

THE POLITICS OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS REFORMS DURING THE EARLY
REPUBLICAN ERA: STATE FEMINISM VERSUS PIONEER WOMEN

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ABSTRACT

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The objective of this thesis study is to analyze the nature, objectives and the repercussions of “state feminism” which pioneered the secularization and modernization reforms during the early Republican period in Turkey (from 1923s to the 1940s) and implemented in the context of an authoritarian regime until the late 1940s. It emphasizes the continuity between Ottoman-Turkish modernization and the Republican transformation of women’s rights by inquiring into the stands of nationalist and feminist modernizing women pioneers vis-à-vis egalitarian reform policies of the male-dominated state in the context of state and nation-building processes. This study especially focuses on the impact of a dilemma created for the women activists of the era, who were committed to the nationalist-collectivist ideals of the Republic as well as to the women’s rights. To this end, it aims to contribute to the critical examination of the egalitarian reforms of the early Republican era by analyzing the emancipatory ideals and discourses of the prominent women activists, Nezihe Muhiddin and Halide Edip. While both women were committed to the Kemalist revolution and held feminist ideals, both were silenced by the authoritarian regime and experienced this dilemma.

Keywords: State Feminism, Women's Rights, Nationalism, Dilemma, Pioneer Women.



ÖZ

ERKEN CUMHURİYETİ DÖNEMİNDE KADIN HAKLARI REFORM POLİTİKASI: DEVLET FEMİNİZMİ KARŞISINDA ÖNCÜ KADINLAR

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Bu tezin amacı, Türkiye’de Cumhuriyet’in erken döneminde (1923’lerden 1940’lara kadar) laikleşme ve modernleşme reformlarına öncülük eden ve 1940’ların sonlarına kadar otoriter bir rejim bağlamında hayata geçirilen Kemalist “devlet feminizmi”nin niteliğini, amaçlarını ve yankılarını analiz etmektir. Feminist ya da feminizm yanlısı öncü milliyetçi-modernleşmeci kadınların devlet ve ulus oluşturma süreçleri bağlamındaki erkek egemen devletin eşitlikçi reform politikaları karşısındaki duruşunu inceleyerek, Osmanlı-Türk modernleşmesi arasındaki sürekliliği vurgular. Bu çalışma özellikle, Cumhuriyet’in milliyetçi-toplumsal ideallerine ve aynı zamanda kadınların haklarına bağlı olan çağın kadın aktivistleri için yaratılan bir ikilemin etkisine odaklanmaktadır. Bu amaçla, dönemin önde gelen kadın aktivistlerden Nezihe Muhiddin ve Halide Edip’in kadınlar için özgürleştirici ideallerini ve söylemlerini de analiz ederek erken Cumhuriyet dönemindeki eşitlik reformlarının eleştirel incelemesine katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Her iki kadın da Kemalist devrime bağlıyken ve feminist idealleri sürdürürken, otoriter rejim tarafından susturulmuş ve bu ikilemi yaşamışlardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Devlet Feminizmi, Kadın Hakları, Kemalizm, Milliyetçilik, İkilem, Öncü Kadınlar.





To My Mom

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

(CHP) – Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi

(CUP) - Committee of Union and Progress

(OECD) - Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development

(RCS) - Women’s Branch of the Red Crescent Society

(TWU) - Turkish Woman’s Union



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Subject Matter, Scope and the Research Question of the Study

Compared with the other developing countries, especially those in the Muslim world, Turkish women have enjoyed almost full equality with men in terms of constitutional, social and political rights since the establishment of the Turkish Republic. As early as the 1920s, the Republican reforms on the family law (the Civil Code), the penal code, and reform policies on political rights and education promoted women's progress in many realms of social life. In other words, perhaps the most important feature of the Republican transformation since the 1920s was the policy of securing equal citizenship rights for women. Turkish women gained the right to vote much earlier even before their counterparts in Belgium, Switzerland, Greece and France. Although women in Turkey were granted the right to stand in the elections and enjoyed voting rights for the first time in 1934, women in Belgium had to wait for fourteen, women in Switzerland for thirty-seven and women in Greece for eighteen more years to enjoy the political rights.¹ Following the French Revolution, the discussion about the political participation of women in France was precluded until the beginning of the 20th century.² Therefore, Turkish Republic and its secularization reforms have

¹ Kadic, H. (2014). *Political Participation of Women in Turkey and the European Union Perspective*. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/9623292/Political_Participation_of_Women_in_Turkey_and_the_European_Unin_perspective

² Tremblay, M. (2007). Democracy, Representation, and Women: A Comparative Analysis, *Democratization*, 14:4, 533-553, DOI: 10.1080/13510340701398261

transformed and expanded the realm of possibilities for Turkish women, which were radical for some countries at the time.

At the same time, in terms of the process and the context of extending equal rights for women, the early Republican era had commonalities in terms of the women's integration into society and politics with the other nationalist state-building experiences outside of the Western world in the first half of the 20th century. Studies examining these nationalist transformations and state-building projects from a feminist point of view demonstrated that these processes, in turn, gave rise to specific dynamics which shaped women's subsequent activism and social-political participation through the politics of male-dominated states.³ In this sense, women's experiences in Middle Eastern societies were significant during the processes of nationalist social reform policies of these countries within which women are located.⁴

The nationalist paradigms of state building and independence movements always attributed overarching importance to collective goals of security, liberation, development, national unity and statist policies at the expense of the promotion of particularistic goals for marginalized groups, in particular women.⁵ Accordingly, women's initiatives and collaborations within the highly patriarchal states in the Middle Eastern countries have always been subjected to research, as will be discussed more in detail in the second chapter of this thesis. In the Turkish case, as an example of these processes in terms of the development of women's equal rights, progress seems to have stagnated in women's liberation in the later decades. Hence, Kandiyoti drew attention to a particularity of women's

³ Sancar, S. (2012). *Türk Modernleşmesinin Cinsiyeti: Erkekler Devlet, Kadınlar Aile Kurar*. İstanbul: İletişim, p.57-60.

⁴ Kandiyoti, D. (1987). Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case. *Feminist Studies*, 13(2). doi:10.2307/3177804, p. 317-338.

⁵ Smith, A. D. (1983). *Theories of Nationalism*. London: Duckworth, p.167.

emancipation in Middle East which presented itself quite in the same way. To illustrate, in the Turkish case, the emancipatory measures provided for women were often explained with quite inconsistent terms as being either extraordinary or solely superficial. However, the Turkish case demonstrates both the opportunities and the restrictions of reforms initiated by a male-dominated state in the absence of a significant grass-roots women's movement without touching the most crucial areas of gender relations. In that respect, the situation of Turkish women decades later the Kemalist reforms was defined as "emancipated but unliberated".⁶

It can be argued that one of the most important outcomes of these nationalist transformations was the creation of a dilemma for pioneer women who stood out with their emancipatory and democratic ideals as feminist elites or intellectuals. These pioneer women were nationalist actors who supported and took part in the state-building process (and independence movement). However, at the same time, they challenged the patriarchal projects of women's integration into the polity which prioritized collective goals of unity and modernization at the expense of democratic inclusion of particular interests and women's liberation. As they were faced with the tension between these general and particularistic objectives they were stigmatized and excluded by the regime. This dilemma survived well into the later periods. For example, Yishai demonstrated in the Israeli case that the tension between mobilization for and in the name of women on the one hand and integration into male-dominated institutions along with nationalist-collectivist ends on the other hand since the establishment of state of Israel remained a significant challenge for women in their struggle for the expansion of equal citizenship rights.⁷ The imperatives of national security and statist nationalist objectives created an enduring tension between the quest for women's

⁶ Kandiyoti, 1987, p.317-338.

⁷ Yishai, Y. (1996). *Between the Flag and the Banner: Women in Israeli Politics*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

liberation and equality and the need for integration into the male-dominated structures and causes. Likewise, in other developing nations, including Turkey, identification with the nationalist goals and modernization objectives also compromised women's emancipatory quest because patriarchal paradigms for women's equal citizenship constructed women's inclusion into the polity through women's nurturing roles in the family and symbolic significance for the nation at large.

As will also be elaborated in this thesis, the Turkish case of women's inclusion in the polity during the state-building process was also characterized by a patriarchal paradigm; this defined women as equal citizens on the condition that they also succumbed to the norms and values of a new patriarchal gender regime: Women were defined as helpmates of men in the public sphere, and they were primarily referred to as mothers and wives in the family.⁸ It then becomes inevitable that the first generation women intellectuals and activists who were not content with the new regime's approach towards democratic participation and women's rights experienced a familiar dilemma. As was demonstrated by second-generation feminist scholars, in Turkey in 1923 the fate of the aborted Women's Republican Party experience indicated that the authoritarian male-dominated state could not tolerate women's autonomous demands. Pioneer women ended up with no other choice but getting involved in the attainment of national goals often compromising from their 'radical' agendas or taking a step back from their public struggles thereby upholding the state's agendas laid down for the general good of the society. It can be argued that this dilemma has been enduring in Turkey and elsewhere; and as the second wave Turkish feminists underlined over and over again, this situation resulted in the perpetuation of the public-private divide and

⁸ Arat, Y. (1989). *The Patriarchal Paradox: Women Politicians in Turkey*. Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press.

relegated women to de facto second-class citizens suppressing their feminine identity behind a façade of legal equality.⁹

As a result, as feminist scholars and activists of the 1980s and the 1990s underlined, although the legal and ideological ground of political and legal equality were laid down during the early Republican period of the 1920s and the 1930s, since then the progress in terms of de facto gender equality and the enjoyment of equal citizenship rights have been problematic. This was largely due to both the patriarchal norms and the lingering effect of the dilemma. Gender inequalities in Turkey are still significant barriers for women's enjoyment of equal citizenship rights.¹⁰ There is still insufficiency in terms of women's political representation in political decision.¹¹ Women's participation in the Turkish parliament is still about a half of the European Union average.¹² Women's employment and labour force participation rates both in national and regional levels have been strikingly low.¹³ Due to prevailing gender segregation in the employment market, they are especially excluded from top-ranked jobs despite the increase in their educational level. There is also considerable number of highly educated women who are not in paid work.¹⁴ The gender segregation at

⁹ Kadioğlu, A. (1994). Women's Subordination in Turkey: Is Islam Really the Villain? *Middle East Journal*, 48(4), 645. ; Durakbaşı, A. (2007). *Halide Edip-Türk Modernleşmesi ve Feminizm*. İletişim Yayıncılık.

¹⁰ <http://eca.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2016/01/turkish-parliament-to-enhance-women-s-political-participation>

¹¹ As of 2018, the average for women in the Turkish parliament stands at 17.48 percent. https://www.tbmm.gov.tr/develop/owa/milletvekillerimiz_sd.dagilim

¹² http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-13-891_en.htm

¹³ Karaçuka, M. (2018). Türkiye'de Kadınların İşgücüne Katılımı ve İstihdamı. *Uluslararası Ekonomi, Siyaset, İnsan ve Toplum Bilimleri Dergisi*, 1 (2), 134-150. Retrieved from <http://dergipark.gov.tr/ijephss/issue/38261/435441>

¹⁴ Ermis, A. (2015). *Segregation at Work, Segregation at Home: Turkish Women, Gendered Jobs and Prestige*. Retrieved from <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.library.metu.edu.tr/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=edsndl&AN=edsndl.oai.union.ndltd.org.bl.uk.oai.ethos.bl.uk.692880&site=eds-live&authtype=ip.uid>

work means that the majority of Turkish women are confined to traditional roles such as housework and childcare.¹⁵ Other problems such as the extent of male violence against women in the society also continue to reveal the continuing strength of patriarchal norms and oppression for women.¹⁶

There are two points of departure for the analysis in this thesis. The first is the contention that in the context of male-dominated perspective of egalitarian feminism, reconciling feminism with nationalist objectives as defined by men remained as a major challenge and tension for intellectual pioneer women of Turkish feminism of the 1920s and the 1930s. Secondly, there was a continuity/commonality in terms of the centrality of women's rights for modernization paradigms in the Ottoman-Turkish reform period and the Kemalist secularization during the early Republican era. However, there was also an important rupture in the process since the Kemalist modernization approach to the question of secularism differed radically from the approaches of the Tanzimat and Constitutional periods, and as such it openly aimed at the emancipation of women in the new regime.¹⁷ As different from the Ottoman modernization which started during the Tanzimat era (1839-1876), the Republican Kemalist modernization was a period of secular state-building based on the nationalist objective of creating a unitary nation-state and a national identity for Turks. Hence, the thesis looks at both the continuities and the ruptures between/from the Ottoman-Turkish modernization (in the late 19th century) and the early

¹⁵ Research indicates that although women's participation in the labour force reached to 33.8% in November 2017, their participation in the workforce remains below the average in other OECD countries which was 51.9% and EU countries which was 46%. These problems make women insecure depriving their basic rights such as pensions and healthcare. <https://www.evrensel.net/daily/347477/working-women-in-turkey-unemployment-violence-and-insecurity>

¹⁶ According to a research, more than 286 women and girls were murdered by men in 2017. Moreover, while 101 women were raped, 248 women and 377 girls were sexually attacked or abused. In other words, at least four women a day are subjected to violence in Turkey. In OECD (2019), Violence Against Women (indicator). doi: 10.1787/f1eb4876-en

¹⁷ Berkes, N. (1964). The Kemalist Reforms. In *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*. Montreal: McGill University Press, p.461.

Republican period (1920s to the 1940s) in the realm of women's rights, and problematizes the paradigm of equality reforms in the context of overarching objectives of a male-dominated state during social and political upheavals. In other words, this thesis underlines the continuity (since the Tanzimat period) in the paradigm of gender equality between women and men in the early Republican era, which was problematized by feminist researchers in the 1980s. Despite the radical essence of Kemalist revolution on transforming citizenship, this continuity is the instrumentalization of women's rights for some social and political purposes based on the family-centered importance of women.

The term "state feminism" came into circulation by the new generation of feminists in Turkey in the 1980s and the 1990s to refer to the policies and the approach of the male-dominated regime in this period to transform the Turkish society by, among other things, emancipating women from the traditional restrictions of the ancient regime. Since the 1980s, the feminist critique of Kemalist reforms contended that women's rights were introduced by the male-dominated state providing Turkish women with rights and opportunities in the public domain as a national policy of modernization and with the objective of demonstrating the pro-democratic credentials of the new state to the Western world.¹⁸ Şirin Tekeli, a prominent name in women's movement and an outstanding feminist scholar, used "state feminism" to refer to the Turkish state's egalitarian approach to the women's rights in the public realm. Other scholars also claimed that Kemalist reforms were practical for national development but not for the liberation of women.¹⁹ For example, Arat objected to associate Kemalism with feminism.²⁰ Feminist critiques held that this process resulted in an

¹⁸ Tekeli, Ş. (1993). 1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadınlar, *1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadın Bakış Açısından Kadınlar*. İstanbul: İletişim.

¹⁹ Berktaş, F. (1996). Türkiye'de Kadınlık Durumu, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*. İstanbul: İletişim.

²⁰ Arat, Y. (2010). Nation Building and Feminism in Early Republican Turkey. In: Kerslake C., Öktem K., Robins P. (eds) *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity*. St Antony's Series. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

official discourse which held that women's rights and opportunities were not gained in consequence of demands of women, but were imposed from above. This idea also came to be accepted by the majority of Turkish society. Moreover, Republican state feminism focused on improving the women's position in the public sphere without being concerned with their oppression in the private sphere.²¹ This critique has paved the way for a change in the perception of women and women's problems in Turkey.²² It was also claimed that Republican reform period gave rise to essential progress in many areas, but short of achieving gender equality not only between women and men but also among the women. The compromising nature of the Republican reforms were generally explained either by the presence of patriarchy fed by Islamic tradition, or by the prudent strategy of the Kemalists who followed a gradual process of modernization to abstain further alienation of the society.²³

In the light of all these criticisms, this thesis has the objective of analyzing the premises and the objectives of "state feminism" in Kemalist administration which pioneered the secularization and modernization reforms in the context of an authoritarian regime until the 1940s. State feminism as the paradigm of gender equality in the early Republic, created a tension between the nationalist-collectivist goals and group interests for women as it resulted in the repression and exclusion of the pioneer feminist women of the era. It means that although in the post-1935 following the era of women's suffrage, these women were silenced and excluded by the authoritarian state.

²¹ White, J. (2003). State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman. *NWSA Journal*, 15(3), 145-159. ; Kandiyoti, 1987, p.317-338.

²² Çaha, Ö. (2011). The Transition of Feminism from Kemalist Modernism to Postmodernism in Turkey. *Turkish Journal of Politics*, 2(1), 5.

²³ Arat, Z. F. (1994). Kemalism and Turkish Women. *Women & Politics*, 51-70.

Accordingly, the research questions underlying this thesis can be formulated as follows: “What were the major premises of state feminism in Turkey in the 1920s and the 1930s in terms of women’s citizenship?” “What kind of a dilemma was created for the women elite activists of the era who challenged the male-dominated authoritarian state’s policies on women’s rights?” In relation to the dilemma or enduring tensions created especially for feminist elite women during the state-building process (and later on for other women as well), this thesis study specifically focuses on the continuity from the Ottoman modernization into the Republican era. It aims at analyzing this continuity specifically by looking at the ideas of women pioneers to draw inferences regarding whether and how they tried to reconcile their nationalist identities as citizens of the new Republic and also their demands for women’s liberation as they were repressed by the authoritarian state. For example, Nezihe Muhiddin’s Women’s Party initiative was aborted in 1923. It was re-established as the Women’s Association in 1924. Later, however, with the new legislation which introduced women’s political rights in 1934, the Women’s Union established by Nezihe Muhiddin was also asked to dissolve itself in 1935. The government then banned the Union’s activities, and women’s activism was disrupted.²⁴ Just like many other similar independent organizations, the Women’s Union was invited to join the semi-official People’s Houses.²⁵ As a result, there were no women’s organizations to voice the gender inequality issue or defiance the state regarding its full equality claim for decades.²⁶ Hence, this year (1935) was taken as the end of the first era of feminism (or the first wave feminism) in Turkey during the early Republican era.

²⁴ Adak, H. (2007). *Suffragettes of the Empire, Daughters of the Republic: Women Auto/Biographers Narrate National History (1918-1935)*. Retrieved from http://research.sabanciuniv.edu/5287/1/adak_npt_36b.pdf

²⁵ Zihnioğlu, Y. (2016). *Kadınsız İnkılâp: Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği*. İstanbul: Metis yayınları.

²⁶ Gupta, K. (2015). Women’s Movement in Turkey Since 1980: Achievements and Limitations. *Internat. J. Appl. Soc. Sci.*, 2 (3&4), 113-121.

Besides, independent activists of the early feminism (1923-1935) such as Nezihe Muhiddin (1889-1958), there were other prominent intellectual and activist women who wholeheartedly took part in the Kemalist liberation and embraced modernization and reforms for women's rights. For example, Halide Edip was opposed to the regime in Kemalist rule. Because of her opposition, she had to self-exile to Europe and could not turn back until the 1939 owing to her oppositional stance to Mustafa Kemal.²⁷ Halide Edip was not a self-proclaimed feminist; she was not involved in the Ottoman and Republican feminist organizations of her time. She was a nationalist and the female voice for the liberation movement as she supported Mustafa Kemal's struggle. However, at the same time, she also supported women's movement and equal rights and objected to authoritarian leadership. Therefore, in the fourth chapter of the thesis, I will consider and examine these women as significant because they were both nationalist and women's rights advocates.

It is also important to note that some of these pioneer women did not describe themselves as "feminist" and despite the fact that they were not included in the feminist organizations, they can be considered as feminists because they supported women's liberation and also legal reforms for equal citizenship. The thesis study focuses on two of the pioneer women, Nezihe Muhiddin and Halide Edip. The importance of these two pioneer women stems from the fact that even though there was a difference between them in terms of feminist struggle, they were both silenced by the state as they conflicted with the Kemalist regime's objectives and paradigm for women's equality. Halide Edip experienced the dilemma because she was excluded due to her opposition to the new nationalist government but she was often criticized on the basis of her feminine identity. She was a woman with feminist ideals but who never identified herself as a feminist. That is why she did not conflict with the Kemalist state on feminism. On the other hand, Nezihe Muhiddin was an activist feminist woman as she raised

²⁷ Zihnioğlu, 2016, p.151-160.

women's individual existence and interests as an issue, but was soon found subversive by the regime. Despite their differences, both Halide Edip and Nezihe Muhiddin were committed to raising women's self-awareness and fought for women's equal rights.

The analysis begins with a historical overview of women's position in Turkish society from the late Ottoman period to the early Republican period by providing a historical background based on the progress as well as the debates on women's rights during the Tanzimat period. For the first time Ottoman women's position began to change along with the perceptions about women and the family during the Ottoman period. There were many civil initiatives set up by women writers and intellectuals express women's problems, demands and working to raise women's conscious in the late Ottoman period although this defensive process of modernization involved a very limited number of women.²⁸

The specific nature of the Kemalist modernization and its outlook on women's rights (instrumentalization of women's rights and equality reforms) is a well-known and well-researched issue so far. Nevertheless, these arguments still retain their importance and scholarly significance because the impact of nationalism and nationalist patriarchal policies and collectivist ideals on the women's public and private roles are still central to any analysis of women's problems in contemporary Turkey. Besides supporting the view which considers the dynamics of the early Republican "state feminism" as the background of lingering gender inequalities today, this thesis highlights historically, the dilemmas of pioneer women on the politics of women's rights reforms during the early Republican era. Based on the analysis of pioneer women's encounters and experiences with state feminism, the relationship between the making of a new gender regime based on collectivist goals and priorities of nation-building and women's struggles will be elaborated. Hence, this thesis study is expected to contribute to

²⁸ Çakır, S. (1994). *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*. Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.

the scholarly analysis of the relationship between the proponents of women's rights, their struggles and the nationalist patriarchal state.

1.2. Research Procedure

This case study is based on qualitative research which combined a process-tracing approach and the deductive analysis of mostly secondary resources to demonstrate the validity of a theoretical expectation regarding macro-scale processes. As another attempt at reviewing the history of a social group (women) and their relations with the state from the perspective of actors, this study is also a feminist analysis in terms of its subject matter and also in terms of the questions it raises. Feminist research is not necessarily tied to a specific research procedure, but it is largely based on qualitative research due to its affinity to interpretive approach to social sciences. Besides, its aims are mainly seeking to overcome biases in research, bringing about social change and acknowledging the position of the researcher.²⁹ In other words, feminist research starts with inquiring and criticizing androcentric prejudice within the disciplines, challenging conventional studies to embody gender as a category of analysis.³⁰ Given the concern with women's experiences and the construction of their subjectivity in male-dominated processes, this study has the intention of contributing to studies illuminating the underrated story of women's experiences within patriarchal state dynamics.

Case study is a methodology applied to a study of an individual unit, as a person, family, or community stressing developmental factors in relation to environment. Therefore, it contributes to theory building by analysing one or more particular situations with a view to making generalizations, particularly with the aim of

²⁹ Reinharz, S. & Davidman, L. (2006). *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. New York: Oxford University Press.

³⁰ Hesse-Biber, S. N. (2012). *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

comparing a larger group to the individual unit.³¹ It is particularly convenient in conditions where contextual situations of the incident being studied are critical and where the researcher has no control over the incidents as they reveal.³² In a case study, the researcher generally provides key points to demonstrate the complexity of the topic. It is suitable for complicated explanations to support a theory. Despite these advantages, as it depends on the underlying philosophical assumptions of the researcher, what observers choose to include may be prejudiced. Furthermore, as there is an element of subjectivity, the researcher may see what s/he expects to see.³³ Because of the complexity of the topic, it is often open to different interpretations, and potential researcher bias.³⁴ The importance of case study is to examine the topics discussed in detail and help to reach generalizations by examining other cases besides idiosyncratic statements. As this thesis also exemplifies, case studies may also be grounded in comparative approach in order to put the case under investigation into perspective. This is important for upholding the theoretical expectations produced on the basis of the similar cases. Hence case studies also have a comparative aspect. In this thesis, the Turkish case is put into perspective in the context of other comparable nationalist state-building processes which brought about large-scale transformations or revolutions in the social and political structure, as reviewed in the second chapter.

³¹ Merriam, S. B. (1988). *The Jossey-Bass Education Series, The Jossey-Bass Higher Education Series and The Jossey-Bass Social and Behavioral Science Series*. Case Study Research in Education: A Qualitative Approach. San Francisco, CA, US: Jossey-Bass.

³² Ritchie, J. & Lewis, J. (2003). *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. London: SAGE Publications.

³³ Range, L. M. (2018). *Case Study Methodologies*. Salem Press Encyclopedia of Health. Retrieved from <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.library.metu.edu.tr/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=ers&AN=93871826&site=eds-live&authtype=ip.uid>

³⁴ Cornford, T. & Smithson, S. (1996). *Project Research in Information Systems: A Students Guide*. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan.

In terms of objectives, a qualitative research may address the ‘why?’ questions focusing on causal mechanisms thus generating explanatory study. At the same time or alternatively a qualitative research may also concern itself with the ‘what’ and/or ‘how’ questions, producing a descriptive or exploratory study, respectively.³⁵ For example, while this study tries to understand why feminist scholars think about the deficiencies of the women’s rights reforms under the male-dominated authoritarian administration (from a feminist perspective), it also aims at identifying what the major premises and objectives of Kemalist state feminism were and its personal consequences for specific women actors. Hence, it starts with providing a description or a representation that corresponds to the actions of patriarchal state and (pro-) feminist actors. It is only when this initial picture was established it will be ready to examine about the ‘why’ question. In other words, asking ‘what’ and ‘how’ questions is important for the better understanding of ‘why’ questions. Therefore, this thesis study is both a descriptive study with a ‘what’ question and an exploratory study with a ‘how’ question, thereby contributing to the answers generated so far to answer a ‘why’ question (why the Republican transformation on women’s rights remained compromised so far).

With the goal of investigating the politics of women’s rights reforms during the early Republican era, this thesis includes direct quotes from relevant documents, reports, memoirs and secondary analyses by other scholars. As this study tries to identify and comprehend the subjective analysis of different feminist scholars regarding a special topic, it will be mainly based on the secondary sources. As the history of women was not integrated into the studies on Ottoman history of Ottoman-Turkish modernization for a long time (and for quite some time as few scholars could read old Ottoman script during the early Republican era), there was generally a scarcity of academic work in this field up to the 1990s. Therefore, revisiting history which has had an androcentric bias and aiming at

³⁵ Barnham, C. (2015). *Quantitative and Qualitative Research*. International Journal of Market Research, 57(6), <https://doi.org/10.2501/IJMR-2015-070>, p.837–854.

exposing these biases by putting women actors into the center of this study by asking new questions enable us to better document and understand women's experiences and perspectives. Overall, the insights of this thesis study are intended to contribute to political science, history and women's studies research.

1.3. The Organization of Thesis

This study consists of five main chapters. The first chapter introduces the subject matter, scope and the research question of the study and lays out research procedure and the organization of the thesis. The second chapter provides the background for the theoretical expectations for my study based on other cases; it reviews the process of egalitarian reforms for women in nationalist transformations. Referring to the Middle Eastern states' perspective in equality policies in the early 20th century in the Middle East, it examines how pioneer women were faced with the feminist understanding of the male-dominated state in the process of nationalization and state-building. Then, the antecedents of the Kemalist reforms on women and modernization during the Tanzimat and the Constitutional period in the Ottoman era will be scrutinized. In the third chapter, the Republican/Kemalist secularization reforms and the place of women's rights are elaborated. After explaining the general structure and purpose of the Kemalist reforms, the aspects of the modernization process which were significant for women are underlined. In the fourth chapter, by overviewing the feminist critique of 1980s and 1990s, the Republican transformation and its state feminism are addressed from a historical and descriptive perspective. Then, the place of the women in nationalist discourse, both in connection with reforms and in nation-building processes is examined. Pioneer women could not refuse nationalist discourses and objectives; yet they were certainly in a dilemma. To illustrate this, the thesis provides the background of the state-administrated reforms on women, the perspectives of important personalities such as male statesmen and female actors as well as the pioneering elite women to hear the voice of women (feminists) as they challenged the new regime's approach to equality reforms and democracy. It highlights the dilemma and the tension created between their

responsibilities as citizens of a nationalist polity and their ideals to defend women's emancipation and individual existence. The conclusion chapter will sum up the discussion and highlight its major findings and point to new research questions in view of the recent developments in gender equality in Turkey.



CHAPTER 2

WOMEN'S RIGHTS DURING STATE- BUILDING PROCESSES AND NATIONALIST PROJECTS

2.1. Contextualizing Equality Reforms and Feminist Struggles for Women in Nationalist and State Building Periods

According to Kandiyoti, there is an ideal type of gender regime in Middle Eastern societies, which she called “classical patriarchy”. This classical patriarchy is the fundamental gender regime in Middle Eastern societies that still governs family life at the normative level.³⁶ Therefore, as a field of research, how the social dynamics are defined in terms of such a gender regime have begun to be explored in the process of the modern nation-states building in the Middle East. As in many Middle Eastern societies, feminism in Turkey, to transform society based on kinship has become part of the nation-building process. This process is often accompanied by an increased awareness of women being dominated and the need for social reform and legal regulation for the advancement of the nation.³⁷ The mobilization of women for the national struggle against imperialism and colonialism is one of the prominent features of these nation-states.³⁸

The emancipation of women was an integral part of the national resistance movements and was formulated to take a central place in nationalist ideologies

³⁶Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with Patriarchy. *Gender and Society*, 2 (3), 274-290.

