

MODERNİZATION, POLİTİKAL İSLAM AND WOMEN

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Introduction

Studies on the consequences of the changes in the position of women in Muslim societies as a response to modernization in economic and political life need to consider the dynamics of interplay between the indigenous culture-comprising the religion, custom and tradition- and new cultural elements emerged in the course of modernization. Moreover, related to that interplay, these studies also need to account for the consequences of the rise of political Islam, or Islamicism (defined below) for the changes in the position of Muslim women in the course of modernization, urbanization, and economic development.

These two proposed consideration are important because in many Muslim societies it has been observed that religious and cultural values often make people less receptive to the changes in women's role and status due to a common perception that women's role as a homemaker and mother could be undermined and that the traditionally defined male authority over women could be abraded as a result of new developments providing women greater opportunities to participate in economic and political activities (see below for the examples of that observation).

Historically, the economic transformation of the West altered the structure of role and status differentiation between men and women. The pre-industrial patriarchal division of labor within which the role of women had been confined to the domestic domain was transformed into a new system that allocates roles on the basis of individual abilities rather than gender. Arguments that economic development and modernization diminish the gender inequalities in the traditional roles and status are to be found in the literature⁽¹⁾. They argue that urbanization and industrialization,

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1) Mill and Taylor. 1970. "The Enfranchisement of Women" in *Essays on Sex Equality*. Chicago. pp. 123-242; Patai, R. 1967. *Women in the Modern World*. Newyork; Goode, W.J. 1963. *World Revolution and Family Pattern*. New York.

of educational and job opportunities at all levels and sectors have gradually introduced a new range of options and eliminated the obstacles faced by women in the pre-industrial agricultural era in the West. The variety and complexity of industrialized society brought greater opportunities for women to develop their potential in various fields outside the home. Women also found enhanced personal and social freedom. Yet, in Africa and Latin America industrialization and modernization of economic life not always enhanced the position of women. In some cases, women lost their control over the economic activities in rural traditional life and they have been marginalized as a result of urbanization and industrialization⁽²⁾.

In the Middle East and Muslim populated Asian countries including Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Indonesia and Malaysia the number of women in tertiary education and in work force has increased as a result of modernization, economic development and urbanization⁽³⁾. Nevertheless, contradictory demands are made on Muslim women by society and policy makers. Though the policy makers acknowledge a more active role as mother and wife. Exposure to diversified and conflicting values suggesting alternative roles and modes of behaviour creates a dilemma: while going along with the emphasis on the traditional domestic role of women, which is part of preserving religious culture, Muslim women desire enhanced career options and active participation in public life⁽⁴⁾. The dilemma of Muslim

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- 2) In the literature some scholars criticized the assumption that the position of women progresses with industrialization on the basis of their observation in some African and Latin American countries. See Allen, V.J. 1974. "Membership Militante, Femme Libre: Political and Apolitical Styles of Modern African Women" in *Women and Politics*, J.J.Jaquette, ed., Toronto. pp. 304-322; Allen V.J. 1976. "African Women, Modernization and National Liberation" in *Women in the World: A Comparative Study*, L.B. Iglitzin and R.Ross., eds. London. pp.25-54; Jaquette, S.J. 1976. "Female Political Participation in Latin America" in *Women in the World: A Comparative Study*, L.B., eds. London. pp. 55-74; Leacock, E. 1978. "Women's Status in Egalitarian Society: Implications for Social Evaluation" *Current Anthropology*. Vol. 19: 247-255; Tinker, I. et. al., 1974. *Culture and Population Change*. Washington D.C.
- 3) Fox, L.G. 1973. "Determinant of Modernization among Women in Ankara, Turkey". *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Vol. 34 (August): 320-329; Yousef, N. M. 1972. "Differential Labor Force Participation of Women and Middle East Countries: the Influence of Family Characteristics". *Social Forces*. Vol. 5 (December): 135-15; Yousef, N.M. 1974. *Women and Work in Developing Societies*. Berkeley; Woodsmall, F.R. 1960. *Women and New East*. Washington D.C.
- 4) There are studies on the dilemma of Muslim women which resulted from the contradictory views of different groups and societies regarding the role of women in development. Papanek, H. and Jahan. 1977. "Women in South and Southeast Asia: Issues and Research". *Social Change*. Vol. 7 (March): 24-37; Papanek, H. 1985. "Class and Gender in Education and Employment Linkage". *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. 29: 317-349; Iglitzin, B.L. 1976. "Foreword" in *Women in the World: A Comparative Study*, L.B.Iglitzin and R.Ross., eds. London. pp. 1-7; Minai, N. 1981. *Women and Islam: Tradition and Transition in the Middle East*. London.

women is related to the Muslim's ambivalence towards the adoption of modern institutions and cultural forms that are essential for development due to the perception that modernization is an extension of colonialism in the post-independence period which could undermine and eventually erode Muslim faith and religious identity.

