

## Syrian Woman's View of Polygamy

Arif YILDIRIM

Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University

Fatma YESIL

Gaziantep University

**Abstract:** As in all social events the among reasons that affect also polygamy, it is known that there are of the many factors such as social structure's social, economical, cultural structures, belief systems which are thought to significantly affect the lifestyles of the societies. The aim of this study is to find out how women from different ethnic origins who came to the world in the same culture and lived within the same geographical boundaries point of view about polygamy and whether there is a difference in the direction of affirmation or negativity. The basic questions appropriate for the purpose of study were prepared in advance and new questions were also generated according to the response given by each participant to the questions, the researcher asked during the interview. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 32 Syrian women of four different ethnic origins who lived in the same geographical borders as Arab, Turkmen, Circassian and Kurdish between the ages of 18-45 and who were trained in the same or similar culture. As a result, it has been found that women have a negative attitude towards polygamy, which is known to exist in the cultural structure in Syria.

**Keywords:** Culture, Ethnic origins, Polygamy

### Introduction

It is known that continuance of societies is maintained as a result of new generations being produced biologically by male and female individuals. Each society aims to achieve continuity by setting a number of rules. The practice of marriage is most commonly known amongst these rules. While the practice of marriage is expected to allow the production of new generations under each society's own systematics, it is known that it makes men's and women's inherent sexual needs adhere to certain rules. In addition, there are many factors which affect this practice, as in all societal relationships. One of the most important of these is the gender roles attributed to men and women. As Tan et al. also mention, societal relationships and gender roles are maintained through power relations such as age, religion, race, class and gender between men and women. Education becomes a part of these power relations. Educational systems usually make up a smaller universe of the gender system of the societies they are located in. They justify existing societal relationships and practices. On the other hand, while education perpetuates traditional sexist stereotypes, it also makes women realize the mechanisms that weaken them and their own power, and provides awareness for them to alter these. The view of a society toward women provides important clues to the society's level of civilization. Rights granted to women are perceived as an indicator of development, around the world as well as in Middle Eastern societies (Tan et al. 2000: 25).

Therefore, there are certain mechanisms that identify the status of women within the house or outside the house, in the subgroups of each society as well as other societies, on a micro and macro level. These mechanisms maintain their existence by feeding off historical and cultural foundations, the belief systems and value judgements of societies. As Okten puts it, these are societal indicators related to the nuclear family as well as the extended family such as early, forced or arranged marriage, polygamy, bride price, divorce rules and honor killings as well as economic indicators demonstrating women's educational status, employment opportunities and their level of participation in business, political and societal arenas. Furthermore, these can feed, protect and

regenerate the traditional controls over a woman's body and her sexuality, and the inequality between genders, in line with the view of the given society towards women (Okten, 2009: 3).

On the other hand, it is known that women's status differs in each society depending on the gender roles carried over from the past to the present as well as the artistic, cultural and economic power of societies that improve through women taking part in the field of production as well as the level of education, and that it is shaped according to establishment and regeneration of the existing culture. Also, gender roles shown to be the fundamental basis in the determination of women's status shape this regeneration process based on the contributions of what is considered to be sacred as default in creation, according to Berktaý. In fact, as an indicator of sovereignty, the metaphor of "seed and soil" in relation to creation exists in all three Abrahamic religions and its rooted way back in history (Berktaý, 2000: 57). Delaney states that this condition cannot be limited only by the physiological regeneration of the relationship between man and woman. It also refers to a fundamental aspect of the universe. Furthermore, exaltation of not only manhood but also fatherhood is an important part of the strength underlying the patriarchal system and that is the essence of patriarchy (Delaney, 2001: 55).

As in all other societal cases, patriarchy is considered to be one of the factors affecting polygamy, which is thought to be a common practice in Middle Eastern societies. As Okten also mentions, reasons for polygamy must be sought in the social, economic, cultural, educational and developmental levels of each region and it must be accepted that polygamy can appear through the interaction of multiple factors (Okten, 2009: 5). It is stated that many religions and belief systems do not impose an absolute ban on polygamy. In Islam, when the Koran is thoroughly examined and interpreted correctly, it shall become quite clear through the 3rd verse of the Surah Nisa that marriage with four women should only be considered as a license and the actual advice on marriage is its realization with only one woman (Gücük et al. 2010: 4-5). However, it is ensured that male hegemony has been maintained from past to present by various means such as keeping women uneducated, preventing them from being productive in business and stopping them from becoming decision makers in the political arena. Male hegemony, which is one of the main reasons patriarchal order maintains its existence, has also driven the advocates of patriarchy to distort the essence of Koran's advice, interpret it in line with their own interests and relay it as the teachings of Islam, as a way to keep women under pressure.

