

GENDER HISTORY*

Caner AYDEYER**

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Abstract

Gender history is a new kind of history with its own sense, which began in the second half of the twentieth century. In terms of social life, gender belongs to both men and women; however, since the second half of the 20th century, this term has been used to describe women's life and history. Until the second half of the 20th century, history was based on masculinity, which meant it was often about men, and male historians were dominant. With this approach to history, women have become more involved in history to explore their past lives, and so gender history provides a great example of how women have won their rights in such a male-dominated world. With such a success, gender gained another sense, in which historically women are more reflected than men. Gender history is important in terms of researching women's past lives and telling how important women are for history.

Keywords: Gender History, History, Women

CİNSİYET TARİHİ

Özet

Cinsiyet tarihi, yirminci yüzyılın ikinci yarısında başlayan, kendi anlamı olan yeni bir tarih türüdür. Toplumsal yaşam açısından cinsiyet hem erkeğe hem de kadına aittir; ancak 20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısından itibaren bu terim daha çok kadın yaşamını ve tarihini tanımlamak için

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** Arş. Gör., Hatay Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi Tarih Bölümü, (e-posta: caneraydeyer@gmail.com, ORCID ID: 0000-0002-9130-1997).

kullanılmaktadır. 20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısına kadar tarih erkeklik üzerine kuruluydu, bu da genellikle erkeklerle ilgili olduğu anlamına geliyordu ve erkek tarihçiler baskındı. Bu tarih yaklaşımı ile kadınlar geçmiş yaşamlarını araştırmak için tarihte daha fazla yer almaya başladılar ve bu nedenle toplumsal cinsiyet tarihi, kadınların böyle erkek egemen bir dünyada haklarını nasıl kazandığını gösteren harika bir örnek teşkil etmektedir. Böyle bir başarı ile toplumsal cinsiyet, tarihsel anlamda kadınların erkeklerden daha fazla yansıtıldığı başka bir anlam kazanmıştır. Cinsiyet tarihi kadınların geçmişteki yaşamlarını araştırmak ve kadınların tarih için ne kadar önemli olduğunu anlatması bakımından önem arz etmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Cinsiyet Tarihi, Tarih, Kadın

Introduction

Gender history is new type of history with its own meaning which commenced in the second part of the twentieth century. In terms of social life, gender pertains to both men and women; but since the beginning of the second part of the 20th century, this term has mainly been used for defining female life and history. Up until the second part of the 20th century history was based on masculinity which meant that it usually was about men, and male historians were dominant. Because of such male domination, women began to take a greater part in history to research their past lives, and therefore gender history is a great example of showing how women gained their rights in such a male dominated world. With such an achievement, gender has gained another meaning whereby women are reflected to a greater extent than men in a historical sense.

1. The Development of Gender History

Although some initial question and scepticism, the history of gender has proven to be an integral part of retrospective studies. It brought new approach, discovered new information, opened valuable new areas of research, generated new debates, and simultaneously established itself as a fundamental component of all forms of holistic analysis. Moreover, in doing so, women's history innovatively transformed itself into gender history. This did not happen without controversy. But it does confirm that the subject has its own internal dynamics and shares broader changes within the discipline. (Penelope,1997:2).

Women's history, in other words, has not rested upon its early laurels. In twenty-five years, between 1970 and the mid-1990s, it has changed increasingly from a fringe interest into a mainstream one. Whereas in the beginning, historians considered it as a vile or eccentric subject for study, it has now accepted as normal. Actually, the pioneers might be disconcerted the speed of its assimilation of women's history. *"They have barely had time to enjoy their success before their own role has been*

transformed from that of path-breaking iconoclasts into established icons, ripe for challenge in turn by the next academic generation” (Penelope, 1997: 1).

Although documenting women in history goes back to much earlier, the field of women's history gave an undeniable impetus by the feminist mobilization of the 1960s and 70s. During these years, a dual project, which was to return to women history and history back to women, was outlined by women historians. The project firstly focused on recognizing the critical (often unrecognized) roles women played in key events (high politics, wars, revolutions, social movements) that dominated historical studies and nationalist narratives. They wrote the histories not only of the more visible actors (Joan of Arcs, Sylvia Pankhursts), but also of the peasant women who led the marches during the French Revolution and the women who fought in the Algerian War of Independence. However, academics have also argued that because so much of women's experiences take place outside the public sphere, focusing solely on women's activism in these spaces cannot tell us the whole story. Thus, by writing family histories, birth control dates, childbearing and child-rearing histories, they extended the boundaries of historical research into what has been called the "private field." (Bourbonnais, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/gender/2016/03/29/a-brief-history-of-womens-history/>).

2. Rising of Women in History

Towards the end of the twentieth century women were invisible and unimportant objects in a historical sense, but this was changed by female historians such as Alice Clark, Ivy Pinchbeck, Eileen power and Marry Beard, who can be viewed as being the most important and influential historians of women. These historians investigated the lives of women in a historical sense with regards to the women's movement. Therefore it might be significant to investigate how women became an essential part of history and how they gained this status; and it would be better to explain the differences between gender and sex in order to make this more understandable.