³⁷ Durakbaşı, A. (2007). *Halide Edip-Türk Modernleşmesi ve Feminizm*, p.87-93.

³⁸ Kandiyoti, D. (1991). *Women, Islam, and the State*. Londra: Macmillan.

that developed a new national-cultural identity. For these ideologies, the “new woman” image was a sign of modernization as a nation. The reformist men of the indigenous bourgeoisie defended women’s rights to create a modern and civilized image for themselves and women in their countries. The women of the bourgeoisie or the prominent bureaucrats were encouraged to fulfill new social roles in accordance with such a modernization ideology and nation-building project.³⁹ However, as one interpreter on Middle Eastern feminism pointed out, the integration of a group of women into public life had been achieved in most of these countries, with the protection of patriarchal order and/or gender asymmetry in exchange for women’s rights to participate in the public domain. While this provided a “nationalist alliance” between men and women, at the same time provided a lasting alliance between “nationalism and patriarchy”.⁴⁰ In these societies, the way in which women’s position placed in different paradigms corresponded to the notions of new cultural integrity and identity, the notions of new citizenship, which provided legitimizing ideologies for the new forms of state power and created inequalities between men and women in the nation-state ideology.⁴¹ According to Kandiyoti, in these societies, women’s rights reforms actually clarify the nature of the nation-state project and the nature of nationalism.⁴²

Every type of nationalism contradicts the idea of democracy based on individual preferences, a liberal principle; because being a citizen of the state gives importance to loyalty not to being individual, but to the nation. In addition, national minorities and especially women were excluded from the public devices

³⁹ Jayawardena, K. (1986). *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*. London: Zed Books.

⁴⁰ Durakbaşı, 2007, p. 89.

⁴¹ Kandiyoti, D. (1989) Women and Islam: What are the Missing Terms?, *Dossier 5/6*, 5-9.

⁴² Kandiyoti, 1991, p.2.

of the nation from the beginning. It is known that women who were closed to the family and motherhood by private and public sphere could obtain equal citizenship rights as a result of long and hard struggles, organizing on their own behalf.⁴³ When we look at the relationship between the conditions of development of democracies and the development of women-friendly gender regimes, it is seen that the development of democracy for women has always under the control of the institutions dominated by men. The conditions for women to participate in social life are prepared by men. In this sense, nations mobilize women as liberation projects.⁴⁴ This was also valid for the nationalist policy of the early Republican era in Turkey, which guided gender regimes with the demands of freedom which will be examined in the next chapters in detail.

In this section, it will be examined the position of woman in the Middle East at the beginning of the 20th century, since women's rights started to be an important issue for nationalist projects, especially in the Middle Eastern countries.⁴⁵ The term "feminism" was used to defend equal citizenship rights for women in public sphere by the early feminists in the late 19th century of Europe. They considered education right as one of women's most important demands, for example. These feminists were generally among middle-class and working-class women holding Enlightenment ideas to underline women's fundamental human rights and equal citizenship rights with men.⁴⁶ As distinct from this, with the development of democracies in the world, women-friendly gender regimes had begun to develop

⁴³ Sancar, 2012, p.47.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.57-58.

⁴⁵ *Remaking Women : Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East*. (1998). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. Retrieved from <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.library.metu.edu.tr/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=edsasp&AN=edsasp.ASP3156659.tcr2&site=eds-live&authtype=ip,uid>

⁴⁶ *From Wollstonecraft to Mill: What British and European Ideas and Social Movements Influenced the Emergence of Feminism in the Atlantic World, 1792-1869?* (2002). Retrieved from <http://womhist.alexanderstreet.com/awrm/intro.htm>

especially in the Middle Eastern countries. Unlike Western feminism, the development of democracies for women in these nation-states started by preparing the conditions for women to participate in social life, which were controlled by male-dominated institutions. In this sense, it can be said that the national organization and/or liberation projects of these states mobilized women in different directions and contexts. In these late-nationalized societies, modernization movements were intertwined with nationalist movements. For this reason, when we look at the characteristics of these “modern” gender regimes created by the nationalist-modernizing political movements focusing on nation-state building, we can see that the relation between the nationalism and feminism changed according to different contexts.⁴⁷ As mentioned before, the nationalist politics that directed the gender regimes in the period of Ottoman-Turkish modernizations, the Tanzimat, the second Constitutional period and the early Republican period, and even in later years are not always the same.

The most important factor directing the gender regime in all these processes shaped by different political dynamics is the inclusion of women in national struggle. Women’s position in the “national struggle” depends on how women are invited to “the national will”, which supports that an independent state should be established in order to be “a modern society”. In the invitation to the national struggle, the place of women can be changed as “female citizens” who represent the national will and equal to the men, or “helping comrades” who only serve the national will.⁴⁸ In this section, the aim is to see similarities in the issue of women’s equal citizenship rights in the nation-state building processes in different countries in the Middle East. If state policies gave similar roles to women in different countries, then it is reasonable for women in different countries to express their demands in a similar way, or that state tactics toward

⁴⁷ Sancar, 2012, p.57-58.

⁴⁸ Ibid, p.58.

women developed in one country could be applied to one another.⁴⁹ It actually tries to learn whether “state feminism” has internationally valid forms. For example, as Atatürk’s Turkey and the Shah of Iran, “Western” and “Modern” concepts were used synonymously. In such cases, this discourse accompanies the conduct of policies aimed at increasing the presence of women in the public sphere.⁵⁰

According to Yuval-Davis, one of the feminist theorists, who pondered on women’s participation models in national-building processes, women’s participation in national projects should be examined not only during periods of nation-state buildings, but also during the re-rectification, consolidation and reformation of established states.⁵¹ When starting to talk about the specificities or similarities of women’s process of joining the nation-building, it is necessary to point out different contexts in advance. First of all, it should be said that women’s rights politics, which advocate women so that they could participate in the national will, create their own specific contexts. It should also be noted that the participation of pro-national women, who are excluded by the nationalist state, in the national-building processes has different characteristics.⁵²

Since the rise of women’s rights movements in the Middle East has a long, tough, and complex path, a comparative approach is beneficial to understand development of women’s rights, and how women struggled with the patriarchal states and its male elites during the transformation of the nations.⁵³ As two

⁴⁹ Altınay, A. G. (2004). *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.61.

⁵¹ Yuval-Davis, N. (1997), *Gender and Nation*, Sage.

⁵² Sancar, 2012, p.59.

⁵³ Al-Qaiwani, S. (2015). *Nationalism, Revolution and Feminism: Women in Egypt and Iran from 1880-1980* (PhD’s thesis, The London School of Economics and Political Science). London.

significant cases among Middle Eastern states, women's rights discourses and movements, and state responses and policies in Egypt and Israel shows us changing notions of woman as both countries had common ground in terms of nationalism and feminism with the Turkish case. There was a women's relationship with modernizing states, and feminist activism within national movements.

The feminist movement in Egypt started toward the end of the 19th century and quickly spread over the Middle East. Women had struggled to make some changes in some specific areas such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody laws and they had obtained limited success. It is important to note that both Moslem and Christian feminists of the 19th and 20th centuries had shown remarkable contributions to their own ways to making their voices stronger. For example, Aisha Ismat al-Taimuriya, who was an Egyptian feminist woman, wrote fiery poetry against the veiling of women. Her struggle was considered as the first motive for the gender equality. Zainab Fawwaz, a Lebanese woman rejecting the veiling, and condemning the seclusion of women, was a famous literary figure in not only Lebanon but also in Egypt. She also encouraged women's education right, as well as their employment outside the home. Nazira Zain al-Din, the Lebanese daughter of an Islamic scholar of religion and law, also supported education of women and criticized the practice of veiling. As one of the most impressive Middle Eastern feminists, Egyptian writer Huda Sha'raoui managed women's marches against the British colonial occupation of Egypt. She also struggled to increase the legal age of marriage for young women from 13 to 16 and she led the establishment of the Egyptian Feminist Union against the discrimination of women in social, political, and economic spheres in 1944.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Moghadam, V. M. (2008). Feminism, Legal Reform and Women's Empowerment in the Middle East and North Africa. *International Social Science Journal*, 59(191), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2451.2009.00673.x>, p. 9–16.

Therefore, in Egyptian case, toward the end of the 19th century, a need emerged for a transformation in the status of women in Egypt after a seventeen-year British occupation. Many scholars link the importance of the 1919 Revolution to the emergence of an Egyptian women's rights movement. Women's roles in Egypt's Nationalist Revolution over a decade were far more defined and apparent. By 1919, almost two decades of serious debate took place on the subject of women's rights.⁵⁵ Amin, as a writer, started to question the nature of Egyptian society, politics, and its possibility for an independent future. He advocated many reforms which were essential to advance the position of Egyptian women because he thought that reforming Egyptian woman meant the improvement of Egyptian society.⁵⁶ Because of colonial critiques of the Muslim woman figure, women's oppressed condition started to be considered as cause and result of the misery in Egyptian society. Polygamy, early and arranged marriages, gender segregation and the veiling started to be seen as symbols of the oppression of women and the backwardness of Egyptian society. Still, the promise of women's progress was to justify colonial authority and to construct a nationalist reform programme. Actually, all measures that the state took aimed at creating "new women" as a means of modernizing Egyptian society. During this process, the status of women would be improved and therefore, modernity and political legitimacy of the Egyptian nation would be obtained. Egyptian women's rights during nationalist project were the product of numerous discursive and material struggles between reformers, nationalist activists, ruling elites, and colonial officials. According to the vision of Amin and reformers like him, women should participate in public role in the project of national modernization.⁵⁷

⁵⁵Al-Qaiwani, 2015, p.113-114.

⁵⁶ Amin, Q., & Peterson, S. S. (2001). *The Liberation of Women and the New Woman: Two Documents in the History of Egyptian Feminism*. Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press.

⁵⁷ Bier, L. (2011). *Revolutionary Womanhood : Feminisms, Modernity, and the State in Nasser's Egypt*. Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press. Retrieved from <http://0->

Later, the Nasser regime's emerged as a result of the 1952 revolution which focused on women question in the state-building processes. This regime remained Egyptian women as "mothers of the nation" and as a "symbol for the modernity of the independent nation". In 1956, Egyptian women were granted the right to vote and the right to run for public office with the new constitution and new electoral law. They became fully enfranchised citizens. All citizens, regardless of gender, were granted the right to public education and were charged with the task of public labor for the benefit of nation. It is crucial to demonstrate that this was the "state feminism" which gave new responsibilities for women providing not only the inclusion but also the transformation of women in the new nation. However, Nasser's regime promoted women's political position as secondary by emphasising a balance between familial and national duties in the 1956 Constitution. The regime generated "different" political/national tasks for men and women. Some women opted for negotiating with the patriarchal bargains and different modernizing impulses of Nasser's regime to advance their own goals.⁵⁸ Nasser' regime also started to crack down on all independent women's rights groups. The regime coopted feminist organizations like Shafiq's Bint Al Nil Union, aiming to centralize their activities through the Ministry of Social Affairs. Although there were some feminists who readily compromised with Nasser, some others opposed to the regime's compulsion. The women who opted for patriarchal bargains were rewarded by the Egyptian State, while others continued to be suppressed.⁵⁹ Bier claimed that this revolution was the beginning of the end of independent feminism in Egypt. Former women activists were not only silenced, but also they were arrested for criticizing the increasingly authoritarian direction of the revolution by patriarchal state regime. For example,

search.ebscohost.com/library.metu.edu.tr/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=nlebk&AN=390640&site=eds-live&authtype=ip.uid

⁵⁸ Al-Qaiwani, 2015, p.39.

⁵⁹ Ibid, p.254-256.

Saiza Nabarawi, who was a founding member of the Egyptian Feminist Union, later had to deal with only national issues instead of women's issues.⁶⁰ The politics of gender disappeared with the advent of the Revolution and there was no more an independent feminist organization. Rather, the state feminism adopted reforms in the discourse of modernization process. Therefore, women in Egypt could not go further than to be a kind of object-symbol of the nation-state building process. Nasser's regime stressed women's roles as "teachers of the next generations", on the strength of socialist constructs of womanhood; yet, similarly limited their political and social activity.⁶¹ This situation demonstrates that while the defined role of motherhood and spouse in the family sanctified the woman within the family, at the same time the dilemmas experienced by women who were forced to be second-class citizens in society.⁶²

Secondly, Israil is also a good point to turn because there are certain similarities between establishment of the Turkish and Israeli nation-states. It is suggested that state-building process was intertwined with nation-building in the two states within a statist project. Therefore, Zionism as a movement for the re-establishment of a Jewish nation in today's Israel, and Kemalism as the guiding principle for the new Turkish Republic after the 1930s were characterized by similar ends. For these opinions, both Zionism and Kemalism represented the establishment of modern European-like nation-states. Just as Zionism tried to de-Orientalize the Jew, Kemalism tried to de-Orientalize the Turk. Both nation-state projects developed a variety of techniques in creating a modern nation involving the politics of women's rights reforms.⁶³ In Israel during the years between 1919

⁶⁰ Bier, 2011.

⁶¹ Al-Qaiwani, 2015, p.219.

⁶² Sancar, 2012, p.61.

⁶³ Papantonopoulou, S. (2015). *Thrice a Stranger: Hellenism, Kemalism, Zionism*, Athens: ATINER'S Conference Paper Series, No: TUR2015-1541.

and 1926, the early feminist struggle reached its peak with the fight to obtain the right to vote for *Yishuv* institutions which was Jewish community in Palestine prior to the establishment of the State of Israel. This prolonged uprising had a positive impact on women's roles, inasmuch as women could participate politically in what was once the most secular and democratic movement in Arab world. Like Kemalism, Zionism also developed an explicit female identity. In Israeli case, the objectives of Religious-Zionists were to constitute an integral part of the new society, at the same time to preserve the traditional order. However, a conflict appeared between the new and the old and this directly affected the new image of women that the state created. In order to protect the patriarchal order, the Israeli state decided to set a new gender relation for the new Jewish sovereign state. As the main aim was modernization, the national struggle created an opportunity for projects that could be called as "state feminism". Religious women started to establish female organizations so that they could contribute to the Religious-Zionist state as well as the development of women's position. They founded some institutions to educate young religious girls and many women started to enter professional training courses thanks to these institutions. Religious Zionist women also joined to the defense forces during the War of Independence.⁶⁴ Although most of them aimed to help the nationalist identification instead of calling for gender equality, they significantly affected their self-image. This is difficult to explain whether they saw themselves in a position they helped to the establishment of the new Israeli state or in a position they pioneered new female paths and roles. However, it is important to note that many of them continued to resume their traditional roles while engaging in feminist activity.⁶⁵ Women acted publicly and politically on the Zionist stage. While Zionism supported gender equality, it also rejected the long-standing and pervasive image of the women in front of weak Jewish men. It also wanted to get

⁶⁴ Rosenberg-Friedman, L. (2018). Religious-Zionism and Gender: 70 Years of Redefining the Identity of Women in the Military, Religious, and Public Spheres. *Israel Studies* 23(3), 152-163. Indiana University Press.

⁶⁵ Ibid, p.152-163.

rid themselves of internalized anti-Semitic stereotypes. In this point, women would be a good indicator of building a new national home.⁶⁶

All these things meant that in the later decades Israeli women have been obliged to subordinate feminism to state interests. This was evidence that “they had opted for the flag instead of the banner”.⁶⁷ This demonstrates the acute dilemma between the nationalist compulsions and women’s interests in Israel. It means that it was a choice between their request to encourage national progress and national security and their search for feminist self-fulfillment. The ones who wanted to be included in national-building process had to reject gender as a basis for political mobilization; but the ones subjected to gender discrimination found themselves preventing the national effort.⁶⁸ Later, women’s movement in Israel also exalted women as “mothers” and as “mothers of martyrs”. This reveals their reproductive roles created a tension as a number of authors have claimed.⁶⁹ This was actually a multifaceted nationalism, implemented not simply by visions of nation-building progress but by romantic ideals of “motherhood”. Women’s claims for emancipation emerged social and cultural contradiction at the end.⁷⁰

The implications for women are remarkable, inasmuch as anti-Zionist, anti-imperialist, and especially Islamist movements dealt with question of national identity. Since women had a significant role of rising the next generations, they

⁶⁶ Gerald M. Berg. (2001). Zionism’s Gender: Hannah Meisel and the Founding of the Agricultural Schools for Young Women. *Israel Studies*, 6(3), 135.

⁶⁷ Yishai, 1996, p.1-27

⁶⁸ Ibid, p.1-27.

⁶⁹ Moghadam, V. M. (2013). Gendering the Middle East and North Africa. In *Modernizing Women: Gender and Social Change in the Middle East*. 3rd ed. *International Journal of Middle East Studies*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, p.25.

⁷⁰ Jayawardena, 1986, p.256-259.

became symbols of cultural values and traditions as “mothers of the nation”. Many women in the Middle Eastern countries assume the role of “motherhood” as an exalted one and willingly accept it even if this role given by the male-dominated states bring out restrictions on their autonomy, individuality, mobility, and range of choices.⁷¹ Therefore, women were purposely constructed as symbols of the nation-state, the bearers of national identity, and the reservoirs of traditional values. Nation-building is a highly gendered process with regard to the notions of gender because appropriate roles for women and men are often essential for the state-building projects and for the constructions of national identity. The democracy movements in Egypt, Israel and Turkey showed that although women were the major participants in nation-building processes, the gender dynamics of nation-states were not necessarily in favor of women’s equality.⁷²

2.2. The Antecedents of the Kemalist Reforms: Women and Modernization during the Tanzimat and the Constitutionalist Period in the Ottoman Era

As this study discusses the politics of women’s rights reforms during the early Republican period in Turkey, it is necessary to discuss the political, social and economic status of women before the Republic. In order to make a clear historical overview of women’s position in Turkish society, this chapter will concentrate on two main stages. The first stage started in 1839 with a series of legislation in the Tanzimat period followed by the second stage which is the Constitutional period. In order to figure out the changing position and roles of women in Turkish society, each period should be taken into consideration separately.

⁷¹ Moghadam, 2013, p.1-37.

⁷² Ibid, p. 25-26.

2.2.1. Reforms of the Tanzimat Period on Women's Rights

The Tanzimat period was one of the most significant periods in late Ottoman history which was characterized by modernization of the state. There were many changes in not only political and administrative but also economic, social, ideological, and educational system. The Edict of Gülhane which was proclaimed by Ottoman Sultan Abdülmecid I in 1839 started the Tanzimat period of reforms and reorganization in the Ottoman Empire.⁷³ The Tanzimat reform programme was intended to change various aspects of the Ottoman state and society.⁷⁴ Therefore, it was a charter of legal, fiscal, administrative and military rights which promised secularization of education, opening government employment and military service to non Muslims, and revisions in the tax structure.⁷⁵ Besides providing for equality of all Ottoman subjects before the law, and no punishment without trial (due process), the power of the ruler to execute a subject and confiscate his property at the ruler's whim was ended by the charter.⁷⁶ Therefore, a new modern bureaucracy replaced the old one and the number of state servants

⁷³ The Edict was essentially composed by the behest of reformist Grand Vizier Mustafa Reşid Pasha and supported by the British government. Hence, there was a huge British impact on the document in the fields of administration, education and legislation. In Ortaylı, I. (2012). *Ottoman Studies*. İstanbul: İstanbul Bilgi University Press.

⁷⁴ The decree itself promised four things: first, it guaranteed the security of life, honor, and property to Ottoman subjects; secondly, it declared equality between Muslim and non-Muslim subjects; thirdly, it promised to establish a regular system of taxation and to abolish the tax-farming system; and fourthly, it underlined the necessity of a well-functioning system for military service which would include non-Muslims. In Aytekin, E. A. (2012). Peasant Protest in the Late Ottoman Empire: Moral Economy, Revolt, and the Tanzimat Reforms. *International Review of Social History*, 57(2), 191-227. doi:10.1017/S0020859012000193

⁷⁵ Weiker, W. F. (1968). The Ottoman Bureaucracy: Modernization and Reform. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 13(3), 451-470.

⁷⁶ The Charter abolished tax-farming and the role of bureaucracy increased in decision-making processes. In the 1840s, separate ministries of education and justice were established to control the legal and educational systems in the empire. Other departments were also put in place during this period, such as the department of transportation, the department of interior security, and the department of finance. A high council of justice was established to oversee judicial appointments. By 1840, there was a Prime Minister in charge of the cabinet. In Rothman, Norman C. (2007) "Islam in Turkey and Modernization: The Tanzimat Period", *Comparative Civilizations Review*: Vol. 56: No. 56, Article 7. Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol56/iss56/7>

increased dramatically in the decision-making processes. A number of quasi-legislative councils with real powers were established at the center as well as in the provinces. The new councils, albeit mostly under the control of local notables provided an accumulation of experience in representative politics which later helped a more democratic political process to emerge.⁷⁷

Modernization theory has until recently dominated the field of Ottoman studies. For the proponents of modernization theory, all the changes that took place in different spheres of the Tanzimat period were initiated by a couple of reformist sultans and a handful of Western-minded bureaucrats. Their aim was to save the empire from collapse by emulating the successful European model and restructuring its state along those lines.⁷⁸ With Tanzimat (1839-1876), the Ottoman Empire decided to start a reform policy which was heavily influenced by European ideas and the aim was to achieve an essential variation of the empire from the old regime of theocracy to a modern one.⁷⁹ Tanzimat was actually a restructuring period where the initiative for modernization came from government officials with the compliance of the sultan.⁸⁰ Therefore, it is common to see the Tanzimat reform program as a state initiative formulated and implemented top-down by state officials. However, state formation does not only consist of repression. Instead, modern states provide society with services and reforms such as mass education, health system, and better urban sanitation. It can be said that during the Tanzimat period, reforms were aimed at improving the

⁷⁷ Aytakin, E. A. (2013). Tax Revolts During the Tanzimat Period (1839–1876) and Before the Young Turk Revolution (1904–1908): Popular Protest and State Formation in the Late Ottoman Empire. *Journal of Policy History* 25(3), 308-333. Cambridge University Press. Retrieved July 9, 2018, from Project MUSE database.

⁷⁸ Ibid, p.308-330.

⁷⁹ The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. (2016). Tanzimat. <https://www.britannica.com/event/Tanzimat>

⁸⁰ Rothman, Norman C. (2007) Islam in Turkey and Modernization: The Tanzimat Period, *Comparative Civilizations Review*: Vol. 56: No. 56, Article 7. Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/ccr/vol56/iss56/7>

living standards of citizens, as well. Many signs of the presence of a modern state, therefore, appeared either during the Tanzimat or could be related with the tendency that the Tanzimat started.⁸¹ For this reason, Tanzimat reforms were also defensive measures initiated by a group of elite.

Although not all the reforms were successfully implemented, the Tanzimat as a whole transformed Ottoman polity. During the Tanzimat reform period, state elites decided to establish new institutions which guaranteed security of life, property, and honor to all subjects of the empire regardless of their religion or race. Women were also affected by these reforms. Reformists believed that the removal of the centuries of women's subordination was necessary to create a modern Ottoman society. Therefore, women in the society began to be visible around the beginning of the 19th century. The Tanzimat period was one of the most significant periods in terms of the developments concerning the position of Ottoman women. There were undeniable efforts in order to figure out the problems of women, arouse consciousness of their womanhood and make legal regulations dignifying their status. The Ottoman women were given many judicial rights and educational opportunities which will be explained below. The Tanzimat period was also the period where the problems of women started to be debated not only in literature but in the press to some extent. Indeed, bad conditions of the period were highly determinants of the improvements concerning the women's position. Although the Edict of Gülhane did not specially include articles regarding women, the changing mentality of the upper classes had a positive impact on women's public presence.⁸²

The changes in the social and cultural life created a need for a revision in different areas such as family law, the penal code, property and personal rights,

⁸¹ Aytekin, 2013, p.308-330.

⁸² Yaraman, A. (1992). *Elinin Hamuruyla Özgürlük: Resmî Tarihten Kadın Tarihine*. Büyükdere, İstanbul: Milliyet Yayınları.

the tax structure, and education in the late Ottoman Empire. These changes also opened up new possibilities for women to gain new roles in the society and their new roles started to be accepted by the society.

In terms of judicial rights, one of the most important improvements is that women gained the right of marriage before the “kadı” (Muslim judge) in 1841. Previously Ottoman Muslim men and women married before the “imam” (Muslim religious leader). Now this can be seen as a necessity to ask the permission of the “kadı” in order to get married and to register the marriage in a court. In 1884, an imperial edict enabled girls’ own consent for marriage and forbid “başlık” (the dowry).⁸³

Sharia law permitted men up to four wives and they had almost an absolute authority over their wives. Therefore, although polygamy was rare in the Ottoman Empire, intellectuals started to protest it because of the Westernization and modernization process. Altınbaş gives some examples of the literary works of the time which aimed to demonstrate the ills and disadvantages of polygamy. For example, in *Eyvah*, Ahmet Mithat Efendi represented the dilemma of a man who loved both of his wives and could not select one over the other. His message was that polygamy meant misery not pleasure. In *Zehra*, Nabizade Nazım described jealousy and hatred between a man’s two wives. In the same way, in *Mor Salkımlı Ev*, Halide Edip Adıvar depicted how her family had undergone difficult times because of jealousy, hysteria, and continuous stress after her father married his second wife.⁸⁴

⁸³ Aygöl, C. (2010). *Change in the Status Of Turkish Women during the Ottoman Modernization and Self-evaluation of Women in Kadınlar Dnyasi of 1913*. Retrieved from <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.library.metu.edu.tr/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=edsndl&AN=edsndl.oai.union.ndltd.org.METU.oai.etd.lib.metu.edu.tr.http...etd.lib.metu.edu.tr.upload.12612331.index.pdf&site=eds-live&authType=ip,uid>

⁸⁴ Altınbaş, N. (2014). Marriage and Divorce in the Late Ottoman Empire: Social Upheaval, Women’s Rights, and the Need for New Family Law. *Journal of Family History* 1-12. Retrieved from <http://yoksis.bilkent.edu.tr/pdf/files/10.1177-0363199013519126.pdf>

Another important judicial right introduced for women is the right of inheritance. Before the reform period, women had no right of inheritance directly because only sons could inherit property without any land registry fee. In 1847 this system was changed and with an edict the daughters gained the right of inheritance over state owned land. Later with the 1858 Land Code, some articles of the Land Code provided the daughters equal property rights as sons without any land registry fee.⁸⁵

Tanzimat reforms also provided educational opportunities for Ottoman women. With the objective of educating girls in public schools, the first state school for girls was opened in 1858, and others followed over the next few decades. In 1869, the Sultanate issued the Maarifi Umumiye Nizamnamesi (Regulations for General Education), mandating further, wide-reaching educational reforms. This was also a reorganization of the central and provincial administration of education as well as the reorganization and regularization of teaching methods. One of the main reforms of the Maarifi Umumiye Nizamnamasi is that a decree made primary education compulsory for both boys and girls aged six to ten. Idadis (junior high school) in all towns of one thousand families or more and sultanis (academic secondary school) in each provincial capital were important educational reforms. There was free education in the sübyans (primary schools), rüşdiyyes (upper elementary schools), and the idadis (junior high schools). In 1870 Darülmuallimat (the Teacher Training College for Girls) was opened, which prepared women as teachers for girls' schools; over the next forty years over seven hundred instructors graduated from this school. Prior to this reform, daughters of upper-class families used to receive instruction in their homes or in classes held in the homes of educated women. Missionary schools and the schools of the empire's non-Muslim minority communities were also important sources of education for women. The vocational schools for women started to be founded started during this period. Foreign teachers educating Muslim women as

⁸⁵ Yürüt, B. (2017). Tanzimat Sonrası Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi ve Hukuki Talepleri. *TBB Dergisi 2017 (özel Sayı)*. Retrieved from <http://tbbdergisi.barobirlik.org.tr/m2017-2017-1728>

midwives at Tıbbiye Mektebi (Medical School) was the first initiative for vocational schools. Moreover, Kız Sanayi Mektebi, which was the first women's industrial school, was opened in 1869 in Istanbul by the tries of Mithad Pasha. These schools were one of the most important steps of Muslim women's educational development.⁸⁶

The Tanzimat reforms also made women visible in literature. Since women became more educated and more involved in public life, they started to express themselves in the journals. As the society started to be more and more modern debates on women's rights became apparent in the Ottoman literature. Women in the urban centers started to publish women's journals. These publications included topics such as rights of women, necessity of the education of women, and family-related issues. However, these writers and political activists were mainly the upper-class elite women who looked for solutions to overcome the problems of women within the boundaries of the social system to which they belonged. Some of them founded women's associations, such as the Commission for the Defence of the Rights of Ottoman Women. They also worked relentlessly to advance women's access to education, to improve employment opportunities, and personal freedom for women. In the newspapers, books, and telegraphs, both male and female intellectuals explored their ideas regarding Ottoman family life, marriage patterns, women's position in the society, and education. *Şükufezar* was the first journal published by a woman, Arife Hanım.⁸⁷ The women's problems, rights and ideas were handled and supported also by the most important male intellectuals of the period who were Namık Kemal, Şinasi, Ziya Pasha and Mehmet Tahir.⁸⁸ In the journals such as *Takvim-i Vekayi* (1831), *Ceride-i Havadis*, *Tercüman-ı Ahval* (1860), *Tasvir-i Efkar* (1861), they mentioned about

⁸⁶ Durakbaşı, 2007, p.97.