## **The Immigrant Woman**

Immigration is the removal of a tree from where it took root and trying to turn it into green in another climate. However, from past to present, people within the boundaries of their home countries immigrated to other countries or intercontinentally, either individually or in groups, with the hope of establishing a better life. Immigration may be due to reasons such as war, famine, natural disasters and societal pressures. It is important to realize that immigration may entail social, cultural, economic changes and changes in the welfare of the society. According to Gokbayrak, a transfer of wealth from the underdeveloped or developing countries of the world to developed ones is being experienced through immigrant women. This is because a shortage in the labor supply in childcare and elder care that has occurred for various reasons in developed countries that allowed immigrants in is filled by immigrant women (Gokbayrak, 2009:23). However, since each individual or group who immigrates bring along their own cultural values as well, this would inevitably cause a degeneration in the cultural structure of the host country's society. On the other hand, the fact that immigrant individuals or women are made to work at low-wage various jobs regardless of their qualifications or the education they received forces them to maintain their lives as unqualified individuals.

As understood from Gokmen's statement as well, immigrant women could have worked at high-profile jobs that require specialization such as doctors, engineers or lawyers in their home countries. However, the change they experience in the countries they immigrated to leaves them facing the problem of becoming unqualified individuals (Gokmen, 2011:26). Furthermore, it's not only the qualifications of immigrant women that is ignored; they may also be prevented from performing their real occupations through certain practices. Besides, the fact that immigrant women come from different historical, cultural and social backgrounds may make it difficult for them to adapt to their new environment. Immigrant women not only cope with integrating into the host-country environment, but also struggle with their spouses over their attributed roles as a wife and mother (Liamputtong, 2006:26). However, these roles are not biologically associated with being a woman. Each immigrant woman plays the role that is attributed to her by her culture. Wager mentions that every woman is biologically a potential mother, although motherhood is not the only potential of a woman (Wager, 2016:6). On the other hand, research carried out by Edo & Toubal shows that the increase in the supply of female immigrant workers in France over the last twenty years caused the wage difference between local male and female workers

to rise (Edo & Toubal, 2017:17). Given the fact that societies have a dynamic structure, it might not be possible to fully anticipate that immigration may have positive or negative outcomes in terms of culture, public safety, economy, politics and health or outcomes that are completely opposite to those anticipated may be experienced. Also, it is important to note that these outcomes may appear after many years.

## **Polygamy**

Polygamy, which is also considered to be a symbol of power and sovereignty, refers to a man or a woman having multiple spouses simultaneously. No other institution or ideology has been so severely criticized as Islam for polygamy by other societies with different religions and belief systems. The Koran undoubtedly permits polygamy. However, if one examines the Koran thoroughly and reads it carefully, it becomes clear that the realization of polygamy the Koran permits depends on conditions that would be impossible to create in practice. It is known that polygamy was not limited on any grounds and a man could marry the women that he wanted to marry without any constraints or conditions before Islam emerged in Arabia. Polygamy was a common practice in the pre-Islamic world. It is not wrong to deduce from the Koran that a man can be married to four women at once. However, it is only a contextual justification for cases where single women and their children need protection and care, etc. The association of polygamy with Islam is a direct consequence of the misinterpretation of the Koran verses; it must be understood that the Islamic permission of polygamy is conditional. Polygamy was born out of circumstances in which Muslims were heavily involved in almost unending battles. Therefore, the continuity of wars caused the Muslim male population to progressively decrease. As a result, women became desperate. Men were allowed to marry multiple women in order to help these women with the condition that they treat all their wives equally and fairly (Zaidi, 2016:1).

In the marriage advice in the Koran, it is clearly stated that monogamy rather than polygamy is advised and that men and women can enjoy peace, comfort and happiness in marriage. It is advised that the principles of honesty and fairness, mutual trust, love and affection can be a source of inspiration for the continuity of marriage if it is based on those principles. On the other hand, the deduction of advice for polygamy in the Koran, its misinterpretation by Muslim legal experts and scientists and its reception and adoption with gratitude, followed by its abuse by men in Muslim societies around the world, is a huge irony (Zaidi, 2016: 4). According to Linkholm, in many cases, prophet Muhammad, who is known to have married many other women after his first wife Hatice, did so in order to establish strong relationships with his allies. His approach to polygamy can be clearly understood by his condition that the marriage of his daughter Fatma and his son in law Ali should absolutely be monogamous. Besides, in the Koran, there is a statement which stipulates that the ability of a man to have a polygamous marriage depends on the condition that he treats all his wives absolutely equally and it is stated that there is no possibility for such a thing to happen. This is such a condition that many reformists argued that in practice, it is impossible to adhere to (Hodgson, 1974, c. 1:341; akt, Linkholm, 2004: 392-393). They stated that one would have to be a true saint to fulfill this condition. In this context, monogamous marriage is considered to be the only appropriate form of marriage that is ethically safe (Linkholm, 392-393: 2004). On the other hand, according to Mashhour, the Koran attaches great importance to seeking of justice. The duty of the fulfillment of justice and the concept of justice are significant in Islam. The primary and principal objective of Sharia law is to preserve justice and ensure public welfare. In this context, there is no doubt that common ground could be found in Islamic teachings among the form of approach to women's rights, principles of justice and public welfare, foundation of the feminist approach and equality of men and women (Mashhour, 2005: 36).

