics is not the main issue in this thesis, to be able to give both a complete perspective on the effect of religion on women's status and a comprehensive analysis of contemporary women's issues in Turkey, it is necessary to refer to identity politics. It is also important to address the handicaps of the new, modern/Muslim women that have originated in the efforts to combine modernity and Islam.

This study presents the compatibility/incompatibility of Islam and feminism from the perspective of gender roles, family, and participation in the public sphere in

a secular, Muslim country. Women's participation in the labor force and their roles as mothers and wives will be studied and analyzed in relation to Islam. Women, whether Kemalist or Islamist, are mostly addressed as symbols and as victims of modernity projects and alternative modernity projects. But women from both ideologies have been repressed in different phases and aspects of the transformation process. This study tries to approach the topic, within the limits of this thesis, in a way that does not victimize these women as objects and that does not lead to dichotomies such as Kemalist and Islamist. There are, however, some limitations due to the nature of the existing literature. To present the compatibility/incompatibility of Islam and women's rights in Turkey, it is important to emphasize Turkey's special position as a secular Muslim country. Women in Turkey are in a different social setting than women living in other Muslim countries. According to Turkish law, women have equal rights with men, and they do not share the same historical background of other women in the Middle East. It is critical to study women in Turkey without an "orientalist" (Said 1987) approach.

To demonstrate the status of women and feminism within Islam in Turkey, it is necessary to provide some historical background regarding the modernization projects and feminist movements. Modernization projects starting in the late Ottoman period and continuing in the republican era had a great impact on today's social structure. State feminism and the liberal feminist agenda emphasized different aspects of women's status. While state feminism started the emancipation project, the second gave rise to a women's movement and improved women's perceptions of

themselves. After the 1980s, with the rise of the Islamist movement, women who adopted Islamic ideology also became active. The debate between Islamists and Kemalists has continued, and women have been the main subject of these arguments. The Islamist movement has presented itself as an alternative to the modernization project and has argued against Western modernization.

How have modernist perspectives affected women's lives in the context of work, family, and gender roles in Turkey? How have state feminism and liberal feminism influenced the transformation of women? How does Islam affect gender roles, family, and workplace participation? In which contexts is Islam compatible or not with feminism and modernism? How can a "modern Muslim woman" ask for emancipation and accept being subordinated to her husband because of her beliefs? How can Islamic beliefs lead women to emancipation? With these questions in mind, this study will try to enlighten the reader and present the history of women's movements in Turkey. Islam as a religion, feminism as an ideology, and modernity as a highly debated phenomenon provide the background for the status of women in Turkey.

CHAPTER 2

WOMEN AT THE CENTER OF ISLAM, MODERNIZATION, AND THE
FEMINISM TRIANGLE

The most common subjects in the literature concerning women in the Middle

East begin with references to modernity and the West. Abu Lughod, Ahmed,

Mernissi, Shakry, Kandiyoti, and Hatem are scholars who have studied the status of

women in Middle Eastern countries. Their work has enabled us to understand the

impact of the East/West dichotomy on feminist discourses. The East was considered

to be backward, and its people were presented as uneducated and ignorant by

Western missionaries (Abu Lughod 1998); the West was modern and the East was

not. The distinction between modernity and tradition marked every issue that

concerned women's rights in the Middle East. Modernity projects of the Middle

Eastern countries therefore adopted Western norms and values in order to become

modern. The linear development theory of modernization goes from traditional to

modern, and this idea was adopted by these countries. According to Abu Lughod

(1998), references in postcolonial studies to the condition of women in Eastern

cultures presented them as victims of those cultures, and the low status they

attributed to these women legitimized their attempts to transform Eastern women.

Shakry (1998) has drawn attention to the modernization projects in the

nineteenth century and their presentation of women as members of a society who are

in need of education, reformation, and transformation.

Ahmed's (1992) work, *Women and Gender in Islam*, in referring to Egypt, presents the effects of colonial structures on the process of forming the "new woman." Ahmed remarks upon the importance of Western colonization and its effect on the "woman question"[2]. According to Ahmed, the most important discourse on Muslim women and their oppression in the Middle East made its advance after colonization of the East by the West. She criticizes Western discourse, which she calls "the discourse on Islam blending a colonialism committed male dominance with feminism", as being oppressive itself. The veil and segregation were used to justify the oppression thesis, according to Ahmed. Customs and traditions represented backwardness. Western missionaries regarded Muslim societies as ignorant, lazy, and backward. Quoting Western missionaries, Ahmed shows how they presented Muslim women as oppressed and exploited. She also narrates the attempts of British teachers to organize girls at school to protest with their families to let them unveil. She criticizes Western ideology and its imposition upon women in Middle Eastern countries. According to her, women were either drafted away from their native religion, their customs, and dress to achieve modernization, or were forced to transform them. The veil became a symbol of backwardness, oppression, and misfortune.

Ahmed's (1992) book closely analyzes Quasim Amin's book, *Liberation of Women*, presenting his Western perspective. According to Ahmed, Amin's

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[2] The term "woman question" was first used by Deniz Kandiyoti (1997).

suggestions in the book caused a furious debate and started the feminist discourse in the Arab world. Her detailed work on colonialism and the interaction between East and West is one of the most important research projects that have made it possible to understand the importance of cultures and their authenticity. Authenticity has become an important argument for Islamic movements in contemporary societies, as Saktanber quotes Al-Azmeh[3]:

> Revivalism is the axial mode of cultural and political discourse and authenticity the sole means of actual access as of moral probity; that as a result, historical practice is an act of authenticating desires or programs for the present and the future; and that this authentication involves references to past events still somehow alive at the core of the invariant historical subject; events which are repeatable, in the act of breach between past and future. Thus parliamentary democracy is presented as a simple revalorization of Shura, a process of consulting clan chiefs in early Islamic times, and rationality becomes a reclamation of a work of Averroes and of Ibn-Khaldun, while freedom becomes a repetition of Mu'tazilite theological theses on free will, and socialism is made to stand in direct continuity with peasant rebellions of the tenth and eleventh centuries.
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> The past therefore becomes a paradigm of a present which must be authentic . . . Past and future are unified by their sub-stratum, the national essence, going beyond which is akin to breaking the laws of the organic nature (2002, p. 10).

Islamist movements in the Middle East and in Turkey have established their alternative modernity thesis using the notion of authenticity. Authenticity therefore becomes a political and social discourse. In the Turkish context, the Ottoman era is accepted as the authentic Turkish past with regard to its power in the world during the Ottoman Empire. The struggle of Islamists is to maintain authenticity by

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[3] Saktanber is quoting A. Al-Azmeh. 1993. *Islams and Modernities* , London: Verso.

distinguishing Islamic culture from the West. And with the Golden Age thesis, their goal is to harmonize traditions and religion with the requirements of contemporary society. The return-to-original-Islam thesis, according to Ahmed (1992), is a response to the colonial discourse that attempted to undermine Islam and Arab culture. From her perspective, "original" Islam or the Golden Age thesis is also problematic. According to her, referring to the Prophet's life and his *hadiths*[4] is questionable because of the ambiguous structure of gender relations in the Quran and the Prophet's sayings.

Saktanber (2002) has argued that the East not only debates Western norms and values but also offers an alternative ideology that aims to displace it. It furthermore criticizes the construction of modernity and its reality creation. Referring to colonization, she remarks upon the defensive position of the East. The absence of Islamists from the global arena and their stigmatization as being backward forced them to form their own metanarratives and storylines. Saktanber eliminates the universality assumption of modernity and underlines the importance of religion as a comfort zone for individuals searching for identity and happiness. This, according to her, avoids diminishing the importance of religion. She maintains that, besides individual commitment, religion can present a corporate public action of religiously motivated people.

According to Moghadam (1992), the reason that women are in the center of

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[4] Traditions relating to the sayings and doings of the Islamic prophet Muhammad.
(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hadith)

the debate is the perception of women as the keepers of Islam's traditions. Women have been the main actors in protecting the traditions and authenticity. At the same time, they have been the symbols of modernization, according to modernity supporters. Saktanber (2002), similar to Mernissi (1975), however, presents a paradox within Islam regarding women as the protectors of Islam as well as the source of *fitna*[5]. As Mernissi suggested, the two threats Islam considers most important are the infidel without and the women within. We come to realize the place of women in Islam as the source of *fitna*. Women's sexuality is considered to be a threat to the Islamic order. Mernissi's statements, according to Saktanber, have affected the discourse regarding women's sexuality and their subordination in Islam. Because they are a threat to Islamic order, they have to be controlled by men. The presentation of women as the enemy within legitimizes control over women and the restrictions imposed upon them. According to Saktanber, this notion of controlling women and their duty as the keepers of tradition has affected both the modernity projects and Islamic movements.

Feminist discourses in the Middle East increased especially after the 1980s, with two opposing sides emerging. The compatibility of Islam with feminism has drawn important attention from Western and Eastern scholars alike. While one side of the opposition regards "ideal Islam" as favorable to women and compatible with

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[5] "Fitna is an Arabic word for civil war, disagreement, division within Islam. The word also includes the idea of drawing someone away from God. It is often believed that having men and women in congregation together or having women as imams can be a cause of fitna and thus is used as a reason for its disallowance" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fitna). In the Quran the use of the term engenders confusions.

its notions, the other has stressed the possibility of fulfilling feminism within Islam.

Ideal Islam supporters agree that the practices that subordinate women to men are social dictates rather than divine (Moghadam 2002). They reinterpret Islamic law and argue that dictates have been misinterpreted and combined with the wrongful practice of Islam. Male authority empowers women and uses the divine law as a legitimizing tool. The journal of Islamist feminists, *Zanan*, has criticized the injustices of the Sharia[6] regime and the misinterpretations of Islam (Moghadam 2002). It presents the patriarchal system as the internal and the West as the external forces that threaten women's emancipation within the traditional original culture. Moghadam refers to Tohidi's (1998)[7] work, which emphasizes the empowerment of women within the Islamic system and analyzes the struggles of Islamist feminists within the patriarchal structure and the Western threat. Tohidi has argued that Islamic feminists have maintained promotion of the egalitarian structure of Islam

> by referring to the verses concerning women and supporting their favoring structure such as education, by subtly circumventing the dictated rules (e.g., reappropriating the veil as a means to facilitate social presence rather than seclusion, or minimizing and diversifying the compulsory hijab and dress code into fashionable styles), engaging in feministic ijtihad[8], emphasizing the egalitarian ethics of Islam, reinterpreting the Quran and deconstructing Sharia-related rules in a women-friendly egalitarian fashion (e.g., in terms of birth control, personal status law and family code to the extent of legalizing a demand

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[6] Islamic Law.

[7] Moghadam quotes from Nayereh Tohidi, 1998, "The Issue at Hand," Pp. 277-294 in *Women in Muslim Societies: Diversity within Unity* edited by H. Bodman and N. Tohidi. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

[8] *Ijtihad* is a technical term of Islamic law that describes the process of making a legal decision by independent interpretation of the sources of the law, the Qur'an and the Sunna. The word derives from the Arabic verbal root *jahada* "struggle"(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ijtehad).

for wages for housework)." (Moghadam 2002, p. 27)[9]

However, scholars who reject the idea of feminism within the Islamist state are opposed to the possibility of feminism without a secular state. According to Moghadam (2002), secular feminism supporters consider what Tohidi accepts as success as a risk for women's rights. Legitimizing the dictates of Islam for women risks their emancipation; their justification of veiling, domestic roles, moral behavior, and adherence to Islamic precepts as signs of individual choice and identity carry the risk of legitimizing these practices for the sake of divine power. The ruling Islamist elite can reinterpret, delegitimize, and restrict the use of new interpretations within which Islamist women are no longer able to form a powerful base to support women's rights in Islam. The success of Islamist feminism in Iran, for instance, is therefore limited. Moreover, this divine power is critical, since it can be used by authorities who can be dominating and forceful.

Opponents of Islamist feminism have also criticized its use of the word *feminism* and present it as inaccurate and irresponsible. But this also depends on the definition of feminism adopted by both sides. According to Moghadam (2002), if we accept Rupp and Taylor's, which is quoted in Moghadam's work, definition of feminist discourse as a "feminist dispute [that] takes place within a social movement community that, as it evolves, encompasses those who see gender as a major category of analysis, who critique female disadvantage and who work to improve

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[9] Moghadam quotes from Nayereh Tohidi, 1998, "The Issue at Hand," Pp. 277-294 in *Women in Muslim Societies: Diversity within Unity* edited by H. Bodman and N. Tohidi. Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner.

women's situation" (p. 44), it becomes possible to use the term *Islamist feminism*. But if we define feminism as a theoretical perspective that aims at the equality of men and women, supports women's empowerment and rejects their oppression and subordination, and seeks solutions to domestic violence, pay inequity, and globalization, it is not possible to argue for feminism within an Islamic context.

