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REPORT

State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman

JENNY B. WHITE

As part of a social experiment designed to create a modern, Westernized society out of a mostly rural, conservative population, the Turkish state, founded in 1923, gave women rights still radical for the time. However, these reforms by the “feminist” state did not evolve as a result of demands originating within society, but were imposed from above. The state’s ideal of the modern Republican woman left out the majority of women beyond a small urbanized elite. Furthermore, state feminism did not concern itself with what happened behind closed doors, but focused on expanding women’s public roles. Nevertheless, these dramatic reforms have expanded the realm of possibilities for Turkish women of all classes and allowed development of a more individualist feminism. The debates continue, but Turkey is one of the most important success stories of women’s empowerment in the early twentieth century.

Keywords: education / feminism / Islam / Ottoman / state feminism / Turkey / women’s rights

Over a period of six hundred years, the Ottoman Empire, at one time or another, encompassed most of North Africa—what we now call the Near and Middle East—and the Balkans. When the Empire dissolved after World War I, replaced by a self-consciously modern and Westernized Turkish Republic in 1923, new doors opened to women as well. The Republican state itself evolved into what later scholars called a “feminist” state, a male-dominated state that made women’s equality in the public sphere a national policy. The new government radically changed laws, encouraged women to unveil, to enter the universities and professions, become airplane pilots, and run for parliament—in many cases before other European societies did. However, these state reforms represented only the vision of a single charismatic leader, the founder of the Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and the values and interests of a small group of urban, middle-class citizens. The Republican state determined the characteristics of the ideal woman and set up a monopolistic system to propagate this ideal in a population that held often quite different values and perceptions of ideal women’s behavior.

While these reforms created a generation of powerful, emancipated women, they did so at a cost. Since the new Republican woman rep-

resented the modern, secular, Westernized state, she was expected to behave and dress in what the state defined as a modern, Western manner. Women who felt that their religious beliefs required them to dress modestly and cover their heads, and women who kept to older customs—like sitting on cushions and eating at low trays instead of sitting on chairs at a table—were not accepted into this Republican sisterhood and were alternately reviled as the uncivilized primitive or romanticized as the “noble” peasant. Since poverty and rural origin hindered women from “obeying” the injunction to leave their homes, become educated, and contribute to the Republic’s professional life, social class and urban/rural differences were, from the beginning, implicit in the differentiation of the Republican woman from the “reactionary” woman.

The ideal Republican woman was a “citizen woman,” urban and urbane, socially progressive, but also uncomplaining and dutiful at home. Modernity, as defined by the Turkish state, included marriage and children as a national duty for women. Marriage was to be companionate, rather than contractual and segregated, and children were to be raised “scientifically” by mothers educated in the latest childrearing and household techniques from the West. Beyond that, state feminism did not concern itself with what happened behind the closed doors of the home. The welfare and duties of women were discussed almost exclusively as attributes of the national ideal. This ideal governed expectations of women for the next half-century. It is only in recent decades that the state feminist project has been challenged by women with alternative views of what it means to participate in a modern society and by feminists who believe that women should be empowered as individuals, not just as a class.

Early Republican reformers tended to be bureaucrats, a social class that had begun to dominate the Empire’s power structure in the nineteenth century and that was primarily urban and middle class. These families already had begun to Westernize long before the Republic, developing an urban lifestyle of nuclear families with Western domestic manners and an emphasis on the “science” of household management, hygiene, and child rearing or “home economics” (Libal 2000, 2002). Standards of health and beauty became Europeanized. These changes were not necessarily due to outside influences or even a result of actions of the state, but rather came about as a result of changes in the economic make-up of society in the late nineteenth century. As salaried employees, Muslim bureaucrats in Istanbul, the capital, were independent of their families, could marry later and have fewer children, and lived in nuclear households instead of in extended households with the husband’s parents and brothers, an ideal in any case rarely achieved due to the early age of death. Better education for both men and women, late female age at marriage, use of birth control, and family planning led to lower fertility rates among Istanbul elites. In the 1930s and 1940s, “at a time when rural families were bringing into

the world seven children on the average and those in towns and cities over four, the residents of Istanbul were barely replacing themselves" (Duben and Behar 1991, 1). Women married, on average, at age twenty-three or twenty-four, men at thirty (1).