On the other hand, it is known that in the cultural structure of Islamic societies, men and women do not have equal rights and a patriarchal system dominates the culture. However, the real issue that needs attention is whether the Islam described in the Koran is patriarchal or not. Dorph analyzed the Islamic legal rules in effect in Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria which all derive from the same Maliki school of thought, and discovered that the legal codes of these countries which derive from the same legal source are substantially different. Furthermore, the patriarchal institution in power neglected the egalitarian approach of the Koran. Some traditions that existed before Islam such as the importance placed on female virginity left the control of a woman's body to patriarchal powers who have the desire to impose such control. Furthermore, it has traditionally been associated with integrity and fear of God (Al-Hibri,1982: 4-5-6).

What must be primarily understood here is that there may be many different interpretations of the Koran that would lead to many possible Islamic traditions. Each Islamic society can interpret the Koran based on how it is affected by other factors that constitute its cultural structure. According to Rohman, some Muslim scholars and feminist Muslim scholars who observed polygamy argue that Islam always respects women, exalts women's status and fundamentally suggests monogamy. They reject polygamy. On the other hand, clergymen who

support polygamy argue that modernists with a mission to reinterpret polygamy in Islam are corrupted by Western ideology to attack the Islamic foundation of family. They claim that issues of diversity, societal gender and human rights are microbes injected into modern scholars of Islam, primarily by the western ideology (Rohman, 2013:6).

However, according to Rodgers-Miller, during the “Era of Ignorance,” “Prophet Muhammad has saved the world of Islam from particularly cruel and barbaric practices on women and girls.” However, one of the practices which he allowed to remain in Islam was polygamy, which is alleged to be under control with the condition that all women are treated equally. Throughout history, nations in the Islamic world employed this theory by demonstrating their commitment to the limitations of the Koran through different approaches. For example, the Ottomans implemented polygamy in order to justify allowing the ruling class to be with hundreds of women at any given time. Likewise, in Iran, the practice of muta or temporary marriage focuses on the fulfillment of men’s sexual desires. Ulema’s goal was to let this institution allow men to engage in sexual acts outside of a traditional marriage without being subjected to the consequences of crimes committed under the umbrella of adultery. While the Iranian nation tended not to approve of the muta marriage even though it could be used for legitimate purposes, it actually still exists as an approved form of prostitution (Rodgers-Miller, 2005:23).

Historically, it is known that polygamy has been practiced without any limitations in the pre-Islamic period. Islam on the other hand, has brought the restriction that a man is only able to marry up to four women. It created plain rules and regulations to ensure that the man treats his wives fairly. It’s obvious that the Koran imposes strict and clear conditions for a man with multiple wives to treat each of his wives equally. This equality is considered and expected in relation to finance, emotions and even sexual relations. The Koran states that if a man is not capable of doing this, i.e., treating his wives fairly, he should not marry more than one woman. In short, polygamy is only an option in Islam in the context of the emergence of many conditions. However, patriarchal power is not a means of control and necessity in order to oppress women. Polygamy is a concept which is usually misunderstood and misinterpreted in Islam (Jaafar-Mohammad & Lehman, 2011:8-9). According to Marcotte, some special circumstances during the time of prophet Muhammad such as the disruption of the new Muslim society and many women becoming widowed due to religious wars set a precedent for polygamy and a convention which allows polygamy under the condition that widows get married without leaving their children behind was created. It is the humanitarian aspect of polygamy that is reflected, especially in social and historical perspectives. When considered in this light, in the context of the conditions that some women live in, it can be considered an improvement in the status of women who are in a difficult condition (Marcotte, 2001: 14-15-16).

Today, greater involvement of women in society, business, politics and world leadership and reforms in Islam or reinterpretations appropriate for women can contribute to the empowerment of Muslim women. The struggle against polygamy within Islam could not be eliminated through the criticisms of Western societies; however, it is known to be decreasing on a daily basis. Implementing rules that protect women’s rights, adopting these rules and allowing women to access solutions such as self-support by reinterpreting the verses in the Koran that allow polygamy demonstrates that the practice of polygamy will continue to phase out. Nevertheless, Muslim reformists’ points of view on ending polygamy can be important and necessary, since polygamy is still practiced. In addition, its practical existence harms women and adversely affects the image of Islam (Johson, 2005: 35).