This dilemma is further complicated by the Islamicist movements that often utilize anti-modernization rhetoric. Their teachings recurrently reinforce cultural resistance to changes in traditional values, particularly those defining gender relations. According to Mernissi⁽⁵⁾, the resistance in the change of women's role in the direction of greater participation in public life is related to the symbolic significance of women in the Muslim world. Women represent male honor and, therefore there should not be any change in the traditionally defined position of women, as it is seen as a potential to bring disgrace to the male honor.

Islamic States and Women

Leading Islamicist intellectuals and ideologues have not reached a consensus on the model of an ideal Islamic state. For some Muslims, Iran, Sudan, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia are examples of an Islamic state. On the other hand, some Muslims disagree with this idea and claim that an ideal Islamic state has not been founded yet in the contemporary Muslim world. For them, there was only one true Islamic state, that was founded during the time of the Prophet Mohammed.

When we examine the situation of women in Iran, Pakistan, and Sudan where an Islamic jurisdiction rules, we see a sharp conflict between the Qur'anic ethics and the practices. Although the Qur'an emphasizes that righteousness is identical in the case of man or woman, and it affirms, clearly and consistently, women's equality with men and their fundamental right to actualize the human potential that they share equally with men⁽⁶⁾, we observe unequal treatment of women in Iran, Sudan, and Pakistan. The cruel and unfair treatment given to Algerian women by the FIS (The Islamic Front) militants show that not only women's human dignity but their right to life has been violated in Algeria.

5) Mernissi, Fatima. 1973. **Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society**. Massachusetts.

6) According to a Muslim feminist theologian Riffat Hassan, the Qur'an gives equality between men and women. Hassan Riffat 1995. "The Rise of Conservatism in its Various Forms: Strategies. Paper read at the **NGO Forum on Women, Beijing 1995**. (September 4 1995). Also see, Hassan Riffat. 1991. "The Issue of Woman-Man Equality in the Islamic Tradition." **Women's and Men's Liberation**. Leonard Grop, Riffat Hassan, and Hain Gordon. New York: Greenwood Press, pp.66-81.

In these countries women have actively contributed to the Islamicist movements before and after the establishment of Islamic regimes. The reward was facing the pressure of laws discriminating against women that have been promulgated under the cover of "Islamization". For example, the enactment of the "Hadud Ordinance" (the Law based on the Sharia in Pakistan in 1979, according to which women's testimony was declared to be inadmissible in **Hadd** crimes, including the crime of rape, was accompanied by a wave of violence toward women and a deluge of anti-women literature which swept across the country in Pakistan. As Hassan observed, "many women in Pakistan were jolted out of their 'dogmatic slumber' by the 'Islamization' of the legal system which through the promulgation of laws such as the **Hadud** Ordinance and the Law of Evidence (1984), as well as the threat of other discriminatory legislation (such as the Law of **Qisas** and **Diyat** or 'blood-money') reduced their status systematically, virtually mathematically, to less than that of men"⁽⁷⁾. In Iran and Sudan the forces of religious conservatism also cut women down to one-half or less of men. Soon after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, Iran's clerical leaders rescinded the Shah's Family Protection Law of 1975 that restricted polygyny and men's unilateral right to divorce and to child custody. In rewriting the constitution, the revolutionary leaders stressed the importance of motherhood and domesticity. With this rationale, they closed day-care centers and family planning clinics, banned abortion and all types of contraceptives (however they have encouraged family planning since early 1990s). Sexual segregation was instated at the universities, and women were banned from entering certain fields of study, such as law, agriculture, geology, archaeology, and mining engineering. All the female judges who had been already practicing asked to resign in 1979, soon after the revolution.

Thus the support of veiled Iranian Women for the Islamic revolution placed them in an unequal position with regard to not only educational and professional opportunities but also marriage, divorce and child custody in Iran⁽⁸⁾. The hard-liner ulema opposed the recent attempts of the moderates, led by the president Rafsanjani, to improve the status of women in Iran and to increase their participation in the labor force. Nevertheless, there is a large number of women in tertiary education, in labour force and a number of female parliamentarians.

7) See, Hassan (1995: 7).

8) For the changes in the status of Iranian women after the Revolution and the attempts of the moderate ulema to improve their status, see Ramazani Nesta. 1993. "Women in Iran: the Revolutionary Abb and Flow", *The Middle East Journal*. Vol. 47 (3): 408-428.