This was a trend far in advance of other Middle Eastern or Muslim cities of the time. "The density of urban life, of communications, education, fashions, and of the social and cultural emulation of the West, as well as the ever-present social mix of Muslim and non-Muslim, created an atmosphere in Istanbul that was quite unique" (7). As the Ottoman Empire crumbled, this atmosphere was heightened as a mix of nationalities, ethnicities, and religious groups from all over the former Empire concentrated in the central cities, particularly Istanbul, bringing new ideas, new styles, and cross-fertilization. Among these were critiques of women's position in society and of arranged marriages, new family ideals, domestic manners, and ideas about child rearing. These literate, bureaucratic classes in the capital were the ideological forerunners of, and produced the leaders for, the transformations wrought by the new Republican state.

Thus, the Republican woman was, by definition, a bourgeois urban woman as well as a symbol of the new state. Since only about twenty percent of the population lived in cities, the number of women whose lives could be said to conform to that of the new Republican woman was limited. The bureaucratic civilizing arm of the Republic was too weak to reach the far corners of Turkey, at that time fairly inaccessible, although the central government in Ankara sent newly trained teachers into rural areas. These graduates of the Teachers' Training Colleges, many of them women, were sent not only to impart education, but also to represent and model the cultural norms of the new state. Idealistic young women, many themselves of rural origin, trained as teachers and went to live and work in rural towns.

State feminism was concerned primarily with women's public emancipation, but little concerned with their private lives as women. Indeed, some early Republican reformers were wary of the Westernizing aspect of modernization, fearing that encouraging women to be active in public might encourage individualism and a decline in their feelings of family duty and responsibility, thus leading to a moral breakdown of society.

One of the principal theorists of the new Republic, Ziya Gökalp, sought a solution to this by positing that modernization was not the same as Westernization, but something essentially Turkish. Thus, the young Republic need not look to the West, with its dangerous notions of romance and individualism, for a model of feminism and egalitarianism, but could look to its own semi-mythic past in pre-Islamic Turkic Central Asia. Historically, tribal Turks migrated to Anatolia beginning in the eleventh century (although in an excess of nationalist fervor, some early Republican historians extended that date into the prehistoric Anatolian past,

arguing that even the Hittites were Turks), from there consolidating and extending their empire in all directions. Seeking to distance itself from its imperial, Islam-tainted Ottoman heritage, the new Republic looked to its nomadic Turkic past for historic roots. Gökalp argued that pre-Islamic Turkic society was, by nature, egalitarian and that the ancient Turks were both democrats and feminists. Turks, in other words, had no need to imitate Europeans, but could look to their own past. He believed that Islam had introduced a way of life out of balance with Turkish traditions and needed to be purged of the cultural pollutants it had acquired as it spread across the globe. Thus, the great historical tradition of Islam was compatible with a democratic, egalitarian society if it supported "correct" religious practices in balance with the "other" great historical tradition of Turkishness.

Gökalp's ideas provided the intellectual foundation of many of the new state's reforms. Spread over the next two decades, they were indeed revolutionary. Under the leadership of the charismatic war hero Mustafa Kemal, Turkey's first president, later given the honorific Atatürk or "father of the Turks," Turkey was given a new image. The sultanate was abolished, along with the caliphate, the position of religious leadership of all Muslims worldwide that had inhered in the sultan; religious institutions, activities, and foundations were put under a state-controlled Ministry of Religious Affairs; the capital was moved from the ancient imperial city of Istanbul to the windswept Central Anatolian town of Ankara; the alphabet was changed from Arabic to Latin; history was rewritten and society reformed from above.

Even the physical layout of Turkey's major cities was transformed. Istanbul, a city built of wooden houses, suffered from frequent fires that burned down large areas of the city. In the 1920s and 1930s, Istanbul and Ankara were rebuilt according to modernist city-planning and architectural designs. Broad boulevards suitable for strolling and shopping replaced the winding, inward-facing streets of the old neighborhoods. Homes that had housed several generations of elite families were sold or subdivided into apartments. This opened up new public spaces for women and gave them a more personalized arena for acting out the modernist ideal of a conjugal, companionate marriage.