According to Rohman’s research, it is found that in some regions of Indonesia, many women successfully reject polygamy since they have a high level of education. However, there are also women who allow polygamy due to a lack of insight into Islam. These women do not realize that a hegemony is established by men and that their social and economic status is low. Western ideology, which is portrayed as a microbe attacking the foundation of family in Islam by traditionalist Muslim reformists, has been used by men to maintain the hegemony. However, for the polygamy that is allowed in the Koran to be understood correctly and for the Islamic world to find the truth, critical thinking and the encouragement of Muslim scholars is required. Those who are afraid of Western ideology are unsuccessful in seeing the fundamental differences in relation to issues of societal gender and human rights. For this reason, it is important to provide training on independence, equality and the strengthening of women’s status to women and those who have a significant influence on shaping the societal structure. It is important to consider and acknowledge women as decision makers since they are the ones who are primarily affected by the practice of polygamy (Rohman,2013:6).

As Brenner also stated, this process can be quite difficult for women. However, it is not impossible. For example, in Indonesia, the initial formation of transition to democracy with the ending of an authoritarian

administration that lasted for decades revealed more modest and hopeful assessments in subsequent stages of the process. They continue to benefit from improvements achieved in recent years and consider the process of transition to democracy as work that is yet to be finished (Brenner, 2006:7).

On the other hand, the economic wealth of societies depends upon an enjoyment of democratic rights equally in science, art and technology. All citizens have a significant effect on the determination of women's status. Hence, only a society where scientific and technological improvements occur along with economic wealth and where democracy flourishes can be successful in raising the status of women. For example, in Ross's description, many observers claim that the significantly weak status of women in the Middle East stems from the patriarchal Islamic culture and the underground wealth - such as oil - of the Gulf states and the region as a whole. Oil and gas drilling in the region tends to lower the possibilities of bringing the workforce role of women and political influence together. It is acknowledged that treatment of women in the Middle East is a fundamental issue that divides Islamic and Western societies and hence drives the "clash of civilizations." If societies only possess economic wealth based on oil and gas, this wealth impedes not only democracy but also more fair gender relationships. On the other hand, obviously, the status of women is not weak in all oil-producing countries because there are many different riches that affect the formation of economic wealth such as diversity, cultural riches and scientific and technological improvement. In many countries, oil and natural gas are produced, however it is observed that it is only those countries which are rich in oil and gas where gender inequality is significant and the women's status is weak (Ross, 2008: 15-16). Without a significant number of women in a country's business arena, its field of science and technology and in its political arena as the enforcer and decision maker of democratic rights, the traditional patriarchal institutions will inarguably continue to exist. According to what Inglehart&Norris states as well, economic wealth based only on oil and gas is associated with the maintenance and sustenance of patriarchal institutions. Moreover, while the continuance of the patriarchal order has very little association with Islam, it has a very strong association with the oil-based economy of the region and the history-based cultural structure of the Arabian societies. Economic growth that is dependent on oil export decreases women's level of participation in the workforce and their role in the political field. Hence, women are forced to tolerate patriarchal norms, laws and institutions (Inglehart and Norris, 2003b; akt; Ross, 2008: 15-16). If the country's wealth is not achieved with women's participation in the field of production, the male hegemony and the patriarchal system will continue to maintain their own legitimacy. Also, it will not be possible for women to recognize the male hegemony and the pattern of the patriarchal system that have a grip on them.

## **Methodology**

In the study, face-to-face interviews were conducted with 34 Syrian women. As a result of the interviews, interviews with 2 women were not included in the assessment due to their hesitations to talk about the subject matter of the study and their lack of interest. Even though pre-prepared questions were used, responses to a variety of different questions were also received in line with the course of the interviews. Single, widowed or divorced women of Arabian, Turkmen, Circassian and Kurdish origins between the ages of 18 and 45 who have immigrated into areas located within the borders of the Republic of Turkey and who live in refugee camps or try to integrate into Turkish society were preferred for the study.

Since concepts such as polygamy and immigration are a taboo for the community of the region, the questions prepared for the purpose of establishing an environment of trust for the women were aimed to allow them to open up and share their inner thoughts and feelings by making them feel comfortable to verbalize issues that make them feel uncomfortable. For this purpose, the women's statements were identified only by their initials. For those who live in camps, the information on which camp they live in was kept confidential as well as the information on how and where women who are trying to get integrated into city life are living.

## **Immigrated Syrian Women's View of Polygamy in Turkey**

The demographic characteristics of the 32 Syrian women who participated in the interviews are as follows: Their average age is 25 and while their monthly income in 2011 before the war was \$ 839.27 on average, it has fallen to an average of \$ 260.47 after immigration. When the pre-immigration and post-immigration periods are examined, cases where there is an increase in income levels post-immigration are observed, although mostly dramatic decreases attract attention as a reflection of the immigration.

When the education levels of women who participated in the interviews are examined, it is found that most of them are university and high school graduates with 10 women for each of these levels, as can be seen in Figure 1 as well.