⁸⁷ Yaraman, 1992, p. 80-84.

⁸⁸ Ortaylı, I. (2008). *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yılı*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

the events women wanted to change, their demands of education and employment and the right to marry men of their own choice and get dress as they desired.⁸⁹

With the Tanzimat reforms, the Ottoman press also started to contribute significantly to the discussions of the women's movement. The press appraised the demands of the Ottoman women activists. For example the first magazine for women, *Terakki-i Muhadderat* (1869), which aimed to make comparisons with contemporary Europe, produced criticisms on the status of women in Ottoman society. It also provided weekly information about feminist movements in the West. The magazine *Vakit Yahud Mürebbi-i Muhadderat* (1875) reported on useful things about womanhood. *Ayine*, a weekly magazine, included children to the readership in addition to women. *Aile* (1880) was also a magazine focusing on various issues related to the family. The mission of *İnsaniyet* (1883) was to enlighten the women. In *Hanımlar* (1883), there were more signatures of women writers while *Şükûfezar* (1886) whose owner was a woman had the entire writing staff consisting of women. *Mürüvvet* (1888) was the first with categorized content. There were also many more magazines such as *Parça Bohçası* (1889) which was the most long-lived, *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* (1895-1908), *Hanımlara Mahsus Malumat* (1895), and *Âlem-i Nisvân* (1906).⁹⁰

The period that started with the Edict of Gülhane, therefore, witnessed a series of political, educational and economic reforms and this period affected the entire society.⁹¹ The reforms had a serious impact on the society itself, transforming the

⁸⁹ Yaraman, 1992, p.107.

⁹⁰ Aydın, H. (2009). Kadın (1908–1909): Selanik'te Yayınlanan İlk Kadın Dergisi Üzerine Bir İnceleme. (*Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*).

⁹¹ These reforms were carried out because of the necessities of modernization. The Ottoman Empire began to recognize new legal rights for its subjects as part of the modernization process. The reforms were inspired by Europe and part of the goal was to create a state as powerful as the European powers. The reform of centralizing the system of administration, for example, should not be seen as only an establishment of more efficient system to limit the power of the monarch. Instead, this centralization should be seen as an answer to meet the necessities of the populace of the empire. Likewise, the new system of education was obviously required for the functioning of the new state because there was a need for modernized and educated strata in the Ottoman Empire. Because of this reason the Tanzimat reforms focused heavily on reforming the Ottoman

lives of imperial subjects. What is more important than the reforms itself is the change in the mentality of the society which brought long lasting impacts on the state. The reforms brought about serious developments concerning the position of Ottoman women as well. The main focus might not have been to address the needs of women but to alleviate the deficiencies and fulfill the necessities of modernization. However, these reforms opened up avenues for struggle and it can be said that the attempts in the way of expressing the problems of women, raising consciousness and legal arrangements were actually a struggle for women's rights.

2.2.2. Reforms of the Constitutional Period on Women's Rights

The period when the Constitution of 1876 (Kanun-i Esasi) was proclaimed and the Ottoman parliament gathered in 1877 after the first parliament elections was the first time that the Ottoman society became familiar with the constitution, parliament and Constitutionalism.⁹² In the meantime Ottoman-Russian War broke out in 1877-1878. Abdülhamid II closed the Parliament temporarily and suspended the Constitution on 14 February 1878. Therefore, before its second year was completed, the first experience of Constitutionalism ended. This resulted in a period of despotism which would last thirty years. During this period, the Committee for Union and Progress (CUP) was established on 23 July 1908 with the aim of restoring the 1876 Constitution.⁹³ The Committee of Union and Progress was founded by a group of medical students in Istanbul. It was an

education system. There was new European style schools opened in order that the Empire could develop in a modern way and it could compete with European powers. However, educational reforms also addressed the needs of the population. There were also political changes to secure the loyalty of the diverse ethnic and religious groups of the Empire. Moreover, as the state started to centralize, there were some economic reforms such as the right to private property, the women's right of inheritance and a new tax system, which might be against religious stipulations.

⁹² Okay, C. (2011). Some Notes on Constitutionalism and the Constitutional Regime in the Ottoman Society 1908-1918. *International Journal Of Turcologia*, 6(11), 61-65.

⁹³ Ibid, p. 61-65.

organization of various, sometimes ideologically conflicting groups but the common ground of them was the abdication of sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909).⁹⁴ These Young Turks was composed of intellectuals who studied in foreign schools and affected from the foreign thoughts and bureaucrats who had received higher education in modern schools in the country. They believed that only a truly constitutional regime was necessary for the salvation of the country.⁹⁵ Although the first Constitution was proclaimed under the pressures of European powers to restore and prevent the crumbling of Ottoman State, the second Constitution was declared as a reaction to a long lasting period of oppression as well as to recover and save the ailing Ottoman Empire.⁹⁶

The 1908 revolution was very significant for the restoration of the society.⁹⁷ As the main goal of Young Turks was to restore and safeguard the 1876 Constitution, they won much prestige within the Empire. On the other hand, they avoided taking a direct role in its administration at the beginning. While both Young Ottomans⁹⁸ and Young Turks⁹⁹ were passionately committed to saving the

⁹⁴ Methodieva, M. B. (2014). How Turks and Bulgarians Became Ethnic Brothers: History, Propaganda, and Political Alliances on the Eve of the Young Turk Revolution. *Turkish Historical Review*, 5(2), 221-262. doi:10.1163/18775462-00502005

⁹⁵ Mardin, Ş. (2005). *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*. New York: ACLS History E-Book Project.

⁹⁶ Birecikli, İ. B. (2008). Yüzüncü Yılında II. Meşrutiyet'in İlanı Üzerine Bir İnceleme. *Journal Of Gazi Academic View*, 2(3), 211-226.

⁹⁷ Karaca, F. (2008). İrade-i Seniyye in the Constitutional Periods. *International Journal Of Turcologia*, 3(6), 5-16.

⁹⁸ Namık Kemal, Reşat Bey, Şinasi, Agâh Efendi, Ziya Paşa, Ali Suavi were members of Young Ottomans.

⁹⁹ Ahmad, F. (2016). *İttihat ve Terakki 1908-1914* (10th ed.), Kaynak Yayınları.

Empire, the Young Ottomans had been willing to rule whereas the Young Turks in the immediate aftermath of the 1908 revolution were not.¹⁰⁰

The reforms towards improving women's situation continued in the Second Constitutional Period as well. However; in this period, although all the topics such as women's education, women's dressing, Islamic clothing, marriage and divorce were discussed, their discussions did not create a huge transformation. This was because during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire the society was tired of the wars, hunger and epidemics. The population decreased because of the wartime problems. The wars also changed the mood of the times, bringing social and economic difficulties to Ottomans in general, and to the lives of the economically less advantaged in particular. Hence, while the elite women of Istanbul were trying to enhance the position of women in the society and demanding rights, many people lost their lives during the Ottoman-Russian Wars. More or less three million Muslim men were killed, lost, or injured during the wars. The destruction of the male population made women who were previously maintained by their husbands compelled to struggle with difficulties. Because the economy was also damaged, women had to enter into economic activities. The Ottoman government started to take measures and provide job opportunities specifically for women. Women first started to work as officials in the Post Office and Finance Ministry.¹⁰¹ The Istanbul municipality gave vocational training to the women so that they could be employed as housekeepers. In 1916, the Ministry of War established the Commission for the Employment of Ottoman Muslim Women (Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyeti İslamiyyesi) to prevent them from having resort to prostitution to make ends meet. However, as the Society directors believed that this initiative was only temporarily solution for women's financial problems, they supported its women employees to get married and

¹⁰⁰ Evered, E. Ö. (2013). The Young Turks, the Committee of Union and Progress in Turkish Politics, 1908–14 by Feroz Ahmad. *Journal Of Islamic Studies*, 24(2), 229-231.

¹⁰¹ Aydın, H. (2015). *Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye'de Kadın*. Retrieved from <http://dergipark.ulakbim.gov.tr/curesosc/article/view/5000131463/5000132756>

initiated a marriage campaign. This was actually a continuation of the national family campaign performed by the CUP. Only when they had the right to remarry, the disadvantaged women for example who had lost their husband would find a livelihood. Otherwise, as most of these women were not educated, they would have had difficulty in earning a living; they would have to depend on a male relative provide for them in accordance with Islamic law.¹⁰²

Because of the changes in the social and economic life in the society, which emerged after the wartime problems, the Ottoman state also needed to revise the existing family law. Reforms in the family life were considered as the intersection point of the Ottoman women's movement with Turkish nationalism during the Second Constitutional Era.¹⁰³ For example, most of the women in the empire were not able to remarry, because they could not get divorced from their lost or missing husbands owing to the Islamic laws. Women could not also get away from undesirable marriages. The family structure had undergone an extensive change with the promulgation of the Ottoman Law of Family Rights (Hukûk-ı Âile Kararnâmesi) in 1917.¹⁰⁴ Women's right to seek judicial dissolution of marriage was granted with this decree. On the other hand, the reform in terms of family law was actually connected with the nation building process in the context of the rise of Turkish nationalism and therefore the creation of a new family construction. Meanwhile, during the Second Constitutional Period, the Ottoman Empire was ruled by the Committee of Union and Progress which came to power in 1912, and a nuclear family became one of the basic concerns of the political agenda of Unionists.¹⁰⁵ By this way, the family became a

¹⁰² Altınbaş, 2014, p.1-12.

¹⁰³ Berktaş, F. (2009). Osmalı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Feminizm, *Cumhuriyet'e Devreden Düşünce Mirası Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet'in Birikimi*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

¹⁰⁴ Yazıcı, A. (2015). Osmanlı Hukûk-ı Aile Kararnâmesi (1917) ve Sadreddin Efendi'nin Eleştirileri. *Akademi Dergisi*, 62nd ser. doi: EKEV.

¹⁰⁵ Toprak, Z. (1991). The Family, Feminism, and the State during the Young Turk period, 1908-1918. İstanbul-Paris: *Première Rencontre Internationale sur l'Empire Ottoman et la Turquie Moderne*.

political issue¹⁰⁶ in this period. Over time, as the Committee of Union and Progress wanted to broaden their political dominance in the Ottoman Empire, they started to affect the legitimate practice and by this way they started to reorganize the image of Ottoman society with their own political predispositions. The CUP cadres believed in the need of social and economic equality between men and women. The claims of the CUP in terms of family structure started to be included in the prominent journals of the time. The main topic of the women's publications was to educate women so that they could perform a service both in the family and the society.¹⁰⁷

The Committee of Union and Progress showed a particular interest towards women's education because there was a belief that the lack of education creates subordinated problems in marriage and raising the children. Secondary schools became accessible to girls in 1911, and the University of Istanbul opened its doors to women in 1916. The CUP rulers, the Pashas Enver and Cemal, even supported the Christian missionary education activities and their creation of schools and school systems for the education of Muslim girls.¹⁰⁸

The importance of education was also one of the main topics of literature. It can be said that women's movement can be ideally seen in the women's publications because these publications focused on questions like gender equality, women's rights, and freedom, as well as the situation of women's educational and professional life. For example, Fatma Aliye (1862-1936) was one of the leading women during reform era in both Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. As an intellectual Ottoman woman, she constantly wrote about the problems of women in her articles, books, and novels on femininity. She mainly focused on

¹⁰⁶ Emine Seher Ali and Semiha Nihal were important names of these publications. In Durakbaşı, 2007, p.121.

¹⁰⁷ Yaraman, 1992, p.47

¹⁰⁸ Altınbaş, 2014, p.1-12.

issues directly related with women's rights and identities such as education of women, marriage, polygamy, and divorce, the visibility of women in social life, working women, and the place of women in Islam.¹⁰⁹ Her book *Namdaran-ı Zenan-i İslamyan* (Famous Muslim Women) was written in 1892 was the first history book written by a woman. The book was about women who played an important role in Ottoman history. As she was the first Muslim Turkish woman novel writer discussing the woman question, she was a significant personality in Turkish history. Although for some scholars Fatma Aliye was not actually a feminist writer, her approach to women's problems in her novels can be considered as a work of feminist literature. As she lived in a period of full of problems such as arranged marriage, polygamy, and infidelity, not being able to return to the family home, or concubinage, she mainly focused on the tradition, religion and modernism in her life. That is why she never gave up dealing with the problems which she faced with in her family and social life. Fatma Aliye's ideas contributed a lot to Turkish women's liberation and education. Fatma Aliye was a conservative Muslim woman writer since her proposed solutions to the problems depicted in her novels are based on Islam.¹¹⁰ Marvel claims that Fatma Aliye's work created a significant piece of the puzzle for comprehending the hybrid nature of the Republican reforms. Her loyalty to the progress of women within the parameters of an Islamic society provided a key for the activist women. While appropriating a secular stance, these Republican reformers benefited from the studies of a woman who embraced Islamic values. Her leadership in creating the modern nation provided improvements in the role of women in Turkish society was undeniable.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Karaca, Ş. (2011). Fatma Aliye Hanım'ın Türk Kadın Haklarının Düşünsel Temellerine Katkıları. *Journal of Black Sea Studies*, 8(31), 93-111.

¹¹⁰ Canbaz, F. (2005). *Fatma Aliye Hanım'ın Romanlarında Kadın Sorunu* (Master's thesis, Bilkent University). Ankara.

¹¹¹ Marvel, E. P. (2011). *Ottoman Feminism and Republican Reform: Fatma Aliye's Nisvân-ı İslâm* (Master's thesis). The Ohio State University, p.11-12

While Fatma Aliye touched upon how men prohibited women's access to education and intellectual thinking; Naciye Hanım criticized men's understanding of the concept of freedom.¹¹² Fatma Zerrin Hanım explained that the educated, Westernized Turkish men were beginning to despise the Muslim women and finding educated Christians more eligible. Another writer, Hatice Hanım, also offered Muslim girls' education as a solution to overcome the drift to marry to Christian women.¹¹³ As the new generation of Ottoman men wanted women to be trained, modern and secular Ottoman schools opened during the Second Constitutional Period.

Patriarchy was more general, powerful and overarching as a system, so it was not easy to object as a whole. However, it was possible to challenge polygamy as one of the appearances or forms of patriarchal social relations. As in the Tanzimat Period, polygamy was rarely practiced and was seriously opposed by many people. In the publications and periodicals, it was often criticized as a social illness.¹¹⁴ Besides the issue of polygamy, there were also debates on women's rights and emancipation in the publications of the era. Women's organizations started to make activities to highlight the importance of education. In order that they could solve the women's problems within and outside the house, they raised the issues of polygamy and lack of women's education through periodicals, books and press during the Second Constitutional Period. In general, this period saw such an explosion in publications. Women's periodicals such as *Demet*, *Mehasin*, *Mefharet* and *Kadın* started to be published in 1908. The focus of the topics in *Demet* was consisted of the education of women, child care, and cultivation of women, facial care and fashion. *Mehasin* was published 12 issues between September 1908-November 1909 as the first colored and illustrated women's

¹¹² Sirman, N. (1989). Feminism in Turkey: A Short History. *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 3, 1-34.

¹¹³ Altınbaş, 2014, p. 1-12

¹¹⁴ Kandiyoti, D. (1991). *Women, Islam, and the State*. London: Macmillan Press.

magazine. Women of other countries, activities by women, fashion, literature, the arts, and actual events were topics of coverage.¹¹⁵ In this period, women's periodicals such as *Muvassser Kadın*, *Kadın*, *Kadınlar Dünyası* (1913), *Erkekler Dünyası*, *Güzel Prenses*, *Kadınlık* (1914), *Sıyanet* (1914), *Seyyale* (1914), *Hanımlar Alemi*, *Kadınlar Alemi* (1914), *Kadınlık Hayatı* (1915), *Bilgi Yurdu Işığı*, *Türk Kadını*, *Genç Kadın* (1918), *Kadın Duygusu*, *Diyane* (1920), *Yeni İnci* (1921), *Kadınlar Saltanatı*, *Hanım*, *Ev Hocası* and *Firuze* were published until the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Some of these periodicals were short-lived.¹¹⁶ However, issues concerning women in the family, marriage, motherhood, feminism, polygamy and education were covered. The journals discussed how the participation of women in social life can be realized. They also dealt with the conditions of the women who were living abroad to understand their living conditions and learn about their way of life. *Kadınlar Dünyası* was one of the most important women periodicals of Constitutional Era which was published daily in 1913 in Istanbul. In the periodical whose owner was a woman, Nuriye Ülviye, some expressions took part such as "It is a newspaper for women" and "Our journal belongs to the works of venerable Ottoman ladies without separating gender and sect."¹¹⁷ It means that it was emphasized by the periodical itself that the articles written by only women writers. In one article, it was said:

If men are free to criticize women's issues, we as the mothers request to be held responsible for what we say. The appropriate statements and defenses about our sensitive feelings belong to us more than men.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Aydın, H. (2009). *Kadın (1908–1909): Selanik'te Yayınlanan İlk Kadın Dergisi Üzerine Bir İnceleme. (Selçuk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi).*

¹¹⁶ Çakır, S. (1994). *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*. Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları

¹¹⁷ Yaraman, 1992, p. 47-48

¹¹⁸ Ibid, p.48

The staff of *Kadınlar Dünyası* was all women. The names of writers were not exactly known. However, some articles of periodical gave bit information about the writers who often wrote. Ulviye Mevlan, Aziz Haydar, Emine Seher Ali, Mükerrerem Belkıs, Atiye Şükran, Aliye Cevad, Sıdika Ali Rıza, Safiye Biran, Yaşar Nezihe, Nimet Cemil, Sacide, Nebile Akif and Melihe Cenan were the prominent writers of *Kadınlar Dünyası*.¹¹⁹ Therefore, the great importance of *Kadınlar Dünyası* was not only that it had a broadcasting staff consisting entirely of women but it was also the publication organ of all women's organizations, not of any organization. Moreover, not only it could continue its broadcast life for a long time like nine years but also it addressed new issues.¹²⁰ *Kadınlar Dünyası* which expressed a number of women's demands in accordance with the sexist values attributed to them should be evaluated considering the social conditions of the period. The demands of women even within their traditional role patterns or for these patterns should not be underestimated. The articles of the periodical highlighted the importance of "family" as the "nucleus of the Turkish nation", of "women" as "mothers of future generations" and therefore the importance of the "education" of women in order that they could rise the future generation.¹²¹ Although the education of women was considered important since the Tanzimat reforms, women were given an extraordinary duty in terms of changing the destiny of the state during the Second Constitutional Period. It was believed that women should have furthered educational opportunities and with this aim many educational institutions and vocational schools were established during this period.¹²²

¹¹⁹ Çakır, 1994, p.28-30.

¹²⁰ Yaraman, 1992, p. 47-48.

¹²¹ Demirdirek, A. (1993). *Osmanlı Kadınlarının Hayat Hakkı Arayışının Bir Hikâyesi*. Ankara: İmge Kitabevi.

¹²² Altınbaş, 2014, p.4.

Therefore, during the Second Constitutional Era (1908-1920), Ottoman women in urban centers started to demand a more active role in the society thanks to the involvement in the associations which they established to defend women's rights. These associations provided them to express their demands in an organized way. These associations were generally founded or led by women. For example, in 1908 the first women's charity organization the Cemiyet-i İmdadiye was founded by Fatma Aliye to provide winter clothing for the soldiers of the Rumeli frontier. The Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi is the other association founded by women in the same year with Cemiyet-i İmdadiye. The aim was to help the orphan females and children. The Cemiyet-i İmdadiye was another organization which was open to whole women regardless of their religion.¹²³ There were many women who got involved in these organizations. The Association to Defend Women's Legal Issues (Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti) was founded by Ulviye Mevlan in 1913. Its objective was to support education, further job opportunities, and rights of the women. As the association also demanded the right of higher education for women, it succeeded in making courses available at İstanbul University for women in 1913. The other success of the association was the constitution of İnas Darulfünunu which was a university for women. Thanks to the courses and articles about women issues which were translated into Turkish from foreign languages especially from English, women affected by the women's movement in the Western countries. More importantly, there were some requirements to be a member of the Association to Defend Women's Legal Issues such as being able to read and write Turkish very well and to attend English courses.¹²⁴ This was also provided the Ottoman women a contact with the foreign women. It also acted in unison with the women's organizations in foreign countries. It defended the women's

¹²³ Taşkıran, T. (1973). *Cumhuriyet'in 50. Yılında Türk Kadın Hakları*. Başbakanlık Kültür Müsteşarlığı Yayınları.

¹²⁴ Kaplan, L. (1998). *Cemiyetlerde ve Siyasî Teşkilâtlarda Türk Kadını (1908-1960)*. Ankara: Atatürk Kültür Merkezi Başkanlığı.

integration in public and professional life, the struggle against inequality and oppressive traditions, and in support of female education. Other women's associations established in this period were "Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti (1908), Anadolu Kadınları Müdafaa-i Vatan Cemiyeti (1913), Asker Ailelerine Yardımcı Hanımlar Cemiyeti (1914), Donanma Cemiyeti Hanımlar Şubesi (1912), Hizmet-i Nisvan (1908), İnas Darülfünunu Mezunlar Cemiyeti (1910), Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyet-i İslamiyesi (1916), Mamulât-ı Dâhiliye İstihlâk Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi (1913), Müdafaa-i Milliye Hanımlar Cemiyeti (1913), Nisvan-ı Osmaniye Cemiyet-i İmdadiyesi (1908), Osmanlı Cemiyet-i Hayriye-i Nisvaniye (1908), Osmanlı Hilal-i Ahmer Kadınlar Cemiyeti (1911), Osmanlı İttihad-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti (1908), Osmanlı Kadınları Terakkiperver Cemiyeti (1908), Osmanlı Kadınları Şefkat Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi (1908), Osmanlı Müdafai Hukuk-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti (1913), Osmanlı Türk Kadınları Esirgeme Cemiyeti (1912), Sulhperver Türk Kadınları Cemiyeti (1912), Teali-i Vatan-ı Osmanî Hanımlar Cemiyeti (1909)".¹²⁵

Teali-i Nisvan, which was founded by Halide Edip with the aim of empowering women, had particularly an importance. According to Jenkins, Halide Edip's teacher at American College, the new administration asked for her to establish a women's association.¹²⁶ In all sources, this association was revealed as the first women's association. Halide Edip emphasized that the association had a tendency towards feminism. Later, the environment in this association was very important for Nezihe Muhiddin who set out to establish Women's People's Party.¹²⁷ This association can be said to be the first women's association established with

¹²⁵ Kaymaz, İ. Ş. (2010). Çağdaş Uygarlığın Mihenk Taşı: Türkiye'de Kadının Toplumsal Konumu. *Ankara Üniversitesi Türk İnkılâp Tarihi Enstitüsü Atatürk Yolu Dergisi*.

¹²⁶ Jenkins, H. D. (2008). *Robert Kolej'in Kızları: Misyonerlik - Feminizm - Yabancı Okullar*. İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları, p.152.

¹²⁷ Çalışlar, I. (2010). *Halide Edib: Biyografisine Sığmayan Kadın*. İstanbul: Everest Yayınları.

feminist orientation.¹²⁸ The difference of the association from other women's associations was that it envisioned directly empowering women. First of all, in order to become a member of the association, it was necessary to read and write Turkish very well and to continue English lessons given in the association. Within the body of the association, articles on women, books, history and literature books were translated into Turkish. The aim of the association was to raise women's cultural level without giving up national traditions. In this sense, this association had an advanced philosophy and purpose for women's empowerment.¹²⁹

Most of these associations had nationalist aims. Still, it can be said that after women had taken steps towards socialization in the public along with the Second Constitutional Era, they began to characterize themselves as a member of the society and individuals who constituted the nation.¹³⁰ Whereas large majority of these associations were established with the aim of charity, some of them were established with the aim of promoting Western style way of life and cultural development. For example, Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti (Association to Defend Women's Legal Issues) had a more feminist posture because the association highly supported the women's education as well as the integration of women in public and professional life. It also opposed to inequality and oppressive customs of the society.¹³¹

¹²⁸ Zihnioğlu, 2016, p.38.

¹²⁹ Çalışlar, 2010, p.88.

¹³⁰ Çolak, G. & Uçan, L. (2008). *II. Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Basında Kadın Öncüler*. İstanbul: Heyamola.

¹³¹ Keskin, T. (2003). Feminist /Nationalist Discourse in the First Year of the Ottoman Revolutionary Press (1908-1909) (Master's thesis, Bilkent University). *The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences*.

Overall, during the Second Constitutional Period in the late Ottoman Empire, a new profile of a woman, educated and working outside the household, became more and more visible. This was made possible with the atmosphere of freedom which rose during the Second Constitutional Period. However, it can be said that the aim was initially to create educated women so that they could serve the public will. One of the best examples of Ottoman approach to the women issue was the news that given with the title of *For Emancipation of Moslem Girls Admires European System* in November of 19th of 1911 in New York Times. In this news, Ahmed Rıza Bey, who was an important name of Young Turks Movement and Second Constitutional period's new council of ministers' chair, said that:

We have women enough, but we have no life companions, no sisters, no wives, and no mothers in the proper sense of the word. ... The chief object I have in view is the elevation of the sense of motherhood and of its sacred responsibilities in the minds and hearts of our daughters. I was greatly struck during my long exile by the splendid beneficial results that accrue European countries from good women brought up with the ideal of gentle, sweet, self-sacrificing, yet strong and rational motherhood. Give us such motherhood and our country will be saved, prosperous, and happy. Nothing else will do it.¹³²

With the beginning of World War I, the debates about the situation of women changed direction. The war period prompted the patriotic feelings of women. Mainstream newspapers like *İkdam*, *Sabah*, *Servet-i Fünun*, *Tanin*, and *Tasvir-i Efkar* brought women's activities to headlines. Fatma Aliye herself wrote articles in *Servet-i Fünun* praising 'heroic women'. Some publications opened a chapter for women, which were also praised in mainstream newspapers.¹³³ When we look at the Independence War period which will be analyzed in the third chapter, it can be seen that women had important role in the resistance movement. For example, the public speech of Halide Edip in 1919 was transformed into a "symbol of the

¹³² Sunata, U. (2014). State Policies and the Women's Body: The Turkish Case. *Analyze: Journal of Gender & Feminist Studies*, (2), 1.

¹³³ Öztürkmen, A. (2013). The Women's Movement under Ottoman and Republican Rule: A Historical Reappraisal. (n.d). *Journal of Women's History*, 25(4), 255-264.

national resistance”.¹³⁴ While the Ottoman women’s movement emerged in the freedom atmosphere of the Young Turk revolution, the war period increased the activities of women. Although war period made women take active roles beside men, in the aftermath of the war they were expected to go back to their traditional roles as mothers and wives.



¹³⁴ Durakbaşı, 2007, p.180-190.

CHAPTER 3

THE PARADIGM OF KEMALIST “STATE FEMINISM”: THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE “NEW WOMEN” IN THE NEW TURKISH SOCIETY

The Republican elites owed much to their predecessors, the Tanzimat reformers and especially Young Turks of the second Constitutional period in terms of their modernizing outlook. However, the Kemalist modernization was a total revolution, secularization and/or the appropriation of Western civilization in a more radical fashion than Ottoman modernization. Kemalist modernization demolished the dichotomy in legal system which existed in the late Ottoman period.¹³⁵

A nationalist resistance started soon after the armistice following the end of WWI. In this complicated process, Mustafa Kemal became the leader of the nationalist resistance. He established a provisional government in Ankara and he called for the Turkish society to rise up against the foreign occupation and initiating a war for independence. Three years later with the victory in the War of Independence (1919-1923), the Allies were discharged from Istanbul, and Atatürk declared the establishment of the new Turkish state as a Republic on October 29, 1923, with Ankara as its capital. Replacing the Ottoman Constitution of 1876, the Constitution of 1921 became the fundamental law until 1924. Following Atatürk's success in leading the Turkish nation to final victory

¹³⁵ Berkes, N. (1964). The Kemalist Reforms. In *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*. Montreal: McGill University Press, p.463-471.

in the Independent War and the proclamation of the Turkish Republic, a radical period of social and political modernization started.¹³⁶

3.1. The Context of Women's Integration into the Nationalist Project and the Polity Prior to and After the Turkish Republic

Women had a significant role during the Turkish national struggle in the context of both state-building and nation-building. They were involved in organizations to help the resistance movement by organizing protest meetings and marches all over the country during the Turkish Independence War (1919-1923). A wave of popular protest in which women took part came on the scene in those years. Women participated not only as anonymous participants but as public speakers in open-air meetings to make calls for the defense of the national liberation. As the violence of the war increased, women started to organize women's revolutionary movement in Anatolia.