In the countries which are referred to as Islamic states, such as Iran, Sudan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan the result of female contribution to the Islamicist movements and/or Islamization was a number of laws introduced to keep women in their place, which means secondary, subordinate, and inferior to men. In the case of Afghanistan the then prime minister Gulbuddin Hikmetyar introduced rigid Islamic rules making veiling compulsory in July 1996. Then the revolutionary Islamicists of the Taliban⁽⁹⁾, who now control much of the country and who deposed the Afghan government, brought in much more rigid dress code for men and women and banned female work outside the home in the areas over which it extended its control.

Turkish Women's Experience of Modernization

Modernization has taken a start in the time of the Young Ottomans, a small group of western educated minor bureaucrats and journalists, who advocated the reformist ideas of parliamentarism, constitutionalism, secular education, and gender equality in the 19th century. They tried to reinterpret the actual practice of Ottoman statecraft as supporting the establishment of representative government⁽¹⁰⁾. The political and social developments that had begun with the **Tanzimat** reforms in 1839 marked a printing houses increased to 54, and in 1903 it rose to 99⁽¹¹⁾. Growing number of dailies and weeklies had begun to introduce "new" ideas and challenged the old institutions, practices, and customs in the public and private domain.

With the abolition of the Caliphate (1924); the adoption of secularism reinforced by constitutional law; and by replacing the Muslim legal code (Sharia) with the a new civic code based on the Swiss Civil Code, Turkey largely eliminated the codes of sexual segregation and discrimination. Polygyny was outlawed, the political rights. The liberation of Turkish

9) Taliban captured Kabul on September 27, 1996. In September 1994, the Taliban emerged in the south of Afghanistan and quickly gained control of many regions. Taliban members are ethnically Pashtun and mosk originally come from one of three distinct groups. Many of the movements's leaders -including its founder, Mula Mohammed Omar- were members of the mujaheddin who fought against Soviet forces in the 1980s. A second important Taliban sub-component are Durrani Qandaharis, who have traditionally supported the former Afghan royal family. The third and perhaps largest element has been the young graduates of the madrasa (religious schools) in western Pakistan Islamabad's Jamiat-Ulema-Islam party, headed by Fazlur Rahman, ran these school, where many of the Afghan pupils were orphans or children of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. The school's teachings offer some insights into the Taliban's political and theological beliefs, including their literalist interpretation of Islam, and particular emphasis is placed on limiting a women's right to education and employment. See, "The Taliban in Kabul". IISS Strategic Comments. Vol. 2, No.9. November 1996. London: IISS.

10) Bianchi Robert. 1984. **Interest Groups and Political Development in Turkey**. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

11) Caporal Bernard. 1982. **Kemalizmde ve Kemalizm Sonrasında Türk Kadını 1919-1970**. Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Publications (Translated by Ercan Eyupoğlu).

women is closely associated with their participation in the national liberation movement against the Allied Forces that occupied Turkey after the First World War. Women, such as the feminist and nationalist writer Halide Edip Adivar, helped mobilize people for the independence struggles with their writings and speeches, carried ammunition, joined Mustafa Kemal's forces as militia women-soldiers, and worked as nurses during the War of Independence. This was not the first attempt of Turkish women to take a more prominent role in a political movement. Before the Independence War, women were actively involved in the Young Turk revolution of 1908⁽¹²⁾ which restored constitutional government during the Ottoman period. After the winning of independence (1922), a group of educated Turkish women took an aggressive step and formed a political party, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası (Women's Party) in June 1923 with the aim of demanding the implementation of political rights and being allowed to stand in elections. The party was dissolved in 1924 and transformed itself into an association, the Union of Turkish Women (Turk Kadınlar Birliği), that has since become one of the country's most efficient women associations.

The reforms and measures of secularism radically changed the status of Turkish women. Atatürk conferred upon Turkish women political rights (in 1934) and initiated changes to provide gender equality before the law. In the early phase of the Republic, the policies failed to set up a system to ensure that they would be able to make full use of these rights. Nevertheless, women left the world of seclusion and they were represented in the parliament. When first eligible to be elected to parliament, women candidates won 18 seats, representing 4.5 per cent, of the total number of deputies, but the number fell to nine or two percent, with the transition to a multi-party system in 1946⁽¹³⁾ Today out of 550 members of parliament, 13 are women.

The women of Turkey's educated elite were granted political and professional positions soon after the Atatürk's reforms, but the women of the disadvantaged social groups began to advance in education, albeit the progress was rather slow and painful due to the customary values and practices that reinforced the seclusion of women after the puberty. Female illiteracy decreased from 90.19 percent in 1935 to 28.01 percent in 1990⁽¹⁴⁾ and the number of women in institutions of higher education has increased.