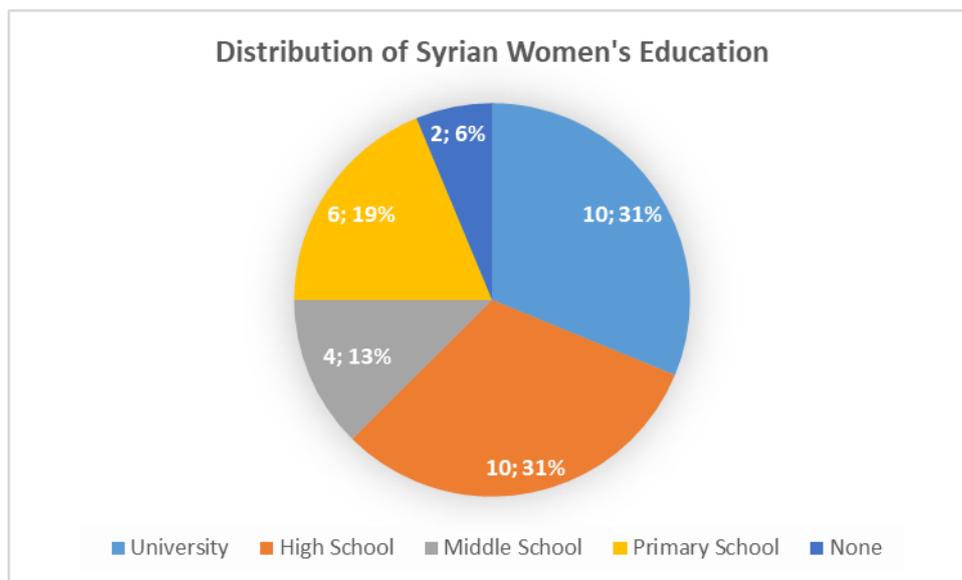


Figure 1. Distribution of Syrian women's education

Syria is a country where people of different ethnic origins live together. For this reason, since only one ethnic origin would not represent all Syrian women, 32 women of which 15 are Arabian, 9 are Turkmen, 6 are Circassian and 2 are Kurdish were interviewed (Figure 2).

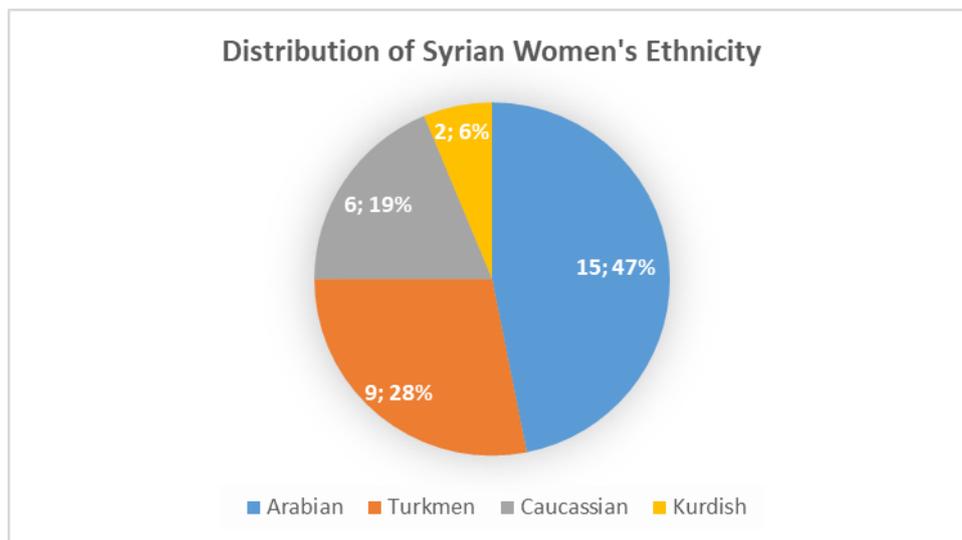


Figure 2. Distribution of Syrian women's ethnicity

26 of these women are single, 5 have lost their husbands at war and 1 has divorced from her husband (Figure 3).