<u>2.1 Dictates of Islam and Women</u>

To understand the debates on women's rights within Islam and to evaluate the effect of religion on women's daily lives, it is necessary to present the "woman question" in Islam. It is important to study the dictates of the Quran, its verses, and the Prophet's sayings. Islam as a religion supports the differences between the sexes (Berktay 1996). According to Islam, women and men are not equal because of their nature. There are female Islam supporters who claim that Islam is compatible with the emancipation of women and feminism (Shakry 1998). But according to Arat (1995), it is difficult to argue the compatibility of Islam with feminism, an ideology that proposes the equality of men and women. According to Islam, men and women complete each other (Tekeli 1980). In Islam equality is not important; what is important is justice. Differentiation does not depend on gender but on sex. Equality is promised after life. In this world women and men have different roles based on their sex, and both have to practice their roles as stated in the Quran. Some parts of the Quran, which are not emphasized by Islamists, subordinate women to men, and some parts, which are not presented by the opposition, favor women.

Islamic discourse on women is diverse and has changed over time. It is difficult to separate the original *hadiths* from the forgeries. Patriarchal ideologies and power relations have affected interpretations of the Quranic verses and *hadiths*. While explaining the rulings, scholars have referred to the Quran and the Prophet's sayings to analyze women's status from an Islamic point of view. Studies on women in Islam have emphasized the context and settings, since these have a great impact on a religion and its effects on a society (Altindal 2004; Bilgin 2005). According to the literature, Islam was a reform that took place after the Jahiliyyah[10] period (Ahmed 1992; Altindal 2004). References to this period presents women as weak, sick human beings who were treated worse than animals and even killed when they were born. Altindal and Ahmed both claim that Islam provided women with some rights and, according to Altindal, these rights were equal to half of what men had at that time. He also argues that since Islam arose in an Arabic setting, these rights were established for Arab women. Therefore these laws and rules were shaped by the juncture of Arab societies and women's position within these societies. These rules, however, were applied in exactly the same way to women in other societies. The Quran and the Prophet's sayings are considered to be the most important references. Since the interpretations of these verses and *hadiths* are diverse, this study will simply present the *suwar*[11] and let them speak for themselves.

The Quran includes some *suwar* directly concerned with the situation of

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[10] *Jahiliyyah* is an Islamic concept referring to the spiritual condition of pre-Islamic Arabian society. It is described as a state of ignorance of God's message (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jahiliyya).
[11] The plural word for *surah*. A *surah* is a chapter of the Quran that may comprise several verses.

women in family and society. These have determined women's position in the public and private spheres. In some verses the Quran subordinates women to men, and some specific rulings in the Quran do the same. Some *suwar* give specific instructions to men such as in case of divorce or when the wife does not obey the husband:

> The men are overseers over the women by reason of what Allah hath bestowed in bounty upon one more than another, and of the property which they have contributed. Upright women are therefore submissive, guarding what is hidden in return for Allah's guarding (them); those on whose part ye fear refractoriness, admonish, avoid in bed, and beat, if they then obey you, seek no (further) way against them. (Walther 1993, p. 48) (en-Nisa (4):34)[12]

For divorce:

> They (women) have the same rights as is exercised over them, though men have a rank above them. (Walther 1993, p. 47) (en-Bakara (2):228)

Before the modification of laws, the refutation of the wife by the husband—*talaq*—was also permitted in Islam. The husband was allowed to divorce his wife without giving a reason and without any legal exercise. When the husband made his divorce claim three times verbally, it was considered valid.

The Prophet Muhammad suggested that women wait four months to remarry after a divorce; this was justified by considerations of pregnancy. If a woman was pregnant, her waiting period would clear confusion about the identity of the father. Women would have to wait almost four months before they could remarry, while men had no such waiting period.

The Quran dictates the differences between the sexes. According to Islam,

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[12] The names, numbers, and verse numbers of the *suwar* in the Quran are presented after each quote.

there are biological differences between men and women, and therefore they cannot be equal. Furthermore, their roles and responsibilities in society differ. Women and men are not equal but complementary, and there is justice for them, which is a very important phenomenon in Islam. Beyond the equality question, Islam organizes the economic, social, and private lives of women, thereby shaping women's lives without freedom of choice. The Quran describes each behavior of women; their obedience and loyalty are considered to be among the most important ones. Women are symbols of purity, loyalty, and honor, and it is the responsibility of both women and men to protect that.

Islam maintains that men are dominant. Women are subordinated to men for economic reasons. The man spends his earnings to take care of his wife and brings home food, and in exchange the wife obeys the husband's requests. The economy legitimizes men's superiority in many Muslim countries, and the Quran strengthens men's economic power with the *suwar*. Some interpretations, however, emphasize the importance of women; they are considered precious and have to be taken care of and treated well:

> Your women are a tilth for you, so go to your tilth as you will, and send (good deeds) before you for your souls, and have God consciousness. For now that you will meet Him. Give glad tidings to the believers. (Roald 2001, p. 146) (en-Bakara (2):223)

The Quran does not mention women's work, nor it does consider their domestic responsibilities as work. The emphasis is on their roles as mother and wife. Women have a very important duty in Islam: They are responsible for pleasing their

husbands under any conditions. A woman does not have the right to resist her husband, even if he stops taking care of her and bringing home food. According to Islam, men should work and women should stay at home, taking care of the husband and children. There is a saying in the Quran, "Heaven is beneath the mother's feet," which places importance on women's child-bearing responsibilities. They are responsible for raising good, healthy Muslim children.

The responsibility of a man is to provide for his wife or wives. In Islam men are allowed to take more than one wife at a time, though interpretations are contradictory on this subject. Some scholars have argued that at that time polygamy was legalized by the Quran because there were orphans and women that needed to be cared for; and since Muhammad was an orphan himself, he was an advocate for the weak. The verse in the Quran is as follows:

> If ye fear that ye may not act with equity in regard to the orphans, marry such of the women as seem good to you, double or treble or fourfold-but if ye fear that ye may not be fair, then one (only) or what your right hands[13] possess; that is more likely to secure that ye be not partial. (Walther, 1993, p. 57) (en-Nisa (4):3)

Islamists consider this verse an encouragement of monogamy, and they argue that it represents Muhammad's concern for widows and orphans after the wars. Since the husband must support all his wives and provide them with their own houses, polygamy becomes a privileged practice for the wealthy Muslim. Muslim women, however, have criticized this interpretation of polygamy and consider it a wrongful

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[13] The right side is considered the good side, in contrast to the left side being the evil side.

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practice among Muslim countries. According to Islamist women, the Quran's dictates should be interpreted in the context of the society at the time. They maintain that since this verse was written after a war and so many orphans and women needed to be cared for (Arat 2005), at the time it was appropriate.

In Islam, women's testimony is considered to have half the value of a man's. Only the testimony of two women can be equal to one man's testimony:

> Whenever you give or take for a stated term, set it down in writing…And call upon two of your men to act as witnesses: and if two of your men are not available then a man and two women from among such as are acceptable to you as witnesses, so that if one of the women should make a mistake, the other would remind her. (Roald 2001, p. 137)(en-Bakara (2):282)

Some interpretations of this verse consider women as more emotion oriented and men as more logical. Women are weak because of their true nature; therefore, they will be so excited and overwhelmed that their feelings will rule them. It supposes that two women will correct each other and there will be no place for mistakes. It has been argued that this *surah* questions women's intellect. But Altindal (2004) has argued that if women are weak and led by their feelings, will it matter if there are one, two, or ten women? According to his perspective, feelings will always affect women's judgment, and as a result this thesis of Islam has no validity.

Islamist scholars argue that, since this *surah* refers to economic activities and since women were not engaged in any business-related issues at the time, it does not degrade women's intellect but instead seeks to avoid any mistakes women may make in calculations and decisions that are business related (Roald 2001). Ironically Islam

supporters also give examples from the Prophet's time and narrate the economic activities of women during that period. The Presidency of Religious Affairs in Turkey has argued that this *surah* does not suggest a negative meaning. According to the Presidency, this verse cannot be considered proof of a women's inability to be a witness since one woman is sufficient as a witness. But the Presidency does approve the testimony of two women and claims that, in case of error, the one can remind the other of her mistake.

According to the Quran, two women are equal to one man when it comes to inheritance rights. The justification for this dictate in the Quran is the economic responsibility of men. Because men are responsible for taking care of their families, they need to inherit more. And since women receive money before their marriage, it is just that a man inherit twice the share. Arat (1995), a famous scholar in Turkey, does not find the inheritance laws and polygamy in advance of women even in the conditions in which the Islamist consider them as favorable to women, such as; after wars when women need assistance to continue with their lives. Interpretations of inheritance and polygamy that favor women do not compensate for the inequality between men and women in Islam and do not make it valid.

The Presidency of Religious Affairs in Turkey has explained the reasons behind the inheritance and distribution of possessions:

> In Islamic law, a woman's cost of living, whether she be mother, or wife, or daughter, or sister, belongs to the son, husband, father, or brother. A woman is usually not responsible for any other person's livelihood except herself. In contrast, man, in almost all societies, is responsible for meeting the livelihood of his wife, daughter, mother, and

sister. Therefore, in accordance with the principle "comfort is the reward of effort," or "no work, no success," a man who is responsible for meeting the needs of his wife, daughter, mother, and sister, has been given a portion equal to that of two females—who have no such duty—from the inheritance.

A woman has the right to spend her own money or property as she wishes. Even if she is rich, she is not obliged to contribute to the expenditures of the family. It can be deduced from all this that in case of equal shares between a man and woman, the equilibrium will be spoiled to the detriment of the man's interests who has this responsibility.

A man is obliged to give a nuptial gift to his wife at the marriage. The woman has no such duty; in contrast, she receives a nuptial gift from her husband.

When the couple divorces, it is the man's duty to provide maintenance for the woman in order to pay for her food, clothes, accommodations, medical expenditures, and other things during her waiting period [of her after termination of marriage]; however, the woman has no such duty. (www.diyanet.gov.tr)

Islamists regard women as being in a very advantageous position when it comes to the responsibilities of men and women. Since men are in charge of all financial responsibilities even after the marriage, their inheritance of twice the share is justifiable. Since fairness is the most important concept for Islam, this is considered to be an appropriate division that carries justice. The Presidency of Religious Affairs also states that in cases where a woman's needs are greater than the man's, the distribution of the inheritance can be performed to the advantage of the woman with consensus between the two sides.

Contrary to the verses from the Quran that subordinate women to men, the suwar contain verses that favor women and give another perspective to gender relations in Islam:

The believing men and believing women are protectors to each other. (el-Tevbe (9):71)

It is He who created you out of one living entity, and out of it brought into being its mate, so that man might incline[with love] towards woman. (el-A'raf (7):189)

And among his signs is this: He created for you mates from among yourselves so that you might incline towards them and he engenders love and mercy. (el-Rum (30):21)

The rights of the wives [with regard to their husbands] are equal to the [husband's rights] over them [with regard to divorce]. (en-Bakara (2):228)

And consort with your wives in kindness, for if you dislike them, it may well be that you dislike something which God has made a source of abundant good. (Roald 2001, p. 146) (en-Nisa (4):19)

Since the Prophet's sayings are also considered important references, what he says about the status of women also needs to be presented. When his sayings are taken into consideration, one does not see any practice that differs from the rulings of the Quran. But the *hadiths* were quoted by people who were close to the Prophet, and they are more vulnerable to wrong interpretations.

"Obedience" is the dominant word in the Prophet's sayings. In contrast, his wives were known as very active women for their time and were respected at that period.

In the Prophet's sayings are seen the same portrayals as in the Quranic verses. In some of his sayings, the relation between men and women is regarded as a mutual relationship of love, while other sayings express a hierarchy between them. Muhammad's answer to the question of how a good wife should be represents the ideal Muslim wife: "She who pleases him when he looks at her, obeys him when he

commands, and does not oppose him in things which he rejects for her and for himself" (Roald 2001).