12) Marcus Julie. 1992. *A World of Difference*. London: Zed Press for observations of Jenkins about the political activism of women during the Young Turk revolution. Jenkins H.D. Jenkins (n.d.) *Behind Turkish Lattices*. London: Glaskow and Collins.

13) Abadan-Unat Nermin. 1981. "Social Change and Turkish Women" in *Women in Turkish Society*, Nermin Abadan-Unat, ed., Leiden: E.J.Brill. pp.5-36.

14) State Institute of Statistics (SIS), 1993. *Statistical Yearbook of Turkey*. 1992. Ankara: SIS Publications.

Formal education is one of the key factors that increased female labour force participation in Turkey. Today, females constitute almost 33 percent of the total labour force; but almost 77 percent of the total number of active females are agricultural workers, most of whom work in the field as unpaid family workers (who constituted 69.3 percent of the total female labour force in 1991). Nevertheless, women are visible in almost every sector and many of them have obtained strategically important jobs and positions. They are well represented in certain fields of profession like banking, medical profession, and teaching where females labour force participation range from 30 to 35 percent.

To what extent Turkish women benefit from educational and professional opportunities varies with their socio-economic background, level of formal education obtained and, occupational position. Due to the traditional elitist approach which favored the females of the elite at the center while ignoring the masses on the rural provincial periphery until the 1970s, the urban middle and uppermiddle class women have much benefited from the equal opportunities for education and profession. This created a dual picture of Turkish women: traditional rural women and urban women. The former infrequently can go beyond the compulsory primary schooling, work in the field as an unpaid family worker and, thus can achieve a status of any significance not through productive activities, but through marriage, child-bearing, and advancing age. Nevertheless, the status of rural women is subject to alterations which are closely related to structural changes, such as economic and demographic changes. With the introduction of new technologies, the mechanization of farming, and absorbing of villages into the national market economy, the unpaid female agricultural workers have become wage earners. With the internal migration from villages to towns and cities, men left the villages to find a better way of life in the city and women have assumed a greater responsibility in managing the agricultural economy and the family, which, in turn, decreased the male authority and enhanced female power in rural areas.

Nevertheless, their social mobility is still limited vis-a-vis urban women who can achieve wealth and status through education, performance, and competition. A *gecekodu* (shanty town) woman living in a metropolitan center is more likely to be employed as a domestic worker without any provision of social security. In addition to these categories of rural and urban women, there is another category, that is, the women of provincial small towns. Their status is mainly determined by the position of the husband. They infrequently work, but contribute to the household budget mainly by producing handicrafts, such as embroidery and needlework. Their life is confined to their residential neighborhoods, but it is this

neighborhood network that permits women to exchange information, and to lobby for their husbands' professional progress through using a female net work to contact those who are married to the men of authority, so that they could affect decisions concerning employment, promotion, and recruitment into a political group or party.

The Dilemma: Islamicist Movement and Modernization in Turkey

Little more than half a century has elapsed since the Turkish women stepped out of the harem, and casting of veil marked the beginning of their emancipation. However some of their successors are already clamoring to go back to a segregated world and revive the cult of veiling. With the increased socio-geographical mobility in the last three decades, many women have moved to urban centers from a rural or provincial traditional social setting, where seclusion sanctions prevented women from having formal education in the recent past, (here the reference is to the period of 1930s-1960s). In the course of gaining social mobility through education and occupation, a visible minority of university students have donned the veil, and they have been calling for a return to "pure" Islam of the *Asr-i Saadet* (the Era of Felicity). Some of them have taken up the **turban**⁽¹⁵⁾ for the first time in their life after attending the university where they undergo an Islamic political socialization. University campuses have often become a fertile soil for radical political movements. In the late 1960s and 1970s it was the radical leftist movement and the ultra-nationalism that drew the greatest support from amongst the students. From the early 1980s onwards it is radical Islamicism that has many defenders amongst the university students.