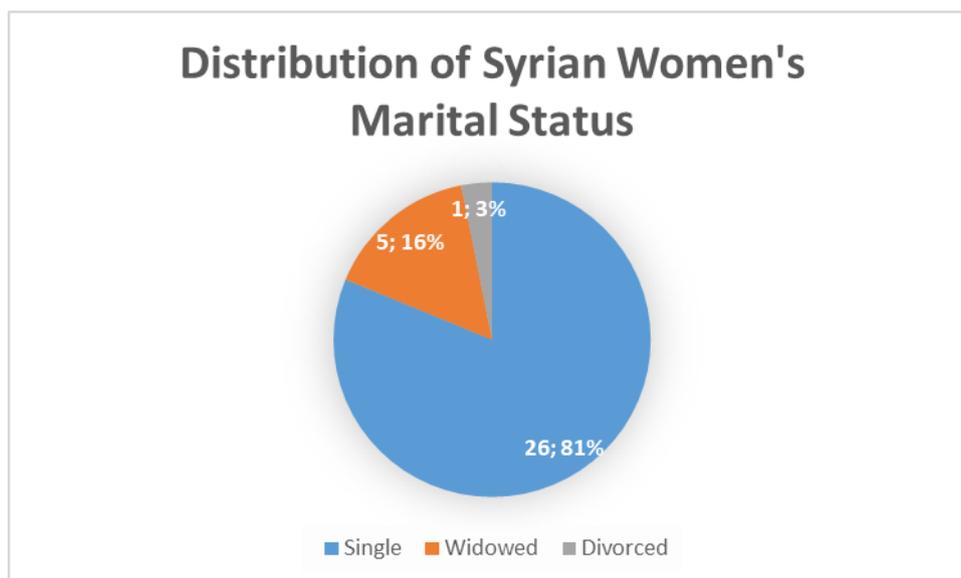


Figure 3. Distribution of Syrian women's marital status

Once mankind who caused the migration of tribes discovered boundaries (race, culture, geography, religion), migration became a universal problem. Migration is the story of the transition of communities to societies with greater boundaries (not just physical ones). Sub-ethnic origins of a nation determine the identity of that nation. Transition from one physical boundary to another occurs with the participation of people of the same sub-ethnic origins and they bring along their own problems into the new physical boundaries. They do this in the name of maintaining ties with their history and commitment to their history and their origins.

In the story of the variable of human and time, during the process of the discovery of boundaries, polygamy was initially a symbol of power and strength rather than an issue. This strength has been reinforced by the legitimacy provided by some of the boundaries in particular during the formation and transfer of the patriarchal structure in the process of transformation from groups to communities and then to societies during the process of the discovery of boundaries that would serve power. Within the loop of time, polygamy has transformed into a tradition and become a cultural element with the appearance of a different boundary due to circumstances and necessity born of the processes created by each boundary and stopped being a cultural element and completed its transformation into a taboo with the appearance of religions which are new boundaries. It has become permanently embedded in the cultural genes of some societies in its taboo form but ended for some societies in the process of formation of the concept of democracy in particular, which is another boundary, even though the transformation through laws and concepts such as the acceptance of women as individuals and equality was initially hard and slow for them. However, in cases where taboos provide benefits for the interests of those who are difficult to take down and hold the power, it becomes impossible for some societies to relinquish these taboos. In cases where gender inequality in particular is experienced in the control of power within patriarchy, even the discontent of one gender would not be enough to destroy this taboo.

Societies form a whole in a structure made up of the majority and minorities with the pieces they all add to each other. They sometimes keep up with and adopt the cultural pieces of one another within their cultural elements and sometimes strictly reject those pieces. While this rejection occurs due to the failure of one's cultural values, individual ethics and worldview to accept some traditions, it may also create a negative image for the unaccepted and rejected ethnic origin. In the interest of revealing one ethnicity's view of another, the statements of women reveal the truth to a certain extent. As such, N.H. states that "a man being married to a few women is a common case in the Arab culture." D.M. says: "our traditions are more similar to those of Circassians living in Turkey, not the Arabs." Likewise, S.A. says: "For an Arab man, a woman is something such as an ornamental plant or a knick-knack." M.A. says: "Syrian women have no value in comparison to men, women who are conditioned to please men, i.e., Arab women are something of a means of ornament in my opinion." But M.A. verifies that the tradition of working together is a guarantee of rights and liberties with the following statement in line with her own cultural values: "Women of other ethnic origins cannot be like ornamental plants because men and women work in the same field together, use weapons together if they have to, in fact women work more." In addition, H.E.M. verbalized her opinion as follows: "in other words, a woman has no value for an Arab man." In this context, polygamy is not only rejected but it is also able to shape the way an ethnicity is viewed by other ethnicities.

The fact that patriarchal power is under the control of the male gender not only causes the discontent of the opposite gender to be disregarded but it also creates situations that could lead to a discourse of hatred. R.N. confirms this in her statement: "I absolutely think that the idea of a second or third wife is wrong, in fact, I'd like to cut off their heads." She continues to mention her discontent: "In Syria there is the practice of one man being married to a few women, but it's not the women who want it, it's men." Hatred felt for the disorder and inequality created by the male hegemony possessing the control of power is included individually in the statements of four women as follows: İ.M. states: "I don't like these men and this culture and I don't accept such a culture," while K.S.Y. states: "I wouldn't want to do anything for Syria. In Syria, we just go through what is offered to us and that's it, even if anybody is uncomfortable with what is offered to them they don't think about it and do anything to change it." F.K. takes it a little further and reveals the level of her hatred with her statement: "In fact, I'd cut his throat, I'd never accept such a situation." M.G. reveals her sadness and resentment with this statement: "I don't even have the words for it." As such, hatred felt for her culture, origins and the country she left behind can be defined as an act of forgetting the situation that the war has created as well. It has been observed that the case of immigration created by war has become a hope of salvation for these women.