Historians who were familiar with studying women increasingly started to discuss the new way in which the system of sexual diversity affected both women and men. By the early 1980s the word "gender" was used to define the system, and at this point it was differentiated primarily between 'sex' in which they meant physical, morphological and anatomical differences; and gender b which they understood as being cultural constructed, historically changing, and usually an unstable system of differences.

The majority of studies with 'gender' in the title continue to focus on women; and women's history has continued as its own field (Wiesner-Hanks, 2001: 2). It can be said that sex is different from gender because sex is related to the position which people have acquired in accordance with

their physical appearances; and gender is mainly about the cultural and more historical, and because of this they are defined separately.

There is another declaration about gender and sex in Tilly's article by Ann Oakley. In this article the Sociologist explains the differences between gender and sex. Thus as a word, sex refers to the biological diversities between male and female; however, gender refers to a matter of culture and social classification into 'masculine' and 'feminine.' In Tilly's article, Natalie Davis has described a new stage in women's history as one whose goal is to comprehend the importance of the sexes and importance of the gender groups historically (Tilly, 1989: 448).

According to Murphy it can be generally agreed that the attempts made by the early women's historians were generally to show how important women were in history by representing women's contributions and successes (Murphy, 1992: 21). This may be the root of the women's movement which provided an opportunity for other women's historians to take more of a position in terms of history. This is because with such an attempt, it helped women to recognise their power within such a male orientated world.

Women's history, as gender history, contributed towards many aspects within this new historical approach. According to Tilly, women's history provided certain contributions for identifying new facts about the past; and for expanding our understanding of them as well as appending to our store of historical information because the process was additive and interactive. This was because women's historians drew upon older specialties such as the demographics for discovering information about fundamental events, activities, and migration; economic history for providing evidence about economic transformation; social history for evidence regarding the procedure of significant structural changes such as professionalization, bureaucratisation, and urbanisation; intellectual history for ways of textual criticism and political history for the theory of power - to examine women's lives in the past, through which a new historical feature had been born, and women, as its theme, had become a topic associated with history (Tilly, 1989: 448).

Scott pointed out that the usage of 'gender' was seen to have first emerged amongst American feminists who would have liked to persist essentially on the social quality of differences based on sex. The word expressed an elimination of the biological determinism implicit in use of such terms as sex or sexual distinctions; and gender also highlighted the relational viewpoint of the normative description of femininity (Scott, 1996: 153).

Sonya O. Rose firstly provides a definition of history to make gender history clearer to understand; and she describes the history which consists of knowledge regarding the past. Thus history is the production of scholarship relating to the past. At this point the reader may wonder

whether history is the past, and in a mutual sense it would tell us that if some are interested in history and therefore they will be interested in what has happened before the present day. However it is significant to be clear and the past is recreated through historical scholarship of which the information is created by historians. Rose asks some questions which must be answered in order to understand the history which are: What have historians focus of their interest? What have historians the supposed to be vital to study about past? How have they gone about studying it? How have they interpreted the evidence they have unearthed? When the historians are answering these questions, they are not removed from history because they are shaped by it and by political, cultural, and economic climates in which they live and work. This is important background knowledge to “keep in mind” as we begin to explore the topic of gender and gender history (Rose, 2010: 1-2).

3. Scope of Gender History

Gender history is based on the necessary idea of what it means to be defined as a man or woman and that both have a history. Gender historians are concerned with variations over time and variations within a solitary society in a specific historical era with regards to perceived dissimilarities between women and men, and they are concerned how these differences and dealings are historically produced and transformed. In addition they are concerned with the impact of gender on a variety of historically vital events and processes; and historians use the model of gender to denote the perceived differences between ideas about women and men, male and female (Rose, 2010: 1-2).

Alberti explained the term gender from the definition which was provided by Jane Flax and John Scott. She stated that Flax had declared gender to be a category which feminist theorists had constructed to analyse certain relations within our culture and experience; and Scott suggested that one motivation was the desire to gain academic legitimacy because the term women’s history contained a thread to a widely accepted view that women were not valid historical subjects which was connected to the alleged stridency of feminism (Alberti, 2002: 1).

Perrot asked some questions to discuss what women’s history actually was in order to help its comprehension by the reader, and also to understand the correct meaning of history. He provided the answers to those questions; and these questions were certainly what were considered to be the importance of this line of study which already had its own history.

Thus what are its roots and why is it essential? What consequence has it succeeded and what effect has it had? For these questions, his answers were that history had two different meanings one of which delivered events, and the things that existed or have existed; and the account given of these events in terms of written history and history as a discipline.