The Islamicist Movement in Turkey

An Islamicist is a person who is not only a pious Muslim, but who believes that Islam is religion and state, and that the two should not be separated. Therefore, he or she has a political position, that is a struggle for establishing an Islamic state. The Islamicist movement is an outlet to express political dissatisfaction with the existing order within which the masses on the periphery have long had a disadvantaged economic and political position vis-avis the elite in the center. It articulates anti-regime sentiments of various social groups and classes whose political dissatisfaction has increased with the sharpened cleavages characterizing the Turkish system. At least five types can be identified within Turkey, these begin: (1) center-periphery conflict; (2) class cleavages; (3) regional

15) The word **turban** refers to any type of enveloping head-covering; this head-covering is usually a voluminous head-scarf, but it may also be something akin to a nun's wimple. For the cultural meaning of **turban** and head covering in Turkish social contest see, Narli Nilufer. 1996. "The Turban: The symbol of Radicalism, Islamic Identity, Piety, or Modesty". *Islam et Laicite: Approches globes et regionales*. Paris: L'Harmattan.

cleavages; (4) church-lay (secularist-Islamicist) cleavages; and (5) sectarian cleavages (i.e., **Sunnis** vs. **Alevis**). These divisions have not been narrowed, these continue to exist, and have even deepened. The conflict between the center -comprising the military officers, senior bureaucrats, notables, and the industrialist created by the early etatist policies- and the periphery is the legacy of the Ottoman period. The Ottoman society was divided into two categorie: the sultan, military, and the ulema at the certer, and the subjects (**reaya**), comprising a large proportion of peasants, on the periphery. The Ottoman central authority was suspicious of the peripheral elements and , thus never permitted their independent organization and input. There was always a huge social and cultural distance between the imperial centre and the Anatolian periphery was not narrowed in the first three decades of the Republic. Conversely, the center geared policies towards keeping this gap. Social mobility and political participation of the periphery were largely blocked. The periphery gained social mobility with urbanization that began in the 1950s. Yet migration from the rural to urban areas where commerce and industry were developing transfered the rural poverty to urban poverty. In metropolises large slums emerged, where people suffered from substandart housing conditions and lack of infrastructure. Now they constitute the new periphery whose members are often economically disadvantaged, culturally disintegrated, and politically isolated. Their social rage has fostered extreme political tendencies since the beginning of 1970s. in the 1970s the revolutionary left articulated their political discontent and anti-regime sentiments. In the 1980s and 1990s, Islamicism has become a movement of protest. The conflict caused by regional economic imbalances and the sectarian antogonism between the **Sunnis** and **Alevis** (a heterodoxical sect more oriented toward Shiite) have further complicated the political tension. Moreover, corruption allegations have aggravated the social rage and prompted calls for political protest. As a result various social groups that need a movement of protest joined the Islamicists.

The socio-economic background, political aims, and interests of the allies of the movement are diverse: the large university student population, most of whom originated from provincial low and middle social classes who have to compete with those from the established urban middle and upper-middle classes; many members of educationally and professionally unqualified young city lumpens whose number has increased with the rural-urban migrations and unemployment; some members of the newly urban workers and subproletaria; state-employed petty-bourgeois who have been proletarianised; bourgeoisie fractions including the relatively privileged new middle and upper classes, the rich merchants, businessmen and industrialist, who sprang from humble **esnaf** (pettytrades) origin, and some rural agrarian capitalists; radical intellectuals searching for an anti-regime movement of

protest. Other groups from which the Islamicists draw support from are former ultranationalist (**ülküçü**) originated from conservative Sunni provincial towns in Central and East Anatolia, who turned to religion and Islamism after the military coup in 1980 with the realization that the nationalist movement failed and that they shared many common cultural qualities and political interests with the Islamicists; a sizable percent of religiously conservative Sunni Kurds, who think that an Islamic order could bring the solution to the regional/ethnic conflict; and a few **Alevi** Kurds who think that the leftists and the social democrats failed to produce a solution to the ethnic issues, and they have turned to the Islamicist movement, particularly after 1993, which they see it to be an instrument of pressuring the state and gaining bargaining power⁽¹⁶⁾. However, all these allies of the Islamicist movement share incompatible interests of weakening the state apparatus (e.g., some of the Kurds, dissident intellectuals and radical students) or gaining a larger share of influence within it (e.g., bourgeois fraction, marginal urban classes, ultra-nationalist).

Women's Participation in the Islamicist Movement

Young females from the various socio-economic backgrounds referred to above have joined the Islamicist movement and taken up the new type of head-covering **-turban** that is a symbol and means of taking part in the Islamicist movement. Turkish women's involvement in the Islamicist movement takes many forms. Many actively march and demonstrate in the street. Some collect and disseminate news or distribute leaflets. If it is necessary, they are ready to take part in clandestine activities and go underground as members of a guerrilla movement insofar as it is seen **jihad**⁽¹⁷⁾. Moreover, they mobilize people by their effective education and propaganda activities. Fund-raising is another form of involvement. For example, leading women organize tea parties and invite all the "sisters" (their female friend) to donate jewelry or money for the oppressed Muslims from all over the world. That money can also be used for the needs of a

16) **Alevi**s tend to vote for center-of-left parties and they are committed to secularism. Nevertheless, in the 1994 local elections in a few Alevi populated places (e.g., Başaran ward of Sultanbeyli district in Istanbul, Halilçavuş village of Hınıs, Erzurum) **Alevi**s overwhelmingly voted for the Welfare Party.