Structural disorder and inequality that has occurred or has been created results in outcomes that could especially lead to the genders' objectification of each other. Since power which has been maintained since the beginning of this period serves its own interest and comfort, it realizes a continuous transference for a single type of diversity to sustain power due to its structural quality. No matter how far the loop of time progresses, in cases where the development processes of the discovered boundaries are not completed, sexism and objectification will severely create circumstances where the one being objectified accepts those terms. In cases where these development processes have progressed, these concepts will demonstrate smoother transitions in different ways. Separation of East and West can be realized by the severity of the objectification and its repetition. Women have been oppressed and victimized since the beginning of the story. Women's acceptance of the roles assigned to them is one of the factors that ensures the continuity of polygamy in this geography. S.A. puts this as follows: "The reason is that his wife cannot find the time to show him enough interest because she has to deal with the children and everything else. And since women are raised on the basis of pleasing men, they think that they're not able to please their husbands anymore and simply accept everything that is deemed to be appropriate for them and do nothing." Likewise N.H. also says: "Men can marry other additional women by saying that they don't love their wives anymore. For a man to tell a woman to stay with him and tell her that he's going to marry yet another woman is such an ugly proposition." As a result of all this, an unpleasant situation arises where it's the woman herself who confirms her loss of identity. D.D. states: "Since Arab men consider even their closest female relatives as sex objects, they think that their wives would consider all men in the same way as well and not be loyal to themselves," and she continues, "Most men get married for pleasure, I mean, they think that they have a brunette so they should get a blonde woman or they have a woman who gives birth so they should get another woman who's younger. They think that since their wives give birth they're not enough for them, but nobody asks the women what they want. So she puts up with what happens to her."

More ironically, a reverse situation also occurs. The fact that the woman does not realize or accept that the man is objectifying both her gender and herself plays a part in the maintenance of inequalities such as polygamy. L.A.'s statement confirms this: "At least the woman is aware of the other women in her husband's life. I know that a man being married to a few women is not a good thing, but it's better than infidelity." Likewise, K.G. reveals the gravity of the situation by saying: "I don't care if he cheats on me or not, he's officially my husband at the end of the day, I'll take care of him."

The story of mankind is filled with conflicts, wars and power displays of societies in line with the discovered borders (race, culture, geography, religion). These processes have reflected on people as conditions and necessities that require acceptance through the dimension of time and space. These conditions and necessities are a factor in the justification of polygamy along with the duties attributed to women and in line with the wars and cultural values. This is surely a case that could be characterized as the desperation and helplessness of women that are enforced on their identities. Polygamy for the elimination of women's desperation due to low levels of male population in post-war situations as experienced in the past as well is considered to be a remedy/solution as also mentioned by Ş.A.H.: "I wouldn't accept becoming a second wife as an individual but society as a whole must be considered at times of war."

In the context of necessities, women who aren't able to give birth, men who want to carry on their lineage and women who accept polygamy come to life in the following statement of H.E.M.: "some women can't have children, husbands of these women can get married a second time, in fact, women in this situation would even want their husband to get married."

Failure of systems to find mass solutions for problems that occur within them lead to the creation of alternative solution processes by the sub layers of the system, which are then perceived as the acceptance of these alternative solutions as a natural part of the system by the system itself. At this point, polygamy is maintained in the societal perception of women by being perceived as a form of salvation from desperation and a protector. Opinions of M.T. provide a good example for this: “the current system has a structure that protects desperate women and orphaned girls so women prefer to become second wives themselves.” Likewise, M.O.’s statement justifies polygamy within the system due to its duty of protection: “the current system protects girls in a way.”

Mankind, whose method of learning is imitation, owes the sustainability of the culture boundary s/he discovered to the frequency of its repetition. At this point, the concept of tradition refers to the level where this frequency is accepted. When circumstances created by conditions and necessities are characterized as traditions, they become concepts progressing to become taboos that are difficult to give up. At this point, polygamy is observed to be an element embedded in the tradition. As E.H. puts it: “particularly in the countryside, arranged marriage is... the elderly women of the family find the girl, so a man can get married to four or five women, in fact there was this family that I knew, the guy married seven women.” Similarly, L.K. supports the idea that arranged marriage is a reason of polygamy by the following statement: “because people who are to get married don’t know each other at all.”