Atatürk and his government were inspired by the ideals of the French Revolution. Many of the Young Turks that supported Atatürk's creation of a Republic had spent years in exile in France. The zeal with which Republican (and late Ottoman) reformers approached their project of refashioning society often has been compared to that of the Jacobins who dominated the French state between 1793 and 1794. The reformers saw society as a project with the goal of moving it, in their terms, from "old" to "new" and from "traditional" to "western." Reason and science were cornerstones of this drive toward civilization. The assumption was that, if

the state changed the institutions and the physical environment to match that of Europe, then people's behavior and attitudes would change as a result. This explains the great emphasis placed on such public symbols as clothing, architecture, and the visibility of women in the public sphere. By the late nineteenth century, the universalistic and liberal ideals of the Enlightenment had been shaped by some European states into particular nationalist projects that defined progress and modernity in very specific ways, allowing no ambiguities and excluding certain, generally ethnically defined cultures as unsuitable for progress in their present state (Kasaba 1997, 26–7). In Turkey as well, unity and collectivist purpose rather than universally applicable civil rights, came to define republican citizenship (Keyder 1997, 42).

Like the French revolutionaries, Atatürk believed that modernity and law and order were best imposed from a strong center. Despite its strong authoritarian center, Turkey was saved from the excesses of the Soviet and fascist experiments by the state's selective incorporation of legal, economic, and social models from a variety of Western societies. For instance, Atatürk mentioned George Washington as an inspiration, but he also was interested in the Soviet economic experiment. In the end, he took something from each, founding a democratic parliamentary system and encouraging free enterprise, but also setting up state-run industries and centralizing the economy. Furthermore, he was surrounded by intellectuals, like Gökalp, debating different views on the role of religion, the state, women and the family, and other issues, many inspired by a nationalism that assumed a gender-egalitarian, pre-Islamic Turkic society. In other words, the Turkish state project of modernity had many sources of inspiration, but ultimately these were molded to the powerful and original vision of its charismatic leader. After Atatürk's death in 1938, the military took over as guardian of the democratic, secular, modernist state ideal.

The Veil and the New Republican Woman

Dress became a cornerstone of Turkey's modernist transformation. In 1925, Atatürk traveled around the country to introduce "civilized dress" to the people. Headgear had been a sign of status and distinction during Ottoman times, the different types demonstrating rank, profession, and sex. It also was a sign of Islamic affiliation. Atatürk was determined to banish such divisions in the Republic by encouraging and, to a large extent, imposing a new common civilized way of life for its citizens. At one of his stops in a small town on the Black Sea, he told his audience that in the villages and towns he had passed, he had seen women cover their faces and eyes as his party passed. This habit, he said, caused discomfort in the heat of summer, and was, in some part, the result of male

selfishness as well as a concern for purity. "But, friends, our women have minds too . . . Let them show their faces to the world, and see it with their eyes" (Mango 2000, 434). The Republican government banned the fez and turban for men altogether, encouraging them to wear hats. It became illegal to display religious insignias in public, whether an imam's turban or priestly collar.

Headscarves and veils were banned only on official premises, however, including schools and civil service offices, and were tolerated elsewhere, although discouraged. In any case, at the time, the headscarf had begun to be associated with a rural, rather than urban lifestyle. During the Ottoman period, full-body veiling, and seclusion in a harem had been primarily a middle-class custom, indicating that the household was well off enough that its women did not need to work or appear in public.¹ By the time the Republic was founded, urban middle-class women, at least in Istanbul, already had begun to discard the veil. Rural women wore comfortable wide trousers or modest skirts and long headscarves that they could tuck up when working or slide across their faces in the presence of male strangers. Since most inhabitants of a village were related to one another to some extent, this was rarely necessary.

Thus, until the massive rural to urban migration beginning in the 1950s, headscarves were associated with peasant life, to be alternately romanticized as a folkloric aspect of the "original" Turkish civilization and reviled as a glaring sign of how much civilizing work still had to be done. Once peasants moved to the cities, the ban on covering one's head in educational and government facilities and in the civil service began to be challenged by upwardly mobile conservative women who felt left out of the Republican ideal, but were unwilling to Westernize in order to be accepted as modern and middle class. These contradictions are the foundation for heated present-day debates in Turkey about whether or not veiled women can take their places as elected officials in parliament, as university students and professors, as doctors and nurses, that is, as Republican elites. So far, the answer is no.