17) The Term "**jihad**" is often translated as holy war as it is associated with the Crusades. The Quranic concept of **jihad** should be understood in terms of the two dimensions of struggle: at the internal level, it means struggle for being a good Muslim through purification and strengthening the self and one's faith; at the external level, it refers to a struggle for one's faith and for Islam. If one is left no means but war for such struggle, one may resort to war.

political party⁽¹⁸⁾. There are other ways of contributing to the "Islamicist Industry" by working in the manufacturing and marketing of the "proper Islamic garments" (tesettire uygun giyim or the long overcoats and head coverings worn by many Islamicist women in Turkey). Their active contribution to the movement is not solely confined to the activities listed above. Social interchanges among women, such as gathering to gossip and exchange news, often take on a political coloration, particularly during the election campaigns: housewives, including the supporters of the Welfare Party, get together and decipher the speeches of Islamicists. Women utilize neighborhood and kin networks for various political aims and interests. The Welfare Party owes much to its female voluntaries who have mobilized a larger number women by canvassing. They convinced many people to vote for the party during several election campaigns. Their contribution played a significant role in the progressive increase of the Welfare Party's votes and in the December 1995 general elections, when the Welfare Party obtained 21.3 percent of the total votes. Most recently, in June 2, 1996 municipal by-elections it obtained 33 percent of the total votes cast.

Here the crucial question is: by undertaking such activities Turkish female Islamicists are following their Iranian sisters, who proudly put on the chador in the late 1970s; fought against the Westernized shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi; and played a decisive role in bringing Ayatollah Khomeini to power. In Iran, many women, even non-religious, non-traditional, and highly educated women, took up the veil as a symbol of solidarity and opposition to the Shah. At rallies and demonstrations, chadors were extended to the unveiled women, who felt obliged to show their solidarity with the majority. Nevertheless, their activism and support for the revolution worsened their position rather than improving (see below).

Why do an increasing number of Turkish women support the Islamicist movement despite the fact that the involvement of Muslim women in the Islamicist movements in Iran, Algeria, and Sudan Brought, anti-women rules and applications (see below)? In order to answer this question, the socio-economic, political, cultural, and psychological factors behind the

18) According to press reports, the money collected by Islamic organizations and groups for various humanitarian purposes is used by the Welfare Party, as is exemplified in the case of Mr. Mercümeç, who was accused of misusing the funds of aid Bosnian Muslims collected from Turkish migrant workers in Germany. According to the allegations made by Freibrg Prosecutor Fluck, the money collected from the Turkish migrant workers in Germany as aid for Bosnians, was "laundered by being transferred into the bank account held in Turkey by Mr. Mercümeç who is known as the RP's (the Welfare Party) cashier". The prosecutor said that the RP used the money in question to finance its election campaign. See, "Almanya'da Refah Holdingi" ("The Welfare Holding'in Germany") in *Hürriyet* (August 21, 1994).

Islamicist movement all must be considered in the analysis of women's situation.

The process of modernization and economic development has been advantageous to the elite women segment of the middle class women (clerical workers, state employed petite bourgeoisie, service sector workers, etc.) have benefited from modernization to a certain extent, but many of them have experienced proletarianization for the last decade due to the decline in real wages and deterioration in the distribution of income. On the other hand, it has created setbacks for the traditional segment of the middle class: the **tuccar** (merchant) bourgeoisie, **esnaf**, and the petite bourgeoisie. The **esnaf** and those who sprang from this origin perceive the cultural and economic changes as jeopardizing their very existence. The conservative provincial merchants and newly urban middle classes, who need a synthesis between Islam and modernity have been major allies of the Islamicist movement since 1970s. They have often voted for the Welfare Party, as it has been seen to be the only political party preaching Islamic morality.

With the deterioration in economic conditions, the Islamicist movement has gained a larger support from among marginal urban classes and urban poor living in slums. The post-1980 economic development, based on a market economy, resulted in a sharp deterioration in the income distribution and, therefore in the living standards of the of women at lower social echelons, intensifying their exploitation and degraded their status. The effects of economic deterioration, the high rate of inflation, and high unemployment (almost 20 percent) also hit the middle class women. These socio-economic problems foster the belief that the state fails to provide social justice. Corruption allegations and political scandals create an idea that "might is right", and that marginal social classes are oppressed. This in turn, justifies the idea that the present secular regime is illegitimate and that Muslims need a new political order based on the Quran. Our survey⁽¹⁹⁾ shows that many Islamicist students support the movement out of a belief that social justice could be re-structured in an Islamic system, which ensures not only the freedom of man from servitude to other men ("kula kul olmaktan kurtulmak"), but also safeguards the freedom of religious expression. In their opinion, the present system restricts religious freedom, and it is un-Islamic; it is also tyrannical as it has reduced the Muslim to the status of mostazafeen (the oppressed and weakened).