The effect of religion within the cultural structure of the geography is at the level of taboos. It cannot be questioned or changed and its meaning cannot be justified. Even though the concept of polygamy has been explained in the 3rd verse of Surah Nisa, the discovered boundaries of the past along with the interpretation of the religion has turned polygamy into an indestructible element. Even though cultural differences are based on religion in differences of ethnic origin for approaches to polygamy, there may be a case of refusal, as in the following statement of N.Ş.O: “Men get married to a few women with the idea that it’s stated in the Koran, but I don’t think it’s necessary and it doesn’t make sense in my opinion.” On the other hand, polygamy is considered something that should be necessarily accepted even though it is thought to be wrong since opposing it would be considered going against religion and its orders. As V.A. puts it: “The religion of Islam grants men the right to get married to four women, and since it is something that exists in religion it is common in our culture as well.” With regards to the prohibition of polygamy, V.A. continues as follows: “No, this is considered as appropriate in religion, besides there are desperate women who want it and need it.” These statements of V.A. demonstrate the religion-based acceptance of polygamy. Similarly, the following statement of Z.G. emphasizes that polygamy is an indestructible taboo: “it is fed off a religious source and since it is a religious precept it’s not possible for any sanctions to be imposed on it.”

Another dimension reveals itself in K.G.’s statement: “There are also men who take advantage of women by using religious precepts.” However, K.G. proves that this taboo cannot be destroyed by providing the following statement with regard to the restriction of polygamy: “It is a religious order, so such a thing is not possible.”

R.M. verbalizes the view on this concept in line with the orders of the 3rd verse of Sorah Nisa as follows: “In my opinion, a man who does not settle for one woman and chooses to marry multiple women for his own pleasure would be committing a sin as he would be making people’s lives difficult morally and materially.”

A religion-based fact is one of the fundamental sources of resistance in structural transformation. While all 32 women have a negative view of polygamy, it is observed that it has an acceptable aspect in terms of conditions and necessities, cultural elements and traditions and also due to the necessity of religion and its perception as a protective practice, even though it is considered to be negative.

When polygamy’s reason for existence is examined, of these 32 women, 8 did not mention any reasons with the attitude that is embedded in their genes, 10 asserted the conditions and necessities, 5 mentioned tradition and 4 based it on religion. One woman stated that she is not interested in it on a level of hatred. The reasons of existence they all mentioned are perceptions of the past that permeated the lifestyles of societies and their embodiment today.

## **Conclusion**

Codes of the past that are permeated into the perceptions of people demonstrate themselves in the society’s problems as well. This is the story of humans’ discovery of the boundaries of race, culture, geography and religion. Each boundary transfers the right way of doing things as well as the problems to the next boundary as a legacy. This transfer continues until the next boundary finds a solution to the problem or by other dimensions of

the problems added incrementally. After a while, they turn into hereditary disorders permeated into the cultural genes. The structural inequality of patriarchy maintains its presence in various dimensions as one of the main problems of this region. A solution method developed against a problem of the past arising from wars has led to the maintenance of that problem and its transformation into a taboo has caused it to be perceived as a protective quality rather than a problem. Interpretation of the case referred to as the power for sustainable problems and the concept of religion which has the ability of creating taboos in line with their own interests is a detail that cannot be overlooked.

The inequality of power within the system gains acceptance due to the perception of obligations even if one of the genders verbalize discontent, particularly in terms of polygamy. Women who are left powerless and without an identity find the chance to experience their own statements even if they do not want to.

Transference of what is traditional by the older generations to the younger is an acceptable method for each culture. Traditions have been kept alive and transferred to the following generations by older generations during the period of communities. This covers everything including the harsh living conditions of the region, belief systems and even the sustenance of the generation of life in terms of maintenance of daily life. In terms of polygamy, it has been observed that elderly women engaged in actions to transfer the tradition, which ensured the continuity of the problem in the region.

During interviews, in addition to answering pre-prepared questions, 14 women mentioned how much they suffer because of the issue of child brides in addition to polygamy, especially within the culture they live in, as they felt comfortable verbalizing other issues. Regarding the issue of child brides, each of the women mentioned particularly during the interviews that it should definitely be prohibited, importance must be attached to education and that relevant laws and enforcement are required for its prevention. In terms of history repeating itself, the following statement of N.Ş. reveals it all: "The father does not want to take care of his daughter anyway. He acts with the idea of leaving her to someone else's care as soon as possible and getting rid of her in that way."

In the transference of a cultural element, the number of people who adopt the culture and perpetuate it in their actions and the number of times that these people repeat this element ensures the maintenance of the culture. In the culture's evolutionary journey from past to present, some elements have been forgotten as a result of the decrease in the number of people who repeat that element and the frequency of the repetition. Some elements have been reshaped through reinterpretation according to the conditions of the period by people who adopted the element. Polygamy and the issue of child brides are problems of this region as cultural elements that should not be transferred to the next generations and that should not be repeated.

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### Author Information

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**Arif Yıldırım**

Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University  
Faculty of Communication, Department of Journalism,  
Terzioğlu Campus, Çanakkale, Turkey  
Contact e-mail: arify@comu.edu.tr

**Fatma Yesil**

Gaziantep University  
Nizip Vocational High School, Samandoken Köyü,  
Gaziantep, Turkey

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