Republican women were encouraged to attend universities, obtain professional degrees, and contribute to the development of the nation. While women had long been teachers in girls' schools, they soon became ubiquitous in mixed-gender schools and followed careers in medicine, law, engineering, and the social and natural sciences. Again, Istanbul was at the forefront of the changes. In 1929, seventy-five percent of all girls aged seven to eleven attended primary school in Istanbul, along with almost the same percentage of boys, compared to twenty-six percent of girls (and fifty-one percent of boys) nationwide. Between 1920 and 1938, ten percent of all university graduates were women, a remarkable achievement in the short time since Istanbul University had opened its doors to women in 1916 (Duben and Behar 1991, 216).

A secular civil code replaced Islamic law in 1926, giving women equal civil rights. Religious and polygamous marriages were no longer recognized and women could initiate divorce. Under Islamic law, a woman's inheritance was half the share of a man. Under the new laws, men and women inherited equally. However, there were some disadvantages for women in the new laws. While Islamic law stipulated the amount of money that had to be settled on a woman at marriage and at divorce, European law contained no such safeguards. Under Islamic law, this wealth belonged to the woman, not her husband or relatives, thus serving as a form of female wealth and insurance against widowhood, abandonment, or divorce. Furthermore, under the civil law, men still were officially heads of households and women needed their permission to travel abroad and to work outside the home, as was the case in many European countries at the time. These laws were only repealed in the 1990s.

In 1930, women were given the vote in local elections, and the first women judges were appointed. In 1934, women were given full suffrage. In 1935, eighteen women were elected to the Grand National Assembly, the Turkish parliament of around four hundred members.² One of these, Satı Çırpan, was a village woman who had distinguished herself as a hero during Turkey's War of Independence and had been elected *muhtar*, or village head, before being nominated for parliament by Atatürk and elected (Taskiran 1976).

Atatürk's adoptive daughter, Sabiha Gökçen, at his encouragement, became Turkey's first military aviator. Her well-known image combined themes of women's equality, secularism, and nationalism, with women taking leading roles (she was photographed wearing her air force uniform, surrounded by respectful men) (Arat 1997, 99). In 1932, less than a decade after the founding of the Republic, Keriman Halis won the crown for Turkey in an international beauty contest in Brussels (see figs. 1 and 2).

Social change was rapid, at least in the major cities. The rise of a business-driven Muslim middle class meant an increase in social differentiation and the possibility of upward mobility for Muslim families. This was due, in part, to a decline in the number of non-Muslim minorities remaining in Turkey after World War I. The minorities had been the merchants and entrepreneurs of the Empire, while Muslims staffed the civil service, bureaucracy, and military. The Republic needed to replace this element of society with a new Muslim bourgeoisie. Elite and middle-class women filled these roles as they gained professional training. During and after the war, women had to take up public employment to maintain their families in the absence of men. The post-war worldwide economic freefall meant men on fixed wages and salaries suffered; women had to take up the slack. Furthermore, women had taken an active part in Turkey's War of National Independence, giving legitimacy to their demands for participation after



Fig. 1: Bedia Vehbi as a contestant in one of Republican Turkey's first beauty contests, held in Istanbul in 1930.



Fig. 2: A modern young Turkish woman, Bedia Vehbi (second from left), posing with her siblings in the late 1920s, just a few years after the founding of the Turkish Republic on the ruins of the Ottoman Empire.

the war ended. Thus, economic and social conditions were conducive to the prominent roles accorded women by the new state.