With this rationale many women have joined the movement. Women's support for the Islamicist cause is not only motivated by economic

19) Narli Nilüfer. 1995. **The Radical Islamicist Movement and its Political Implications: A Case Study of Turkish Islamicist University Students.** The Revised version of the unpublished report submitted to the Ford Foundation..

frustration and political discontent, but by the fact that while a number of literate, highly educated, and wage-earning women in urban centers increased, no fundamental process of change have taken place in the status and social relations of the majority of Turkish women. With urbanization and migration from villages and towns to metropolitan centers, there is no genuine change in values and ways of lives, but there is a tendency to reproduce traditional social relationships, values, attitudes, and behavior patterns, including gender roles and family arrangements.

Many marginal women of the metropolis feel that they have been encapsulated in their traditional male-dominated world in the social ghetto they live. The younger generation of women, who are the first generation in the city are caught up in two conflicting and competing value systems -the traditional one reinforcing their families and the religious standards of public morality, and the more modern one aligning them with a Westernized "imported" culture. Many of them think that the emancipation of women based on the Western model does not work for Muslims; on the contrary, it brutalizes women because it exploits their bodies as modern merchandise and inspires false dreams, while it appears to promise liberation from traditional shackles. They are against slavish imitation of European fashions, preoccupation with self-presentation, and in short, commercialization of women, which created an "alien" model of womanhood.

As an alternative, Islamic models of womanhood are reintroduced by the leaders and ideologues of the Islamicist movement. Fatimah, the daughter of the Prophet Mohammed, has become the personification of virtue, piety, and obedience; and Aisha, the wife of the Prophet has become the symbol of outspoken, aggressive women. These role models provide women, especially, those of rural and provincial origin with an identity and a much-needed defense mechanism. They inspire them to defend the restoration of Islamic values and to organize the public and private life on the basis of an Islamic model, which is seen to be the only solution to socio-economic and moral problems that have been weakening the country.

New role models of Islamicists are appealing for many women because Islamicists emphasize that a good Muslim woman reserves all types of satisfaction, sexual, emotional, and material. Women are often told that liberation of women means working outside the home, double exploitation of women, and loneliness. On the other hand, being a mother and wife is the biggest reward for a Muslim woman who is the queen of her house, whose husband has to satisfy and treat her kindly. It seems that Islamicists ask their women to be happy in a "feminine world," yet they may leave this world whenever their help is needed to mobilize Muslims and struggle for the Islamicist cause.

Their female counterparts received this appeal by taking up the **turban** that symbolizes an adherence to a cause for the restoration of an Islamic identity and establishing an Islamic political order. By donning the **turban**, they show solidarity with those who oppose to the existing regime, which is seen to be a “corrupt state” and “illegitimate” order where there is no social justice (according to the majority of the Islamicists interviewed). They also often express their opposition and resistance against the “decadent Western culture” and its imperialistic expansion into the Muslim land⁽²⁰⁾. By covering themselves Muslim women give a message to their men who felt threatened to see the increased visibility of women in the public domain that traditionally belongs to men: “we are not emancipated western women, but Muslim women in **jihad**, who struggle for the integrity of the Islamic way of life.”

Where Will Turkish Islamicist Women Go?

In the early twentieth century in the Arab world and Asia, Muslim women participated in the transformation of a social order as part of a party seeking national liberation, and persuaded the male leaders to liberate women by instituting a number of reforms, which made suffrage universal, insured equal pay for equal works, equalized educational and professional opportunities in law for women, as see above. Nevertheless, in the late twentieth century female activism has been directed to another cause. Muslim women have been participating in movement, which aim to transform already secularized or semi-secularized political orders into a state of Islam where female seclusion and a new legislation discriminating women in the family and public life are more likely to be introduced. Are they aware of such a likely discrimination?