The second meaning which should be considered is that it is possible to write history about the category of sex in this case because this provides an optimistic content and there are events which are definite to women and concern them the most. He stated that there was no longer doubt that women had a history, or that they made history, and thus there was no doubt that history could be written, even though this would be without meeting problems

Perrot highlighted that gender history, especially women's history, had come from the women's movement and that woman had during the years 1970-5 began to express themselves with specific forcefulness. This was a time period which comprised the political development of the women's liberation movement and the rise of the feminist press (Alberti, 2002: 3). Thus, women became more dominant in social life and other aspects of life, and Perrot stated that history sensed in many circles, take account of universities. Thus, there have been teachers who have been skilled in responding to the demands of female students and indeed of stimulating this demand and presently, women are more dominant in life than in the past. Therefore, women are now present within and outside of the university institutions. Women are now involved in study days, in the publishing of academic journal articles and many collections have titles pertaining to women. In addition, there are some TV series about women and feminism (Alberti, 2002: 3). Therefore, it can be shown how women have increased their status over time.

According to Hanks it was difficult for the women's historians to take a significant place in history because a number of studies have described male experiences as the dominant perspective. For example, man as the artist, man as the hunter and man and his environment which have usually been depicted as universal. However, the historical lives of women started to be investigated, (whereby women were fitted into categories with which we were already relaxing), nations historical periods, social classes, religious loyalty, and then figuring out that this approach mockingly classified as "add women and stir" being unsatisfying. She also stated that focusing on women usually disrupted the common categories and forced rethinking about the way in which history was organised and structured. Recent historical approaches such as the emphasis on class analysis using social science techniques termed the new social history were developed during the 1960s and were found to be wanting in their consideration of differences between women's and men's experiences (Wiesner-Hanks, 2001: 1).

According to Farge in the book "Writing Women's History", women's history can be divided into two equal levels one of which is the long period when things were dropping into place and when both its fundamental and marginal nature were founded. The responses it met took many different forms and subsequently after the years 1979-80 reactions were increasing speedy and the capacity of

the discipline differentiated; whilst the output was no longer only from authors identified with their subject or motivated by the feminism of early years (Perrot, 1992: 12).

Gender history contains the feminist movement because the feminist movement constitutes the basis of gender history. According to Green and Troup in their book "The House of History", the part pertaining to gender history reflects the route of the feminist movement in general and they state that in the United States women activists set a lobby to gain equal rights; and that historians have a tendency to focus on researching women's status and experiences associated with the past, and have occasionally written about famous women. They also state that gender history emerged because of women's dissatisfaction with their historical invisibility. However, afterwards they expanded its range to also investigate masculine history (Green and Troup, 1999: 253-254). According to Perrot women were for a long period of time was excluded from political life and were distanced from decision-making. They were reduced to passive experiences regarding the events of public life and "historical" events without few exceptions when the events were brought about which were not basically experienced by women. (Perrot, 1992: 12).

Feminism can be considered to be part of gender history; or it can be called another form of women's history. However, Murphy claimed that the first women's historians argued that they were not feminists and thus they were writing more objective history (Murph, 1996: 21). Conversely, Gabaccia and Maynes assumed that feminist historians were bringing a gendered concept into history (Gabaccia and Maynes, 2012: 21).

According to Tilly many women's historians were members of feminist organisations and they described themselves as feminists because they had been shaped by the feminist social movement. Otherwise, there was one opinion about women's history that differentiated it from other aspects of history, but that it was true that it has been an historical movement; and to a large degree it had been written out of feminist conviction. Therefore, it can be said that not all women's history is a feminist history (Tilly, 1989: 440-441).

The product of the women's movement or by another name, second wave feminism, triggered the existed of women's history which is a field of inquiry. The women's movement or the second wave of feminism can be distinguished from the early twentieth century, which sought to have the vote for women as well as increasing a number of other problems relating to women's disparity. Because of this feminism was the main point in alerting interest in and generating analytical aspects associated with the history of women. Whilst women's historians who see themselves as feminists may not be in general agreement regarding what the purpose of feminism ought to be, the majority would agree that it is essential to have feminism and that woman ought to have the same main human rights as men. Feminists discuss that women are not generally advantaged relative to men, and that

they are suffering such disadvantages due to how gender has described their social worlds. The idea which suggested that women ought to have equal advantages to men led feminist scholars to ask to gain back the earlier untold story of women's lives in the past (Rose, 2010: 5).

According to Scott, feminism is a political appeal to the women in whose name it behaves as if they were a permanent and clearly noticeable social group, in order to deploy them into a compatible political movement. Therefore the history of feminism is the history of a project of decreasing differences among females to a general identity of women. To a greater extent that feminist history provides the political ends of feminism (Scott, 1996: 4).

Conclusion

History has a few kinds of subtitle areas to research, one of which is gender history. Gender history pertains to sex, women's history and feminist history, however all term shave a different meaning and carry a different purpose because each of them has been created for a specific aim. Sex means the biological differences between men and women; and gender is a matter of a cultural term. Although gender relates to both men and women, it is mostly about women and it has two different subject areas one of which pertains to women's history. This was created to show the importance of women from the past to the present day. It is mostly for investigating women's lives in the past and expressing how women are important for history.

The other area pertains to feminist history which was created in order for women to gain equality in line with their male counterparts. This began with the women's movement, such as the women's suffrage movement in the United States of America. However, all areas provided a view of women as an important part of social life and as historical objects and they have helped women to gain more power.

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