Elite women had long been active in the public sphere through publications in which they had agitated for just such expanded roles. In the nineteenth century, they formed women's associations and issued publications educating women about topics like child care, family and household, and calling for women's legal rights, rights they later gained under the Republic. Demirdirek identifies over forty publications oriented toward elite women, just prior to the establishment of the Republic in 1923 (2000, 66). Women's demands centered on education, employment, and electoral rights. Ottoman women closely followed women's movements around the world, but argued that living in an Islamic society required different solutions. However, by the turn of the century, they began to address issues using secular arguments. While articles and letters in earlier publications had been signed using family identifiers ("Leyla, the daughter of Ismail Pasha"), later writings appeared with signatures referring to the woman's educational and employment status ("F. from the Teachers' Training School for Girls") (Demirdirek 2000, 69). In their publications, women debated the advantages of the nuclear over the extended family, arranged marriages, and the question of attire and concealing women's faces, hair, and bodies in public. Male reformists generally were receptive to these demands and placed great importance on "the woman question," paving the way for the reforms of the new Republic.

Constraints: The Modern Ideal and Social Morality

Republican women's activism and autonomy, however, were circumscribed by two things: conservative morality and the requirement to remain true to the state's modernizing project and state interests. Traditionalists denounced the changes as an invitation to immorality, echoing Gökalt's earlier fears. Despite the enormous changes and new opportunities for women, Turkish society was socially and sexually conservative, even in the cities. There were no flappers in Turkey between the wars. In the workplace, the citizen woman dressed to downplay her femininity and sexuality, donning severe suits and a no-nonsense demeanor. Atatürk believed religion should be a matter of personal choice (and thus, not represented in the public sphere), but he also believed that "morals are sacred" (Mango 2000, 438). In the same speech in 1923, he called for women to "take their places in the general economic division of labour" and stated that "a woman's highest duty is motherhood" (Duben and Behar 1991, 221). Even women's journals at the time wrote about the need for women to become educated so that they would be able to carry out their political duty properly, that is, to bring up the children into whose

hands the future would be entrusted, a theme echoed in the “republican motherhood” of nineteenth-century France and the United States. Schools added to their curriculum the new Fordist “science” of home economics that taught women modern child rearing, household techniques, principles of hygiene, and Western fashion.

People feared that women becoming educated, entering the workplace and public sphere, and earning their own incomes would precipitate a crisis of family and community. This echoed Gökalp’s fears that the intrusion of romantic love and individualism would let in social corruption and egotism, perhaps even a refusal to marry at all, thereby creating a threat to social order, the family, and the state. The solution to this perceived moral vacuum was seen to be national solidarity. The individual was to subordinate himself or herself to the nation in the name of progress and national purpose. A 1913 women’s journal wrote: “The family provides the future of national life. Family means nation; nation means family” (Duben and Behar 1991, 105). Marriage meant becoming a responsible citizen; choosing not to marry was an egocentric act, amoral and irresponsible. In reality, arranged marriage was the national norm and even today is widely practiced, although usually with some input by the candidates. Family, then as now, remains important if not paramount, even among the elite. Motherhood was a patriotic duty. Love and passion in the early Republic were to be subordinated to love of nation.

These contradictory expectations placed a double burden on women who took advantage of new opportunities to get an education and pursue a career, since they were expected simultaneously to be attentive and well-trained mothers and to keep the household running smoothly. The conundrum of the ideal citizen woman demonstrating equality and progress in public and being ideal and pure mothers and wives in private was managed (if not solved) by hiring lower-class women to take care of the household. Relatives helped with child care, but this did not absolve the mother from her responsibilities. In the ordinary domestic world of men and women, traditional gender responsibilities and conservative sexual morality persisted, despite discussions of equality between men and women, women’s education and professional work, and the increasingly companionate character of marriage. Such a gendered division of labor, of course, was not unique to Turkey, but was common in Europe at the time and formed the basis for the modern, Western nuclear family emerging in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Problems within the family, like mistreatment by husbands, were not the concern of Turkish state feminism. It was not until the 1980s that a new, liberal feminist movement reclaimed this territory by speaking openly about women’s sexuality and desires outside of family duty, opening battered women’s shelters, and a women’s library.