Halide Edip Adivar (1882-1964) was one of the most important female intellectuals and activists of the Turkish National Struggle period. She was part of the small group who had joined the resistance movement in Anatolia. Istanbul women constantly gathered together and tried to do their best to share the burden of the war since the disastrous days of the Balkan War. Halide Edip organized the aid and nursing arm of the Teali-i Nisvan and set up a hospital at Nakiye Hanım's home to look after the soldiers.¹³⁷ As Halide Edip put it "Turkish women's nursing started in those days."¹³⁸ During the heated days of the Independence War, women held large-scale meetings. In one such meeting Fatma Aliye, Gülsüm Kemalova, Fehime Nüzhet, Nakiye, Zehra, Firdevs, Naciye Hanımlar

¹³⁶ Atabaki, T., & Zürcher, E. J. (2004). *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization Under Atatürk and Reza Shah*. I. B. Tauris.

¹³⁷ Çalışlar, 2010, p.107.

¹³⁸ Adivar, H. E. (2005). *Memoirs of Halide Edip*. NJ, USA: Gorgias Press, p.334.

took the floor. Lastly, Halide Edip appeared on the stand. She addressed the Sultan saying that “My sultan, immediately join the war; run to the soldiers waiting for their sultans. Join the war at least for the honor of women.”¹³⁹

It can be contended that Halide Edip had a warrior soul. Meanwhile, the Balkan Wars had led to changes in the conservative traditions of the society about women. Women who served as nurses during the war were started to be welcomed to arrange and attend the meetings. Later, during the occupation of Izmir in 1919, Halide received a call from the Türk Ocağı and was invited to Izmir by Ferid Bey to prepare a rally to protest the occupation.¹⁴⁰ Moreover, in addition to her resistance in the national struggle, she also received the rank of “Corporal” in the Battle of Sakarya with her military service.¹⁴¹ As a free and independent woman, Halide Edip did not turn to the “world of women”, but by taking advantage of transformation in the society, she entered the “world of men”. She was encouraged by modernists as a “woman leader”.

During the nationalist struggle when she listened to the people, Halide Edip saw that women were more vulnerable regarding the Turkish nation’s perpetuity. Even if women did not fully understand the political context, they rebelled against the danger of their homeland.¹⁴² During these years, Associations for Patriotic Defence were organized in Anatolia; however, women did not join those organizations directly. Instead, they set up their own parallel organizations.¹⁴³ The Association of Anatolian Women for the Defense of the Nation (Anadolu

¹³⁹ Çalışlar, 2010, p.108.

¹⁴⁰ Adivar, H. E. (2009). *Türk’ün Ateşle İmtihanı: İstiklâl Savaşı Hatıraları*. İstanbul: Can Yayınları, p.25.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, p.228.

¹⁴² Adivar, 2009, p.11

¹⁴³ Lewis, R. (2013). *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*. Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, p.276.

Kadınları Müdafaa-i Vatan Cemiyeti) was set up in Sivas in November 1919 to call upon all Turkish women to exercise close cooperation in the national resistance. This association became the most important women movements of the period.¹⁴⁴ The Association which had a branch in Bolu with the title of Bolu Women Association for the Defense of the Homeland gathered fund drives and aid campaigns and contributed to awareness-rising and created new revenues for raising income to provide for the needs of the army on the other. Women never refrained from showing full determination and support for the freedom of the nation. With the belief that men alone were helpless against the occupation, they asked for permission with a letter of application submitted to the Bolu Governorship to participate in the war in the frontlines.¹⁴⁵ Another organization namely the Women's Branch of the Red Crescent Society (RCS) took care of the fund raising and relief work. This organization also offered nursing classes for women over a period of five months and after a practical training a final examination was taken in order to obtain a diploma. From November 1914 to April 1915 alone, 300 women took the classes and 120 of them passed the exam.¹⁴⁶ Having a profession was not the only way for women to join the war. Many women which were called as Anatolian women had no work backgrounds but they were engaged in gathering of the necessities for the troops. Therefore, these Anatolian women carried munitions, cannon balls on their shoulders to the battle fields. They even organized military attacks. The active members of these associations were the wives, daughters and sisters of local provincial notables and higher level state employees, as well as some teachers and educational administrators. These women who were the main supporters of the national

¹⁴⁴ Baykal, B. S. (1996). *Milli Mücadele'de Anadolu Kadınları Müdafaa-i Vatan Cemiyeti*. Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Yayınları, p.118.

¹⁴⁵ Ozdemir, N. (2011). *Milli Mücadelede Kadın Desteği: Bolu Müdafaa-i Vatan Gazi Kadınlar Cemiyeti*. Retrieved from <http://dergipark.gov.tr/download/article-file/15462>

¹⁴⁶ Cevik-Compiègne, B. (2014). From Gallipoli (1915) to the War of Independence (1919-1922): Modernisation of Turkish Womanhood. *Cosmopolitan Civil Societies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 6(3), 102-115. doi:10.5130/ccs.v6i2.4206

struggle were the members of local middle class which the Second Constitutional Period did so much to nurture.¹⁴⁷

As Turkish women were very active during the World War I and War of Independence years, they would also have an important place in the new nation-state. Women were started to be regarded as not only being “mothers of the new generations”; their image was significantly changed. They were also the “major actors of the national struggle” to liberate Anatolia from the occupation of Western powers. The war and the loss of the male population gave women the opportunity to be available in public life as a necessity. This was also coherent with the idea of Kemalist modernization. The activities and organizations of women did not actually show that there was gender equality in the society because women’s role was considered as a “substitute of men”. It means that although the war had opened up new possibilities to women they were still subordinated to men. The women kept defining themselves as an “army of sisters and mothers”. Even the official papers of the Red Crescent Society defined them in relation to a male in their family (sister of X, daughter of Y, wife of Z, and so on).¹⁴⁸ This kind of representation of women was in contradiction with the image of the new modern Turkish women; as will be elaborated below in this thesis, the Republican elites also defined women’s equality with men and autonomy from men as a target for modernization.

The affinity between feminism and nationalism was indeed crucial during the Ottoman modernization and the formation of the Turkish Republic. At the time of the establishment of the Turkish Republic, state intellectuals such as Namık Kemal and Ziya Gökalp considered the Turkish feminism and women’s activism within the framework of Turkish nationalism and the populist principle of the

¹⁴⁷ Lewis, 2013, p.276.

¹⁴⁸ Cevik-Compiègne, 2014, p.102-115.

single-party regime.¹⁴⁹ For example, Ziya Gökalp who was one of the spokesmen of Turkish nationalism gave precedence to a feminist discourse in his dream of the Republic. He stressed the position that feminism was peculiar to Turkish identity. He claimed that democracy and feminism were essentials of Turkish life since the ancient times. Therefore, it can be said that feminism collaborated with nationalism as they both used the other to take their goals a step further.¹⁵⁰

In addition to Kemalist Republic's modernizing and secularizing feelings of ideological stance, the respect toward women's heroic struggles during the national struggle also led the state elites to strive for the emancipation of Turkish women from Islamic and/or communal restrictions after the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey. In the aftermath of the Republic, therefore, a re-definition of women's place in the public and private spheres became crucial issue in defining the new national identity of Turkey. Despite their contribution to the establishment of a Republic and the modernization of the nation, majority of women especially rural Anatolian were uneducated. According to Mustafa Kemal, this was an obstacle to modernization. In one of his public speeches in 1923, Atatürk stated that:

If our nation now needs sciences and knowledge, men and women must share them equally. Obviously society creates a division of labor, and in this division women should carry out their own duties as well as contribute to the general effort to improve the happiness and well-being of our society.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Safarian, A. (2007). On the History of Turkish Feminism. *Iran & The Caucasus*, 11(1), 141–151. <https://doi.org/10.1163/157338407X224978>

¹⁵⁰ Gökalp, Z. (1952). *Türkçülüğün Esasları*. Ankara : Ankara Matbuat ve İstihbarat Matbaası, 1920 = 1339. Retrieved from <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.library.metu.edu.tr/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=cab06966a&AN=metu.b2221518&site=eds-live&authtype=ip.uid>

¹⁵¹ Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi. (n.d.). *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*.

He then continued:

If henceforward the women do not share in the social life of the nation, we shall never attain to our full development. We shall remain backward, incapable of treating on equal terms with the civilizations of the West.¹⁵²

Believing in the necessity of the visibility of women in society, Kemalist government activated many reforms which would provide Turkish women with equal rights and opportunities.¹⁵³ Hence, during these years many steps were taken to enable women to get more involved in public, political and professional life and to encourage more equality in the society because the emancipation of women was considered as a significant symbol of Westernization and modernity.¹⁵⁴ However, it is important to say that the most important factor that determined the alliance and/or conflict between nationalist elite men and feminist politics was related to what extent women was called for the feminine tasks in the establishment of the nation-state. It is also important how they became functional in the mobilization of women. In the course of Turkish nationalism, the extent to which women's rights were accepted as the fundamental principle of the nation and how women's demands were legitimized by women's organizations will be decisive in this context. In addition, the extent to which women's organizations that expressed these demands remained autonomous or nationalist, shaped how much a policy that advocated women's rights could be included in the founding ideology of the nation. The extent to which women who defended independent women's rights could cooperate with founder nationalist organizations and male politicians is an important factor in understanding the extent to which nation-building processes ensured equal citizenship rights to women. Women who enjoyed equal citizenship rights were later excluded by the Kemalist single-party

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Mardin, Ş. (2004). *Türk Modernleşmesi*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, p. 289-294.

¹⁵⁴ Merçil, I. & Senemoğlu, O. (2014). The Historical Grounds of the Turkish Women's Movement. *Human & Social Studies*, 3(1), 13-27.

government because pluralism was not accepted.¹⁵⁵ For this reason, women's movements were kept away from the governmental levels because they seemed divisive for nationalism and national purposes.

3.2. Secularization Reforms and Women's Rights

3.2.1. Secularization Reforms of the Republic

The establishment of the new parliament and the adoption of the new Constitution in 1921 was the evidence of sovereign rights of the Turkish nation. As the founding father of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal who was first elected as the president in 1923 led the Turkish government in implementing a series of reforms. After the liberation of the country from the enemy and adoption of the 1921 Constitution, several steps had already taken targeting secularization.¹⁵⁶ In 1924, the Caliphate was abolished and the Canonical and Pious Foundations Ministry (the Ministry of Religious Affairs) was closed.¹⁵⁷ The aim was to create the modern republican form of government and secular administration. It was also believed that republican principles were best safeguarded by educated and cultured elite.¹⁵⁸ The new state also aimed to liberate the concepts of justice, laws

¹⁵⁵ Sancar, 2012, p.60-61.

¹⁵⁶ First of all the Sultanate was abolished in 1922 which was followed by the proclamation of the Republic in 1923. The Assembly of which one fifth of its members were clerics, including 14 müftüs and 8 leaders of religious orders 'unanimously' approved Law No 308 on 1 November 1922, retroactively abolishing the Sultanate and next day, deposing Sultan Mehmed VI and appointing his cousin Abdülmecid as the new Caliph. The abolition of the Sultanate finished the political authority of the Throne that had ruled Turkey in the name of God for six centuries. Now only the Ankara government represented Turkey. In Köker, T. (2009). The Establishment of Kemalist Secularism in Turkey. Middle East Law and Governance. Retrieved from <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1364684>.

¹⁵⁷ Religious orders (tarikats) were prohibited in 1925. In 1926 a Civil Code in the Western style was introduced. In 1928 the Constitution was amended and the article in the Constitution stating that the religion of the State was Islam was deleted. In 1937, the principle of secularism was inserted. In Daver, B. (1988). Secularism in Turkey. Retrieved from <http://www.atam.gov.tr/dergi/sayi-11/secularism-in-turkey>

¹⁵⁸ Garlitz, R. P., & Jarvinen, L. (2012). *Teaching America to the World and the World to America: Education and Foreign Relations Since 1870*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

and legal institutions from their Islamic social bonds.¹⁵⁹ This illustrates the importance of the legal transformation. During the years between 1926 and 1930, the CHP (Republican People's Party) administration succeeded in making crucial legal changes. Religious laws were abolished and a secular system of legal order was introduced. Religious courts had been effective in social life for the last six hundred years. After abolishing the Ministry of Religious Affairs along with the Caliphate, the Turkish Grand National Assembly put an end of the religious courts. The Constitution of 1924 delegated the exercise of judicial authority in the name of the nation to the independent courts, which were about to adopt secular codes. On 1 March 1924, there was the secularization of civil and family law. The Assembly rejected a civil code draft tracing the spirit of Sharia.¹⁶⁰ The amendments made in the new Civil Code, Code of Obligations, Commercial Code and Criminal Code were modeled after the Swiss, Italian and German ones. According to Atatürk, at the convocation of a Law Faculty on 5 October 1925 these amendments were crucial for carrying on the path of Westernization and because of that reason the laws had to be arranged in order to satisfy the modern needs of the Turkish nation. Despite the great reforms of Tanzimat and Constitutional periods and the emergence of new courts, the religious courts had still survived. With the early Republican reforms period the judicial duality was abolished. Above all, each citizen regardless of their gender or economic conditions started to be equal before the law because the aim of the Republic was to modernize the society in order to give them a new sense of dignity, equality, and happiness. For the Kemalist state, the major challenge was to elevate national life to the highest level of civilization and prosperity. In the design of modernization, equality had significant place. When the Republic established, it was announced that "the new Turkish State is a state of the people and a state by

¹⁵⁹ Berkes, N. (1984), *Dünya Politikasında Halifelik, Teokrasi ve Laiklik*, Adam Yayıncılık, İstanbul.

¹⁶⁰ Köker, T. (2009). The Establishment of Kemalist Secularism in Turkey. *Middle East Law and Governance*. Retrieved from <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1364684>.

the people”.¹⁶¹ By this means, the importance of creation of a nation without privileges was stressed.

Education had also crucial role in the modernization during the early Republican period. Mustafa Kemal declared that “The cornerstone of education is an easy system of reading and writing. The key to this is the new Turkish alphabet based on the Latin script”.¹⁶²

Although one of the toughest reforms in a society was presumably in language field, Arabic script which had been in use for a thousand years was replaced with the Latin alphabet. Turkish became the common language in education on 1 November 1928 in accordance with Law Number 1353 with the aim of increasing the literacy rate, facilitating education and making Turkish the common language.¹⁶³ As a universal symbol of Islam and one of the defining characteristics of Muslim identity, the Arabic script had to be abolished because it deprived the new Republic of developing a national identity. A nation had to have a secular and national identity.¹⁶⁴

Since the government looked upon education as the major instrument of cultural transformation, new educational reforms and policies were designed and implemented. The way of creating a secular and modern nation was reforming the

¹⁶¹ Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi. (1923). *Atatürk'ün Söylev ve Demeçleri*. Retrieved from <http://www.atam.gov.tr/mustafa-kemal-ataturk-veri-tabani/temel-eserler/ataturkun-soylev-ve-demecleri>

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Turkish Ministry of National Education. (2005). *Basic Education in Turkey: Background Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/39642601.pdf>.

¹⁶⁴ Within a year, by the middle of 1929, the Latin-based alphabet was used to print all publications. The publications printed in Arabic language were strictly prohibited even for religious purposes. Teachers also started to instruct in the new Turkish language in the schools. The language reform enabled children and adults to learn the script, grammar and vocabulary quickly. They started to read and write easily. Moreover they were able to study Western languages. In Yılmaz, K. (2011). *Critical Examination of the Alphabet and Language Reforms Implemented in the Early Years of the Turkish Republic*. Retrieved from <http://dergipark.gov.tr/download/article-file/179011>

education. Immediately after the declaration of the Republic of Turkey, Turkey's newly appointed Minister of Public Instruction, Sefa Bey, invited U.S. philosopher and educator John Dewey to survey Turkey's educational system. The government attached importance to Dewey's suggestions on how to make Turkish schools agencies of social reform that would advance their state's identity as a democratic republic.¹⁶⁵

The government initiated a program of education. Within this program education was made free. Primary education was made compulsory. The aim was to build a new social structure through education in a more modern way. The first main reform was the adoption of the Law on the Unification of Education (Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu) on March 3 1924 in order to democratize the education system and to bring secularism in action in the field of education. By means of the Law on Unification of Education, all scientific and educational institutions were brought under the Ministry of National Education; all kinds of religious educational and training institutions ceased to function, and foreign schools, as well as those of the minorities, were brought under state control.¹⁶⁶ With this Law the nation's centuries-old religious schools (mektebs, madaaris, and madrasas) were abolished and by placing all educational institutions under the control of the Ministry of Public Instruction.¹⁶⁷ Instead of the madrasas, a faculty of theology at Darülfunun (Istanbul University) was established by the Ministry. The Ministry also gave permission to the foundation of schools for the training of Muslim prayer leaders despite the fact that there was a strict control over these

¹⁶⁵ Dorn, C. & Santoro, D. (2011). *Political Goals and Social Ideals: Dewey, Democracy, and the Emergence of the Turkish Republic*. Education & Culture, 27(2), p.3-27.

¹⁶⁶ Gök, F. (2007) Türkiye'de Eğitiminin Tarihi ve Gelişimi (The History and Development of Turkish Education). Çokkültürlü Topumlarda Eğitim- Türkiye ve İsveç Perspektifi (Education in Multicultural Societies – Turkish and Swedish Perspectives). Der. By Gök, F., Carlson, M., and Rabo, A., *Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul*. I. B. Tauris & Co Ltd, London and New-York, 247-255.

¹⁶⁷ Landau, J. M. (1984). *Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey*. Boulder: Westview Press.

institutions.¹⁶⁸ A Law issued on 22 March 1926 formalized the secular education system, based upon the principles of the Republic. On 22 March 1926 the Board of National Education was established as the advisory agency to the Minister. The National Education Councils were constituted at a national level and stand as the most important advisory agency to the Ministry. They included participants from all social sectors and aimed to increase the quality and quantity of educational services to beyond the level of contemporary civilizations. The councils also assisted in setting education policies.¹⁶⁹ As a result, the national government began the process of standardizing and centralizing the nation's educational system.

During 1930s public reading rooms and Village Institutes (Köy Enstitüleri) were opened in villages and in 1932 People's Houses (Halkevleri) which were replaced by Türk Ocakları set up in the countryside for public education.¹⁷⁰ These public reading rooms and People's Houses were intended to be the major public adult educational institutions and they served for the social and political legitimization of the newly established secular nation-state. These were also institutions aspiring to the nation-building process because the nation should be trained in order to be capable professionals for each sphere. For example, with the training programmes directed at Turkey's villagers, agricultural and industrial production be increased. Moreover Mobile Village Women's Classes (Gezici Köy Kadınları Kursları) and Village Men's Training Classes (Köy Erkek Sanat Kursları) were introduced in 1938 and 1939 by the Ministry of Education.¹⁷¹ These were all significant increases in the number of schools, students and teachers at every level of the

¹⁶⁸ Öcal, M. (2007). From the Past to the Present: Imam and Preacher Schools in Turkey-An Ongoing Quarrel, *Religious Education*, 102:2, 191-205, DOI: 10.1080/00344080701285477

¹⁶⁹ Turkish Ministry of National Education. (2005). *Basic Education in Turkey: Background Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/39642601.pdf>.

¹⁷⁰ Durakbaşı, 2007, p.125.

¹⁷¹ Gök, 2007, p.247-255.

system regardless of the gender. Literacy which had been less than 10 percent in the early years of the Republic rose to more than 33 percent by 1938.¹⁷²

3.2.2. Women's Rights Reforms within the Republican Transformation

As previously emphasized, ensuring women's equal rights with men were one of the most significant objectives of the early Republic. Although there was no clearcut break between the late Ottoman period and early Republican period in terms of the progress in women's position, there was also a significant rupture in terms of the Republic's radical approach to secularize the state and to receive gender relations from "community pressure" stemming from Islamic norms.¹⁷³ The objectives regarding the role and place of women in society, especially in family, were also transformed as the state-building, Turkish nationalism and the modernization project were all intertwined during the early Republican period.¹⁷⁴ Although the rights and opportunities granted to women were also significant in the reform programs of the Tanzimat and the Second Constitutional periods, the Republican reforms drastically improved women's social status by providing them with equal citizenship rights.

Throughout the First World War and the Turkish War of Independence, as explained, Turkish women started to enter professional life by substituting the men who were on the front battle. Women not only directly took part in battles of the Independence War but they also entered into public by organizing political manifestations. During these years, they gained some of the rights they had fought for. To illustrate, they were admitted to universities in 1914; they were

¹⁷² Turkish Ministry of National Education. (2005). *Basic Education in Turkey: Background Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/39642601.pdf>.

¹⁷³ Mardin, Ş. (2006). Religion and Secularism in Turkey. In A. Kazancıgil & E. Özbudun (Eds.), *Atatürk: Founder of a Modern State*. London: C. Hurts & Company, p.191-219.

¹⁷⁴ Sancar, S. (2012). *Türk Modernleşmesinin Cinsiyeti: Erkekler Devlet, Kadınlar Aile Kurar*. İstanbul: İletişim.

allowed to work in factories and the public service in 1915. In 1919, suffrage had already become an issue on which women launched a campaign.¹⁷⁵ The new Ankara government, which convened the day after the establishment of Turkish Grand National Assembly in 1920, started to deal with many war time problems. It also addressed women's issue a couple of times in this period. Some significant proposals, such as the political rights of women, were offered in the first period of the Grand National Assembly.¹⁷⁶ After the establishment of Republic, Kemalist modernization policies followed the same way as it aimed to increase the visibility of women in public and political areas. The early Republican reforms which included equal legal rights, political rights, the expansion of educational opportunities, employment rights for women and their presence in literature and press paved the way for women's inclusion in citizenship in the new society.

Moreover, in the early years of Republic, the women's movement was also politicized. Although the Republican People's Party was not yet established, several women attempted to establish a women's party. On 16 June 1923, Nezihe Muhiddin and her friends established the People's Party of Women (Kadınlar Halk Fırkası). If permitted, it would be both the first political party of the Republic and the first women's feminist political party for women's rights in social, economic and political life and especially suffrage.¹⁷⁷ The aim was to oversee the political and social rights of women. However, the Istanbul

¹⁷⁵ Tekeli, Ş. (2006). *The Turkish Women's Movement: A Brief History of Success*. Retrieved from http://www.iemed.org/publicacions/quaderns/7/193_Tekeli.pdf

¹⁷⁶ Doğan, G. (2016). *The Establishment of Kemalist Autocracy and its Reform Policies in Turkey*. Retrieved from <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.library.metu.edu.tr/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=edsndl&AN=edsndl.oai.union.ndltd.org.KSU.oai.krex.k-state.edu.2097.32147&site=eds-live&authtype=ip,uid>

¹⁷⁷ Balcı, M. & Tuzak, M. (2017). The Struggle of Turkish Women for Political Rights from Nezihe Muhiddin's Point of View during the First Years of the Republic. *Marmara Üniversitesi Kadın Ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet Araştırmaları Dergisi*; Zihnioğlu, Y. (2016). *Kadınsız İnkılâp: Nezihe Muhiddin, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, Kadın Birliği*. İstanbul: Metis yayınları.

Governor's Office did not let the party to run in the elections, although they had completed all necessities and appealed even before Atatürk's Republican People's Party (RPP). In other words, while Muhiddin waited for the approval of government, government rejected even the establishment of this party. Therefore, the Women's People Party was forced to be turned into a civil association under the name of Turkish Woman's Union (Türk Kadınlar Birliği) in 1924.¹⁷⁸

3.2.2.1. The Turkish Civil Code and Women's Equal Citizenship

The most important reform that transformed the status of women was in the area of judicial rights because these rights promoted women's visibility in the society, and enabled women to participate in public domains such as education, work life and politics. Since the government aimed to promote the participation of women with egalitarian reforms, a new secular civil legislation was adopted in 1926.¹⁷⁹

The 1926 Civil Code was a very controversial issue in the second Turkish Grand National Assembly. Before the adoption of 1926 Civil Code (when the Caliphate was not abolished yet), a proposal was prepared as a civil code. It had contained provisions that went further than the 1917 Decree of Ottoman Family Law. The Commission did not remove the polygamy, and even removed the condition for the second marriage, adopted in 1917, to be bound by the consent of the first pleasure, and it allowed the 9-year-old girls to marry. Despite many discussions, this bill was rejected in 1923 and 1924. The discussions of these laws did not cause a great reaction among women, and therefore women were criticized by the press. It was claimed that the Turkish Women's Union organized a protest meeting under pressure of these criticisms, however, a neat proposal reflecting the rights and demands of women did not appear. Even Halide Edip, speaking on

¹⁷⁸ Altınay, 2004.

¹⁷⁹ Şahin, F. (2012). *Women's Rights in Turkey*. Retrieved from <http://turkishpolicy.com/Files/ArticlePDF/womens-rights-in-turkey-spring-2012-en.pdf>

behalf of the commission established for this purpose, looked at the problem not from the perspective of women's rights, but from the point of view of the "solidity of the family".¹⁸⁰

This situation can be explained by the fact that women who went outside the house in the active years of the war and took part in the social and political life did not have the chance to participate to the same extent in the post-war society. Working life had not been a part of life for women. In this case, the only assurance of women was marriage and family bonding. It was very likely therefore, that Halide Edip made an explanation to affect that she did not demand the right to divorce in the name of women. Moreover, it was common for women to remain behind the progressive intellectual men as in previous periods. This passivity adopted by women, was related with the esteem to the lawmaker's confidence.¹⁸¹

Later, the new Civil Code was unanimously adopted in a session in 1926. Thus, some of the most basic rights to women were recognized by the revolutionary male elite without a clear and unambiguous support from women. The new Civil Law which was based on the Swiss Civil Law provided women with equal rights both in marriage and in individual terms. As gender equality became one of the basic principles of the Republic, the new Civil Law contained the essential principles of gender equality, especially in the area of family law. For instance, it made polygamy illegal and recognized the equal rights of women in divorce, custody, guardianship of children and inheritance replacing religious marriage with civil one. This meant that both men and women were granted the same rights before the law in regard to marriage, divorce and inheritance. One of the most significant impacts of the Civil Law, the abolition of polygamy was hitherto permitted under Islamic law. Any person seeking to get married should prove that

¹⁸⁰ Tekeli, 1982, p.207.

¹⁸¹ Ibid, p.208.

any previously existing marriage had been terminated. Moreover, a marriage act would be void if either of the spouses were already married at the time of entry into marriage. A minimum age for marriage was fixed at 15 for girls and 17 for boys. The 1926 Code also brought important changes in divorce procedure. Divorce could no longer be obtained with the request of the husband. Both spouses were given equal entitlement to divorce, and the grounds for divorce became the same for both spouses. Accordingly, the husband's absolute right to divorce was abrogated by allowing for divorce only through the judicial system and based on the enumerated grounds.¹⁸² Additionally, women obtained equal rights in child custody (velayet). Perhaps most importantly, the 1926 Code provided the equality of testimony before a court of law. Previously, under Islamic law, the testimony of two women was equal to that of one man. Although men still held the position as head of the household, and women could not work outside the home or travel abroad without the permission of the husband, with the new laws, the road was opened for Turkish women to start careers in law, medicine and services.¹⁸³

As will be elaborated later, for Mustafa Kemal and his supporters, women's equal legal rights were a symbol of equalization with the civilized world. It was also a debt to pay for the women who had taken the burden of wars. But above all, it was the most effective political-ideological step that would break the social ties from the theocratic Ottoman past.¹⁸⁴ Therefore, it is possible to think that the main objective of Mustafa Kemal was not only to recognize women's rights when giving equal legal rights to women; granting of these rights was attributed to another purpose which was perhaps more important in the conditions of the day.

¹⁸² Yıldırım, S. (2005). *Aftermath of a Revolution: A Case Study of Turkish Family Law*. Retrieved from <https://digitalcommons.pace.edu/pilr/vol17/iss2/8/>.

¹⁸³ Ayyıldız, J. (2004). *The Contribution of Turkish Women to the Modernization of Turkey*. Retrieved from <http://www.ataturksociety.org/the-contribution-of-turkish-women-to-the-modernization-of-turkey/>

¹⁸⁴ Taşkıran, 1973, p.125.

The expansion of rights and opportunities of women helped the new nation verify not only its secular and national nature also its democratic desires. To illustrate, the 1926 Civil Code which was crucial for the expansion of women's rights was also the strongest way of secularizing the new nation. This new Code emasculated the Islamist section and demolished any kind of legal ground which might struggle with the secularization process. Furthermore, the new legal opportunities women gained thanks to the 1926 Civil Code debilitated Islamic roles given to women in society. While doing this, the Republic achieved that women assisted them in reinforcing Turkishness or nationalism.¹⁸⁵

3.2.2.2. Women's Voting Rights (Universal Suffrage)

Another important change in shaping the legal status of women was their acquisitions of political rights. In the first period of the Grand National Assembly, which lasted until April 1923, women's suffrage issue was first raised by Hüseyin Avni Bey. He was a prominent leader of the opposition Second Group in the Assembly. In November 1921, before the War of Independence ended, he proposed the women's participation in local administration for the agenda. He claimed that, owing to the war conditions, the male population had been diminished significantly and that women had to shoulder all responsibility in their daily lives. He suggested that if the government would continue to collect taxes from women, their equal rights also had to be recognized. This demand met with some objections because the political rights granted to women was essentially a "symbolic level".¹⁸⁶ Only Tunalı Hilmi Bey, deputy of Bolu, supported his idea. Nonetheless, his proposal was rejected by most deputies. After the first period of the Assembly was over, women's suffrage issue was again brought up by Tunalı Hilmi Bey in 1923. However, he was again faced with harsh reactions of the deputies, although his proposal was supported by

¹⁸⁵ Arat, 2010.