The following are some of the *hadiths* that present gender relationships in Islam:

> If the husband invites his wife to his bed, she refuses, and he is angry when he goes to sleep, the angels will curse her until morning.
>
> Every one of you are protectors, and every one of you are responsible for his/her subjects (herd). The leader is a protector, the man is a protector of his family, and the woman is a protector of her husband's house and his children. So every one of you are protectors and everyone of you are responsible for his/her subjects.
>
> Treat women kindly. The woman is created from rib, and the most crooked part of the rib is the upper region. If you try to make it straight you will break it, and if you leave it as it is, it will remain curved. So treat women kindly.
>
> The best among you is the one who treats his family in the best manner. And I am the one among you who treats my family in the best manner.
>
> None of you should hit his wife like he hits a slave, then go to sleep with her in the evening.
>
> A man asked the Prophet, What are the husband's obligations towards his wife? Muhammad answered, Give her (food) as you yourself eat. Give her clothes as you yourself dress. Do not hit her face. Do not speak badly to her. Do not separate from her, except in your own house. (Roald 2001, p. 148)

According to the Quran, women should stay at home, and they should not look at a man who is not *halal*[14] to them. If it is not necessary, they should not go out to pray at a mosque; instead they should pray at home. When women are in the presence of men who are not *halal* to them, they should cover some parts of their bodies. Interpretations of the *surah* that describes women's veiling differ. This *surah*

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[14] Legitimate, lawful.

states:

> Tell the believing women to cast down their eyes and guard their private parts and not show their ornaments, except so far as they [normally] appear, and let them throw their scarves over their bosoms and not show their ornaments except to their husbands or their fathers or the fathers of their husbands, or their sons or the sons of their husbands, or their brothers or the sons of their brothers, or the sons of their sisters, or their womenfolk, or those in their possession [i.e., slaves]. (Walther 1993, p. 70) (en-Nur (24):31)

The parts that should be covered are not specifically stated. The interpretations of this verse are diverse in Muslim countries. While in most Arab countries women cover their faces and sometimes even their eyes, in Turkey women only wear headscarves and long coats. The Presidency of Religious Affairs has not publicly commented on women's covering, but the following statement of theirs approves of it:

> The religious sources consider the organs that should be covered during prayer under the title of *satr-i awra*. *Satr-i Awra* is one of the conditions of validation of the daily prayers, and means to cover the private parts of the body. The concept of *awra* indicates those parts of the body that have to be covered during and out the prayers and which are not to be looked at. (www.diyanet.gov.tr)

Since it contradicts the state's secular practices, this statement regarding the use of head covering in public has given rise to arguments within Turkish society. On the one side, the state bans head covering in universities and public workplaces, while on the other it encourages it within one of its institutions. But the majorities of Muslim women in Turkey neither cover their heads nor wear long coats but are still Muslim. In Turkey even Muslim women have a modern look in the way they cover

their heads with colorful silk scarves and wear modern long coats and shoes, even colorful makeup (Gole 2002). But the turban, which has been the new fashion of head covering especially since the 1980s, is tightly tied with no hair appearing. The traditional veiling in Turkey is a headscarf loosely tied under the chin with a little hair appearing in front.

Although the Quran does not mention covering the face, in most Arab Muslim countries women do cover their faces. Even before the Quran's legitimization of women's veiling, women were already covering their faces in Babylon and Assyria. Veiling was a sign of belonging to a higher class, and women who were from the upper classes wore veils. At the time slaves were not allowed to veil themselves.

Hoodfar, Ahmed, and Abu-Odeh are Middle Eastern scholars who have defended veiling. According to these scholars, veiling should not be seen as a tool that limits women's activities and controls the threatening absence of women's sexuality. Instead it validates the empowerment of women. Hoodfar (1997) has described veiling as a mystifying beauty instrument and compares it with the makeup used by many women in the West. The veil is also described as an alternative for improving women's public presence and supporting anti-consumerist claims for women's control over their bodies and sexuality. It is also argued that veiling erases class origins and protects women from sexual harassment. Veiling in the works of these scholars is presented as a woman's own choice. But in her book, *Feminism and Islamic Fundamentalism*, Moghissi (1999) has criticized these attempts to legitimize

the veil within the Islamic context. Against the element of choice she presents the existence of coercive powers, punishments, and social intimidation used against women who do not wear *hijab*,[15] and she gives examples of the practice of mandatory use of the *hijab* from Iran and Algeria. Moghissi rejects the *hijab* as a class-erasing tool, since class distinctions in the Middle East and North Africa have become more profound. Since women are also harassed in these countries, she also disproves the protection thesis of the veil for Muslim women. The control of sexuality and protection of women cannot be supported, since not looking into the eyes or turning the head in another direction do not protect women but on the contrary draw more attention to what is under the veil.

Walther demonstrates the connection between veiling and women's exclusion from the public sphere by referring to a surah from the Quran that was directed toward the Prophet's wives:

> When ye ask them for any article, ask them from behind a curtain; that is purer for your hearts and for theirs. (Walther 1993, p. 71) (el-Azhab (33):53, 55)

This *surah's* reference to the veiling of women and the separation of rooms and places led to conditions that were unfair for women and excluded them completely from public life.

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[15] 1) A headscarf worn by Muslim women; conceals the hair and neck and usually has a face veil that covers the face (http://wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=hijab). 2) Veil or Cover. This is the Islamic dress for Muslim women, which covers the whole body except the foot and the hands (www.islamcan.com/dictionary/cgi-bin/csvread.pl).

The Presidency of Religious Affairs in Turkey has stated:

In Islam, women have the same basic rights and freedoms as men have; and there is no kind of restriction to their rights and responsibilities. Everyone—whether they be man or woman—has the right to work, to trade, and to have a public job, provided they follow the basic Islamic principles and rulings, and show respect for the general rules of ethics.

There is no drawback from the religious point of view for women being administrators, including the presidency of the state, if they fulfill the necessary requirements and have the qualifications. (www.diyanet.gov.tr)

According to Islam, men and women are equal and complete each other. There is no difference between men and women ontologically and in sharing religious responsibility. They both share religious responsibility in legal matters, and both have basic rights and freedoms. However, the social and cultural milieu, and especially the patriarchal family structure in which Islam flourished, were the dominant factors in determining the position of women. This situation is the main reason for various understandings or practices concerning women in Islamic societies.

One has to take into consideration the social and cultural conditions of the revelation of the Qur'anic verses, their literal meaning, and their aim in understanding and interpreting the Qur'anic verses about women. Moreover, taking further steps about the social and legal status of women does not violate the spirit of the Quran. Under the light of the main principles of the Quran and of the Prophetic practice concerning women, all news or narrations which indicate women's being inferior, and sexual discrimination, have to be considered as false or fictitious. It is not scientific and ethical to lay blame upon Islam and its Prophet because of such fictitious news or narrations. (www.diyanet.gov.tr)

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CHAPTER 3

ISLAM AND THE MODERNITY PROJECTS OF TURKEY

Turkey, as a secular country, is the successor of an Islamic culture that was ruled by Islamic law known as *Sharia*. Turkey, which was never a colonized country, first faced the tenets of modernity in the late nineteenth century. The first ideas of modernity among the Ottoman elites paid attention to techniques that Western countries used. The modernization projects concerned reforms in the military. But the notion of becoming modern exceeded military interventions and spread to other aspects of society as well.

It is important to present the modernity project of Turkey to understand the social structure in which women became active participants in society. Without an understanding of Turkey's modernity project, Kemalism, and feminist discourses, it is hardly possible to understand Islamist movements and the status of women today.

3.1 The Late Ottoman Period and Reforms

The bureaucrat elite who led the reforms in the Ottoman period in the nineteenth century in the spheres of the judiciary, military, and education also sought to emancipate women. They were interested in polygamy, education, veiling, and the separation of sexes. This liberal movement by the elites faced opposition from Islamists, who considered the emancipation of women an offense to the existing

Islamic empire and these reforms to be the effects of the imperialist West (Kandiyoti 1997). The modernization projects in Muslim countries in the Middle East are said to have led to a separation between the reformists and conservative Islamists. But according to Kandiyoti (1997), this oversimplifies the dynamics and complexities within these movements. Modernity and ideals of nationalism in Middle Eastern countries manifested different syntheses, according to Anderson (Kandiyoti 1997). And women's status was manipulated in order to legitimize the structures of the new nations.

In the Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century, administrative, legislative, and educational reforms were undertaken in order to integrate with Europe. Equality, freedom, and citizenship were new ideas stemming from the French Revolution, and Ottoman bureaucrats who were educated in Europe could not resist these ideals. Besides technological advancements, a new rationalistic view of life in Europe also started to have an impact on the Ottoman Empire. Islamists debated the consequences of this materialistic lifestyle and argued that the decline of the empire hinged upon these values. According to Sirman (1989), an emphasis on Islam versus the stress on Westernization and enlightenment formed two opposing sides.

The reforms that aimed to strengthen state power in the Ottoman Empire led to a gap between the bureaucratic elites and the *ulama*.[16] The Young Ottomans[17]

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[16] Muslim scholars trained in Islam and Islamic law.

[17] "The Young Ottomans (Turkish: *Yeni Osmanlilar*) were a group of Turkish nationalist intellectuals formed in 1865, influenced by such Western thinkers as Montesquieu and Rousseau and the French Revolution. They advocated a constitutional, parliamentary government. The Young Ottomans were

supported ideas such as liberalism, modern Islam, and socialism. Although the Islamist wing among the Young Ottomans agreed to the advantages of European methods in technology and science, they rejected the secular reforms and blamed them for the decline of the Empire (Sakallioglu 1996). Because of the disparity between the state and the *ulama*, the authority of the *tarikats*[18] in the hinterlands became more powerful than before. The struggle between state and *tarikats* became an issue that continued throughout the twentieth century; the mechanisms to deal with tarikats changed from closing them down to granting them patronage (Sakallioglu 1996).

The women question (Kandiyoti 1997) and the reforms of elite bureaucrats seeking to emancipate women by adopting the Western modernization model in the late Ottoman era overlapped with the debates over Islam and modernity. While the new, educated bureaucrats argued that the traditions and Islamic way of life could not emancipate women as educated wives and mothers who needed to be civilized, the Islamists were critical, defending the argument that Islam was sufficient in regulating social life (Sirman 1989). Compared to the reforms in the legislative, educational, and military fields, society presented more resistance to the social reforms. Polygamy, arranged marriages, divorce regulations that favored men, and the segregation of the sexes were obstacles in the Islamic structure that made

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burecrats resulting from the Tanzimat reforms who were unsatisfied with the bureaucratic absolutism of it and sought a more democratic solution." (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Young_Ottomans)

[18] Islamic brotherhoods.

women's emancipation a difficult terrain. The debates over the status of women were the arenas in which these ideologies were fought.

The modernization process was followed by the appearance of women in public life at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. The impact of the West, economic problems, educational reforms, and conditions after World War I made it easier for women to enter public life. During World War I, women replaced men in some government offices such as mail services. At the beginning of the twentieth century, half the textile workers were women, and in 1897 half the personnel in matchstick factories were women. Women from the lower classes were already working in the Ottoman Empire in the factories and homes. With the educational reforms, women's educational status improved, and they formed a new working class (Sirman 1989; Berktay 1994). The Women's University, secondary schools, and vocational schools helped to employ women as teachers and nurses. Besides their participation in the labor force, women founded charity organizations and became socially active.

The participation of women in the workforce threatened the segregation of the sexes, so the Islamic Organization for the Employment of Women, which was founded in 1916, promoted marriage for working women and expressed its aim as teaching women how to work honorably (Sirman 1989).

During this reformist process, women's expectations were high. But after the reforms had been implemented, they criticized the reformists. At that time, women's organizations were founded and women's journals, such as *Kadinlar Dunyasi*

(Women's World) and *Kadinlik (Womanhood)*, were published. Articles in these journals mainly dealt with the qualities of a good housewife, health, and fashions. These journals represented issues parallel to the reformists' new ideas about women, such as being an educated housewife and an educated mother. But despite the voices opposed to women's subordinated status among women, such as Fatma Nesibe, Azize Haydar, and Fatma Aliye, at the end of the Ottoman Empire women were still regarded primarily as wives and mothers. Some articles, however, debated the scope of the reforms in relation to women's emancipation and criticized them by declaring their disappointment (Sirman 1989). These arguments started a new debate among literate and educated women about the liberation of women—not the emancipation, but the liberation by women, for women. A feminist awareness during this period, affected by Western feminist movements, led women to education, since they believed education to be the key to progress. Both Emine Seniye and Fatma Aliye emphasized education and invited women to take control of their education on behalf of progress. Naciye's writings in *Kadinlar Dunyasi* and Aliye's writings in *Kadinlik* considered men as obstacles to their liberation and the source of subordination.

According to Berktay (1994), although some arguments questioned the ignorance of women, women's organizations during this period represented an important activity from the women's side. The first women's movement, which was organized against a phone company in opposition to its regulations about employing women, resulted in securing advantages for women.