State feminism, the state-led promotion of women's equality in the public sphere, monopolized women's activism and shaped it as a tool of the state's modernizing project. In 1923, women requested authorization to found a Republican Women's Party, but were refused on the grounds that a woman's party would distract from the Republican People's Party that state leaders were establishing. In 1935, the Turkish Women's Federation collaborated with feminists from other countries to host an international Congress of Feminism in Turkey, and issued a declaration against the rising threat of Nazism. State elites were displeased, particularly since Turkey was attempting to stay neutral in international affairs, and closed the Federation, arguing that, since the Republic had given women all their rights, there was no longer any reason for women to organize (Arat 1997, 101). Nevertheless, the opportunities and power made available to women as a result of Atatürk's reforms should not be minimized. They laid a firm and enduring foundation for later developments in women's rights in Turkey.

Rural Women

Life for the majority of Turkish women living in towns and villages and other, less central, urban areas was quite different from that in Istanbul and Ankara, both before and after the reforms. Birth rates were high and marriages earlier than in the cities. Official figures indicate the average age of village marriage as nineteen for women and twenty-two for men, but it is likely that the actual ages were lower (Duben and Behar 1991, 1). Unlike the self-supporting salaried urban family, the village family relied on children, especially sons, for agricultural labor and for support in old age. Infant and child mortality was high. State propaganda also encouraged childbearing to make up for the great losses of World War I (3).

The upheavals of World War I were felt even in the remotest villages, as communities struggled to take care of large numbers of orphaned children, widespread malnourishment, and disease. This was one of the major concerns of the new state, which funded projects in health and social welfare. The state itself had scant resources to undertake such an enormous task of reconstruction. It needed to set up schools, government offices, hospitals, police departments, and courts. Islamic pious foundations that traditionally had provided education and social welfare for the poor were unable to respond as well as in the past because they were in the process of being absorbed by the state and reorganized. Civic organizations, among them women's organizations, such as the Mothers' Federation and the Turkish Women's Federation, took up causes, like that of child poverty. These were a continuation of elite women's charity activities from the

Ottoman era, but with a new ideology and civic activism. Along with material assistance, Republican women aimed to transform the personal habits, customs, clothing, and moral orientation of the Turkish people. They were concerned, for instance, about the patriarchal nature of rural family life, which they associated with backwardness and religiosity.

In a comparison of women's practices in contemporary sub-Saharan African and Turkish patriarchal societies, Deniz Kandiyoti (1988) suggests that women in Turkey enter into what she calls a "patriarchal bargain" in which submissiveness and obedience is rewarded with security, stability, and respect. They have few options, since by custom they are expected not to engage in paid labor, although many work as unpaid family workers in agriculture. African women, on the other hand, are able to negotiate by threatening to leave their husbands, since they have their own sources of income through their customary marketing activities. While Turkish women are expected to stay out of public areas like streets and marketplaces, African women are not. This, Kandiyoti suggests, makes the difference between active resistance by African women and passive resistance by Turkish women who, in order to strengthen their claim to security, intensify the characteristics and practices that are their part of the patriarchal bargain.

Elite Republican women were given new bargaining tools and were eager to share these with rural and lower-class women. However, it was not until Turkey's economic growth after World War II, and the building of roads to connect the hinterland to the cities, that Republican reforms began appreciably to affect the lives of rural women. This was due, in large part, not to the reforms coming to the villages, but to the villagers coming to the cities.

Despite the rare example of women like Satı Çırpan, the village woman who became a member of parliament, it took decades for Atatürk's reforms to reach the countryside, to build the necessary institutions and train the personnel to staff courts, schools, medical clinics, and government offices. Government offices generally were situated in towns, and villagers would have to travel long distances or rely on middlemen, like the *muhtar*, as their conduits to the government. At the same time, the state extended its reach into daily life, whether by setting agricultural prices or requiring an official civil marriage certificate, rather than a religious ceremony.

Some villagers, especially in communities far from an administrative center, continued to marry by religious ceremony. Others married in civil state ceremonies, then took second wives using religious rites, since polygamy was illegal. Under Islamic law, these women would have received certain protected rights. Under Republican law, however, since they were not officially married, they did not inherit and their children had no official status, as official identities are linked to the father. This meant difficulty obtaining identity cards, registering for school, or

inheriting. Nevertheless, polygamy was rare in the countryside as well as the city, even in Ottoman times (Faroghi 2000).