¹⁸⁶ Tekeli, 1982, p.215.

Turkish press which drew attention to the inequality between women and men. Some newspapers argued that a woman, who had to pay taxes, had no right to vote in the constitution in 1924 whereas an 18- year-old male servant of a woman was able to vote simply because of his gender. Moreover, the press tried to convince the public opinion saying that while a well-educated women had no right to vote, an uneducated man who had no ability could be elected.¹⁸⁷

Although there was opposition in the parliament between 1923 and 1925, the assembly, which served between 1923 and 1927, implemented the most important and most difficult reforms of the Kemalist government. The same assembly, however, failed to give women's political rights immediately after the proclamation of the Republic. As a matter of fact, in due time of the 1927 elections, the debates in the Women's Union and the press were also reflected in parliament and members of the parliament were united to recognize women's right to vote and to be elected. The assembly could have accepted the law to give women political rights. On the other hand, although it is known that women are willing to gain political rights, they did not engage in an active struggle through meetings, rallies, demonstrations and petition campaigns for the sake of gaining these rights, as in the Western countries. Yet, by making a change in the charter of the Women's Union, it was announced that the Union will fight for women's political rights. In fact, their priority request was the right to elect and be elected and Nezihe Muhiddin put it "We will take this right, even if they don't give."¹⁸⁸

Supporting the voting rights of women, the newspaper *İleri* made an interview with Nezihe Muhiddin. In this interview, Nezihe Muhiddin declared that, "None of us think of being a deputy or ambassador. Yet, we want to have the right to vote."¹⁸⁹ Therefore, the Women's Union continued to press for political equality

¹⁸⁷ Doğan, 2016, p.263-265.

¹⁸⁸ Zihnioğlu, 2016, p.121-127.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 121-127.

through the debates about how women could participate in the upcoming election. It also supported a “feminist” male candidate so that women’s rights could be promoted in parliament. This topic was largely debated in the Turkish press.¹⁹⁰

Eventually, Turkish women were granted the right to vote and to be elected in the municipal elections in 1930, in elections held for village councils in 1933 and in the parliamentary elections in 1934 by Turkish Republic.¹⁹¹ In the following elections held in 1935, twenty-eight women deputies were elected to the Grand National Assembly for the first time. However, the list of candidates was determined at the party headquarters by one-party administration.¹⁹² That is, candidates were not elected; but selected by Atatürk’s initiative. The symbolic importance of the female candidates was enormous.¹⁹³ As a percentage, they accounted for 4.5% of all the seats in the Assembly, one of the highest proportions in the world at that time.

Nakiye Hanım, who was one of the first women to be elected in the parliament in 1935 and the pioneer woman who was active in the Teacher’s Association since 1919, told journalists, who asked for her views on the nominations of the Women’s Union for the 1927 elections, the following:

We don’t nominate women deputies because the law is not available. Therefore, our time has not come yet. Our government has so far given all the rights that our femininity deserves, even more.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁰ Çalışlar, 2010, p.88.

¹⁹¹ Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs Secretariat General for EU Affairs. (2007). *Political Reforms in Turkey*. Retrieved from <https://www.ab.gov.tr/files/pub/prt.pdf>

¹⁹² Tekeli, 1982, p.216-218.

¹⁹³ Zürcher, E. J. (2004). *Turkey: A Modern History*. London: I.B. Tauris.

¹⁹⁴ Taşkıran, 1973, p.125.

This demonstrates that the women's consciousness which was created by the war could not find opportunity to develop and promotion after the war. In 1930, Nezihe Muhiddin and Suat Derviş joined to the Liberal Republican Party and ran for mayor, but neither of them was successful as the women candidates.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, with the new legislation which introduced women's political rights in 1934,¹⁹⁶ the Turkish Women's Union was forced to close down in 1935. Ankara government claimed that as women had full equal political status with men, there was no need for a women's organization such as TWU.¹⁹⁷ That was the end of the women's movement for 40 years to come. Despite the fact that women gained the right to vote in 1935; Nezihe Muhiddin's association was closed down forever. However, in 1949, with the objectives of protecting the rights as well as developing and expanding the Association, TWU were re-established on April 13 by a group of women intellectuals namely Mevhibe İnönü, Latife Bekir Çeyrekbaşı, Makbule Dıblan, Mebrure Aksoley, Kamile Erim, Neriman Sirer, Aliye Beyazıt, Lamia Refik Fenmen, Dr.Mediha Eldem, and Necile Bilen. In 1954, the Turkish Women's Union won the status of association working for the public interest with the decision of the Council of Ministers.

3.2.2.3. Reforms on Women's Access to Education

Another significant change of the Republic was in the field of education. Women's education had a key role because women were considered as the essential component of an equal society. As the ideology of the Republic aimed to create a new type of citizen, education was considered as a powerful transformer for the new nation-state. For economic and social progress of a modern nation state, the inclusion of women citizens into the process was

¹⁹⁵ Zihnioğlu, 2016, p.121-127.

¹⁹⁶ Tekeli, Ş. (2006). *The Turkish Women's Movement: A Brief History of Success*. Retrieved from http://www.iemed.org/publicacions/quaderns/7/193_Tekeli.pdf

¹⁹⁷ <http://www.turkkadinlartirli.org/tr/kurumsal/1/Tarih%C3%A7e>

emphasized; the creation of “educated women” was targeted by means of the education policy of the state.¹⁹⁸ The Kemalist Republic aimed to put women’s secondary and higher education on an equal footing with men to prevent women being lagged behind men in science, scholarship, and culture. Otherwise, for Atatürk, this situation would make difficult the idea of modernization.

With the adoption of the Law on the Unification of Education (Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu) on March 3 1924, equal educational opportunities for women and men were provided. This Law also arranged the education under a uniform system. After the legal changes in the laws concerning the religious affairs in 1924, the educational system was also secularized.¹⁹⁹ National Education Basic Act No. 1739 stated that the opportunity of education was equal for all women and men and institutions of education were open to everyone, regardless of language, religion, race and sex. Primary Education Act No. 222 confirmed the rule of equality of opportunity in education. According to Act No. 1739, co-education was the main principle at all levels. However, some schools could be allocated to boys or to girls depending on the type of education.²⁰⁰ Due to its centrality as a major agent of political socialization²⁰¹, the Republic paid much attention to girls’ schooling. Although girls had gained some rights of education during the late Ottoman periods, these rights were narrowly defined. Although with the modernization of institutions women were allowed to enjoy more extensive educational opportunities in the sense that some women began receiving formal education in state schools, upper-level schools remained all-male domains.

¹⁹⁸ Gürol, P. (2003). *Building for Women’s Education during the Early Republican Period in Turkey: Ismet Paşa Girls’ Institute in Ankara in the 1930s*. Retrieved from <https://etd.lib.metu.edu.tr/upload/1268689/index.pdf>.

¹⁹⁹ Landau, J. M. (1984). *Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey*. Boulder: Westview Press.

²⁰⁰ Göğüş Tan, M. (n.d.). *Women, Education and Development in Turkey*. Retrieved June 9, 2018, from <http://www.srii.org/content/upload/documents/dd35e33c-6840-40ae-b51f-49105dc5cc6c.pdf>

²⁰¹ Arat, 1994, p.57.

Therefore, early Republican period succeeded to have more gender balance within the different stages of the educational system. The adoption of the Law on the Unification of Education provided equality in education and more people were provided with high standards of educational opportunities.²⁰²

Debates on coeducation had started as early as in 1920 with the boycott of girls who demanded to have education in the same classes in Darülfünun. However, until 1927, girls could not go to higher level schools because only primary school education was compulsory for both girls and boys. Western style modern schools were built separately for boys and girls during the Ottoman era. Therefore, there was a separate education which prohibited having girls and boys educated together. During the years 1927-1928, coeducational secondary schools were opened in addition to the separate girls' and boys' secondary schools. Despite that schools continued to be separate for boys and girls, co-education started.²⁰³ Moreover, several girls' teacher training schools, lycées and girl's industrial idadis were opened. Regardless of their gender or religion the educational reforms of the early Republican era involved each and every citizen in education. On the other hand, although it seemed that the new regime brought the gender equality in the education, this was not exactly the case. The distinction between the rural and urban girls continued on for a long time. The girls who could attend schools were generally from middle-class families, the daughters of bureaucrats and state elites. Despite the construction of the schools and village institutes later in the villages, it was still problematic to have equal opportunities for girls in cities and villages.

²⁰² Erarslan, A. B. (2011). Modernization of Education through the Lens of Women's Education: Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic. Conference Papers -- *American Sociological Association*, 534. Retrieved from <http://0-search.ebscohost.com/library.metu.edu.tr/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=sxi&AN=85658062&site=eds-live&authtype=ip.uid>

²⁰³ Ibid.

Between the years 1928-1950, the topic of “family” was intensively processed in the national education curriculum. It served the purpose of providing the family with the function of “political socialization” through education (public schools and People’s Houses). In particular, it was seen that political socialization was aimed in the content of the books that were taught in the lessons of Family Information and Citizenship (Aile Bilgisi ve Yurttaşlık Bilgisi). In the Primary School Program published in 1936, the purpose of family knowledge was stated as follows:

... To have a good understanding of the roles of men and women in the family so that children can be a good mother and father in the family life they will establish in the future, and to establish a nest in order of regularity and order. ...²⁰⁴

As with women, the idea of establishing a good family in the future was presented as a necessity, not as a preference for children. What was taught in the lessons was that it was necessary to do their inquiries that they would not say no to their mother and father. With such an understanding of education, in fact, the freedom of the children was taken from their hands. The children who made an error against their elders were threatened with disrespect. Thus, the children learnt that they had to maintain the hierarchy of great-small power within the family, even if they were unhappy about this because this would be good for his own interest in the future.²⁰⁵

In the Family Information (Aile Bilgisi) lesson, which was directed towards girls to prepare them for their future work, the following opinions of Kemal Atatürk were quoted:

²⁰⁴ İlkokul Programı (1936). İstanbul: Devlet Basımevi. In A. G. Altınay (2004), *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, p. 173.

²⁰⁵ Şerifsoy, S. Aile ve Kemalist Modernizasyon Projesi, 1928-1950. In A. G. Altınay (2004), *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, p. 175.

Our daughters should try to raise themselves day by day so that their children can look like them when they become mothers in the future. ... Children are like their mothers in their character, as well as in their appearances. ... Therefore, what you learn today is more for your future generations than for you.²⁰⁶

It can be said that women's education and their self-improvement were considered possible in the context of their ability to perform the task of better "motherhood". Beyond that, it was not even possible for a woman as an "individual" to do something for herself. The restrictions imposed on the woman in textbooks and on family life were not limited to this. The nature of being housewife, one of the most important duties of the woman coming after motherhood, was explained in the textbooks. The family was likened to the government; while the father was its president; the mother was considered as the minister and children as its subjects. In this case, while the cooperation between men and women was foreseen, in fact, men (the fathers), had the final word as the president. Women as minister could only provide peace within the family (society) and she did even this under the supervision of the men.²⁰⁷

This actually shows that rationalist, modernist and Western-oriented Turkish men regarded the women's modern education as the tool of salvation and modernization of the nation. Their primary target was to educate women so that they could be transformed into the women in their own imaginations. As well as being responsible from well-being of their husbands and future generations of the nation, they were also responsible from modernizing the nation by recovering nation from its past. Moreover, when we look from the standpoint of nationalist movement, supporting the women for their education and active participation to public life were significant for the new emerging nation states. The Republic's

²⁰⁶ İçsel, P. & İçsel, N. (1937-38). Aile Bilgisi ve Ev İdaresi. İlkokul IV. İstanbul: Mürettibiye Basımevi. In A. G. Altınay (2004), *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, p. 177.

²⁰⁷ Şerifsoy, S. Aile ve Kemalist Modernizasyon Projesi, 1928-1950. In A. G. Altınay (2004), *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık, p.178.

discourse presented a model of woman as the “enlightened mother of the nation”. With the pre-school “socialization” that women gave to their children, they actually served the ideal of raising good citizens. In this case, being a good citizen for women was being a good mother and this role should be reinforced with education.²⁰⁸



²⁰⁸ Ibid, p. 167-180.

CHAPTER 4

PIONEER WOMEN VERSUS STATE FEMINISM

In this chapter, after providing the feminist critique of 1980s and 1990s, the state feminism of the early Republican period and the construction of “the new women” identity in “the new society” is examined from a historical and descriptive perspective. The aim is to further inquire into the state paradigm for the women citizens and their roles in the society as determined by male state elites in the context of nation-building process. It is important to see what kinds of roles were provided for the women of the Republic as the role model for Turkish women. Then, the chapter proceeds to analyze selected pioneer women’s encounters with state feminism to hear the voice of feminist women as they challenged the new regime’s approach to reforms and to analyze their dilemmas. Thus, the major target of this chapter is to shed light on the tension between women’s responsibilities as citizens of the new national and statist polity and their ideals to defend their individual existence and liberation.

4.1. Women, the Republican Transformation and the State Feminism of the Early Republican Period

A new stage in women’s activism in Turkey had started after the establishment of the Turkish Republic (lasted until the 1980s).²⁰⁹ This stage is characterized by the appropriation of the Ottoman women’s movement by discourses on nation-state building.²¹⁰ Kemalist reforms which extended equal citizenship rights to women

²⁰⁹ Sirman, 1989, p. 1–34.

²¹⁰ Yaraman, A. (2001) *Resmi Tarihten Kadın Tarihine*, Bağlam, İstanbul.

have been the subject of much controversy by the younger generation of feminist scholars in the 1980s and the 1990s.²¹¹ The new feminists problematized the instrumental nature of these reforms as well as the roles that women citizens were expected to perform during the modernization of the state.²¹² In this context, the major argument was that the expansion of women's rights during the 1920s and the 1930s was crucial for the new nation-state to confirm its secular and modernizing nature and also to prove its pro-democratic credentials. In other words, the instrumental objective behind these equality reforms was critical in legislating women's rights at that conjuncture. For example, although the 1926 Civil Code was so central in expanding the women's equal citizenship rights, it was also a prerequisite for the secularization the new state. These new equal citizenship rights that women gained were a way of demolishing Islamic roles for women in society. The rights and opportunities given to women thus helped create a new national identity by transforming the Islamic background of the society.

When fascism in Europe was on the rise, Turkey was under the rule of an authoritarian single-party state in practice. Therefore, giving some civil liberties and suffrage to women was a statement of intent of demonstrating their difference from the fascist regimes. Kemal Atatürk also sought a remedy for the dictatorship charges toward him in the Western world. Thus, democratization in a controlled manner would be the solution. Women's right to participate in municipal elections in 1930 was a step which served this target. Kemal Atatürk wanted to differentiate himself and his regime from the Nazis' fascist regime. In that respect, in contrast to the principles "kitchen, church, child" of the fascist Germany which ostracized women, the women's right to vote would show the

²¹¹ Arat, Y. (2010) Nation Building and Feminism in Early Republican Turkey. In: Kerslake C., Öktem K., Robins P. (eds) *Turkey's Engagement with Modernity*. St Antony's Series. Palgrave Macmillan, London.

²¹² Çakır, S. (1994). *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*. Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları.

evidence that Turkey was included in democratic societies.²¹³ Granting suffrage for women in 1934 had a highly symbolic meaning which was a part of a democratic image.²¹⁴ This was how Tekeli tried to describe “state feminism”²¹⁵ which aimed at symbolizing women’s access to the parliament rather than integrating them the actual politics. In other words, the main critique of the new feminists, such as Tekeli, was the motivation of state feminism and its impact on women’s emancipation.²¹⁶

The other critique is that Kemalist state feminism turned women’s bodies into an “object for the state’s new ideology”. According to Arat, the new model of Turkish women started to be incorrectly universalized. She contended that because of the project of modernity and its mission of uniformity, differences among women were glossed over. Educated women having a profession who were mostly from the middle class started to speak on behalf of other women easily, without seeing the variations in ethnicity, religious proclivities, or class. While the state aimed at eliminating gender inequalities, male-dominated norms were left untouched in many institutions and realms of life. The aim was not only to change conventional definitions of women as being good mothers and housewives, but also to make them suitable for the modernization project of the state. Therefore, the liberation of women was regarded as a way of modernization, as an instrumental move in promoting the project of modernity.²¹⁷

²¹³ Tekeli, 1982, p.214-215.

²¹⁴ Yeşilyurt Gündüz, Z. (2004). *The Women’s Movement in Turkey: From Tanzimat towards European Union Membership*, p.115-116.

²¹⁵ Tekeli, 1982, p.193-218.

²¹⁶ Koyuncu Lorasdağı, B. (2018). *Türkiye’de Kadın Çalışmalarında Post-Kemalizmin Etkileri Üzerine Yeniden Düşünmek*. Paper presented in Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Ankara.

²¹⁷ Arat, Y. (2005). *Rethinking Islam and Liberal Democracy: Islamist Women in Turkish Politics*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

For this reason, as Kandiyoti contended, Turkish women were regarded as “emancipated but unliberated”²¹⁸. Arat also stated that Republican reforms led to an improvement in women’s position through legal reforms, but the opportunities remained limited and failed to serve an emancipating or empowering function. According to new feminists, in retrospect, the women’s movement was a significant challenge to Kemalist reforms of women’s status but women unconsciously helped promote the Kemalist vision of a Westernized, in other words, democratic and secular Turkey.²¹⁹

Overall, these assertions are mostly shared by opponents of the idea propagated by the state elite, Kemalists and anti-feminists that women’s rights in Turkey were granted by Turkish Republic in a top-down approach. Feminist critiques held that the reforms and opportunities given to women enabled to create the national and modern state but ignored their struggle to extend their own rights. A specific discourse which held that women owed everything to Atatürk had emerged. Women who were intimately involved in the process of nation building wanted to claim their share in the progress towards women’s rights in the country.²²⁰ It can be contended that feminist criticism of the 1980s and the 1990s focused on explaining how women affected the modernization process instead of how the reforms affected women. Instead of ascribing modernization to the Republican leaders or to only Kemal Atatürk personally, their aim was to locate women as essential actors in this process.²²¹ Inspired by these criticisms, it is important to stress women’s own contributions and their dilemmas in the context

²¹⁸ Kandiyoti, D. (1987). Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case. *Feminist Studies*, 13(2), 317-338. doi:10.2307/3177804

²¹⁹ Arat, Z.F.K. (2010) Opportunities, Freedoms and Restrictions: Women and Employment in Turkey. In: Kerslake C., Öktem K., Robins P. (eds) *Turkey’s Engagement with Modernity*. St Antony’s Series. Palgrave Macmillan, London

²²⁰ Arat, 2010; Kandiyoti, 1987, p.317-338.

²²¹ Marvel, 2011, p.3-4.

of their encounters with an illiberal approach to equal rights in the introduction of their rights. At this point, it is necessary to briefly look at the pioneers of women's liberation in the Republican era since women were not passive recipients of the equality reforms. Their struggle also symbolized continuity from the late Ottoman period to the Republican period.

4.2. The Construction of the “New Women” in the “New Society”

When the period following the proclamation of the Republic is analyzed, it becomes clear that the objective of most of the women's magazines was to create a “women” which was convenient to the Republic's definition of the female citizen. While some of the magazines aimed to realize this through make-up and hairstyles, some of them chose clothes, and others chose opinions. The magazines trying to create a modern female type through fashion generally took European women as an example and underlined that the Turkish women should keep up with modernity with their appearances.²²² For example, during the years of 1931 and 1932, *Aile Dostu* presented itself as a family magazine and the magazine *Cumhuriyet Kadını* was published in 1934. The publishers and managers of both were men. The magazine *Ana* was published between 1938 and 1942 as a monthly family magazine. These magazines aimed at covering all issues regarding family life as well as educating and entertaining women. The other aim was to create a “woman identity” that was sophisticated and informed about business life, social life and domestic life. The magazines, therefore, strived to complete what they saw as the deficiencies of traditional women so that they could be fully modern by means of reading, learning, working, caring for family, and keeping up with the fashion without separating her from her mothering roles.

The Kemalists came from the tradition of the “progressive men”, who were familiar with the “women's issues” debates and “women's liberation” of the

²²² Tuna, T. (2012). A Study on the Representation of Turkish Women in an Early Republican Period: The Magazine *Aile Dostu* (1931), *Cumhuriyet Kadını* (1934), *Ana* (1938-1942). *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 3.

Ottoman period. The important role of the progressive men in these reforms was not only about their discontent with the traditional culture and its limitations on women. At the same time, they were Turkish elite who had undertaken the role of “saving the state”. For them, one of the important elements of the cultural model of the modern state was the “liberation of women”. However, women’s roles had to be moulded within the image of men. Participation in the male-dominated bureaucratic elite required for women at certain moments that their traditional feminine roles had to be overcome and broke down, and in some cases it required women’s submission to the almost formal control of men on their bodies. After the 1920s, the uniforms (tayyör) of the Kemalist women in the public service, especially the uniforms worn by the teachers, were a concrete indicator of this phenomenon.²²³

Women’s relationship with the nationalist projects, therefore with Kemalism, can be examined within two stages: The first, as Jayawardena emphasized, is the stage at which the rise of the women’s movement took place with anti-imperialist and nationalist struggles. At this stage, the promise of nationalist/modernizing projects to women was that women would be given equal citizenship rights in the public sphere because this promise tied women more strongly to nationalist projects. The second stage was the “establishment” stage. Here, the women who participated in the nationalist/modernization project during the crisis times were expected to return to their original duties.²²⁴ In terms of the Kemalist ideology in addressing the issue of women and the role given women by the Republic, it can be said that these two stages had taken place in Turkish case. As a matter of fact, women’s central role in the reproduction of the nation as a bearer of culture and the tasks of ensuring the biological survival of the nation demonstrated that both patterns of integration central to the Kemalist modernization. Both roles indicated

²²³ Durakbaşı, 2007, p. 119-120.

²²⁴ Ağduk, M. (2000). Cumhuriyet’in Asil Kızlarından '90'ların Türk Kızlarına... 1990'larda bir "Türk Kızı": Tansu Çiller. In A. G. Altınay (Author), *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, p.297-306.

that the control of women was under the sovereignty of the nation. That was, although women took part in the same nationalism project as men, they served nationalism in a different way; within this project being a citizen of the same nation did not mean sharing the same/similar responsibilities or equally benefiting from the same rights.²²⁵

In his speeches, where Kemal Atatürk addressed the Turkish woman, it was claimed that contrary to the claims of Europeans, Islam did not consider women to be subordinate to men. This actually reflected the view of Ziya Gökalp, who previously spoke of Turkish feminism in the old Turkish tribes representing the genuine Turkish society. This illustrated that the old equality principles and “the ideal of feminism” were re-adopted with “the revival of national culture and ideal”. According to Gökalp, the “national family” would not be a copy of the modern family, but would evolve on the basis of Turkish culture. In the early Republican period as well, based on this principle, the nationalists put national culture at the forefront of both women’s rights issues and “family affairs”.²²⁶

Modernization was a desire to create a new citizen through Westernized bureaucratic institutions and schools, etc. With the advancement of the process, the objective to create “new women” and “new families” was added to the collectivist project of the male-dominated state. The bodies of women were chosen as the main object to achieve the desired modernity and tradition together; even the moral values and symbols of national identity were marked on these bodies.²²⁷ While searching how the desire of creating a modern society and compatible citizens with that modern society were defined through different types of men, Sirman looked at the way how early novels described a modern

²²⁵ Ağduk, 2000, p.303; Kandiyoti, D. (1997). Kimlik Kavramı ve Yetersizlikleri: Kadınlar ve Ulus, *Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar/Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Dönüşümler içinde*. İstanbul: Metris Yayınları, p.149.

²²⁶ Ibid, p.121.

²²⁷ Ibid, p.128.

society. In these novels, she said that the views of the “modern men”, which criticized the old-fashioned men who were polygamous or who took their non-equivalent little girls as wife or fellow-wife, was exhibited. What was focused in these novels was actually the critical view of modern, educated young men seeking freedom for community pressure.²²⁸ At the same time, in the periodicals and publications of the period, it was emphasized that spouses who decided together in important works as middle class modern family model should be suitable families for democratic life.²²⁹ In these articles, modern women were informed about body and skin care, fashionable dressing and healthy culinary knowledge. All this information was provided locating women inside “the home” which was the place of modern marriage.²³⁰ In the daily newspaper reports, women were given the advice to be a good housewife, to be the ideal wife for her husband and to make the man happy with the rhetoric that what makes woman a good woman was sexual morality.²³¹ However, an ideal citizen was portrayed as a sovereign husband and/or a dependent wife/mother rather than an individual.²³² The 1926 Civil Law’s definition of the modern Turkish family as a structure in which the man was the “head (reis) of the household” continued until the civil law reform in 2002.²³³

²²⁸ Sirman, N. (2000). Gender Construction and Nationalist Discourse: Dethroning the Father in the Early Turkish Novel. In A. Güneş-Ayata & F. Acar (Authors), *Gender and Identity Construction: Women of Central Asia, the Caucasus and Turkey*. Leiden, Boston: Brill, p. 162-176.

²²⁹ Üstel, F. (2004). *Makbul Vatandaşın Peşinde: II. Meşrutiyetten Bugüne Vatandaşlık Eğitimi*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, p.269.

²³⁰ Ibid, p.270.

²³¹ Sancar, 2012, p.247- 257.

²³² Sirman, N. (2005). The Making of Familial Citizenship in Turkey. In E. F. Keyman & A. Icduygu (Eds.), *Citizenship in a Global World: European Questions and Turkish Experiences, Studies in Governance and Change in the Global Era*, vol. 3, 147–172.

²³³ Arat, Z. F. (1998). *Deconstructing Images of the Turkish Woman*. London: Macmillan Press.

The prevailing political opinion, which dominated the discourse of women's rights attributed to the Kemalist state, justified women's confinement in their role as "participant but silent and decent women". The dominant view of the period was that women were granted political rights, but some limits were necessary to prevent excesses in their use. Furthermore, it was held since women and men became equal, subversive thoughts like feminism should not be advocated in Turkey any more.²³⁴ While Kemal Atatürk "praised" the Turkish women, he presented them with an "Anatolian female model" and showed how this model corresponded to the civilized style and declared that Turkish women should "Let us show Europe how civilized we are."²³⁵

As Abadan-Unat claimed that:

By liberating Turkish women, Atatürk aimed to lay the foundations of a more egalitarian and modern family life; at the same time creating a nation where female members could use their energies and capacities efficiently and productively in various roles, as well as male members.²³⁶

However, in this scheme, the idealization of the "Anatolian peasant woman", who was portrayed against the "degenerated" urban woman as an example of a chaste, pure and hard-working local woman, was a recurring theme in the period of 1910-1930 in the national literature. This new Republican image of "the emancipated woman image" (educated and professional women) was not a role model for Anatolian peasant women. This image, which was created for the upper and middle-class urban women, was the symbol of the new Republic and modern Turkey.²³⁷

²³⁴ Sancar, 2012, p.178-179.

²³⁵ Durakbaşı, 2007, p.122.

²³⁶ Abadan-Unat, N. (1986). *Women in the Developing World: Evidence From Turkey*. Colorado: University of Denver, p.29.

²³⁷ Ibid, p.122-123.

While Mustafa Kemal himself praised the Turkish women, he presented them with an Anatolian female model and showed how this model corresponded to the civilized style. As the CHP populism conceptualized the nation as a union of different occupational groups living together in harmony, with no conflicts of interest among themselves, women who constituted the half of the society were viewed as complementary to males. In other words, women's national responsibilities, which reflected a functional perspective, were considered to be more important than their domestic responsibilities. Atatürk legitimized the status of the new woman in terms of the highest values of humanity such as virtue, wisdom and knowledge in "the role of the mother of the nation" and "the protector of national ideals". As women would work side by side with men in all areas of social life, and as they were the first to educate their children, Atatürk always emphasized the importance of educated mothers in the progress of the nation.²³⁸

However, women who were called for active support during the National Liberation (1919-1922) by making speeches in squares, were not invited during the nation-building stage. The assertion was that women were not yet ready to use their political rights and that women should take on more important functions as mothers to raise children and soldiers. As will be explained below, in this period, one of the pioneer women close to Kemalist nationalist movement, Halide Edip, was excluded and silenced after the establishment of the Republic, because she conflicted with the new administration over democratic ideals. While prominent women of the National Struggle were left outside of the state and politics of the new state, we see "new women" promoted and trained as "public role models". Although they were not so many, they were important because they were supported by the Kemalist regime. Latife Hanım and Afet İnan, who were created

²³⁸ Durakbaşı, 2007, p.119-126.

by the Republic as role model for Turkish women, can be given as the important examples of this.²³⁹

The first woman created by the Republic as role model for women was Latife Hanım, who was the first and the last wife of Mustafa Kemal (their marriage lasted until August 25, 1925). Mustafa Kemal's marriage (January 29, 1923) with Latife Hanım, whom he met on the days of liberation of İzmir, illustrated that the aim of this marriage, which was the pioneer of today's civil marriage, was actually to be a role model for society. It is possible to understand this from Atatürk's these words : "I do not want to get married in order that I get married. In order to create a new family life in our homeland, I must first set an example for myself."²⁴⁰

Latife Hanım was very well educated woman thanks to the educational opportunities her father, a wealthy businessman, gave to their children especially to his girls. Latife Hanım completed her elementary school in Camlı Köşk, the school her family built; the secondary and high school in Arnavutköy American College, and she was a student of Halide Edip for about a year. She completed her university education in France at the Sorbonne University. As a result of her early education and later, she learned English, German, French and Spanish. Besides that, Latife Hanım specially attracted the attention of Mustafa Kemal because she belonged to an elite and modern family, "Uşakizades".²⁴¹ In fact, when Rauf Bey's wife, Lahika Hanım, asked Atatürk whether Latife Hanım was beautiful or not, Atatürk commented in the following way: "If she is a beautiful

²³⁹ Ibid, p.172.