Educated bureaucratic elites and the Young Ottomans also had an important

role in this feminist discourse. Sharia provided these men, especially the elite class, four wives, freedom in divorce, and legitimacy of their supremacy and control over women. So why did these men want to emancipate women? According to scholars Fatmagul Berktay (1994) and Deniz Kandiyoti (1988) gender relations also did not favor men when it came to mate selection and a happy marriage. These educated men desired to choose wives for a happy marriage and friendship, and they wanted women who would not be subordinate to them and who would share their ideals. These men therefore wanted to leave the old, oppressive customs behind.

According to Sirman (1989),

> Right before the demise of the Ottoman Empire, women were regarded by themselves and by the state as primarily responsible for home and hearth. Although educated women had begun to speak out against the Ottoman family system, the main discourse was one of progress and education that did not challenge the identity of women as wives and mothers. This discourse was formulated in opposition to and at times in compliance with another, dominant discourse that couched its arguments in Islamic terms. (P. 9)

The search for being a citizen instead of a vassal was one of the most important factors in male stream feminism in the late Ottoman period. According to Berktay (1994), male stream feminisms in Middle Eastern and Third World countries can be associated with the struggles of the local middle class searching for anti-imperialist and nationalist social reforms, modernization, and laicism.

In Turkey the origins of feminism paralleled the efforts of nationalism. Since it emphasized and supported women's rights, nationalism is considered to form the basis of the women's movement in this period.

3.2 The Early Republican Period: Kemalism vis-à-vis Islam

Although the history of modernization in Turkey dates back to the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire, the most critical and important reforms include those made between 1926 and 1930, after the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923. The main goal of the republic was to develop the country along the lines of Western civilization and to reach the stage civilized nations had achieved (Berkes 1964).

In the early republican period after 1923, the new reformists, namely Mustafa Kemal, upon whom was later bestowed the name Atatürk as an honor, and his cadres wanted to create a new Turkish identity opposed to the Ottoman identity with its roots in Islam. They wanted to radically transform the Ottoman Islamic structure into a nation-state within the framework of ideological positivism. Kemalism[19] sought to create a new nation with capitalism as an economic structure, the nation-state and democracy as a political structure, and secularism as a cultural basis (Irem 2002).

Because the new ideals of modernization of these educated bureaucrats were not compatible with the Islamic way of life, to weaken the power of Islam in social life, the Caliphate[20] was abolished in 1924, along with the office of Seyh-ul-Islam (the highest religious authority in the Ottoman Empire) and the Ministry of Sharia

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[19] The word *Kemalism* was first used by Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoglu to refer to the new nation-building state ideology; this word is also used to define the revolutionary ideology between 1923 and 1935.
[20] Islamic leadership of the community of Islam.

(Sirman 1989). The *fez*[21] was also outlawed. The abolition of the fez was a "great symbolic revolution," according to Lewis (1968, p. 269), since it was an important symbol of Muslim identity. In the 1924 constitution, Islam was designated the religion of the state. This article was changed in the 1928 constitution, and secularism was inserted into the 1937 constitution (Sakallioglu 1996). Islam was integrated into the government structure as "state Islam" by an agency called the Directorate of Religious Affairs. Imams who represented enlightened Islam were graduated from the state schools of the government.

The goal of the modernity project of the new government was a modern nation that had adopted the rationalism of Europe. According to Atatürk and his cadres, to achieve this nationalization transformation, it was necessary to annul the inheritance of the cultural identity of being Muslim. In Atatürk's program of modernization, secular government and education played a major role. Sakallioglu (1996) makes an important statement in his article about the position of Kemalism regarding the new identity of the nation:

> In Benedict Anderson's terminology, the Kemalist project of Western-style Enlightenment attempted to achieve the difficult task of making individuals come to "imagine" themselves as part of a nation and identify themselves with that "imagined community" of Turkey. This was to take place without any inheritance of older cultural meanings, the strongest of which was being a Muslim. (P. 235)

Under the policies of the new republic, Islam became a secondary identity and a secondary cultural element in society. Being a citizen of the nation was the

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[21] Muslim headgear for men in the Ottoman Empire.

primary identity at which the Kemalist ruling elite aimed. Because the structure of Islam was incompatible with the new ideals, such obstacles needed to be eliminated to create a new identity. The annulment of Sharia, the religious schools, and the Caliphate were reforms that legitimized the authority of the new, secular state. As heir to the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic's new goal was to discontinue the rule of Islam. Islam was now the state religion, which could be controlled under the agency of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, which separated the public and private realms of religion.

Atatürk gave important speeches to emphasize the goal of a secularized nation; these were considered answers to the Islamic revolts taking place in Anatolia[22]:

> The Turkish Republic cannot be a country of sheiks, dervishes, devotees, and lunatics. The truest and the most authentic *tarikat* is that of civilization. (http://www.devletim.com/ataturk_sozleri.asp)

Atatürk and his friends placed greater importance upon the Turkish identity than the Ottoman identity, and to do so they had to compete with the power of Islam. The Islamic identity of the nation was subordinated to the Turkish identity, and Islamic culture was subordinated to Turkish culture to legitimize the new nationalist politics (Sirman 1989; Sakallioglu 1996).

> Kemalist ideology was an amalgam of the ideas associated with laicism, nationalism, solidarist positivist political theory and 19th century scientism. The dominant trend in the historiography of the

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[22] Anatolia is the Asian part of Turkey, but it is also commonly used in reference to the rural parts of Turkey. I use the name Anatolia to refer to the rural parts.

Kemalist revolution saw it as a late-Enlightenment movement that had its roots in the secular-rationalist tradition of ideological positivism and characterized the politics of the era as a zero-sum game between secular modernist Kemalists in action and religiously oriented anti-modernists in reaction. (Irem 2002, p. 87)

The legal transformation that might have required decades in most other countries was achieved in Turkey within a short time. Use of the Swiss civil code, the Italian penal code, German business law, and the Latin alphabet made it easier and faster for Turkey to make those transformations (Yilmaz 2003). Annulling religious laws and introducing the new, secular legal system made every citizen equal under these laws.

3.3 State Feminism and Reforms in the Republican Era

After the new republic had disengaged itself from its Ottoman heritage and Islamist ideologies, it now had a secular and democratic structure, and the status of women became an important concern for the state. The idea of modernity had brought the question of the status of women into the center of such binary oppositions as traditional and modern. This break from the past had important effects on feminist writings, and women became the symbols of this shift. Besides the new technological advancements and new regulations, the education of women as patriotic citizens was also an important part of this modernization project. The roles women had assumed during the Turkish War of Independence played a major role in their new identity as patriotic citizens. During the war, urban and rural women had defended their country behind the lines and in the cities. While rural women were

helping in Anatolia, educated women gave speeches in the cities (Sirman 1989). Most of the women also fought with the enemy along the enemy lines.

The national goal was to reach the level of the civilizations of the West and for both men and women to work together to achieve this new goal (Acar 1980). Hence, women had to redefine themselves and go through the transformations that the state encouraged. Feminism during this republican period was called "state feminism," and it aimed to make women appear in the public sphere as modern daughters of the republic. Education was the most important tool to bring about the modernization of women so they could become professionals as well as Westernized wives and enlightened child bearers, with the scientific knowledge needed to raise healthy children for the republic (Bora 2001).

Atatürk emphasized women's development as professionals as well as their domestic roles, as quoted by Arat:

> As time passes, science, progress, and civilization advance with giant steps, so increase the difficulties of raising children according to the necessities of life in this country, and we are aware of this. The education that mothers have to provide to their children today is not as simple as it has been in the past…Therefore, our women are obliged to be more enlightened, more prosperous, and more knowledgeable than our men. If they really want to be mothers of this nation, this is the way. (1991. p. 61)

In March 1923, Atatürk stated:

> Our enemies claim that Turkey cannot be considered a civilized nation, because she consists of two separate parts, men and women. Can we shut our eyes to one portion of a group, while advancing the other and still bring progress to the whole group? The road of progress must be trodden by both sexes together, marching arm in arm. (Abadan-Unat

1974, p. 24)

According to Sirman (1989), the early republican period was the second phase of interest in women's emancipation; in the Ottoman period, women had been wives and mothers in need of education, while in the republican period they also became patriotic citizens. Both periods emphasized the importance of education stemming from Enlightenment ideals. Atatürk's speeches also emphasized women's role as symbols of democracy and civilization. To be a civilized, democratic country, inequality between men and women needed to be eliminated.

Women seeking emancipation in the Ottoman period did not receive much liberation on issues such as polygamy, divorce, inheritance, and custody rights. Between the 1917 Ottoman Family Law and 1926, Turkey was devoid of a civil code. In 1924 preparations for a new civil code began. But because of the commission's reactionary attitudes and bureaucratic difficulties, the preparations did not proceed fast enough. The commission working on the civil code attempted to legalize the 1917 Family Law, setting the age for marriage at 9 for girls and 10 for boys, legitimizing polygamy, and giving the right to divorce to men in all situations and to women only under some circumstances (Kandiyoti 1988). This protocol was not legalized until 1926 with the adoption of the Swiss civil code. During this process, Ottoman feminists did not oppose this family law and were therefore criticized by men. But although feminists did not oppose this in the context of emancipation, within the familial context they considered it contrary to healthy marriages and so criticized it. The passivity of women against attempts to

subordinate them was a sign of the importance feminists placed on the family and on women's domestic roles. In the Ottoman period, feminists had searched for emancipation but also continued to highlight women's roles as mothers and wives in journal articles. The reaction of the commission and its attempts to sabotage the new civil code is just one example that shows the tension between the modernists and the Islamists in the republican era.

With the adoption of the Swiss civil code in 1926, which was important for eliminating the obstacles that had existed during the Ottoman Empire, polygamy became illegal, women gained the right to divorce, civil marriage became obligatory, and both sexes were considered equal in matters of inheritance. Abadan-Unat (1974) has pointed to Atatürk's emphasis on the importance of the Turkish family:

> He wanted the goal of Turkish women, like that of men, to be to develop a lifestyle that uses her energies and capabilities in such a way that she functions in her various roles efficiently and productively. Atatürk was determined to liberate women from their secondary and subdued role that consisted solely of being a commodity of exchange, a producer of offspring, in short a sex object. (P. 23)

Although the Swiss code provided women with security, it described men as being the head of household and gave them the right to choose where the couple would live. To participate in household expenses, women should perform tasks within the household, and if they were to work outside, written consent from the husband was mandatory. Patriarchs of *mahrem* (belonging to the private sphere, secret) became the heads of households in the new system. Also, the age for marriage had to be arranged according to custom; in June 1938, the age of marriage

for men was set at 17 and for girls 15. Although the reforms encouraged the participation of women in the public sphere, they did not interfere much with the private sphere. Turkish scholars such as Kandiyoti and Tekeli later criticized this aspect of the reforms during the liberal feminist movement. The republicans did not criticize or argue over what constituted womanhood. The new goal of women was to become social, educated, and active in addition to their roles as mothers and wives.

The education system now became coeducational, and in 1927 the first lawyer appeared before a court, followed by the first judge and prosecutor in 1930. In 1930, 1933, and 1934, women gained their rights in the municipal councils, the councils of elder men in the villages, and in parliament respectively (Abadan-Unat 1974; Kirkpinar 1998; Arat 1996).

During this period in Germany, Hitler's National Socialist German Workers' Party was in control. The Nazi party placed women in the center of the three *Ks*, as in *Kinder, Kirche, Küche* (children, church, and kitchen). In Turkey during the 1930s, the ruling party was Atatürk's Republican People's Party (until 1946 there was single-party system), and it has been argued that to eliminate prejudice against being a dictatorship and to distinguish itself from Hitler's government, Atatürk gave women the right to vote and to be elected (Tekeli 1979).

Between 1926 and 1934, women fought to gain their right to vote, and they founded the Turkish Women's Federation to be politically active and to represent the needs of women in the political arena. But their attempts in the 1927 and 1931 elections failed due to the criticisms against them. In fact, in 1935 their leader was

deposed, and the new leader of the federation declared that it would only participate in charitable activities, since women had gained the rights they had asked for and no further struggle was needed for political demands (Afetinan 1962; Arat 1997a). In 1935, 18 women were elected during the national elections and began to attend parliament (Kirkpinar 1998). Women's participation in the parliament during the republican era stood at 4.5 percent, and it was only in 2002 that their participation again reached the same level at 4.4 percent.[23]

In the republican era, industrialization gained momentum. In addition to changes in the economy, industrialization also brought about social change, and, parallel to that, changes in the family and women's status. To arrange the new economic structure and women's status in the workforce, in 1936 a new Labor Law went into effect. In 1937 the state banned women from working in dangerous and heavy-weight jobs. As Citci (1979) has shown, the number of women working in public between 1938 and 1978 increased 22 times, while the number of men increased only 6 times compared to the previous years. According to her study, women in the public sector prefer urban areas to rural areas. And the reason for this preference is the reactions against women's participation in the workforce in rural areas.