Rural women engaged in back-breaking labor in the fields, gathering firewood, hauling water, tending to the animals, preparing and preserving food, and taking care of numerous children and the household. They had as many children as possible in order to provide the necessary workforce to see them through their old age. Sons were particularly valued for this, since girls generally went to live with their husbands' families after marriage. Marriages often were within the village or a nearby settlement, so it was possible and desirable that mother and daughter would continue to see each other, but the daughter's labor belonged to her husband's family. As in other patrilocal societies, sons remained close to their natal households and brought further pairs of hands into the family—brides and children. Elite women of the towns did not work in the fields, but rather spent their time in the company of female friends, relatives, and other townswomen. Formal gatherings during at-home days have a long history and are mentioned in travelers' accounts in Ottoman times, providing a forum for social and political leadership within the female community that continues to this day.

Kinship and tribal links were vital for survival. They gave protection, land usage rights, economic resources, connections, and even provided political organization. *Aghas* or large landowners, religious sheikhs, and tribal leaders provided a framework for rural life that had to be supplanted or, at least, penetrated and co-opted by the state. This took time and resources. The strength of these traditional forces and concomitant weakness of the state increased as one moved from the major urban centers of Istanbul, Izmir, and Ankara in the west toward the isolated, mountainous and poorer areas of the east, at Turkey's borders with Iran, Iraq, and Syria. It is these areas that remain the poorest and least developed even today and in which women have lower status and less access to their rights under Republican laws than elsewhere in Turkey.

Conclusion

Early Republican changes were dramatic and have, over the years, expanded the realm of possibilities for Turkish women of all classes. Present-day debates in Turkey, however, still revolve, sometimes bitterly, around the "civilizational" premise of the ideal Republican woman. Two-thirds of the population now lives in cities. As peasants have become urbanites, they have laid claim to the benefits of education, career, and a modern, urban lifestyle. Many, however, are demanding these rights without having to conform to the secularized, Westernized Republican model, for instance, claiming they can be thoroughly modern and full

participants in society while remaining veiled. In other words, what is being challenged is the Westernized, secular aspect of Republican lifestyle ideals, not modernity, education, democracy, civic participation, and the media, which have become the stable framework within which issues of identity politics are debated in Turkey. This too is a legacy of the Republic.

Changes also have occurred in the feminism of the post-1980s younger generation of secular, Westernized urban women who are rejecting state feminism for a more individualistic concern with women "as women." They argue that state feminism was more concerned with outward manifestations of progress—women unveiled, educated, visible in the professions as representatives of the modern state—but paid no attention to these women's lives at home where they could be beaten by their husbands and fathers, forced into arranged marriages, and otherwise mistreated. As Deniz Kandiyoti put it, Republican women were "emancipated, but not liberated" (1987, 317). However, despite blocking early attempts to develop a feminism outside state sponsorship, in the long run, Republican reforms contributed to the development of conditions that allowed a shift in the 1980s to a more universalist liberal feminism. In contrast to Republican state- and modernization-oriented feminists, liberal feminists opened women's shelters, fought for changes in laws affecting women's private lives, and published magazines that spoke openly about issues like sexuality. In other words, the new feminists represent women as citizens or as women, not as "citizen women." The state feminist model, however, despite its authoritarian rigidity about what constitutes a modern woman, was groundbreaking and successful in allowing Turkish women to participate in society at all levels to an extent unheard of in Europe or the United States at the time. Ultimately, the model's very success opened the doors to religiously conservative women who had not been included under the state's definition of modern and to liberal, individualist women who deviated from the nationalist communalist project. The debates have not ended, but the Turkish experiment is one of the most important success stories of women's empowerment in the early twentieth century.

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Notes

1. Veiling and seclusion as status symbols predate Islam. Elite Christian Byzantine women veiled. The effect is similar to that of the Victorian corset and pallor that publicly displayed women's limited productivity. Much as a Victorian woman's pale skin indicated that she did not have to work in the fields, a contemporary tan implies that the wearer does not have to sit in an office (although the spread of tanning salons has made the tan a less than reliable status indicator).
2. To a large extent, these early elections were orchestrated by Atatürk's Republican People's Party. The number of women members of parliament decreased subsequently, especially after Turkey's first free, multiparty elections in 1950.

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