²⁴⁰ Gürel, A., & Akçiçek, E. (2018). *Uşakizade Köşkü'nden Çankaya Köşkü'ne Latife Mustafa Kemal*. Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları.

²⁴¹ Ibid, p.20-36.

woman, I would not marry her. I am a jealous man. I like her intelligence, knowledge and decency.”²⁴²

The British newspaper, the *London Times*, fully evaluated this marriage from the standpoint of its social role by stating that “This marriage, which was deprived of traditional ceremonies, created a marriage revolution.”²⁴³

In another commentary entitled “Atatürk is a reformer as much as a conqueror” dated February 22, 1923, the *New York Times* focused on the innovative side of this marriage:

This amazing and hard-hitting man, Mustafa Kemal, proved himself to be more Western than Eastern only with his appearance and clothing. ... He said Turkish women to stop using veils, at least, to reduce using it. This does not prove that Mustafa Kemal is exactly a ‘feminist’, but it is still a huge and striking transformation in terms of the traditions of the Turks which he defends. ... He gives his new wife the same freedoms as the Europeans enjoy, which will also affect the new Turkish people.²⁴⁴

Indeed, Mustafa Kemal always held that Turkish women should take their true place in the society, and this determination was proved by this marriage. At the time of their marriage (1923), although the religious marriage was valid, their marriage was held in front of a judge (kadı), not a religious man (imam or müftü). Moreover, some documents were also arranged about this civil marriage. For this reason, their marriage carried out during the days when Islamic marriage (imam nikahı) was valid, anticipated the provisions of the Civil Code, which would be adopted two years later.²⁴⁵

²⁴² İlhan Lütem, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk 57 Yılın Öyküsü, Ankara, Avrasya-Bir Vakfı Yayınları, 2000, s. 224. In Gürel, A., & Akçiçek, E. (2018). *Uşakizade Köşkü’nden Çankaya Köşkü’ne Latife Mustafa Kemal*. Beyoğlu, İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, p.83.

²⁴³ Gürel&Akçiçek, 2018, p.89.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, p.89.

²⁴⁵ Ibid, p.99.

On 1 March 1923, a week after her arrival in Ankara, Latife Hanım was invited to the Grand National Assembly. Her visit as she came to parliament with the invitation of Servet Akdağ Efendi, who was the deputy of Bursa, was the first for Turkish women. This was also an indication that Mustafa Kemal always wanted to see his wife exemplifying his revolutions, especially in the realm of granting of women's rights reforms and their implementation.²⁴⁶ Latife Hanım's visit to the Parliament was reflected in the newspaper *Hâkimiyet-i Milliye* of 2 March 1923 as:

Latife Hanım's presence during the session of the Grand National Assembly yesterday, no doubt, was a step to confirm the high success of Turkish women. Latife Hanım was the first Turkish woman to be present in the parliamentary sessions.²⁴⁷

Another reform about women was realized after Latife Hanım's arrival in Ankara. Until that day, women were not seen eating together in a restaurant with men. Mustafa Kemal demolished this ban and illustrated that he wanted to maintain women's freedom of movement within the society.²⁴⁸

Despite all this, it is no doubt that Mustafa Kemal wanted to give his wife a sense of duty from the first day. In the early years of the Republic, when he travelled around Anatolia, he took his wife everywhere. Within all the men, the pashas who came to listen to Mustafa Kemal, Latife Hanım had always a pose like wishing to stand out from everyone. She throws leg on leg and while Atatürk was talking to someone, she was busy with someone else. Even when she was talking to her elders, she would refer to them as if she were older. Latife Hanım had an

²⁴⁶ Banoğlu, N. A. (1981). Atatürk ve Latife Hanım. In *Nükte ve Fıkralarla Atatürk* (3rd ed.). İstanbul: İnkılâp ve Aka Kitapevleri.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, p.530.

²⁴⁸ Gürel&Akçiçek, 2018, p.145-147.

authoritative expression and style of interaction with others.²⁴⁹ This particular attitude must have disturbed Mustafa Kemal; because in Konya where he went in the second month of his marriage, in Red Crescent Society's meeting of women he began as follows: "I do not want to copycat women,"

Then Mustafa Kemal stated that:

The modern woman is intellectually minded, so, the person of the time with her knowledge and culture. Women's dressing, behavior and life style will of course be appropriate for the time. But it is also essential to adapt to the traditions and feelings that we value as the society. We will also know how to add our national/traditional characteristics to every innovation we will undertake; we will not contradict!²⁵⁰

Thus, with his marriage to Latife Hanım, Mustafa Kemal had indeed realized the first stage of women's rights which he had thought for years. Foreign newspapers published about the development of women's rights in Turkey starting with this marriage. It was claimed that Mustafa Kemal broke both the thoughts about the Turkish women and chain which was tied by the traditions with the examples shown by his own marriage and his wife.²⁵¹

Latife Hanım also held definite thoughts about the future of Turkish women:

I believe in equal rights for Turkish women; this means the right to vote and to be elected to parliament. But I also believe that education comes before the right to vote and participation in the public life. It would be absurd to give ignorant villagers the right to vote. In a long period of time, we should have schools managed by women for women. It is inevitable that this is a long process.²⁵²

²⁴⁹ Tanju, S. (1998). *Bazı Anılar*. İstanbul: Yalçın Yayınevi.

²⁵⁰ Ibid, p.206.

²⁵¹ Glasneck, J. (1976). *Kemal Atatürk ve Çağdaş Türkiye*. Ankara: Onur Yayınları, p.244.

²⁵² Gürel&Akçiçek, 2018, p. 178.

On March 15, 1923, the *New York Times* illustrated Halide Edip and Latife Hanım as two pioneers in the liberation of Turkish women.²⁵³ Latife Hanım really worked as an example to the modern Turkish woman, and this could be inferred from her domestic trips as well. As an indication of this, the votes cast to support the Latife Hanım from İzmir and Konya was significant, despite the fact that she was not a candidate for the parliament. To demonstrate the “Turkish woman model” that she had undertaken, she also conducted research, and corresponded with women in foreign countries on “feminism”.²⁵⁴ In this sense, Latife Hanım’s ideas were in parallel with Mustafa Kemal’s views on Turkish women.

It can be contended that after 1924, women’s public invisibility and their increasing silence were accompanied by greater display of respect and gratitude to male leaders. A kind of “child-woman” model was created in which Atatürk’s adopted women were also considered as a “public role model”.²⁵⁵ One of the most successful examples of this was historian Afet İnan (1908-1985). As Mustafa Kemal’s adopted child (*manevi kızı*), in the all meetings and conversations in which the society and the new Turkish identity were discussed and reformulated, Afet İnan always accompanied Atatürk as his secretary or assistant. In the 1930s, she was part of a team of national historians as the diversity and pluralism in the field of history studies which were independent of the political parties and organizations during the Young Turks era were united under the control of the CHP. In a speech he made in 1931, Mustafa Kemal stated that all efforts, energy and works in this important turning point and in the history of the nation should be combined to form the “national culture”. For this reason, as Atatürk used his Çankaya residence as a workshop venue for the “national identity” discussions, İnan was assigned the task of taking notes on the discussions. These notes were

²⁵³ Ibid, p.182.

²⁵⁴ Ibid, p.187-196.

²⁵⁵ Sancar, 2012, p.173.

then read and rewritten by Atatürk for publication. After Afet İnan completed her doctorate in history in Switzerland with the monetary support of Atatürk, she returned to Turkey and worked on research to inquire into the racial characteristics of the Turks. In fact, her historiography was shaped by Atatürk's views when she was assigned to write "national history".²⁵⁶

Afet İnan was a regular figure in Atatürk's meetings and loyal student of him. However, she was reluctant to struggle with ideas that did not favor or promote women's participation in public life and politics.²⁵⁷ Nevertheless, one day in the classroom where she was the teacher, while they were making election practice, a female student was elected as mayor, and a male student objected to this for the reason that women did not have the right to vote and to be elected. Thereupon, she told Atatürk that she could not teach in the classroom without having equal rights with the male students in her class.²⁵⁸ In fact, Afet İnan claimed that for the first time, she had brought the women's suffrage right to Atatürk's mind and that she had convinced him about it. She said that the necessary legislative changes were made by the TGNA (TBMM) thanks to her.²⁵⁹ She then tried to credit herself as the architect of the acceptance of women's right to vote and to be elected in local and general elections. Afet İnan explained the process as follows:

Women' organizations established in Turkey, unlike other countries, did not pursue a political claim and therefore attempted to struggle for that claim. However, these organizations gathered our intellectual women and enabled them to share ideas. This also allowed women to work collectively in charity organizations. ... During the War of Independence, a demand for political rights has not been put forward by our women. For

²⁵⁶ Durakbaşı, 2007, p.144-146.

²⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 147.

²⁵⁸ İnan, A. (1964). *Atatürk ve Türk Kadın Haklarının Kazanılması: Tarih Boyunca Türk Kadınının Hak ve Görevleri*. İstanbul : Milli Eğitim Basımevi, p.122.

²⁵⁹ Sancar, 2012, p.174.

this reason, we will acknowledge the year 1930 as the beginning of our election rights.²⁶⁰

Afet İnan also claimed that she herself advocated the recognition of women's suffrage and the right to be elected in her book *Vatandaş İçin Medeni Bilgiler* (*Civil Knowledge for Citizens*), which was considered to be the cult text of the Republican understanding of citizenship, as a textbook to be read in schools with the instructions and suggestions of Atatürk.²⁶¹ However, it is important to note that Afet İnan's ideas in this book are a typical example of "state feminism".²⁶² Still, İnan claimed that she was committed to women's political rights, and contended that women had different interests which should be represented, and that was a requirement of democracy. She claimed that:

The most ignorant and greatest statesman in front of the ballot box is equal. Why should women be excluded from this equality? Besides men, women also have a lot of rights and interests to defend.²⁶³

Then, after four years of providing women the right to elect and be elected in municipal elections, one night Afet İnan was called to the work room of Atatürk and İsmet İnönü. Atatürk said to Afet İnan: "Kiss the hand of İnönü and thank him. His government will offer women the right to vote for parliamentary elections."²⁶⁴

Since women were one of the most important beneficiaries of the Republican reforms, women as subjects of the nation had to succumb to the state policies of

²⁶⁰ İnan, 1964, p.121.

²⁶¹ Üstel, 2004, p.239.

²⁶² Ibid, p.166.

²⁶³ İnan, 1964, p. 129.

²⁶⁴ Ibid, p.132

the Republic willingly and without any reservation or hesitation. However, many activist pioneer women of those years who tried to engage in the nation building and modernization process in their country was excluded from the government agencies because the women's movement was seen as divisive in terms of nationalism and nationalist objectives.²⁶⁵ Although there were many activist women who were highly influential in the nation building process, they were to remain on a large scale invisible in official history books, as well. For example even *Türk Kadın Haklarının Kazanılması* (*Atatürk and the Attainment of Women's Rights*) did not mention about Nezihe Muhiddin's role although it was written by a woman, Afet İnan. Instead, in this study, she talked about her own attributions and beliefs about women's rights.²⁶⁶

The point here is that while there were many talented, experienced and knowledgeable women of national struggle and modernization process, how should one interpret this new kind of "role model women"? As Sancar also posed the question, are we facing two different positions of women in terms of gender regimes? Was there a "strategic reality" when the latter were showcased and promoted as the role models of women, where the firsts were excluded and pushed to silence?²⁶⁷

While Durakbaşı described Halide Edip as "the rebellious girl of the Republic"; she described Afet İnan as "the missionary and faithful daughter of the Republic".²⁶⁸ This point of view of Durakbaşı also shows the difference of the position of these two women who were both educated and intellectual and who

²⁶⁵ Çakır, 1994.

²⁶⁶ İnan, A. (1968). *Atatürk ve Türk Kadın Haklarının Kazanılması: Tarih Boyunca Türk Kadınının Hak ve Görevleri*. İstanbul: M.E.B., Devlet Kitapları Müdürlüğü.

²⁶⁷ Sancar, 2012.

²⁶⁸ Durakbaşı, 2007, p.142.

were actually found in the close vicinity of Kemal Atatürk. It is important to understand why Halide Edip became the rebellious girl of the Republic despite her higher status due to her age and experience in comparison to Afet İnan. As will be explained in the next section, Halide Edip had an important place in the cultural and political activities in the late Ottoman period and she took part in the Turkish Independence War along with Mustafa Kemal. She proudly witnessed that Turkish nationalism became the new source of identity in the establishment of the Republic of Turkey but held different views on government.

4.3. Pioneer Women and Their Dilemmas between Nationalist Imperatives and Women's Interests

As already mentioned, several activist feminist women who raised women's individual existence and interests as an issue into the foreground emerged as the "pioneer women" in the "new society". These women were the educated daughters of elite bureaucrats. Nezihe Muhiddin and Halide Edip Adivar were some of the feminist precursors of the day who were committed to raising women's self-awareness and the fight for women's equal rights. Most of these pioneer women published a great number of periodicals in order to make women knowledgeable and to claim women's rights in education, work, and political participation.

As one of the most prominent activists among these women, Nezihe Muhiddin (1889-1958) was also an elite woman in both the Ottoman and Republic periods. During her work as teacher at the Girls' High School under the rule of the Committee of Union and Progress, the secretary of the Ottoman Turkish Women's Protection Association, the writer and editor, she was always a strong defender of women's rights. Muhiddin led a very active professional life. Although she was married, she never used her husband's surname in her writings.²⁶⁹ In her book *Türk Kadını* (Turkish Woman) written in 1931, she

²⁶⁹ Zihnioğlu, 2016, p.37-39.

praised Ottoman women taking part in the women's movement. She supported the abolition of the legal codes regarding Islamic divorce and polygamy. She urged that all obstacles for women in education, professional and working life needed to be eliminated.²⁷⁰ Nezihe Muhiddin was a foremost suffragette along with the other strong-willed Turkish women of the 20th century.

As also mentioned in the previous chapter, the state's response to the attempts of Nezihe Muhiddin's party was deterministic in terms of the fate of the struggle for women's rights. Muhiddin's petition for the authorization of Women's People's Party (Kadınlar Halk Fırkası) was rejected by the CHP government on the grounds that Turkish women did not yet have political rights, and thus they were not eligible to establish a political party. However, it is a striking historical fact that the real reason for the rejection of the first-ever political party of the Republic (Republican Women's Party) was the preparation for the establishment of Republican People's Party (RPP), which ruled the Republic single handedly until 1950. It was believed that Women's People's Party would decrease the interest and the support for Atatürk's Republican People's Party. Additionally, Mustafa Kemal decided to establish a party with the same name.²⁷¹ Still, Nezihe Muhiddin and a group of activists again struggled to persuade the government to extend the political rights to women. Instead of founding a women's party, the Republican male elites recommended that women established a women's association. The Turkish Women's Union was thus launched because those women who were apparent in politics were a serious concern for the modernization process of the Turkish Republic. In 1927, the Women's Union introduced a "feminist" male candidate to advocate women's rights in parliament with the target of influencing the public opinion. However, it was a dangerous maneuver, as the Republic was dominated by a single-party regime without an

²⁷⁰ Ibid, p.38.

²⁷¹ Altınay, A. G. (2004). *Vatan, Millet, Kadınlar*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayıncılık A.Ş.; Toprak, Z. (1986). 1935 İstanbul Uluslar arası Feminizm Kongresi ve Barış, *Toplum-Düşün*, Vol. 24, 24-29.

organized opposition party. At the end of the meeting with Mustafa Kemal in July 1927, the temporary nominee of the Women's Union, Kenan Bey, withdrew his nomination. The government then issued a search warrant against the Union in August 1927, and charged its leader with corruption. The Union was suspended, and its documents confiscated. The police officers obstructed the Union's members to gather an extraordinary congress. Both Muhiddin and other activists resigned. Muhiddin was also put on trial for violating the law of associations.²⁷²

This demonstrates that state feminism focusing on women's existence in the public sphere also tried to control women's activism and constructed it as a means of the modernization project. During this process, women's rights agenda had been transformed from feminism to nationalism in international women's congresses such as International Women's Association (IAW).²⁷³ As an example to this, in 1935, when the Turkish Women's Union (TWU) cooperated with feminists from all around the world to hold an IAW for the first time in Turkey, and when they published a pronouncement opposing the increasing threat of Nazism, Republican elites were disturbed. As the Turkish government decided to stay neutral in international affairs, the CHP government closed the Turkish Women's Union on the ground that Turkish women gained all their rights thanks to the Republic and there was no longer any reason for women to organize.²⁷⁴ Akşit commented on this situation by stating that with the increase in international connections with Turkish women's unions through their own

²⁷² *A Century of Feminism in Turkey*. (2007). Retrieved from https://www.esiweb.org/pdf/esi_picture_story_a_century_of_feminism_in_turkey_-_june_2007.pdf

²⁷³ Sancar, 2012, p.179.

²⁷⁴ Toprak, Z. (1986). 1935 İstanbul Uluslararası Feminizm Kongresi ve Barış, *Toplum-Düşün*, Vol. 24, 24-29.

organizations, there was also increase in the accusations and the exclusion for the organization.²⁷⁵

The Republican male state elites felt that the public realm belonged to the modernizing state and neither autonomous woman's organizations nor other similar organizations could be tolerated. The majority of women, satisfied with the new rights they had been acquiesced.²⁷⁶ It was considered that after women were given their rights by the state, they did not need to fight for their rights and opportunities.²⁷⁷

Halide Edip was the first important writer to place the women's problem in the center of nationalism. However, she was excluded on charges of favoring American mandate and was asked to silence after the foundation of the Republic. Whether Halide Edip was a women's rights advocate of the time has been debated because she was within the political organizations of the nationalist and Turkish male elites of the period such as Türk Ocağı, not in Turkish women's suffrage or other organizations. However, Halide Edip also defended the women's equal rights.²⁷⁸ In fact, Halide Edip (1884-1964) was also one of the most distinguished early activists behind women's struggle for emancipation. As she was the first-hand witness of the change and transition within the social life, she was questioning her place within the process. In her novels, Halide Edip reflected on the place of the Turkish women within the society. Her novels were mainly focusing on the process of socialization of Turkish women and the

²⁷⁵ Akşit, E. E. (2008). Osmanlı Feminizmi, *Uluslararası Feminizm ve Doğu Kadınları: Doğudan*, vol.7, 84-91.

²⁷⁶ Arat, Y. (2000). From Emancipation to Liberation: The Changing Role of Women in Turkey's Public Realm. *Journal of International Affairs*, 54(1), 107-123.

²⁷⁷ Zihnioğlu, 2016.

²⁷⁸ Durakbaşı, 2007.

problems they faced. In these novels, via the female characters created, she discussed the women of her age who conversed and took huge steps to be a part of the social life. Her women protagonists who gradually changed from *Seviye Talip* and *Macide*, to *Handan*, from *Handan* to *Kaya*, from *Kaya* to *Ayşe* and who matured, renewed and completed their defects as they changed, reflected the adventure of socialization of the Turkish women who were part of the modernization movement since the second half of the 19th century.²⁷⁹ Therefore the main problem that Halide Edip put emphasis on during her whole life was the problems regarding the women who were transformed into a position as social subject. She believed that the prevailing mentality regarding the women as a second class people had ground neither in the religion nor in the history. The basis of this mentality was social relations and prejudices and the only way of getting rid of this mentality was education of women. Her utopian novel *Yeni Turan* (New Turan), regarding to the imaginary of Turkey's twenty years later, granted suffrage to women because suffrage was a cause which she wished for Turkey as early as during the aftermath of the Young Turk Revolution.²⁸⁰ Moreover, in the memoirs of Halide Edip, *House with Wisteria*, the focus was on "a new Turkey where a chastised and matured Union and Progress has taken the reins of power, where women have the vote, and women work with the qualities of head and heart which characterize the best Turkish women".²⁸¹

Nevertheless, far from being a self-proclaimed feminist, Halide was a free-spirited and independent woman. She did not participate in any women's organization during the Republic. However, when necessary, she supported women's rights. For example, the Family Law Decree, issued in 1917 and later

²⁷⁹ Argunşah, H. (2015). Halide Edip'te Değişen Kadının Romandaki İzduşümleri: Seviye Talip'ten Ateşten Gümle'ye. *Journal Of Türklük Bilimi Arastirmalari*, 20(37), 27-52.

²⁸⁰ Adivar, H. E. (1991). *Yeni Turan*. İstanbul: Atlas Kitabevi.

²⁸¹ Adivar, H. E. (2000). *Mor Salkımlı Ev* (3rd ed.). İstanbul: Özgür Yayınları.

repealed, was brought to the Parliament again in 1923. During Lausanne negotiations, there was a promise given for a family law to apply equally to all citizens. *Talak* (i.e. one-sided repudiation) and multiple spouses were the biggest concerns of women. In 1924, the debate on family law flared up. The women's group, headed by Nezihe Muhiddin, held a meeting in the Türk Ocağı to announce that they opposed the religious provisions of the bill. For this meeting, they issued an invitation to all women in Istanbul. In addition to the three hundred women, a group of men who had their own problems were also present. Women wanted the same rights in marriage, divorce, and inheritance with men.²⁸² The old Family Law Decree seemed inadequate to women. At the end of the meeting, which caused heated debate, women formed a commission to carry out the work. They chose Halide Edip to the commission, which was composed of the names such as Nezihe Muhiddin, Sabiha Zekeriya, Rezzan Emin, Nakiye Hanım, even though Halide Edip did not attend the meeting.²⁸³ The discussion continued in the newspaper pages. Angry with the news about the meeting, Halide Edip wrote an answer article criticizing the attitude of the men. In this article, while defending the women of Istanbul, she literally employed a "feminist style". Her criticisms were expressed in the following way:

....I can be neutral, in the capacity of not being an entrepreneur of the meeting or even not at present that meeting. Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım's attempts to gather women in the Türk Ocağı, with no inspiration or suggestion of any master gathered with their own will. It was just a meeting of ladies. Ladies had the right to invite journalists and some lawyers alone. If the legal knowledge of the invited men did not satisfy the men who criticized the women, this is a matter among men....²⁸⁴

²⁸² Zihnioğlu, 2016, p.143.

²⁸³ Çalışlar, I. (2018). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk: Mücadelesi ve Özel Hayatı. İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, p.493.

²⁸⁴ Halide Edip, Kadınlarımızın Maksadı Nedir *Akşam*, cited in Tezer Taşkiran, *Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında Türk Kadın Hakları*, p.112.

Halide Edip declared in her article that even though she was not in contact with women's organizations, she thought and acted like them completely. She supported women, leaving behind the scenes when necessary, indicating that she was in politics. This actually illustrates that Halide Edip did not give up hope of women's struggle.²⁸⁵ Moreover, Halide Edip, who was actually in complete contradiction with Anatolian peasantry women in terms of her education (for example in American Girls' College which was a "feminist-leaning" school that began with long-term projects for women's education), fiery preaching, open determination and ability to express. Halide Edip was the first Muslim girl who graduated from the graduate school of the College of American Girls in 1901 with the degree of B.A and served as a role model for Turkish women.²⁸⁶

There were some political initiatives of Halide Edip during the period of national struggle. She even sent a letter to the US president Wilson. One day, Mustafa Kemal came to the farm where Halide Edip was staying and he expressed himself in a very clear and simple way:

Everyone has to fulfill my orders. I don't want any criticism, no idea. I don't want any idea or order from you either. As long as you serve national purposes, I will obey you.²⁸⁷

"This is the only time we could have flared up during my relationship with Mustafa Kemal", Halide wrote later. On that day she became aware that her primary duty was to give support to Mustafa Kemal.²⁸⁸ Halide Edip then decided to write down his memoirs and write them in English that very evening:

²⁸⁵ Çalışlar, 2010, p.307.

²⁸⁶ Ibid, p.28-39.

²⁸⁷ Çalışlar, 2010, p.225-226.

²⁸⁸ Adivar, 1928, p.187.

I knew that he would never forget what was going on that day, but he would act as if he had forgotten and expect me to continue to work as if nothing had happened. However, it was impossible at the time. I was very nervous, and I didn't see the work I did as important to devote myself to it. So, one day I would write a simple and sincere, just like a child, human document, dealing with women and men living with me, for the whole world to read.²⁸⁹

The disagreement with Mustafa Kemal even prevented her from writing in the newspapers. She did not write papers from February 1920 to February 1921. For this reason, she had to return to literature with her own story.²⁹⁰ One day, Halide told Mustafa Kemal that she wanted to go to the Front to volunteer. Halide Edip was promoted in the battle of Sakarya and was accepted as the “chance of war”.²⁹¹ Despite her great role in the National Struggle, Halide Edip was not among the state executives and ministers of the Republic. While waiting for the tasks to fulfill her dreams, Halide was lynched in spiritual sense; rendering dysfunctional “she was killed”. Therefore, her book turned out to be a summary of what happened to her. She recounted the injustices committed against women and to her in the national struggle.²⁹²

Turkish women, more than half of the country's population, were deprived of the right to vote and to be elected. Those who called Halide to front did not call her to the Assembly. When the war was over, the need for her also was over. The situation in which Halide fell into was summed up in an aggressive language in the following years with all its nakedness in a newspaper article. The male elite of Ankara evaluated the expulsion of Halide Edip in the following way:

²⁸⁹ Ibid, p.187-190.

²⁹⁰ Çalışlar, 2010, p.226.

²⁹¹ Ibid, p.247-249.

²⁹² Ibid, p.303.

Finally, the war is over, there has been peace, the deceased has died, the rest has remained, the homeland has been saved and you have been unemployed. ...Did you want to be deputy or minister? Or, God forbid, was it a bigger thing? ...In your heart expanding from taking more passengers than its capacity, who knows what lies!²⁹³

A few days after the establishment of a new opposition party, Terakkiperver Party, the national press started to spread rumors that the new party had been holding meetings under the chairmanship of Halide Edip. The newspaper *Cumhuriyet* asked whether this news was true or not and she answered that she was not part of any party which did not give women the right to vote.²⁹⁴ Halide Edip criticized the Terakkiperver Party and the CHP for not declaring that women would have the right to vote as an equal citizen. Halide angered the party with a statement announcing that she was not supporting or affiliated with the Terakkiperver Party. In the big debate that began in November 1924, it was declared that Mustafa Kemal no longer supported her; instead, he excluded her. It was also declared that Halide Edip was discredited by Yakup Kadri.²⁹⁵

This political environment had ruined Halide's nerves. She was often sick. For this reason, with her husband Adnan Adıvar, she went abroad. Their travel was not an escape or forced exile. They decided to live abroad because they could not stand the political tension. But even their leaving had created tension. Mustafa Kemal described Halide Edip's refuge in England as a strange twist of fate because she was a British enemy. Moreover, Halide Edip, who had run to the front even before the men in the national struggle, started to be known as the "traitor woman".²⁹⁶

²⁹³ Ortaç, Y. Z. (1928). Halide Edip Hanım'a, *İkdam*, cited in Halis Ahmet Özer, *Roman Tenkidleri*, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, s.109.

²⁹⁴ Çalışlar, 2010, p.313.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, p.314.

²⁹⁶ Ibid, p. 323-345.

In response to Atatürk's *Nutuk*, Halide Edip wrote a book in English namely *the Turkish Ordeal*. The uniqueness of this book was that it was drafted by a female writer who had clashed with the leader, and therefore changed her life. Halide, who accepted Mustafa Kemal's leadership but was uncomfortable with the way he used his leadership, revealed her inner unrest by this book.²⁹⁷ After this book, she received a considerable reaction from the Turkish press. She became the target of serious attacks. The Corporal Halide of the National Struggle was gone, and instead, a witch had come who was emphasized as having a Jewish origin.²⁹⁸ The fact that the criticisms towards Halide Edip were not even on the political level but based on her sexual identity is highly traumatic. Even though Halide Edip preferred solidarity with male comrades instead of solidarity with pioneer women, this did not prevent her from being "sexual material" in the struggle for power.²⁹⁹ During the process of discrediting Halide Edip, the articles in the newspapers insulting Halide Edip due to her political views challenging Kemalist cadres, actually can be given as a proof of this situation.