3.4 Critique of State Feminism

The republican period in Turkey formed the background to women's

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[23] Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry, Directorate General on the Status and Problems of Women. 2004. *Statistics for Women in Turkey.* Ankara.

liberation with its efforts to emancipate them. But these efforts were not the result of a women's movement but instead came from high officials. According to Kadioglu (1998), the main characteristic of the republic was the emancipation of women in the absence of a women's movement; these reforms reflected the ideals of male elites but not women's demands. She has also argued that these reforms do not indicate the presence of feminism during this era. Kandiyoti (1987) has supported this implication by stating that women were "emancipated but not liberated" in this period. But women's efforts between 1926 and 1934 to gain the right to vote cannot be denied, as well as their manifest during the municipal elections that provided free distribution of milk among nursing mothers.

According to Kadioglu (1998), despite the state's expectation of women to become teachers and educated professionals, its first goal was to create educated wives and mothers who would educate the nation in turn. Women were expected to appear in the public sphere according to the Westernization ideals of the republic, but they were also placed in the private sphere as mothers and wives. The new identity of women presented a duality between the new, modern Western ideology and the traditional Islamic identity.

Examination of the characteristics of the reforms, including the civil code defining men as head of the household, shows that the goal was not to liberate women as individuals. As previously mentioned, the reforms did not interfere with the private life and role of women. Women were given an impossible mission: besides being symbols of modernization, they had to restrain the rapid breakdown of

the social structure by undergoing a moderate transformation process. Kadioglu defines these women as "the keepers of the tradition" (1998, p. 94). According to Kadioglu, Islamists, socialists, and Kemalists dissolved women's issues into their own politics and used them to legitimize themselves.

Another scholar who has stressed state feminism and its effectiveness is Tekeli (1979), who has provided a detailed analysis of the efforts by republicans to give women the right to vote. Tekeli has emphasized the liberation question and presented the possible politics behind women's voting rights. According to her, the right of women to vote was a democratic strategy for the republic. Scholars have criticized Atatürk as being a dictator, since during that period his party alone ruled the country. Women's voting rights could be the shift that would support democratization. Also, in contrast to Germany's three Ks, women in the parliament could support the republicans' democratic ideals. In 1930 the results of this "controlled democracy" led to the formation of another party, which had to repeal itself due to the unsuccessful multiparty system (Tekeli 1979). As Tekeli has pointed out, the republican efforts to give women the right to vote and be elected to the parliament appears to have been a strategy designed to accomplish the ideals of democratization. Tekeli (1995) regards women as the symbolic pawns of the state. She has also argued that "accomplished objective illusion," brings into question the absence of a women's movement during these years. Although Tekeli refers to republican women as symbolic pawns, she stresses the idea that the reforms came as regulations from above. She draws attention to the feminist movements in the

Ottoman period and to women's protests that fought for voting rights. According to Berktay (1998), women internalized the nationalist ideology, and this prevented them from forming a women's movement. Another reason for the absence of a women's movement is the inadequate transformation in gender roles in this period.

During the republican period, reformists attached importance to women's role as mothers and wives to be the producers of a new, powerful nation. Their role was important in raising healthy, educated citizens for the nation. Women needed to become educated, patriotic citizens. But the reformists thought their Westernization needed to have some limits, and they were not to become "over-westernized *mondaine*."[24] Kandiyoti (1987) puts the new women's identity during this period into perspective using the terms "the comrade-woman" and "asexual sister-in-arms." In White's terms, "the ideal republican woman was a citizen woman, urban and urbane, socially progressive, but also uncomplaining and dutiful at home" (2003, p. 145). White also argues the contradiction between being a mother and a professional. According to White, women not only had to be active but also conservative. Kadioglu and White agree that women had to make the transformation slowly. Women had to adjust to their new lifestyles, and at the same time they had to keep the social order. Newton (1994) has remarked upon the importance of women being pulled into the domestic sphere by scientific motherhood and the ways to raise healthy good citizens for the nationalist project, and she has criticized the potential new coercive structures of the state. According to her, these new modernity aspects

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[24] Worldly woman.

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of the state may have been the beginning of a new form of control and restriction over women that may have weakened other forms of male authority.

Most scholars who have criticized state feminism have argued there was a contradiction between motherhood and labor force participation. The highest duty for women was motherhood, and their political duty was embodied with motherhood: to raise educated generations for the republic. Motherhood was the highest patriotic duty. A healthy family was the main concern of the republic, and if the family was strong, the nation would be strong, too. Also, this period did not support individualism, since collectivity was more important to achieve the national purpose. Women's education carried the risk that it could undermine the importance of the family; if women were educated; they would earn their own money and would not need a husband to support them. Because this would lead to a corruption in the social order and morality, individualism was not to be encouraged. Thus women's responsibilities became a burden for the new, educated woman; she participated in the workforce but at the same time, because of the gendered division of labor, she had to take responsibility for the house, children, and the duties of being a wife (White 2003). Some women in the 1960-70 period did not take these roles for granted, but instead became active participants in remodeling the society in order to redefine their roles (Cindoglu and Toktas 2002).

But Saktanber (2002) has argued in her book *Living Islam* that the state's policy on gender roles led to a smooth transformation in society, making it more successful than other nationalization projects in the Middle East. She has also

established her proposition according to the gender politics of the reformists and their gender. She states that:

> the republican reformers were almost all men, who did not base their discourse on gender politics merely on women's issues, and nor did they address men through women. This is to say, when they built their discourse as a speech between "I" and "you", both the addresser and the addressed were men. (P. 122)

She also does not see women as the objects of this modernization.

Urban and rural differences also became visible during the state feminism period. Although religious marriage was illegal, in the rural areas it continued to exist. But the state did not recognize religious marriages, which caused problems in such areas as inheritance and children's identities. Islamic law provided some security for these women, but the official laws could not since the marriage was not legal. The penetration of the reforms into the rural areas required more time than it did in the cities because of the absence of railroads and communication. The family structure of extended families remained, and women's status did not change as much.

The consequences of state feminism were the increase in women's responsibilities and rural/urban differences. In this period women were emancipated as a class and undertook different responsibilities. Although this period cannot be emphasized as a liberation process for women, it obviously laid the groundwork for women's liberation in the 1980s. Despite the transformations, neither republicans nor women themselves in this period challenged gender roles and the family as an

institution. Also, the illusion that "women had obtained what they asked for" obstructed formation of an active women's movement. Feminism in this period was not only encouraged and supported by the state but was also ruled by the state. Although the state encouraged feminism, it also drew limits. Therefore, it is possible to argue that women's attempts to form an active feminist movement were discouraged by the state, and feminism disregarded women's actual needs.

During the 1980s, state feminism was criticized by new, liberal feminists, who aimed to liberate women as individuals, not as a class (Durakbasa and Ilyasoglu 2001; Ilikkaracan and Berktay 2002).

3.5 The 1980s and the Liberal Feminist Movement

To explain the peak of the feminist movement after the 1980s, one must look at the political conjuncture of the 1970s. At this time there was tension and polarization between rightist groups and leftist groups in Turkey that resembled a civil war. Women were mostly engaged with leftist groups that were opposed to class inequality and capitalism. Since these groups were engaged with "oppression" and "exploitation," women became aware that they themselves were disadvantaged by these phenomena. But because leftist movements opposed capitalism and questioned class oppression and exploitation, to them feminist discourse was not a concern. Capitalism as a system was the main reason for class differences, and once freedom and equality were gained, there would be no more oppression and class differences and no need for feminist ideology. Being anti-feminist, socialist ideology

denied that women were oppressed; instead, it regarded women's exploitation as a side effect of capitalism (Gulendam 2001). Therefore, during the 1970s in Turkey, socialist women could not raise their voices and were expected to take a role in the leftist organizations along with men against capitalism. According to Gulendam (2001), women were so far involved in this process that they themselves could not realize that patriarchal oppression would still be there even after the leftist revolution. Feminist ideology was completely absorbed by these leftist movements and therefore never had the chance to become visible until the 1980s.

Arat (1991) gives four reasons for the rise of the women's movement in the 1980s: (a) the impact of Western feminist movements, (b) the presence of educated women, (c) the effect of leftist movements, and (d) the political conjuncture in the 1980s.

Western feminist movements affected women in Turkey especially after the modernization project. Feminism was a strong ideology in the West, and it was inevitable that Turkish women would question their rights after the social transformations which took place after the Republic was founded. This transformation gave women the opportunity to become educated professionals with economic freedom. Most of these women were educated in Western universities and could speak Western languages, which let them become active participants in the Western feminist movement.

Most feminist women had belonged to leftist movements before the 1980s. According to these movements, what was most important was equality between

classes, not the sexes, and so they did not provide women enough space to argue their ideology. Thus, feminist ideology was hindered by the polarization and extremism in the political arena (Gulendam 2001). Nevertheless, although they limited women's ability to argue their ideology, they did provide them with experience in facing the government (Ahiska 1994).

Until 1980, the oppression of women in Turkey was not an important concern, and no feminist group or organization was founded that argued against women's subordination. At this time there were three main political perspectives: (a) the Kemalists, who thought that women were already equipped with every possible legal right and that every situation that oppressed women had been eliminated; (b) the Islamists, who argued that Islam provided the best situation for women since their most important role was to be a good wife and mother; and (c) the socialists, who regarded women's oppression as a side effect of capitalism and offered the socialist revolution as a solution. None of these three accepted feminism as a necessary ideology.

Gulendam (2001), in an article in *Woman Magazine*, has explained the different identities imposed on women by different groups in that period:

> They realized that Islam, Kemalism and socialism had superimposed specific roles on women with the aim to make them a useful member of the society. Accordingly Islam imposes the role of wife and mother on women; Kemalism imposes on them the role of the educated, emancipated woman who successfully unites her career with marriage and motherhood; socialism imposes on them the role of comrade, sister and fighter, subordinate to men. They were "Islamic Women", "Kemalist Women" or "Socialist Women", but they were never "women" or even "an individual woman." (P. 9)

"Private is the political" was the new slogan of the new women's movement. Kemalist ideology never intervened with the private sphere, and according to Islam, the private sphere was sacred (*mahrem*). Socialism was also anti-feminist since it denied that women were oppressed because of their gender. This gap and inadequacy in representing women's problems in the private sphere may have been an important driving force that led women to argue their problems for themselves.

In the 1980s, besides the oppressive side of the military coup, space opened up in the political arena as a result of the elimination of both leftist and rightist ideologies. The oppression of these political factions made it possible to argue new ideologies. With this favorable situation, it became convenient for feminists to come forward and start a new movement. This conjuncture was not only suitable for feminists but also for Islamists. They both had an opportunity to form a new structure and to define norms. They both argued that the private was political.

The political structure after the 1980 military coup allowed both women's and Islamist movements to become visible in the political arena. Both movements were looking for individual freedoms. While women were looking for freedom of choice in the private sphere, Islamists were searching for freedom in the public sphere.

After the 1980s, a liberal women's movement developed in Turkey to focus on women's problems. Because state feminism was the antecedent of the liberal feminist movement, liberal feminism is thus a part of the modernization project that started with the Kemalist reforms. With the background provided by the Kemalist

reforms, women were able to start a women's movement. According to Arat (1991), liberal feminism reaches beyond the aspirations of state feminism since it questions the sufficiency of the Kemalist reforms.

Since state feminism was not concerned with the private lives of women (White 2003), women's liberation, problems within the family, and women's mistreatment by their husbands became concerns for the new liberal feminist group in the 1980s (Ilyasoglu 2001). The emphasis was on problems that stemmed from being women only. Women's sexuality, their desire and need to participate in the workforce, and their mistreatment were concerns for this new movement. This movement also provided women with shelters, contraceptives, education, libraries, and knowledge concerning their rights. Liberal feminists increased the expectations of women and aimed to change gender role dynamics and women's status in both the family and workplace.

The leaders of this new movement were urban middle class, educated women with professions. These women defined themselves as feminists. Using the term *feminist* at that period was a brave thing to do, according to Arat, since in Turkey feminists are perceived as *women who are the enemy of men*. These feminist women gathered to write a feminist column in a journal called Somut. Kadin Cevresi was an organization founded by these feminists to present and evaluate women's problems in the workplace, whether at home or outside it, and whether paid or unpaid (Arat 1991).