The surveyed data collected through closed and open-ended questions showed that Turkish female Islamicists are aware of a likely gender discrimination in an Islamic state to-be-built; but they are ready to accept some measures of discrimination despite the fact that one of the important question of the human rights issue is the rights of women. The data showed that out of 500 Islamicist students interviewed, 40.4 percent of the respondents supported the idea that “women must have the right to vote and the right to stand for election”, and 18.4 percent believed that such rights exist in an Islamic state. Conversely, 25.8 percent did not endorse providing women with the right to vote nor the right to stand for elections. A few

20) My Survey, which included 500 Islamicist university students, revealed that one of the major reasons for supporting the Islamicist movement is the belief that the existing regime is illegitimate as it is based on a secular constitution, and that it is corrupt and in the state of decline. The cure is a return to Islam and restoration of Islamic values and identity. See, Narli (1995).

(2.2.%) thought that women had the right to vote but did not have the right to stand for the election. Meanwhile, a significant proportion (11.8%) of the respondents, many of whom were females, refused to answer a question on the issue of women's rights; this was seen to be an "un-Islamic issue". Some even exclaimed that, there was no problem of women's rights in Islam, and that the question of women as a controversial topic has been introduced by the decadent Western feminist'. Along with accepting political discrimination, some even approved of the practice of polygyny as a right of men since, in their understanding, it is written in the Quran. Moreover, they believe that the biological difference between the sexes justifies division of labor based on gender discrimination. For example, menstruating women are psychologically weak and can not make firm and fair decisions, so women do not suit to positions of authority and judiciary.

The Islamicist movement, which seeks to transform the political order, does not incorporate the question of women's oppression, but raises the question of family and women's role as a mother and wife. In the past the Welfare Party opposed the establishment of a separate ministry dealing with women's issues and accused the architect of that idea of ignoring the significance of family⁽²¹⁾. Some Islamicist women in Turkey and the Middle East think that raising the issue of gender equality may split the movement and jeopardize the cause. Nor, are they looking to amending the Islamicist movement with an autonomous Muslim women's movement. For them the most important target is to defend the cause until their men reaches the final objective of establishing an Islamic state. Until that they are willing to pull back and support their men by assuming rather secondary roles and positions. This explains why female supporters of the Welfare Party did not show a strong reaction to the party when it did not list any female candidates to contest for 1995 general elections.

Nevertheless, a number of women living under Islamic regimes and others contributing to the Islamicist movements have begun to realize that religion is being used as an instrument of oppression rather than as a means of liberation. With this realization they have been engaged in developing the discipline of feminist theology in the context of Islam⁽²²⁾. While some Muslim women support such scholarly examination of the theological assumptions which underline the negative ideas and attitudes regarding women, others see such endeavor as a betrayal.

21) See *Türkiye* (February 15, 1992). Osman Bengi's article "Aileye Son Darbe" ("The Final disaster for the Family").

22) Prof. Dr. Riffat Hassan of Pakistan is one of the examples of Muslim feminists in the discipline of feminist theology. See above.

How will these discussions and developments will affect Turkish Muslim women? Is it very likely to see Turkish women approving anti-women laws in the name of Islam? I think Turkish women have come a long way since the beginning of **Tanzimat** (reforms) Period that began in 1839 and paved the way for the introduction of Western secular education⁽²³⁾ and modernization in many aspects of life. Despite the opposition of the former professional men of religion and **tarik**at sheiks, Atatürk reforms were largely supported by the people, since they had faith in the great leader Mustafa Kemal. The target of secular reforms was modernization of the country, and modernization was synonymous with Westernization. Turks who were the sword of Islam against the West made a deliberate choice for westernization. For two centuries Turkish women have been struggling for equal rights in a country where democratization and Westernization were the deliberate preferences of people rather than being imposed by colonial powers as happened in many Muslim countries ruled by Britain and France in the early 20th century.

Now the time has come for women to advance in education, to obtain and occupy strategically important jobs, to influence decisionmaking process. The consciousness of large numbers of women, from various social groups and classes, has been raised irreversibly to the necessity of improving their status in Turkish society. Islamicist forces, if in power, are not likely to force women to go to a segregated world and confine their lives to domestic domain. Women have already organized to counter a likely negative development in the position of women as result of the increased influence of the Islamicist movement in social life and political arena. Several women's NGOs, informally organized women groups, and those who commit themselves to a secular democratic Turkey have initiated a movement to counter likely anti-secular, anti-democratic, anti-gender equality attempts from the Islamicists.

23) Traditional Islamic medrese education and many Islamic customary practices regulating social life were predominant during the **Tanzimat**, period. After that, with the Atatürk reforms the entire legal system including personal status, family, and Inheritance law was secularized during the first decades of the infant republic. The **medrese** education (Islamic education) was abolished and the education system was established on secular principles with **Tevhidi Tedrisat** (the Unity of Education) Act of 1924. In 1926 a new civil code, adapted from the Swiss code, was passed in replacement of the Sharia rules.