In spite of all this, Halide Edip maintained her critical views on the regime from a feminist perspective, and she did not lost hope in terms of women's rights. When the 1926 Civil Code was enacted, Halide Edip, who was the symbol of the equality struggle, was abroad because she was excluded from politics. However, she told the newspaper *Manchester Guardian* asking for her opinion on the reforms that:

²⁹⁷ Çalışlar, 2010, p.348.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, p.359-362.

²⁹⁹ Sancar, 2012, p.170.

An advantage of the dictatorship that emerged after the parliament lost its character of being a representative was that it took another step forward in women's freedom; very desirable is that the woman has been European.³⁰⁰

Later, in 1928, Halide Edip stated that:

The freedom movement of women in Turkey was not developed as a part of the feminist movement, but as a part of Turkey's transformation. Not only women, but also men wanted women's right to vote as liberation of Turkey as a part of their hope.³⁰¹

Despite the disappointment caused by the failure to make room for even a single woman in the government, Halide Edip said:

The future of Turkey will be a country with the right to vote for women. At the same time, women have the power to recognize the right to vote in the hands of progressive men, so they will perform this at any time they want.³⁰²

Upon the death of Mustafa Kemal, Halide Edip decided to return to Turkey years after their emotional exile. As she returned to Turkey, she continued her relationship with the Kemalist cadres, such as İsmet İnönü (Turkey's President from 1938 on). In the political sphere, however, in 1950, she was nominated as a candidate for the Democratic Party cadres with the transition to a multi-party life and she was elected as an independent deputy from Izmir.³⁰³ Her belated status as a deputy and its symbolism cannot be considered as an improvement of the Republican women's revolution. On the contrary, this demonstrates that the

³⁰⁰ Çalışlar, I. (2018). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk: Mücadelesi ve Özel Hayatı. İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, p. 496.

³⁰¹ Janet Mabie, "Freedom of women is part of new Turkey's emancipation, declares Mme. Halide Edip", *Christian Science Monitor*, 1928, cited in Çalışlar, 2010, p.368.

³⁰² *Turkey Faces West*, p.228 cited in Çalışlar, 2010, p.369.

³⁰³ Çalışlar, 2010, p.449.

pioneer women were the first section who could be easily sacrificed in the political conflicts, as well as the sexist dimension of Turkish modernization.³⁰⁴ Later, even though she was an academician and an independent member of parliament, we do not see her as a woman who gained public visibility in high-level political cadres.

The purpose of the one-party government of the time (CHP) was to neutralize a constant opposition, such as the women's movement. According to Yaraman, Kemalism was already obliged to fail to bring about the liberation of women because subsequently no effort had been made to change real social relations, and even Kemalist state discouraged women from seeking their own freedom. The official history was written in such a way that the women's movement was chained in the infancy. Much less the women's struggle given for this cause, the idea that women, who were unable to even know what was happening, *were given or rewarded* rights had been put forward.³⁰⁵

Eventually, both Halide Edip and Nezihe Muhiddin, albeit for different reasons, were excluded from the leading political cadres of the new Republic and, therefore, from the state administration and political institutions. They also kept silent and assumed a low-profile in the oppressive atmosphere of the modernizing regime. It can be said that there were not serious ideological distinctions between the women and the founding men of the Republic regarding the state regime and the society model. For example, Nezihe Muhiddin, with her nationalist stance, criticized feminists' calls for "to fight against your state and army, not to support the war between the nation-states and be peaceful" before World War I; she said that it would serve imperialism.³⁰⁶ Although the feminist movement can be

³⁰⁴ Sancar, 2012, p.172.

³⁰⁵ Yaraman, 1992, p.162-163.

³⁰⁶ Durakbaşı, 2007, p.157.

considered as a product of society, these women could not find their places within the Kemalist state. It is important to understand why the aim of state feminism was to suppress and efface the civil feminism. Most of the pioneer women of the past coming from the Ottoman movement adopted and supported the Republic. In spite of this, as Durakbaşı asked, why could not these women be the “loyal children of the Republic”? It is maybe because they were considered by the state as the uninterrupted continuation of Ottoman women’s movement and they wanted to resume their movement again after the National Struggle. These questions need to be more thoroughly discussed and investigated. Moreover, how these women internalized and experienced the roles they were given in their own subjective consciousness constitutes the other side of the story. To understand this, there is a need to look at how they adopted or criticized modernist discourses of Kemalist state on the position of women. For these women, who both internalized historical narratives on Turkish nationalism and criticized Kemalist policies, a dilemma was created.

Halide Edip’s memoirs were a potential source for an alternative history of the War of Independence and the early Republican period of Turkey. Although Halide Edip’s literary works did not contradict the fundamental premises of the nationalism of the period, they challenged the mystification and idealization of Atatürk as the leader of the nation and the Ancestor of Turks. Halide Edip, who took part in the close circle with Mustafa Kemal, offered a very special portrait of everyone involved in the National Struggle, including Mustafa Kemal. Hence, Halide Edip’s works revealed the dual nature of the Turkish revolution with an extraordinary perspective; they also illustrated her own dilemmas. Halide Edip’s memoirs reflected the vision of a person who took part in the events at one time; but for that moment from the outside, from the exile. I believe that her being in self-exile was also convenient to reflect on her ideas and her critique of herself. Halide Edip was known as a pioneer Turkish feminism in the West; even though she did not openly and publicly assume this role; instead she always described herself as more of a Turkish patriot. In the words of Halide Edip:

My way of identifying myself with my nation has now reached the highest and strongest level. Either I was going to be among the warriors to prevent the bad ending or I would die in this struggle. No matter how small and insignificant my contribution was, I did not care. This was the giant picture of a struggle without precedent: I could have been his least bits.³⁰⁷

Her life story presented the portrait of an emancipated Turkish woman of that period. However, her autobiography, written in the self-exile in England, reflected her internal conflicts with her roles as a woman, her reaction to social customs, and the formation of her own self in the National Struggle and in parallel with the birth of a new nation.³⁰⁸ For example, although she took part in the war, she stayed away from the enthusiasm of victory and accepted her marginal status as a woman in such a male order. In other words, Halide, who regarded war as the struggle of men, reflected a feeling of subordination. Moreover, during the Independence War, she approached the soldiers of both sides with a woman's sensibility as a "mother".³⁰⁹

It is also possible to see the dilemma that Halide Edip experienced in her memoirs. Immediately after the victory, Halide Edip's farewell scene with Mustafa Kemal in Latife Hanım's mansion in Izmir provides an instance of this dilemma. When Mustafa Kemal said goodbye to Halide Edip, he gave her the girdle he wore during the National Struggle. It can be perceived from Halide Edip's narrative of the incident that Mustafa Kemal would soon liquidate the prominent names of the National Struggle. In this memory, Halide Edip mentioned Gül Hanım who was known as one of the anonymous warriors of the Independence War. Gül Hanım was a female soldier with a fantastic mask of white bandages on her face. In this scene, Gül hanım was watching Halide

³⁰⁷ Adivar, H. E. (1928). *The Turkish Ordeal*. Halide Edip'in Anıları, New York, Londra: John Murray, p.283.

³⁰⁸ Durakbaşı, 2007, p.32-33.

³⁰⁹ Adivar, 1923, p.306.

Hanım, hiding behind a tree and holding Atatürk's calpac in hand because Halide Edip was not accepted by him. Halide Edip stated that "Mustafa Kemal rigidly said that I will not accept her. He continued to talk about Gül Hanım in a disappointing style that hurts me."³¹⁰

When Halide Edip was in self-exile, she continued to write memoirs. Feminism, according to her, was a sexism that favored the female; therefore, the issues she posed seemed too small and unnecessary when considering the essential social issues of the nation. According to her, the only honorable case was to work for the national cause and try to glorify the nation. In this case, however, men and women were indistinguishable regarding the national service. As a result, she meant that the emancipation of women in Turkey would certainly be different from Western feminism.³¹¹ Halide Edip elevated the role of women as being mothers and as the creator and protector of culture. Glorifying the feminine and masculine characteristics; she considered complementarity in the roles and skills of women and wrote that:

Nature has assigned the mother to the establishment of the family, and since the family phrases have inevitably been transformed into nations, nature has equipped her with two seemingly contradictory features: Protectiveness and extreme degree of revolutionism. ... I believe that women are an organic part of society. A woman is the agent of nature producing life and its delay.³¹²

The "enlightened motherhood" depicted by Halide Edip was not very different from the role of the "new women" created by the Kemalist state. Like Turkish nationalists and progressive intellectuals of the time, Halide Edip also criticized the traditional social structure, the Ottoman family system and the discrimination

³¹⁰ Adivar, 1928, p.389-390.

³¹¹ Durakbaşı, 2007, p.198.

³¹² Adivar, H. E. (1935). *The Clown and His Daughter*, Londra: George Allen and Unwin Limited, p.174.

between the sexes; yet, the egalitarian Turkish family, which the husband and wife shared their duties and responsibilities, had given importance to nationalist ideals.³¹³ In Republican Turkey, women's maternal roles as mothers had been brought forward; at the same time, especially the women in the elite class were encouraged to pursue a professional career. There was both a conflict between "modern men" and "modern women" as well as the tension between "modernity" and "womanhood" in Halide Edip's life.³¹⁴ However, Halide Edip, who wanted to lead herself in the public sphere and be the role model for the new women identity that was established in the Republican period, was forced into self-exile and was confined to keep silent in the early years of the Republic.³¹⁵ Yahya Kemal who witnessed this period claimed that Halide Edip was uncomfortable with her exclusion from the cadres of political power.³¹⁶ For this reason, the friction of Halide Edip with Mustafa Kemal should also be related to not being included in the new cadres of the Republic right after the Independence War.³¹⁷

After being silenced in the years of her self-exile, her desire to serve other people in other countries can be understood within a feminist perspective as "the war of a woman against her own limits".³¹⁸ Even Halide Edip was in self-exile, in 1925, she described the Law of Takrir-i Sükûn as a dictatorship. At the time, she told the *New York Times*, which wanted to report as news that Halide Edip was

³¹³ Durakbaşı, 2007, p.209-210.

³¹⁴ Ibid, p.231-235.

³¹⁵ Yaraman,1992, p.160.

³¹⁶ Kemal, Y. (1986). *Siyasi ve Edebi Portreler*, İstanbul: Yahya Kemal Enstitüsü, p.39-40.

³¹⁷ Durakbaşı, 2007, p.244; Adivar, 1928, p.169.

³¹⁸ Durakbaşı, 2007, p.246.

nominated for Istanbul deputy candidate along with Nezihe Muhiddin, that she was not aware of the nomination and did not want to be a deputy.³¹⁹

Therefore, it can be contended that Turkish women's movement took a different turn, which was shaped by the political developments between the years 1923-1935. Politicized feminist women were removed from the public scene with the closure of the Turkish Women's Union in 1935. Beyond the exclusion and the dilemmas in the personal thoughts of pioneer women such as Halide Edip and Nezihe Muhittin, a new understanding of women's rights started to begin under the influence of the nationalist and statist regime which dominated the Republican mentality.

The confusing choice for women was between participation in the state-building/nation-building process at the expense of their particular interests and ideals, and adopting a feminist position that would guarantee their rights as women. While the first option means participating in overarching collective goals and acting from within, the second option means involving in a (pro-) feminist struggle and mobilizing from without.³²⁰ The dilemma of Turkish women appeared during the emergence of new nation-state, so during the early Republican era which was an era of social and political upheaval. At such times, identification with a national movement may put some constraints on the evolution of partial mobilization focusing on issues about women. This dilemma between two conflicting imperatives hindered social transformation. The dilemma was real in that disclaiming collective (national) values could necessitate its cost in the sense of exclusion from social rewards; choosing particular interests could diminish the personal loyalty.³²¹

³¹⁹ Çalışlar, 2011, p.318.

³²⁰ Yishai, 1996, p.1-27.

³²¹ Ibid, p.1-4.

While some women thought that working together with the men in the ideological movement would protect the rights of Turkish women, some tried to establish and maintain independent women's rights organizations without being involved in political organizations. In this context, the basic question to ask is: How did the nationalist women of the Republic took a stand to defend feminism as an independent women's rights policy? There was not any common struggle between both kinds of women's rights advocates in terms of political rights. Instead of being close to feminists, in many subjects, Halide Edip, for example, preferred to work for the country's affairs with the men who were involved in their ideological positions. It is understood that these women who cooperated with men in organizations such as Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) were trying to establish a political and ideological distance between the other women, who struggled for the women's right to vote in women's organizations which excluded men such as TWU.³²² For nationalist women, feminists were putting forward extreme demands. Moreover, this feminist view was understood as the view of the colonialists and they were considered foreign to the realities of the country. Although women such as Halide Edip and Nezihe Muhiddin were said to support the struggle of the organizations that chose to fight independently for women's political rights such as TWU from outside, this relationship did not turn into a partnership and cooperation.³²³ Eventually, however, both women were unable to take part in the administrative level of the state; they were erased from the stage of history without transferring their experiences to the new generation of women.³²⁴

Women's duty of reproducing by bearing children and raising and educating them along with national ideals makes nationalism gendered. Although men

³²² Sancar, 2012, p.185.

³²³ Çalışlar, I. (2011). *Halide Edib: Biyografisine Sığmayan Kadın*. İstanbul: Everest Yayınları.

³²⁴ Sancar, 2012, p.186.

supported women's rights within the national building process, their aim was above all to secure the new "modern" nation. The dilemma of women who had not gained the right to vote even until 1935, but who were expected to support the nationalist and collectivist ideals and objectives was the evidence of this idea. Nuclear families with educated, employable and modern women were considered as the way of development by the reformist elites. However the state did not ensure that women will maintain this esteemed position later within the politics.

Toska, who defined the ideal women of the Republic, made a distinction between those who crossed the threshold and those who did not. According to her, it was striking to see how the women of the Constitutional Monarchy, who sought freedom, had been excluded because they were "useless Istanbul women" and they were confronted by the "pure and hard-working Anatolian women".³²⁵ Among the women who were elected as deputies for the first time in the 1935 general elections, Nakiye Elgün was the only well-known woman in the past. This summarizes the dominant perspective and attitude in this period. Those who raised issues that were appropriate to the agenda of feminist politics had been stigmatized as actors serving imperialism and as advocates of Western imitators.³²⁶ From 1935, nominated/elected female deputies took the floor in the parliament in rare cases. The issues they talked about were not generally political subjects, but feminine issues related to children, health and education.³²⁷ Tekeli claimed that during the single party period, there were no women who defined themselves as leaders and more than 80% of women deputies were viewers while only a few women were active.³²⁸

³²⁵ Toska, Z. (1998). *Cumhuriyetin Kadın İdeali: Eşiği Aşanlar ve Aşamayanlar*. 75 Yılda Kadınlar ve Erkekler, der. Hacımirzaoglu, B. İstanbul: Türkiye İş Bankası, Tarih Vakfı.

³²⁶ Ibid, p.85.

³²⁷ Arat, 1989, p.252.

³²⁸ Tekeli, Ş. (1982). *Kadınlar ve Siyasal-Toplumsal Hayat*. İstanbul: Birikim.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The main objective of this thesis was to analyze the premises and the objectives of “state feminism” in the context of the secularization and modernization reforms during the early Republican period. Based on the argument that during nation and state-building processes, equal rights granted to women by states were often legitimized in line with nationalist and collectivist-developmental goals, the dilemma and tensions created for early feminist activists among the nationalist intellectual and activist elite women were analyzed. In Turkey, the early Republican understanding of equality and the instrumentalization of women’s rights in the path of secularization and modernization have long been subject to critical analyses by the women’s movement since the 1980s. In an effort to contribute to this critical paradigm, the analysis in this thesis underlined that the particular concept of equality and “state feminism” of Kemalist administration presented in several important respects continuity with the paradigm of the legitimization of women’s rights in the Ottoman-Turkish modernization preceding the Republican transformation. As the modernist male elite who founded the Republic came from the reformist Tanzimat tradition, the central paradigm of Ottoman modernization on the women’s issue was also transferred to the Republic. After this continuity was emphasized, the dilemma created for female women’s rights activists and nationalist women of the early Republican period was explored to demonstrate that Kemalist state feminism above all aimed at the construction of a modern society rather than women’s liberation as individuals. For this reason, feminist women and those nationalist intellectual women who were at odds with the authoritarian state were forced to adopt the official discourse; those who objected to the regime’s discourse and

paradigm of nationalism and state feminism were excluded and silenced.

Although the instrumentalization of women's rights and equality reforms is a well researched theme and argument, the impact of nationalism and patriarchal state policies on women's rights in terms of the creation of a dilemma for women activists of the era has not been sufficiently explored. It is important to look at the historical background of this dilemma. The gender regime of Turkish modernization process was constructed as "family-centered modernization", the significance of which is difficult to comprehend without understanding the historical continuities between Ottoman-Turkish modernization and the early Republican era. In order to understand the gendered character of Turkish Republican modernization, it is also necessary to understand the background of the reformist paradigm on women's rights and women's movement as well as the gender politics of the Turkish nation-building process. Throughout these processes, women were excluded from the political decision-making bodies of the newly constructed modern institutions. They joined the modern nation-state building by constructing the nest of the modern Turkish family, which would be one of the most important strategic areas of the male-dominated state and society. The problem here is that women's participation in the construction of the nation-state created ideational dilemmas for women in the sense of a pressure to succumb to both collective-nationalist ideals and to uphold women's claim to emancipation and equal citizenship.

To this end, in this thesis, first a literature review of women's rights during state-building processes and nationalist projects which contextualizes equality reforms for women in nationalist and state-building periods outside of the Western world in the first half of the 20th century was provided. Then, after providing the antecedents of the Kemalist reforms and the early Republican reforms of state feminism, the thesis continued with the Kemalist critiques of new feminists of 1980s with a focus on the nature of the construction of the "new women" in the new Turkish society. Lastly, to exemplify women's dilemmas, the pioneer women, their dilemmas and their exclusion from the

regime and from the dominant paradigm were examined.

The demands of those women trying to be autonomous from the state and the single-party administration (CHP) were suppressed by the regime which dominated and coopted existing women's organizations. The some pioneer women were directed towards charity organizations and social assistance activities. This actually constrained the quality of the Republican women's right revolution. In the process, the revolution was shaped by the decisions and desires of the founding men elites. These pioneer women, such as Nezihe Muhiddin and Halide Edip who wanted to participate in political institutions and who tried to be assertive vis-à-vis the male elite, were not included in the polity on their own terms with their specific claims to women's rights and democracy. While Nezihe Muhiddin was excluded from politics directly because of her feminist politics, Halide Edip was excluded because of her conflict with the Kemalist state on political regime issues. Consequently, they both were kept away from the administration of political parties and state institutions. This situation constituted the historical context behind the fact that women in Turkish political parties and politics in general still remain secondary and subordinate compared to men.

The equality paradigm of Turkish one-party regime restricted the prospects for women's liberation by confining their lives and their social and political careers to the patriarchal nationalist framework. However, Turkish women had started to claim their rights in return for their sacrifices in the nation-building and liberation process. Although there was continuity between the Ottoman Empire and the new Republic in terms of the patriarchal gender regime, women's visibility in the public domain created a challenge for men during the early Republican period. As underlined by previous studies, this study also highlighted that the gender regime adopted by the Turkish modernization project was underlined by a particular conception of modernity, in which women were expected to participate in the modern society by building modern families, homes, children and modern life. In this process, they were expected to participate in politics besides men but in different ways from men. I believe that most women were already aware of the

male domination over them but they still led them to control their lives because over against this, male-dominated state would pave the way for women's equal rights. At the beginning, the male elite (the founders of the Republic) supported women as mothers of the nation and in turn, women encouraged their nationalist brothers so that they would have equal citizen rights. However, this solidarity started to be destroyed when these modernist brothers stopped supporting women's full rights and started to limit them with conventional gender roles. That is why Anderson is right because there was no nationalism in the world which granted women and men the same privileged access to the opportunities of the nation-state.³²⁹

Moreover, the ideal Republican woman was defined as an elite urban woman which was the symbol of the new Republic. The state designated the features of the ideal woman controlling their behavior. Although Republican male elites wanted women to be strong and emancipated, they did so at a cost. As the new women symbolized the modern and secular state, they were supposed to obey patriarchal norms of conduct and interaction as desired by the state. Women who wanted to dress modestly and cover their heads because of their religious beliefs were not accepted within this Republican sisterhood. Dressing modestly, however, was also a demand of religious patriarchy. Therefore, women were under the pressure of two different and mutually hostile forms of patriarchy. In the new republic, since modernity was defined by the secular state, it entailed many tasks for women as a national duty. Moreover, state feminism did not concern itself with what happened in their private lives. It just concerned with women's public duties, without caring about their private lives as women. Actually, some early Republican reformers were also scared what if women started to be active in public domain decreased their feelings of family duty and

³²⁹ Anderson, B. R. O. (2006). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London; New York; Verso, 2006. Retrieved from <http://0-search.ebscohost.com.library.metu.edu.tr/login.aspx?direct=true&AuthType=ip&db=cab06966a&AN=metu.b1250896&site=eds-live&authtype=ip,uid>

responsibility. For them, this situation would create a moral deterioration in the society.

The pioneer feminist women such as Nezihe Muhiddin and Halide Edip suffered from dilemmas because these women had patriotic feelings; and at the same time, they also struggled for the expansion of democracy and women's emancipation. This breaking point, where women who were the closest to the state ranks were left out of the state or self-exiled, was characterized by a discourse that women were not yet ready to use their political rights from the beginning and that they should undertake more important functions as mothers who would raise children and soldiers for the nation. Worse than this dilemma they experienced, these women who were nationalist and at the same time looking for emancipation were excluded as "useless Istanbul women" and were contrasted with women who were defined as "pure and hardworking Anatolian women". They were at times criticized on the grounds that they were against the interests of the country, served imperialism and were Western imitators as they said things parallel to the agenda of Western feminist politics. At the end of the day, the dilemma was simple but overpowering: being "equal citizens as men" and/or "becoming mother-citizens".

In order to highlight this dilemma, the positions of Latife Hanım and Afet İnan vis-à-vis the Republican regime have also been briefly examined. These two women were promoted and trained as "role models" for Turkish women by the Republican state as opposed to the autonomous pioneer women who were also close to the nationalist movement, such as Nezihe Muhiddin and Halide Edip. However, the latter were excluded and silenced after the establishment of the Republic, because they conflicted with the new administration over democratic ideals. They did not fully commit themselves to the model of "new women" within the new Turkish society.

Following the early Republican era can be characterized as a period in which women's rights and family policies were promoted by nationalists and

conservatives on the common ground settled and transferred to daily life. It can be said that this period opened a new chapter in history in terms of the gender policies in Turkey because it was a period that erased the struggle for women's rights from both memories and history. The women's revolution of the Republic, which gave women modern rights, went down in history as the rights that Atatürk presented to women without women's demand and struggle. History-writing based on the claim that women did not fight for their rights created memory loss with this period. Much has not changed since the dominant discourse of the time.

On the other hand, there was a women's movement (at least one led by few pioneer women) in the early Republican period in Turkey. The Republican regime strived to suppress the autonomous activities women with "state feminism". It is worth mentioning that the only reason for this suppression was not the principles of Kemalist nationalism, but historical resilience of patriarchy in Turkey. The age-old heritage of patriarchy is an important reason why, although women gained some significant rights, some of these did not last long or were not sufficient to solve problems in the social sphere.

In understanding our present problems, the arguments and insights in this thesis has emphasized the importance of the problems created by the patriarchal features of the states on women from a historical perspective. The contribution of this thesis has been to examine closely the relation between these patriarchal features and state feminism so that new research could look at the relationship of these two to better understand these processes. It is important to note that as long as the patriarchal features of the state persists, the women's dilemma will persist as well, even if women seek for their equal rights and emancipation through independent struggle.

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APPENDICES

A. Turkish Summary/ Türkçe Özet

Diğer gelişmekte olan ülkelerle, özellikle de Müslüman dünyasındakilerle karşılaştırıldığında, Türk kadınları, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin kuruluşundan bu yana anayasal, sosyal ve politik haklar bakımından erkeklerle neredeyse tam eşitlik elde etmişlerdir. 1920'lerin başlarında, Cumhuriyetçi aile hukuku reformu (Medeni Kanun), ceza kanunu ve siyasi haklar ve eğitim konusundaki reform politikaları kadınların sosyal yaşam alanlarındaki ilerlemesini teşvik etmiştir. Başka bir deyişle, Cumhuriyetçi dönüşümün 1920'lerden bu yana en önemli özelliği, kadınlar için eşit vatandaşlık haklarının güvence altına alınması politikasıdır. Türk kadınları Belçika, İsviçre, Yunanistan ve Fransa'daki çağdaşlarından çok daha erken oy kullanma hakkına sahip olmuşlardır. Bu nedenle, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti ve laikleşme reformları, o dönemde bazı ülkeler için radikal olan eşitlikçi hakları Türk kadınları için dönüştürmüş ve geliştirmiştir.

Aynı zamanda, Cumhuriyet'in erken dönemlerinde kadınların topluma entegrasyonu (süreç ve kadınlar için eşitlikçi hakların yaygınlaştırılması bağlamında) ile 20. yüzyılın ilk yarısı Batı dünyasının dışındaki diğer devlet deneyimleri arasında ortaklıklar vardır. Bu milliyetçi dönüşümleri ve devlet inşası projelerini feminist bir bakış açısıyla inceleyen araştırmalar, bu süreçlerin, kadınların erkek egemen devletlerin politikaları yoluyla daha sonraki aktivizmini ve sosyal-politik katılımını şekillendiren belirli dinamikleri ortaya çıkardığını göstermiştir. Bu anlamda, kadınların Ortadoğu toplumlarındaki deneyimleri, içinde bulundukları bu ülkelerin milliyetçi sosyal reform politikaları sürecinde önemlidir.

Devlet inşası ve bağımsızlık hareketlerinin milliyetçi paradigmaları her zaman, marjinalleşmiş gruplar için, özellikle de kadınlarda belirli hedeflerin desteklenmesi pahasına güvenlik, kurtuluş, kalkınma, ulusal birlik ve devletçi politikaların kolektif hedeflerine büyük önem atfetmiştir. Buna göre, kadınların Orta Doğu ülkelerindeki ataerkil devletler içindeki girişimleri ve işbirlikleri, bu tezin ikinci bölümünde daha detaylı olarak tartışılacağı gibi her zaman araştırmaya tabi tutulmuştur. Türkiye örneğinde, bu süreçlerin kadınların eşit haklarının gelişimi açısından bir örneği olarak, kadınların özgürleşmesinde ilerleyen yıllarda, ilerleme kaydedildiği görülmektedir. Bu nedenle, Kandiyoti, Orta Doğu'daki kadın özgürlüğünün kendine özgü bir şekilde kendini gösteren bir özelliğine dikkat çekmiştir. Örnek vermek gerekirse, Türkiye örneğinde, kadınlar için sağlanan özgürleştirici reformlar genellikle ya olağandışı ya da tamamen yüzeysel olarak oldukça tutarsız terimlerle açıklanmıştır. Bununla birlikte, Türkiye örneği, erkek egemen bir devlet tarafından başlatılan reformların gerekçelerini, gerekse toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkilerinin en önemli alanlarına dokunmadan kadınların yokluğunda başlattığı fırsatları ve kısıtlamaları göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda, Türk kadınlarının durumu yıllar sonra, Kemalist reformlar tarafından “serbest bırakılmış ancak özgürleştirilmemiş” olarak tanımlanmıştır.

Bu milliyetçi dönüşümlerin en önemli yönlerinden birinin, özgürleştirici idealleriyle (feminist veya feminist yanlısı) seçkinler veya entelektüeller olarak öne çıkan öncü kadınlar için bir ikilem oluşturulması olduğu söylenebilir. Bu öncü kadınların bir kısmının kendilerini “feminist” olarak tanımlamamalarına ve feminist örgütlere dahil olmamalarına rağmen, kadın haklarını destekledikleri için feminist yanlısı olarak görülebileceklerini belirtmek faydalı olacaktır. Bu tez çalışmasında, öncü kadın olarak belirtilen iki kadın Nezihe Muhiddin ve Halide Edip'tir. Bu iki öncü kadının önemi, feminist mücadele anlamında aralarında çok büyük bir fark olmasına rağmen, ikisi de Kemalist rejimle çatışırken devlet tarafından susturulmuş ve dışlanmışlardır.