According to Arat (1991), during the 1980s the main problem for feminists

was patriarchy. Patriarchy involved subordinating women to men, and it was a more important issue than women's rights. Besides equality of the sexes, women's individuality was also a subject of concern. According to these women, the state and its various organs were validating women's subordination. Because the organs of government helped maintain the continuity of its patriarchal structure, they needed to be transformed. The policy of the state offered equality between the sexes, but it left women alone in the private sphere. Therefore the gap between the private and public spheres needed to be eliminated, and women needed to acquire security and freedom of choice in their private lives. At this point liberal feminism differentiated itself from state feminism. It proposed a different structure that would eliminate the oppressive, patriarchal side of the state. In science, education, health, law, and the family, changes needed to be made. During the 1980s, with the support of liberal feminists, many organizations were founded to protect and defend women's rights. But according to Kandiyoti (1987), Western feminist ideologies were incomplete or inadequate in the case of Turkey, since they were used and abused by politics.

In the 1980s, in addition to liberal feminism, Islamist movements that had existed in Turkey for 70 years became visible when their political power started to impact society (Aksit 1989). The emergence of an Islamist perspective gave rise to a struggle between the Kemalist/secular and Islamist groups. The impact of this struggle can be noticed in the economy, politics, and social life, especially on issues concerning women. The literature provides us with different examples that present the conflict between these groups and modernity. At the governmental level, while

the Family Research Institute recommended women's return to the private sphere to maintain their role as wives and mothers, the Directorate General for Women's Status and Problems encouraged women to participate the workforce. While some research shows that some religious women who are university graduates have preferred to remain in the private sphere (Gole 2004), a different study shows that some women have continued to work after marriage (Ilyasoglu 1994).A lot of doctors, lawyers, and teachers from Islamist groups still participate in the economy. And these women, who have benefited from the Kemalist reforms providing them education and the opportunity to work, have formed a new class—"a new Muslim woman," as Gole (2002, 2004) states—that has changed the dynamics of gender and the identity politics of Islam.

CHAPTER 4

REASONS FOR THE RISE OF ISLAM

According to Sakallioglu (1996), the early republican period had two different perspectives on Islam: authoritarian, and the combination of Islam with the secular state. Secularism during the early republican period became so defensive that its notions went beyond those in the West, and its oppressiveness became the most important reason for the appeal of Islam. The defensive position of the state towards Islam did not succeed in banishing it from the public sphere, but in contrast placed Islam in the center of politics.

During the 1950s the Democratic Party (DP), a new party that had its roots in Islam, took its clientele from landowners and peasants who had migrated from the villages to the cities. For the DP, Islam was not a political ideology but a traditional cultural element. The DP was considered as being soft on Islam. But according to Sakallioglu (1996), the DP took a tough stand against the movements and politics that were anti-Kemalist, and they passed the Atatürk Bill to help fight the anti-Kemalists. Their policy on Islam remained within the framework of Kemalist cadres. Despite their cautiousness, this period resulted in the use of Islam as a tool for electoral votes. Liberalism and democratic ideals led the Islamic element of society to raise its voice.

The military regime between 1960 and 1961 used Islam as an underlying ideology to legitimize its actions. To secure its legitimacy, the military regime—similar to the DP—distinguished between cultural Islam and political Islam. During this period the state focused on training enlightened imams to support its secular objectives.

The Justice Party (JP), 1961-1980, followed the military regime. It wanted to separate political Islam and traditional Islam, and it synthesized modernist and Islamist ideals. It opened more *Imam Hatip* schools[25] to train modernized imams to support the true nature of Islam and banish it from the public sphere. Between 1965 and 1977, the JP opened 193 religious schools. Its success in socioeconomic development legitimized its actions. The JP's success and more secular policies made Islam into a powerful weapon against communism (Sakallioglu 1996). But in the long term, the JP's double discourse did not promote secularism and modernization. The party's leader was the first to institutionalize the Friday prayer, which strengthened the party's relationship with the sheiks and *tarikats*. The electoral vote from this element conflicted with the secularist and modernist ideals of the state.

In the 1950s, migration from the rural to urban areas also strengthened the identity crises and widened the gap. Migrants from rural background had difficulties in adopting the new, modern lifestyle in the cities. Since the state could not provide them the support they needed, Islamists found ways to become more visible and

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[25] Primary school with religious education.

supply the migrants' needs. The solidarity between Islamists and the migrants and their support of them created a new base of support with similar values and norms (Keyman 1995; Arat 2005).

The National Salvation Party (NSP) and the Welfare Party (WP) had a different base that stemmed from the least developed parts of Anatolia and the undeveloped parts of the big cities. These elements desired to fit into the new modern structure and have greater impact in the economic and political arenas. This demand necessitated combining modernity with Islam. In addition to supporting technological and scientific development, the WP and NSP maintained the tradition of Islam and its morals.

During the 1980s post-military regime, the state supported Islam in the political arena. Before communism disintegrated, it was seen as a threat to the regime in Turkey, and so Islamic elements were encouraged. Religious reaction was considered less dangerous than communism. Both the military and state supported the teaching of religion in primary schools, and in the 1982 constitution it became mandatory. *Tarikats*, their publications, and Quran courses became more visible than before. Leaders and members of *tarikats* penetrated to the ranks of government, and Islamic movement had gained its power with the Islamist companies, religious foundations and projects (Sakallioglu 1996).

Since the 1980 military coup, the structure of the Islamic movement has changed radically. This new form of Islam is different from the previous expressions of Islam by political parties, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, and even the

tarikats.

> In an ideological and political tone, the new Islamic stance calls for restoration of the Islamic spirit and the dismantling and re-establishment of the state on the basis of the sharia. It also crystallizes new Islamic answers to issues of Westernization, independence, sovereignty, women's rights, and the distribution of power within the state … It consists of young people educated in second-rate secular institutions, urban rather than rural born, upwardly mobile and desperately in need of an identity and economic security that a crises ridden Turkish economy can offer at only meager levels. Popular Islam, which in the past had allowed one to combine personal devotion to Islam with Political Secularism, has been transformed into an ideologically hardened Islam. (Sakallioglu 1996, p. 243)

Mardin (1989) has emphasized the place of Islam in Turkey. According to Mardin, a state policy that was rationalist, positivist, and pragmatic failed to find a place among the population and did not connect with society—the "superficiality and lack of organic linkages with the society of Kemalism" (Mardin 1989, p. 170). Islamists had an opportunity to fill the gap between state and society. Cultural differences between Kemalists and Islamists created identity crises.

In the 1987 general elections, the WP (Refah Party) gained 7.2 percent of the electoral votes; in the 1994 local elections, it received 19.7 percent; and in the 1995 elections it became the lead party in Turkey with 21.4 percent of the votes (Arat 2005). Behind the success of the party was its support for the demands of the migrants and support for moral values and norms. The party's program emphasized national characteristics and cultural development along with moral values. It criticized Westernization and Western values and supported cultural authenticity.

Emphasis on the importance of religion and *urf*[26] at a juncture where people needed alternative values to modernity carried the party to its leadership position.

During this process the opposing sides of Kemalism and Islamism debated in the political and economic arenas. The WP promised to bring justice, not power, to the economic and political realms, and it accused other parties of imitating Western standards. According to the WP, "the cadres of the state did not have the will, ability and the initiative to serve for love of worship, nor did they have any *plans*." But the WP "had conviction, science, plans, cadres and the ability to pursue and bring its goal to conclusion" (Arat 2005, p. 34). The WP presented itself as an authentic, original, moral alternative to Western modernization. According to the WP, the future of Turkey lay among the Eastern civilizations, not the Western, which were also Christian. In the organization of the economy, education, and social life it offered alternative Islamic ways to follow (Arat 2005).

The rise of Islam in Turkey after the 1980s cannot be explained by one reason alone. The dynamics of society, the state's control over Islam, concerns of the political parties over votes, the view of communism as evil, the state's failure in economic development, and, most importantly, the gap between the state's policies and society, gave rise to Islam as an alternative to Kemalism.

The struggle between the Kemalist/secular and Islamist groups raised questions about women's status in society. At the governmental level and in matters of education, clothing, and the family, their contradictory arguments presented a very

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[26] *Urf*: tradition.

complex model for society. While some believed in Islam's compatibility with modernization, some argued its incompatibility (Arat 1995). Conflicts arose. Women were in the middle of this debate, and are still today. Identity politics places women in the main center of its agenda, which in turn affects women's daily lives and their participation in the public sphere.

Women have always been at the center of the modernization project, and they have been given great importance and an important role. As is to be expected, it has been necessary for the Islamic movement, which sees itself as an alternative to the Kemalist modernization project, to also place importance on women.

Islam places great emphasis on women because the well-being of the social order is closely related to the well-being of the family and gender relations. In this context, women's roles as mothers and wives are at the core of this ideology. Since the socialization of children as good Muslims is important, the function of women as mothers is one of the most important ones in society (Sunar 2002). Women were at the heart of Kemalism's new modernity project from the early years of the republic; therefore the Islamist movement could not ignore women. The new Kemalist woman symbolized Western modernization, women's liberation, and gender equality. The Islamic movement opposed Western modernization and its outcomes, especially the new Kemalist woman's identity; therefore, it had to build a new "modern Muslim woman" identity. Women within the Islamist movement have had an active role in the transformation of Islam into a daily practice and legitimization of the Islamic lifestyle. This is one of the most important reasons that the "turban" (Islamic

headscarf) is used as a symbol by this movement (Sunar 2002).

4.1 Islam and Women's Rights in Turkey

In Turkey, feminism and women's rights have had a unique background (Kandiyoti 1991). Under the law women are equal with men. The founding fathers of the republic gave women rights even before their counterparts in Europe had those rights. The improvement of women's status was the primary goal in order to become civilized. Within the ideals of secularization, women had an important role to play. In addition to opposition to the annulment of Islamic laws, female and male equality found its voice in the Islamic sector of society, while Turkey became a secular state. Western laws were adopted to improve the family, civil rights, and education. But the elite cadres drew limits to the emancipation of women. In 1923, when Nezihe Muhiddin wanted to found a Women's Party, her request was rejected. She was allowed to form a federation instead, which was later accused of being autonomous and was closed by the state (Arat 2005).

In the public realm, women became professionals and started to develop careers. But when it came to the private sphere, the state emphasized their roles as mothers and wives. The gendered division of labor between the sexes was also stressed. In his speeches Atatürk himself regarded women's primary role to be good wives to their husbands and good mothers to their children. Women, who had to make radical changes in their lives at the time, such as uncovering their heads, being together with men in public, and adapting to Western values, were neither

encouraged nor supported in the private sphere. Men were still the head of the household, and women were expected to fulfill their domestic roles.

An important number of activists for the new regulations were big city elites. Because of the lack of communication between urban and rural areas, transformation did not reach the rural areas for many years. The gap between urban and rural women became more visible. While in the big cities women were living under the umbrella of the new laws, in Anatolia the previous regime still had an impact in the form of Sharia. The regional ethnic and religious differences between women were undermined. Kemalist women spoke for all Turkish women without referring to these different backgrounds. All women were expected to grasp the impact of Kemalist ideas and women's rights through education. Once Kemalist ideals were adopted, there would be no reason not to embrace those ideals.

It was during the second wave of feminism that women started to demand individualism and presented the problems they had on account of being women. This new generation of feminists criticized republican-period feminism for its collective content. Second-wave feminists claimed their individuality and their full legal rights, and debated the issues of domestic violence and sexual harassment. Emphasizing the existence of domestic violence was a very important step towards women's rights, since the family was the most sacred institution in Islam and Turkish tradition. This feminist generation wanted to speak for themselves, and they did not want to leave the liberation of women to men. Second-wave feminists in Turkey supported libertarian values, which meant autonomy, freedom of expression, and the ability to

speak up for one's own values (Arat 2005). The private became political, and battering, domestic violence, sexual harassment, sexual repression, and control over the female body emerged as important issues.

Similar to secular feminism especially since the 1980s, Islamist women criticized the state's policies regarding Islam. The state had strictly controlled religion in the public realm and had banned women's headscarves from state institutions, including educational ones. The state was secular, and Islam was exercised and controlled under the supervision of the state.

4.2 Islamist Women and the Headscarf

Islamist women come from different backgrounds; they are housewives, students, lawyers, doctors, and journalists. They define themselves in terms of a moderate Islamic background. They demand the right to education and their right to work wearing their headscarves. According to these women, the headscarf is a dictate of their religion and they should be free to wear it in public. They also feel their educational rights have been restricted because of their religious beliefs. The state has been forcing them to choose between being a citizen and a believer (Saktanber 2002). Islamist women have united to protest the banning of the headscarf in the public realm. The turban that they wear as a headscarf is different from the traditional head cover of Turkish women. While the traditional headscarf was tied loosely, allowing the hair to be seen, the turban is tied tightly; it is also longer than the traditional headscarf and covers the hair completely. Especially since

the 1980s, more women have started to cover their heads with turbans. The turban has been the symbol of a political ideology, and the protests of these women have become a political issue.

The state's practices regarding turban have changed over time. In 1982 the state banned turbans from the universities; in 1984 the Council of Higher Education allowed girls to wear turbans in universities; and in 1987 the turban was again banned from the universities. Islamist women actively questioned the authority of the state and organized protests against the state. But their attempts to withdraw the article banning the turban in universities failed. Muslim students then carried the issue to the European Human Rights Commission and defended the proposition that people should be able to freely practice their religious beliefs. But the cases were dismissed. Ironically, these women who took their cases to the European Human Rights Commission also criticized the Western ideals of the republic and accused it of being a satellite (Arat 2005) to the West. Yet the WP wanted to integrate with the East instead of the West. It is striking that these cases were taken to a Western institution. Considering the headscarf bans of Germany and France, Western institutions will be critical about for their demands to wear the veil in schools and state institutions (Arat 2005).

Back in the 1920s, Islamists were protesting against the educational rights of women and their appearance in the public sphere. What changed in 50 years in Islam and in interpretation of the Quran's dictates was that women became a concern of the political parties because of their electoral vote. Women's problems have been

supported by the parties within restrictions, and only if there is an election in the future. They were regarded as symbols in the 1920s and after the 1980s. Despite their limited emancipation and the state's control over women's improvement, along with criticisms of women's submissive and secondary activities, there have been women who have worked for women's emancipation and have otherwise been active. It cannot be agreed that women have been puppets or objects. These criticisms present a point of view that diminishes the activities of women. Also, contemporary Turkey has required a long process to break the rigid structure of the patriarchal state and its cadres to improve women's rights.

The head covering has had very strong opposition from secular groups. It has been seen as a threat to democracy and secularization. Muslim women have been accused of being brainwashed and manipulated. It has been argued that the head covering is a restriction against women's liberation. Socialist feminists, radical feminists, and independent feminists alike have been opposed to the head covering (Kozat 2003). While Kemalist feminists placed themselves in opposition to Islamist women, the new generation of second-wave feminists has not been critical about Islamist women's demands to wear the headscarf in schools and state institutions. Despite the diverse ideological differences of the radical, independent, and socialist feminists, they have agreed on criticizing the state's policy. Besides their support for the secularist state, they have also supported Islamist women for a more democratic political system. However, the assumptions of these post-1980 feminists have been based on their perception of religious enlightenment. According to their ideas, these

Islamist women would distinguish the place of women in Islam and would protest patriarchal religious authority (Kozat 2003). According to Kozat in the journal *Cactus*, the bias against religion has been obvious, as stated by Sedef Ozturk:

> I defend the right to veil, not the wearing of the veil. I wonder whether Islamist women ever thought about how the practice of veiling reinforces women's subordination, and reduces their sexuality and social role merely to the biological function of reproduction. (Kozat 2003, p. 194)

According to these feminists, the main problem has been sexism and the patriarchal exercise of men over women. Sexism is in the teachings of Quran, and this has been a common problem for both feminists and Islamist women. The position of women in Islam and what Islam may offer them has been the new question for post-1980 feminists. The turban has become a political tool for Islamist movements and parties. It symbolizes traditional Islamic values, such as the subordination of women to men, and it is considered to limit the rights of women in accordance with statements in the Quran related to inheritance, divorce, separation of the sexes, and women's submissiveness. But the headscarf concerns secularists primarily as a threat to secularism. In the Turkish Republic, religion has been under state control and its use as a party policy has been obstructed. As Arat (2005) has explained, the constitutional court has maintained that allowing Muslim women to wear headscarves in educational institutions would discriminate against other religions and would give privileges to Islamists; therefore, it cannot be allowed. Equal treatment requires banning any religious practices from public institutions. In France as well, covering the head has been banned to promote equality in the public

schools. Laicism means the separation of the state from religion. It also denotes preventing the dominant religion from oppressing other religions coexisting in the same society. Thus, if headscarves were allowed, it would open up the way to other rituals and practices. For years Muslim women in Turkey covered their heads and attended secular public schools, but their headscarves never drew much attention. The reason the turban has captured attention and created much opposition has been its political content. According to the state and secularists, allowance for the turban would be a compromise and a step toward letting Islamists carry forward other dictates of Islam. Religious practices in public should be controlled by the state and within the framework of secularism. Religious freedoms cannot be advanced beyond the established, proper limits (Arat 1997b). With the headscarf issue, women have again been placed in the center of politics, but this time not for but against the norms of Western modernization.

The opposition of Kemalist feminists took place within the efforts to reinforce literacy and education. They emphasized the secular ideals of the republic and argued that education would undermine the attraction of Islam. Their primary goal was to enlighten Turkish women and avoid religious obscurantism. Secular feminists argued that any opposition to the secular system would jeopardize women's rights. Kemalist women refused to practice their academic activities in the universities when the state allowed turbans to be worn there. Necla Arat, a Kemalist feminist, has argued that veiled women do not want to break away from the backwardness of the past. She has described the veil as a cloth that covers the head

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of women and that is claimed to protect their honor. According to her, Islamist women who cover their heads maintain the traditional submissive image of women and want to abolish the rights the state gave them (Arat 1997b).

What is important here is that Kemalist policy emancipated women. Against all criticisms, Kemalists improved women's rights and their status in Turkey. But for Islamist movements it is hard to make assumptions. If Islamic women attempted to solve the problems of women, such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, and restrictions under the civil and penal codes, it would be easier to defend them as supporters of women's rights. Instead, despite these critical problems facing women in Turkey, they have chosen to protest only over the turban issue. The turban problem cannot be considered a women's problem. The right of women to wear what they want intersects with the ethics of laicism. In Turkey, where religious and ethnic diversity is considerably high, allowing Muslims to practice their dictates would lead to the domination of one religion over others. Therefore the protest of women to be allowed to wear the turban is not a women's issue but a political protest against the state's policies, as well as modernization and secularism. Their protests resemble the women's protests in Iran when Reza Shah banned the veil during his modernist regime.

It is important to address the turban issue within women's daily lives. Aside from these arguments on veiling, it is a fact that veiling limits Islamist women's lives. With the ban on turbans in educational institutions, veiled women who want to improve their lives prefer to wear wigs in the schools to continue their education. In

addition to limitations in the state sector, companies in the private sector also do not want to employ veiled women so as to present a secular image. Veiled women cannot be present in the parliament, and their participation in decision making in the political arena is restricted. A veiled woman, Merve Kavakci, who was elected to the parliament, had to leave the General Assembly during the oath-taking ceremony because of regulations regarding veiling and the protest of secular groups.

Islamist women's zealousness over their right to veil does not appear when it comes to questioning men's authority. Their autonomy seems to be limited by their desire to wear headscarves in the universities. Women from Islamist backgrounds have demanded only their rights concerning the turban. Domestic violence, male authority, divorce, and the civil code have not been discussed. Veiling has become a symbol for political Islam, and it emphasizes the secrecy of gender relationships (Gole 2004). But as women have become visible in public, they have also stressed gender relations within Islam and started a process that is changing the dynamics in both the public and private spheres.

4.3 Daily Lives: Private and Public Spheres

Similar to the republican parties during the 1920s, the Welfare Party also addressed women's traditional roles as a priority. Whether republican or Islamist, women were always referred to as mothers and good wives. Islamists presented women's duties as the following:

> In society, ladies and mothers are given important duties. According to our beliefs, "heaven is under the feet of mothers". In the

tradition of our nation ladies and mothers have always deserved respect and affection. Let us never forget the Sultan Aspaslans, Sultan Osmans, Sultan Fatihs and great scholars like Aksemseddin; people who have been examples of morality and virtue have been raised by their mothers. Mothers of today and tomorrow will raise those who build and serve the great Turkey once again. What a great goal, what an honorable service! (Welfare Party General Elections Election Declaration 1991, p. 95)

Once again women's domestic roles were emphasized for the nation's success. Their main purpose was to raise good Muslim children who would dedicate themselves to Islamic ideals. In contrast, during the republican period, in addition to their domestic roles women also were called upon to be good citizens of the state, to be educated, and to be Westernized. Years later in the same country, women were again being presented with the same traditional roles, this time to bring success to Islamic ideals through a political party—not for purposes of Westernization, not for the state, but against women themselves. This time instead of equality, complementarity was recognized between the sexes (Arat 1997b). The objective was to criticize the state's authority and Western modernization ideals, and to replace them with the moral customs and norms within the culture. But there was no reference to women's educational rights or employment issues, except those that contradicted the turban ban. Islamists criticized only issues related to the turban ban. For the WP, which supported women's protests and encouraged them, the turban problem was not a women's issue. Instead it was a protest against secularization and the authoritarian nature of state policies. It was presented as an important step towards democratization. But it also contradicted secularism. The only promise made

to women by the WP was on the turban issue. The party guaranteed that when they came to power, they would allow Muslim women to cover their heads in universities and state institutions. Thus the turban issue was largely considered a political issue instead of a religious requirement (Abadan-Unat 1986; Ozdalga 1998).

According to the dictates of Islam, women's obedience to their husbands is beyond question. Islamic law regarding inheritance, divorce, child custody, and polygamy already dictates the regulations for them. The validity of the *suwar* and *hadiths* cannot be criticized. Although there are different interpretations of equality of the sexes in Islam, Islam legitimizes men's authority over their wives. Both Islamist and secular scholars in Turkey have accepted the differences between the sexes in Islam. Even the Presidency of Religious Affairs has stated that the equality of men and women depends on the division of labor between husband and wife based on their different skills.

Although Islamist women accept the traditional division of labor in Islam, they reject its inegalitarian nature. Responsibility in different areas of life is fair, since everybody has different skills and abilities. According to Muslim women, it is God's call alone to decide what is fair and unfair. These ideas coming from Islamist women validate practices that exclude women from some public areas. According to Islam, women cannot become the practitioners (imam[27]) of Islam. Women can lead the community with prayers only if there are no men to practice the ritual. Islam itself excludes women from practicing the most sacred work. But in modern Turkey,

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[27] The officiating priest of a mosque; the title for a Muslim religious leader or chief.

Islamist women have argued the validity of working for God's sake. Equality for men and women is subject to debate, if not paradoxical. What Islam dictates is written in the Quran. The authority of men over women cannot be eliminated from interpretations of the Quran. Even in the most modern interpretations, the right of men to beat their wives does not appear compatible with feminism in any context. Polygamy, whatever the reason for it, such as protecting the deceased or weak, cannot be compatible with feminism. Even Islamist women, when asked, do not agree with polygamy, and to defend Islam they refer to this issue as a wrongful interpretation. One of the most criticized issues in Islam by secularists is the number of wives the Prophet had (Arat 2005).

Islam approves and legitimizes the separation of the sexes. In Islamic practice, women and men sit in different rooms and practice their religion in separate parts of the mosque. When a Muslim woman works with men in a workplace, she is violating the separation rule. Also, the Prophet stated that women should stay at home and do not even need to leave the house to pray; their home is considered to be their mosque. Some scholars have argued for and defended women's freedom and their autonomy under Sharia. Their most important responsibility is to take care of their children, their husbands, and their home. What happens when they cannot carry out their responsibilities because of their work? In one of Arat's interviews with the Welfare Party's Ladies Commission, one active member explained that since party work is considered to be for the sake of God, she believes that He will forgive and understand her. Working for God's sake validates the employment of Islamist

women, but can working in other institutions as doctors, lawyers, or teachers also be validated? Islamist women have also argued that the capitalist system degrades women and gives them more responsibilities. According to one Islamist woman writer, Cihan Aktas (Arat 2005), a woman who works outside the home comes home and cannot find enough time to cook, clean, and take care of the children. Since women are expected to do both, they are being exploited by the modern capitalist system. It is impressive at this point to see the similarities between Western feminists and Islamist women regarding the division of gender roles.