Bu ikilem daha sonraki dönemlerde de yaşanmıştır. Mesela Yishai, İsrail örneğinde, bir yandan kadınlar adına harekete geçme ve bir yandan erkek devlet kurumlarına entegrasyon ve milliyetçi-kolektivist amaçlar arasındaki gerginliğin devam ettiğini göstermiştir. Kadınlar için eşit vatandaşlık haklarının genişletilmesi mücadelesinde önemli bir zorluk yaşanmıştır. Ulusal güvenlik ve devletçi milliyetçi hedeflerinin zorunlulukları, kadınların kurtuluşu ve eşitliği arayışı ile erkek egemen yapılara ve nedenlere entegrasyon ihtiyacı arasında kalıcı bir gerilim yaşanmıştır. Aynı şekilde, Türkiye de dahil olmak üzere diğer gelişmekte olan ülkelerde, milliyetçi hedeflerle ve modernleşme hedefleriyle özdeşleşmek aynı zamanda kadınların özgürleştirici arayışlarından da taviz vermiştir; çünkü kadınların eşit vatandaşlığa yönelik ataerkil paradigmalar, kadınların aile içindeki besleyici rollerini ve büyük ölçüde ulus için sembolik önemini kullanarak kadınların siyasete katılmasını sağlamıştır.

Bu tezde ayrıca ayrıntılandırılacağı gibi, Türk devletinin devlet kurma sürecinde kadınları siyasete katması da ataerkil bir paradigma ile karakterize edilmiştir; bu da, kadınları yeni bir ataerkil cinsiyet rejiminin normlarına ve değerlerine uydukları takdirde eşit vatandaşlar olarak tanımlanacaklarıdır. Kadınlar kamusal alandaki erkeklerin yardımcısı olarak tanımlanmışlar ve öncelikle ailede anne ve eş olarak adlandırılmışlardır. Daha sonra, yeni rejimin demokratik katılıma yaklaşımından memnun olmayan bazı kadın aydınların bir ikilem yaşadığı kaçınılmaz hale gelmiştir. 1980’li ve 1990’lı yılların feministlerinin gösterdiği gibi, 1923’te Türkiye’de, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası deneyiminin kaderi, otoriter erkek egemen devletin kadınların özerk taleplerini bile hoş göremediğini göstermiştir. Bu durum, öncü kadınların, başka hiçbir seçeneğe sahip olmadıklarından, genellikle “radikal” amaçlarından taviz vererek ulusal hedeflere ulaşmak veya halkın mücadelesine destek olmak suretiyle, devletin ve toplumun genel yararı için belirlenen amaçları korumak için geri adım atmalarıyla sonuçlanmıştır. Bu ikilem kadınların yerini yasal eşitlik cephesinin arkasındaki kadınsı kimliklerini baskılayan fiili ikinci sınıf vatandaşlara bıraktı.

Sonuç olarak, 1980'lerin ve 1990'ların feministlerinin de altını çizdiği gibi, her ne kadar siyasi ve yasal eşitliğin yasal ve ideolojik temeli 1920'lerin ve 1930'ların Cumhuriyet dönemi başlarında ortaya konsa da, o zamandan bu yana fiili toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği ve eşit vatandaşlık haklarının kullanılması açısından ilerleme sorunlu olmuştur. Bu büyük ölçüde hem ataerkil normlar hem de ikilemin kalıcı etkisi nedeniyle olmuştur. Türkiye'deki toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizlikleri, kadınların eşit vatandaşlık haklarından yararlanmaları için hala önemli engellerdir. Siyasette kadınların siyasi temsili konusunda hala yetersizlikler vardır. Kadınların Türkiye parlamentosuna katılımı hala Avrupa Birliği ortalamasının yarısı kadardır. Kadınların istihdamı ve işgücüne hem ulusal hem de bölgesel düzeyde katılım oranları çarpıcı şekilde düşüktür. Ayrıca ücretli işte olmayan çok sayıda eğitimli kadın vardır. İşyerinde cinsiyet ayrımı, Türk kadınların çoğunluğunun ev işleri ve çocuk bakımı gibi geleneksel rollerle sınırlı olduğu anlamına gelir. Toplumdaki kadına yönelik erkek şiddetinin yaygınlığı gibi diğer sorunlar da, ataerkil normların devam eden gücünü ve kadınlara yönelik baskıyı ortaya çıkarmaya devam etmektedir.

Bu tezin analizi için iki çıkış noktası vardır. Birincisi, eşitlikçi feminizmin erkek egemenliği perspektifi bağlamında, feminizmi erkeklerin tanımladığı milliyetçi hedeflerle uzlaştırmanın 1920'lerin ve 1930'ların Türk feminizminin entelektüel öncü kadınları için büyük bir zorluk ve ikilem yarattığı iddiasıdır. İkincisi, Osmanlı-Türk reform döneminde kadının modernleşme paradigmalarına ilişkin haklarının merkezi olması açısından erken Cumhuriyet dönemi arasında bir süreklilik/ortaklık olmasıdır. Bununla birlikte, laiklik meselesine Kemalist modernleşme yaklaşımının Tanzimat ve Meşrutiyet dönemindeki yaklaşımlardan kökten farklılık göstermesi nedeniyle de bir kopuş vardı. Bu nedenle, bu tez, Osmanlı-Türk modernleşmesinin (19. yüzyılın sonlarında) ve Cumhuriyetin erken dönemlerinde (1920'lerden 1940'lara kadar) kadın hakları konusunda sürekliliklerine ve kırılmalarına bakmakta; toplumsal ve siyasal ayaklanmalar sırasında erkek egemen bir devletin genel hedefleri bağlamında eşitlik reformları paradigmasını sorunsallaştırır. Başka bir deyişle, bu tez, 1980'lerde feminist araştırmacılar tarafından sorunsallaştırılan Cumhuriyet döneminde, kadınlar ve

erkekler arasındaki cinsiyet eşitliği paradigmasında (Tanzimat döneminden beri) sürekliliğin altını çizmektedir. Kemalist devrimin eşit vatandaşlık haklarını dönüştürmesindeki radikal özüne rağmen, bu süreklilik, kadının haklarının kadının aile merkezli önemine dayanan bazı sosyal ve politik amaçlarla araçsallaştırılmasıdır.

Osmanlı-Türk modernleşmesinin yörüngesindeki kadın meselesi, son Osmanlı döneminden Cumhuriyete devredilen bir devamlılık unsuru olarak ortaya çıkması bakımından çok önemlidir. Ancak, Osmanlı-Türk modernleşmesi, Cumhuriyet’in erken dönemlerinde kadın haklarına ilişkin laiklik reformlarıyla birlikte radikal bir kırılma yaşanmıştır. Tanzimat döneminde (1839-1876) başlayan Osmanlı modernleşmesinden farklı olarak, Cumhuriyetçi Kemalist modernleşme, Türkler için üniter bir ulus-devlet yaratma hedefine ve ulusal bir kimliğe dayanan laik bir devlet inşası dönemi idi.

“Devlet feminizmi” terimi, Türkiye’de 1980’lerin ve 1990’ların feministleri tarafından, bu dönemdeki erkek egemen rejimin politikalarına ve yaklaşımına değinmek ve kadınları eski rejimin geleneksel kısıtlamalarından özgür kılmak Türk toplumunu dönüştürme amacına atıfta bulunmak üzere ortaya çıkmıştır. 1980’lerden bu yana, Kemalist reformların feminist eleştirisi, kadın haklarının, Türk kadınlarına kamusal alanda haklarını ve fırsatlarını ulusal bir modernleşme politikası olarak sunan ve yeni devletin demokratik yanlılıklarını Batı dünyasına göstermek amacıyla erkek egemen devlet tarafından getirildiğini iddia etmiştir. Kadın hareketinde öne çıkan bir isim ve seçkin bir feminist olan Şirin Tekeli, Türk devletinin kamusal alanda kadın haklarına eşitlikçi yaklaşımını ifade etmek için “devlet feminizmi” terimini kullanmıştır. Diğer feministler aynı zamanda Kemalist reformların ulusal kalkınmayı sağlama amacı olduğunu ancak kadınların kurtuluşu amacı taşımadığını iddia etmişlerdir. Örneğin, Arat, Kemalizm’i feminizmle ilişkilendirmeye itiraz etmektedir. Feminist eleştiriler, bu sürecin, kadınların hakları ve fırsatlarının kadınların talepleri sonucunda kazanılmadığını, ancak yukarıdan empoze edildiğini gösteren resmi bir söylemle sonuçlanmıştır. Bu fikir aynı zamanda Türk toplumunun çoğunluğu tarafından da

kabul edilmiştir. Dahası, Cumhuriyetçi devlet feminizminin, kadınların kamusal alandaki konumunu, özel alanda yaşadıkları baskılarla ilgilenmeden iyileştirmeye odaklandığı iddia edilmektedir. Bu eleştiriler, Türkiye’de kadınların ve kadınların sorunlarının algılanmasında bir değişikliğe yol açmıştır. Cumhuriyet reformunun, birçok alanda temel ilerlemelere yol açtığı, yalnızca kadınlar ve erkekler arasında değil, kadınlar arasında da toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğinin sağlanmasının yetersiz olduğu iddia edilmiştir. Cumhuriyet reformlarının uzlaşmacı doğası genel olarak, ya İslam geleneğinden beslenen ataerkilliğin varlığı ya da toplumun daha fazla yabancılaşmasını önlemek için kademeli bir modernleşme süreci izleyen Kemalistlerin ihtiyatlı stratejisi ile açıklanmıştır.

Tüm bu eleştiriler ışığında, bu tez, 1940’lara kadar otoriter bir rejim bağlamında sekülerleşme ve modernleşme reformlarına öncülük eden Kemalist yönetimde “devlet feminizminin” öncüllerini ve amaçlarını analiz etmeyi hedeflemektedir. Cumhuriyet’in başlarında toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği paradigması olarak devlet feminizmi, milliyetçi-kolektivist hedefler ile kadınlar için grup çıkarları arasında, dönemin öncü feminist kadınlarının bastırılması ve dışlanmasına yol açan bir gerilim yaratmıştır. Kadınların oy kullanma dönemini takip eden 1935 sonrasında, bu kadınların otoriter devlet tarafından susturulması ve dışlanması anlamına gelmektedir.

Buna göre, bu tezin altında yatan araştırma soruları şu şekilde formüle edilebilir: “Türkiye’de 1920’lerde ve 1930’larda kadınların eşit vatandaşlığı açısından devlet feminizmin ana öncülleri nelerdi?” “Erkek egemen otoriter devletin kadın hakları politikalarına meydan okuyan çağın seçkin aktivist kadınları için ne tür bir ikilem yaratıldı?” Devlet inşası sürecinde (ve daha sonra diğer kadınlar için) feminist ve feminizm yanlısı seçkin kadınlar için yarattığı ikilem veya süren gerilimlerle ilgili olarak, bu tez çalışması özellikle Osmanlı modernleşmesinden Cumhuriyet dönemine kadar uzanan sürekliliğe odaklanmaktadır. Bu sürekliliği, özellikle öncü kadınların yeni Cumhuriyet vatandaşları olarak milliyetçi kimliklerini ve otoriter devlet tarafından nasıl bastırıldıklarını, kadınların kurtuluş taleplerini konusunda devletle nasıl uzlaşmaya çalıştıklarına dair çıkarımlar

ortaya çıkarmaya çalışarak analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Örneğin, Nezihe Muhiddin'in Kadın Partisi girişimi 1923'te durdurulmuştur. 1924'te Kadınlar Derneği olarak yeniden kurulmuştur. Daha sonra, 1934'te kadınların siyasi haklarını getiren yeni yasa ile Nezihe Muhiddin tarafından kurulan Kadınlar Birliği 1935'te kendisini feshetmiştir. Hükümet daha sonra Birliğin faaliyetlerini yasaklamış ve kadınların aktivizmi sona ermiştir. Diğer birçok bağımsız kuruluş gibi, Kadın Birliği de yarı-resmi Halkevlerine katılmak üzere davet edildi. Sonuç olarak, cinsiyet eşitsizliği konusunu dile getiren veya devlete eşit vatandaşlık hak talebi ile ilgili olarak meydan okuyan hiçbir kadın örgütü kalmamıştır. Bu nedenle, bu yıl (1935), Cumhuriyet'in ilk dönemlerinde Türkiye'de ilk feminizm döneminin (veya birinci dalga feminizmin) sonu olarak alınmıştır.

Ayrıca, Nezihe Muhiddin (1889-1958) gibi erken feminizmin bağımsız kadınları (1923-1935), milli mücadeleye gönülden katılan ve kadın haklarına yönelik modernizasyon ve reformları benimseyen başka önemli entelektüel ve aktivist kadınlar da vardır. Örneğin, Halide Edip, Kemalist yönetimde rejime karşıydı. Muhalefeti nedeniyle, Avrupa'ya sürgün etmek zorunda kalmış ve Mustafa Kemal'in muhalif duruşundan dolayı 1939'a kadar geri dönememiştir. Halide Edip, ilan edilmiş bir feminist değildi ve zamanının Osmanlı ve Cumhuriyetçi feminist örgütlerinde yer almamıştı. Mustafa Kemal'in milli mücadelesini desteklerken, milliyetçi ve kurtuluş hareketinin kadın sesiydi. Bununla birlikte, aynı zamanda kadınların hareketlerini ve eşit haklarını desteklemiş ve otoriter liderliğe itiraz etmiştir. Bu nedenle, tezin dördüncü bölümünde, bu kadınlar hem milliyetçi hem de kadın hakları savunucuları oldukları için anlamlı görülüp incelenmiştir.

Bu tez, Türk toplumundaki kadınların Osmanlı döneminin sonlarından Cumhuriyet dönemine kadar olan konumlarına, Tanzimat döneminde kadın haklarına ilişkin tartışmaların yanı sıra ilerlemeye dayanan tarihsel bir arka plan sağlayarak başlamaktadır. İlk defa Osmanlı kadınlarının konumu, Osmanlı döneminde kadınlar ve aile hakkındaki algıları ile birlikte değişmeye başlamıştır. Kadın yazarların ve aydınların oluşturduğu pek çok sivil örgüt kurulmuştur. Bu

modernleşme savunma sistemi çok sınırlı sayıda kadını içeriyor olsa da, kadınların geç Osmanlı döneminde kadınların bilinçlerini arttırmak için taleplerini ve taleplerini ifade etmektedir.

Kemalist modernleşmenin kendine özgü doğası ve kadın haklarına bakışı (kadın haklarının ve eşitlik reformlarının araçsallaştırılması) bugüne kadar iyi bilinen ve araştırılmış bir konudur. Bununla birlikte, milliyetçilik ve milliyetçi ataerkil politikaların ve kolektivist ideallerin kadınların kamuoyu ve özel rolleri üzerindeki etkisi, günümüzdeki Türkiye’deki kadın sorunlarının analizinde hala merkezi olduğundan, bu argümanlar önemini ve bilimsel önemini korumaktadır. Erken Cumhuriyetçi “devlet feminizmi” nin dinamiklerini bugün sürmekte olan toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerinin arka planı olarak gören görüşü desteklemenin yanı sıra, bu tez tarihsel olarak, öncü kadınların erken Cumhuriyet döneminde kadın hakları reformları siyasetine ilişkin ikilemleri vurgulanmaktadır. Öncü kadınların devlet feminizmi ile karşılaştığı ve yaşadığı deneyimlerin analizlerine dayanarak, kolektivist hedeflere dayalı yeni bir toplumsal cinsiyet rejimi oluşturulması ve ulus inşasının öncelikleri ile kadınların mücadelelerinin öncelikleri arasındaki ilişki geliştirilecektir. Bu nedenle, bu tez çalışmasının, kadın haklarının savunucuları, mücadeleleri ve milliyetçi ataerkil devlet arasındaki ilişkinin bilimsel olarak analiz edilmesine katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir.

Bu tezin temel amacı, Cumhuriyet devletinin erken dönemlerinde yapılan sekülerleşme ve modernleşme reformları bağlamında “devlet feminizmi”nin öncüllerini ve amaçlarını analiz etmektir. Millet ve devlet inşası süreçlerinde, kadınlara devletler tarafından verilen eşit hakların, milliyetçi ve kolektivist-gelişimsel hedefler doğrultusunda genellikle meşrulaştırıldığı, erken feminist ya da feminizm yanlısı aktivistler ve entelektüel öncü kadınlar için yaratılan ikilem ve gerilimlerin ayrıca analiz edilmiştir. Türkiye’de Cumhuriyetçi erken eşitlik anlayışı ve kadın haklarının laikleşme ve modernleşme yolunda araçsallaştırılması uzun süredir 1980’lerden bu yana kadınların hareketinin eleştirel analizlerine tabi tutulmuştur. Bu eleştirel paradigmaya katkıda bulunmak

amacıyla, bu tezdeki analiz, Kemalist yönetimin belirli bir eşitlik kavramının ve “devlet feminizmi” nin Osmanlı-Türk modernleşme döneminde kadın haklarının meşrulaştırılması paradigması ile birkaç önemli konuda sunulduğunun altını çizmiştir. Cumhuriyet’i kuran modernist erkek seçkinlerinin, reformist Tanzimat geleneğinden geldikleri gibi, kadın meselesi de Osmanlı modernleşmesinin merkezi paradigmasında olduğu gibi Cumhuriyet’e devredilmiştir. Bu sürekliliğin vurgulanmasından sonra, kadın hakları aktivistleri ve erken Cumhuriyet’in milliyetçi kadınları için yaratılan ikilem, Kemalist devlet feminizminin her şeyden önce kadınların birey olarak özgürlüğünden ziyade modern bir toplumun inşasını hedeflediğini göstermek için araştırılmıştır. Bu nedenle feminist (yanlısı) kadınlar ve otoriter devletle çelişen milliyetçi entelektüel kadınlar, resmi söylemi benimsemeye zorlanmış; rejimin söylemine ve milliyetçilik ve devlet feminizmin paradigmasına itiraz edenler dışlanmış ve susturulmuşlardır.

Kadın hakları ve eşitlik reformlarının araçsallaştırılması iyi araştırılmış bir tema ve argüman olmasına rağmen, milliyetçilik ve ataerkil devlet politikalarının, öncü kadın için bir ikilem yaratma açısından kadınların hakları üzerindeki etkisi yeterince araştırılmamıştır. Bu ikilemin tarihsel geçmişine bakmak önemlidir. Türk modernleşme sürecinin toplumsal cinsiyet rejimi, Osmanlı-Türk modernleşmesi ile Cumhuriyet’in erken dönemleri arasındaki tarihsel sürekliliği anlamadan anlaşılması zor olan “aile merkezli modernleşme” olarak inşa edilmiştir. Cumhuriyetçi modernleşmenin toplumsallaştırılmış karakterini anlamak için, reformist paradigmanın kadın hakları ve kadın hareketleri ile Türk ulus oluşturma sürecinin toplumsal cinsiyet politikaları hakkındaki arka planını anlamak da gereklidir. Bu süreçler boyunca, kadınlar yeni inşa edilen modern kurumların siyasi karar alma organlarından dışlanmışlardır. Erkek egemen devlet ve toplumun en önemli stratejik alanlarından biri olacak olan modern Türk ailesinin yuvasını kurarak modern ulus devlet inşasına katılmışlardır. Buradaki sorun, kadınların ulus-devlet inşasına katılımının, hem kollektif-milliyetçi idealleri başarabilmeleri hem de kadınların kurtuluş ve eşit vatandaşlık hakları iddiasını desteklemeleri yönünde bir baskı şeklinde kadınlar için fikirsel ikilemler yaratmasıdır.

Bu amaçla, bu tezde, ilk olarak, 20. yüzyılın ilk yarısında Batı dünyası dışındaki ulus-devlet inşası dönemlerinde kadınlar için eşitlik reformlarını içeren devlet oluşturma süreçleri ve milliyetçi projelerdeki kadın haklarına ilişkin bir literatür taraması yapılmıştır. Ardından, Kemalist reformların öncülleri ve erken Cumhuriyet dönemi devlet feminizminin reformları anlatıldıktan sonra, tez, yeni Türk toplumunda “yeni kadınların” inşasının doğasına odaklanarak, 1980’lerin feministlerinin Kemalist eleştirileriyle devam etmiştir. Son olarak, kadınların ikilemlerini örneklemek için, öncü kadınlar, ikilemleri ve onların rejimden ve baskın paradigmadan dışlanmaları incelenmiştir.

Devletten ve tek partili idareden (CHP) özerk olmaya çalışan kadınların talepleri, mevcut kadın örgütlerini yöneten rejim tarafından bastırılmıştır. Bazı öncü kadınlar yardım kuruluşları ve sosyal yardım faaliyetlerine yöneltilmiştir. Bu aslında Cumhuriyetçi kadınların devriminin niteliğini sınırlamıştır. Bu süreçte devrim, kurucu erkek seçkinlerin kararları ve istekleriyle şekillendirilmiştir. Siyasi kurumlara katılmak isteyen ve erkek seçkinler karşısında iddialı olmaya çalışan Nezihe Muhiddin ve Halide Edip gibi öncü kadınlar, kadın hakları ve demokrasi konusundaki iddiaları yüzünden Cumhuriyet’in ilanından sonra devlet kademelerine dahil olmadılar. Siyasi partilerin ve devlet kurumunun idaresinden uzak tutuldular ve aktif olacak başka bir yer bulamadılar. Bu durum, Türk siyasi partileri ve genel olarak politikadaki kadınların hala erkeklerle karşılaştırıldığında ikincil ve alt düzeyde kalmasının ardındaki tarihsel bağlam olarak düşünülebilir.

Erken Cumhuriyet döneminin tek partili rejimin eşitlik paradigması, kadınların kurtuluşunu, yaşamlarını ve sosyal ve politik kariyerlerini ataerkil milliyetçi çerçeveye hapsederek sınırlandırmıştır. Ancak, Türk kadınları ulus inşası ve kurtuluş sürecinde fedakarlıkları karşılığında haklarını talep etmeye başlamıştır. Her ne kadar Osmanlı Devleti ile yeni Cumhuriyet arasında ataerkil cinsiyet rejimi konusunda bir devamlılık olsa da, kadınların kamuda daha aktif olmaları Cumhuriyet’in ilk döneminde erkekler için bir zorluk yaratmıştır. Daha önce yapılan çalışmalarda vurgulandığı gibi, bu çalışma aynı zamanda, Türk modernleşme projesi tarafından kabul edilen cinsiyet rejiminin, kadınların

modern aileler, evler, çocuklar ve modernler devletler inşa ederek modern topluma katılmasının beklendiği belirli bir modernite anlayışıyla vurgulandığını göstermiştir. Bu süreçte, kadınların, erkeklerin yanı sıra ancak erkeklerden farklı şekillerde politikaya katılmaları bekleniyordu. Kadınların çoğunluğunun kendileri üzerindeki erkek egemenliğinin farkında olduklarına inanıyorum, ancak yine de bu durum kadınların yaşamında baskı ve kontrollere neden olmuştur, çünkü buna karşı erkek egemen devlet, kadınların eşit haklarının önünü açacaktır. Başlangıçta, erkek seçkinler (Cumhuriyet'in kurucuları) kadınları ulusun anneleri olarak desteklemiş ve kadınlar da erkek milliyetçi kardeşlerini eşit vatandaşlık haklarına sahip olacakları için teşvik etmişlerdi. Ancak bu dayanışma, bu modernist erkek kardeşler kadınların eşit vatandaşlık haklarını desteklemeyi bıraktığında ve onları geleneksel cinsiyet rolleriyle sınırlamaya başladıklarında yok olmaya başlamıştır.

Dahası, ideal Cumhuriyetçi kadın, yeni Cumhuriyet'in sembolü olan seçkin bir kentsel kadın olarak tanımlanmıştır. Devlet, ideal kadının davranışlarını kontrol eden özelliklerini belirlemiştir. Cumhuriyetçi erkek seçkinler kadınların güçlü ve özgür olmalarını istemesine rağmen, bunu bir paha karşılığında yapmışlardır. Yeni kadınların modern ve laik devleti sembolize ederken, devletin istediği gibi ataerkil davranış ve etkileşim normlarına uymaları gerekmektedir. Mütevazı bir şekilde giyinmek ve dini inançlarından dolayı kafalarını örtmek isteyen kadınlar bu Cumhuriyetçi kız kardeşlik içinde kabul edilmemişlerdi. Modernite laik devlet tarafından tanımlandığından, kadınlar için ulusal bir görev olarak birçok vazife içeriyordu. Dahası, devlet feminizmi, kadınların özel hayatlarında yaşadıkları ile de ilgilenmiyordu. Kadınların özel hayatlarında yaşadıkları problemlere aldırış etmeden, sadece onların toplumsal görevleriyle ilgilenmekteydi. Aslında, bazı Cumhuriyetçi reformcular da kadınların kamuya açık alanda faaliyete geçmeye başlaması durumunda aile içindeki görev ve sorumluluk duygularını azaltacağından korkuyorlardı. Onlar için bu durum toplumda ahlaki bir bozulma yaratacaktı.

Nezihe Muhiddin ve Halide Edip gibi öncü feminist (yanlısı) kadınlar, hem vatansever duygulara sahip oldukları hem de demokrasinin ve kadınların özgürleşmesinin geliştirilmesi için de mücadele ettikleri için ikilem yaşadılar. Devlet saflarına en yakın olan bu kadınların devlet kademelerinde yer alamadığı ya da kendilerini sürgüne zorladıkları bu kırılma noktası, kadınların henüz başından beri siyasi haklarını kullanmaya hazır olmadıklarını ve daha fazla aile içi rolleri üstlenmeleri gerektiğini söyleyen bir söylemle karakterize edildi. Bu rol, erkek egemen devletin gözünde, millet için çocuk ve asker yetiştiren anneler olmak gibi daha önemli işlevlerdi. Yaşadıkları bu ikilemden daha kötüsü, milliyetçi olan ve aynı zamanda özgürleşmeyi arayan bu kadınlar “işe yaramaz İstanbul kadınları” olarak dışlanmışlar ve bu kadınların yerine “saf ve çalışkan Anadolu kadınları” olarak tanımlanan kadınlar getirilmiştir. Bu öncül kadınlar, ülkenin çıkarlarına aykırı oldukları gerekçesiyle eleştirilmiş ve küçük düşürülmüş, emperyalizme hizmet ettikleri ve feminist siyasetin gündemine paralel şeyler söyledikleri gerekçesiyle Batılı taklitçiler olarak nitelendirilmişlerdir.

Bu ikilemi daha iyi anlamak için Latife Hanım ve Afet İnan incelenmiştir. Bu iki kadın, Nezihe Muhiddin ve Halide Edip gibi Kemalist milliyetçi harekete yakın olan öncü kadınlar yerine Cumhuriyetçi devlet tarafından Türk kadınları için “rol modelleri” olarak ortaya çıkarılan kadınlardı. Nezihe Muhiddin ve Halide Edip gibi öncü kadınlar demokratik idealleri sebebiyle yönetimle çelişkileri olduğu için Cumhuriyet’in kuruluşundan sonra dışlanmış ve susturulmuş olsa da, Cumhuriyet tarafından yaratılan bu “yeni kadınların” toplum içinde önemli bir yer edinmişlerdi. Latife Hanım ve Afet İnan, feminist örgütlenmelerde yer almayıp ve “feminist kadınlar” olmasalar dahi, Kemalist rejim tarafından desteklendikleri için önemliydi.

Erken Cumhuriyet dönemini takip eden yıllar, kadın haklarının ve aile politikalarının milliyetçiler ve muhafazakarlar tarafından ortak zeminde yerleştiği ve günlük hayata aktarıldığı bir dönem olarak nitelendirilebilir. Bu dönemin Türkiye’de toplumsal cinsiyet politikaları açısından tarihte yeni bir bölüm açtığı

söylenebilir, çünkü kadın hakları için mücadeleyi hem anılardan hem de tarihten silen bir döneme girilmişti. Kadınlara modern haklar veren Cumhuriyet'in kadın devrimi, Atatürk'ün, kadınların talebi ve mücadelesi olmadan kadınlara sunduğu haklar olarak tarihe geçmişti. Kadınların hakları için mücadele etmediği iddiasına dayanan tarih yazımı bu dönemde hafıza kaybı yaratmıştır.

Öte yandan, Türkiye'de Cumhuriyet'in başlarında bir kadın hareketi (en azından öncü kadınlar) vardı. Cumhuriyet rejimi bu öncü kadınları “devlet feminizmi” ile bastırdı. Bu baskılanmanın tek sebebinin Kemalist devlet değil, bazı nedenlerden dolayı ataerkilliğin dayanıklılığı olduğunu belirtmekte fayda vardır. Tarihsel miras bunlardan sadece bir tanesidir. Sebep ne olursa olsun, kadınlar birçok eşit vatandaşlık hakkına sahip olsalar da, bu kazanımların bazıları uzun sürmemiş veya sosyal alanda sorunları çözmek için yeterli olmamıştır.

Mevcut sorunlarımızı anlamada, bu tezdeki argümanlar ve içgörü, devletlerin kadın üzerindeki ataerkil özelliklerinin yarattığı sorunların tarihsel açıdan önemini vurgulamaktadır. Bu tezin katkısı, bu ataerkil özellikler ile devlet feminizmi arasındaki ilişkiyi yakından incelemek ve böylece bu süreçlerin daha iyi anlaşılması için yeni araştırmaların bu ikisinin ilişkisine bakabilmesini sağlamaktır; çünkü devletin ataerkil özellikleri devam ettiği sürece, kadınlar kendi mücadeleleriyle eşit haklar ve özgürleşmeyi arasalar bile, kadınların ikilemlerinin de kalacağını not etmek önemlidir.

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