Although there are Islamist women who want to work and practice their profession in the public sphere, some Islamist women reject the idea of working outside the home and ascribe to their primary responsibilities. Education is validated in Islam since it is considered important for a good Muslim, but ideas on working outside the home differ. In the Islamist magazine *Kadin ve Aile* (*Women and Family)*, writers have opposed the idea of women's employment (Arat 1995; Gole 2004). Arat's (1995) research on *Kadin ve Aile* magazine has provided data on the writings of Islamists regarding women and their suggestions to them on how to behave and to be a good Muslim. Arat researched three Islamic journals, all of which have prioritized women's domestic roles as mothers, wives, and housewives. Besides modern discourses, fundamentalist approaches are also to be found in those journals. There are fewer articles regarding education, employment, and women's appearance in public than articles referring to their domestic roles. Since Islam considers education to be important, education and employment are considered differently as

part of the public realm. While these journals approve of women's education, they criticize their employment. Employment is acceptable only when it is necessary. If a Muslim woman needs to work for the sake of the family, it is appropriate for them to work in an environment that is agreeable to Islam's principle of separation of the sexes (Arat 2005). In these journals, common arguments are criticism of Western values and support for separation of the sexes. The exploitation of women in the West has a very important place in these journals' arguments. According to their perspective, women who work outside the home have difficulty performing their domestic roles. Western women are expected to perform in both the private and the public spheres; therefore, their culture is more inclined to oppress them. But in Islam they are protected, and they are only responsible for the house. Most of the research supports the idea that women in Turkey still consider their roles as mothers and wives as the most valuable, and women in the workforce share a common guilt of not being a good mother (Koray 1993). Women in the modernized West also have the work/family conflict, but examination of labor force participation rates[28] in Turkey in the cities (17.1 percent) and in rural areas (30.9 percent) shows that more women are working in Western countries (Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry 2004). Since Islam legitimizes the division of labor with the differentiation of the sexes, it can be argued that Islam has had an important effect on employment practices. Arat (1995) has also pointed attention to subjects such as divorce, polygamy, battering, inheritance, and testimony; criticizing the magazines' approach, she has stressed the

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[28] Rates for employment include population 15 years and over.

absence of articles concerning these issues.

In these journals, *Kadin ve Aile (Woman and Family)*, *Mektup (Letter)*, and *Bizim Aile (Our Family),* women are told to be pretty at home but ugly outside. According to Arat (1995) Islamist women avoid any competition from other women by covering themselves.

According to Islamist women, Islam favors women more than secularism does and gives them more rights to protect them from exploitation. They have criticized the use of women's bodies as a marketing mechanism and their sexual exploitation, and have supported Islam's dictates on the dress code for women. Western culture is referred to as "materialistic, racist and exploitative" (Hosgor 1996, p. 166). Their turbans and long coats protect them from being the target of men's gaze. Islamist women have rejected arguments that emphasize the restrictive nature of the headscarf. They have also challenged arguments that Islam considers women's sexuality to be threatening and men's sexual desires to be aggressive. They have also questioned the notion that their perception of protection requires them to veil. Although they have rejected the arguments that criticize the veil, their references to "open"[29] women provide a clue to their views on protection. Their approach to the dress code is different. They regard it as a dictate of Islam, and they follow it for God's sake. They choose to cover their bodies to be free from exploitation, and the choice is theirs. From their perspective, "open" women with

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[29] In Turkey, the word "open" refers to women who do not cover their heads, as opposed to being "closed," which refers to covering the head.

their tight dresses and miniskirts are at greater risk of harassment by sneaky, evil eyes. According to Islamist women, a good Muslim man would not gaze upon another woman with bad intentions (Saktanber 2002).

CHAPTER 5

TURKEY: BEING AN ISLAMIST WOMAN IN A SECULAR STATE

According to Islamist women in Turkey, an Islamic state would be possible if

true Islam were allowed. Since their concept of Islam has been shaped within a

secular state, it is not possible for them to threaten the system. An interview from

Arat's book that reveals the worldview of Islamist women who worked for the

Welfare Party under the Ladies Commission emphasizes the notion of ideal Islam:

> I wish correct Islam could be practiced; I wish those countries
> practicing Islamic Law practiced it properly. Our biggest problem is that
> there is no country that we could hold up as an example. Islam was
> practiced perfectly in its golden age, but since then we have been
> searching for the proper Islamic community as it should be. Of course
> human beings are fallible. That is why there are Qur'anic Laws against
> wrongdoing. . . . we have to study very hard to understand the correct
> Islam. Up till now only the squatter settlements and villages were pushed
> into Islam, rather than the educated urbanites….Well whatever they
> could now of Islam- there was no studying and going back to the
> sources. (2005, p. 102)

In this case Turkey's uniqueness is very important. Turkey is a secular,

laicized country that has allowed women their rights and has protected those rights.

The state has had contradictory ideologies regarding women that both feminists and

Islamists have criticized. But women's rights to education and employment, and their

right to vote and to become a member of parliament, are the products of this secular

state. The civil code, which has recently been changed, no longer defines the

husband as the head of household. Husband and wife are considered equal. Women can practice whatever profession they desire without their husband's consent; the glass ceiling effect is lower than in most European countries. Feminists and women have worked together to achieve equality between the sexes. But if this were not the case, would it be still possible for Muslim women to demand an Islamic state?

The practices of Islam in the Middle East regarding women cannot be a model for Turkey since these states are not secular. The dominant authority within Sharia can use divine authority in a way that can be either very harmful or very promising. Either way it is very difficult to question an Islamic regime that receives its legitimization from a divine source. Its authority cannot be questioned, argued, or transformed (Arat 2005). The secular state and Kemalism are the base and core of women's rights in Turkey. Despite criticism, the success of the reforms cannot be denied. Islamist women who are educated professionals, students, or politicians have come from a secular background that has allowed them to practice their rights. It was the Western ideals of the Kemalists that made it possible to emancipate women. Both Islamist and republican elites have shaped the boundaries for women; however, this time the boundaries are narrower. The demands of Islamist women are incomprehensible to secular women

Although Turkey was never a colony of the West, Islamist movements there share similar characteristics with Islamist movements that have arisen in the colonized countries. The Islamist movement perceives the reforms and transformations as a challenger to their authenticity in Turkey. Neither the

definitions of *modern* or *traditional* are clear. Islamist women are trying to live their lives within traditional norms and at the same time adjust to modernity. Thus, they are transforming both themselves and the society they live in. According to Arat (1995), Muslim women have taken a step forward to change Islam from within. They have become visible in modern localities such as universities and urban sites, while they try to validate their Islamic identity. In Turkey, when Muslim women become visible in public and demand their rights to education and employment, they perforate Islamic gender relations in both the public and private spheres.

In contemporary Turkey, Islamists, and especially Islamist women, are transforming the definitions and boundaries of what religion permits (Arat 2005). The notion of an "ideal Islam" legitimizes the modernity ideals of these Muslim women from within the bounds of their religion. For these women to claim women's rights and feminism for themselves, Islamic dictates need to be interpreted according to ideal Islam (Bilgin 2005). In Turkey today, both Muslim and secular women feel the need to express themselves in public. The urge and need for Muslim women to step into the public domain are important. Many educated Muslim women with qualifications to work are trying to find a way to enter the public realm. But their demands regarding women's issues do not go beyond the headscarf debate. The interpretations of divorce, the sexist division of labor, domestic violence, and marriage and equality issues are limited within the dictates of Islam. And since Islam and Islamist women support the differences between the sexes, their ideas as well as Islam's dictates cannot be compatible with feminism. Feminism rejects the

submissiveness of women to male authority in the public and private realm. Ideal Islam, considered a utopia by scholars, provides a shield for Islamist women against opposition.

The practice of Islam in Turkey is diverse. Besides supporters of ideal Islam, there are extreme Islamists. It is difficult to separate moderate Islam supporters from extremists and the political from the private. In Istanbul since the 1980s, teenagers meeting in the parks with their girlfriends and boyfriends have faced serious attacks. Fundamentalist Islamists have attacked, beat, and sometimes pushed them into the sea, claiming they should be separated, when they have merely been sitting together on a bench hand-in-hand. Also, not long ago in Konya, a very conservative city of Turkey in Anatolia, a man stoned a woman journalist just because she was wearing jeans and had her hair uncovered. He accused her of seducing the public with her uncovered hair and jeans.[30]

In Turkey it was a common belief that with modernization, traditions would be lost and cultural norms would erode. According to Gole (2004), this perception no longer persists in Turkey. From Mardin's (1983) perspective, Islam is not an alternative to modernity; rather it is a method to overcome the difficulties within modernity. It is a comfort zone that allows people to appear in the public sphere and provides solidarity. The gap between the modernized urbane citizens and rural Islamists is filled by Islam, and it provides them a new identity.

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[30] Hurryet Newspaper February 13 2006, p. 24.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

All women in Turkey share the same history, whether they be secularists, Islamists, or feminists. But the ideologies that shape their lives create the differences between them. It is important to criticize authoritarian regulations that oppress women, whether they are the secular policies of the state or the dictates of Islam. The diversity of the ideologies within feminism in Turkey prevents them from working together. It is apparent that women have the autonomy to shape their own lives, to decide what is best for them. The dichotomy between secular and Islamic opposition is today one of the most important handicaps they should overcome. Beyond the headscarf issue, there are critical concerns for both Islamic and secular women. But the headscarf debate has been placed at the center of women's problems in Turkey.

Identity politics, headscarf debates, the threat of Sharia, all prevent women from working together for their rights. It is important for women in Turkey to avoid the policies, ideologies, and practices that limit their potential for achieving equality. State policies not only restrict the rights of veiled Islamist women, but also those of open and secular women. Islam cannot itself restrict women's lives; instead it needs a mechanism to practice its dictates. Turkey as a secular country has managed to eliminate some religious effects on daily life. But except for the turban issue, it is not

possible to conceptualize the effect of Islam on women's lives. Research and empirical data only support evidence on issues related to the turban. Nevertheless, it is certain that Islam legitimizes the patriarchal structure in Turkey, which leads to the submissive position of women. Although the turban issue appears to be related to women's rights in Turkey, many scholars consider the turban debate to be a political rather than a women's problem.

Islam as a religion calls for obedience for women and contradicts feminism. Although Islam allows women to be visible in the public sphere within limits, it does not approve full participation. With its surahs and hadiths that refer to women's obedience, Islam is incompatible with feminism in Turkey. The division of labor and responsibilities in the private and public spheres, which are criticized by Western feminists, are considered by Islamist women in Turkey to be a compensation for the money the husband brings home. Islamist women see no harm in such a bargain. What appears to be compatible with feminism is neither Islam nor Islamist women, but their idea of becoming autonomous individuals in contemporary society. But their religious practices conflict with feminist practices. The debates regarding the identity crisis of Islamist women appears destined to continue for a long time.

Carrying women's problems into a domain where dichotomies such as East/ West, traditional/modern, veiled/unveiled, Muslim/secular exist only serves as an obstacle. This time women themselves are producing debates that sabotage their liberation. They restrain themselves within these dichotomies and undermine more important issues regarding women. Discussing women's rights in the Middle East in

only a symbolic context such as veiling appears to serve male stream thought. Identity politics and dichotomies can also be criticized for restricting the potential of women's movements and can be considered new ideologies imposed upon women to control them.

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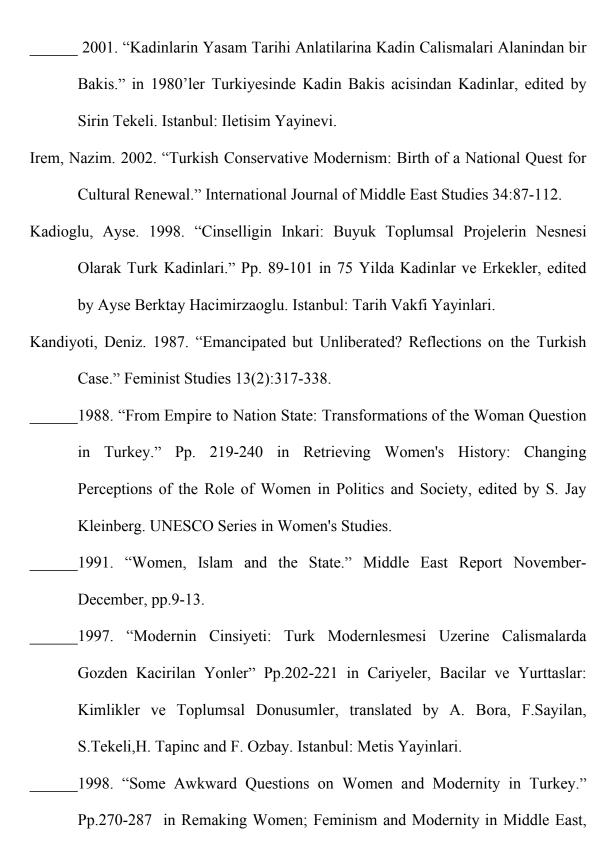Citci, Oya. 1979. "Turk Kamu Yonetiminde Kadin Gorevliler." Pp. 214-270 in Turk Toplumunda Kadin, edited by Nermin Abadan-Unat, Deniz Kandiyoti and Mubeccel Belik Kiray. Ankara:Turk Sosyal Bilimler Dernegi Kadin Arastirmasi Serisi.

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