

ABSTRACT

THE OTTOMAN WOMEN'S MOVEMENT:

WOMEN'S PRESS, JOURNALS, MAGAZINES AND NEWSPAPERS

FROM 1875 TO 1923

By Vuslat Devrim Altınöz

Ottoman women lived under Islamic law and the strict values of an Islamic society with some legal recognition by the state until the big transformation of the Ottoman state and society in the nineteenth century. Though there was a form of divorce law, it was only used by sisters and daughters of the sultans to solve heredity and property problems. Following the transformation in Europe in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the Ottoman Empire was faced with the need to instigate social and legal reforms in order to reorganize a corrupt judicial system with no unified legal code and laws applicable to various members of the society depending on their status, gender or religion. In 1839 Sultan Abdülmeçid declared a series of reforms. Although the reforms were not especially directed at changing the status of women, Ottoman women were affected by the economic, social, political, judicial and ideological transformation and started to acquire a better social and legal position in society. The status and role of women attracted the attention of modernization movements at the end of the last century and early twentieth century. The liberation of women was considered a very important step in modernizing the state during the period between the reforms and the second constitutional period in 1908. The press made noticeable contributions to the discussions of the women's movement during the same period. This study examines women's magazines, journals and newspapers during this period and evaluates the demands of the Ottoman women made.

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FROM 1875 TO 1923

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INTRODUCTION

Although there is a presumption that women's movements in the Middle East lagged behind such political and social gains in Europe and United States, it is obvious that in fact women's movements in the Middle East paralleled their Western counterparts in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Through an examination of women's journals¹ from the late Ottoman era, I wanted to understand women who had previously demanded their rights and struggled to establish and legitimize a new life different from what they had been experiencing in the late 1875-1920s. I tried to understand their demands and how they presented and justified them. I also will try to present the Ottoman women's movement as reflected in journals oriented toward women readers. More specifically, I will try to highlight demands raised in various journals, but especially in the journal *Kadınlar Dünyası* (*Women's World*).

The Ottoman women's journals demonstrated that in the early twentieth century the echoes of the women's suffrage movement in Europe reached Ottoman women. Women's movements in European countries, and their improvements and gains, were major topics that women discussed. These discussions appeared in all of the journals, at least as a news item. When the beginnings of the early women's rights movement, or the first wave feminism, began within Europe just after the outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789, then quickly spread to the United States, "Turkish women's emancipation," was on the way as well.

¹ Recent years, there has been an important bibliographic research made on Ottoman women's journals. One of the first studies about the women's journals was written by Emel Aşa in 1989 as a Masters Thesis. Emel Aşa, *1928'e Kadar Türk Kadın Mecmuaları*, (İstanbul: İstanbul Üniversitesi Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümü, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 1989). Another important study which includes an index of all the women's journals that has published since the 1850s to present is *İstanbul Kütüphanelerindeki Eski Harfli Türkçe Kadın Dergileri Bibliografyası* (İstanbul: Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Vakfı Yayınları: 5, Metis Yayınları, 1993). This is a work produced by Zehra Toska, Serpil Çakır, Tülay Gençtürk, Sevim Yılmaz, Selmin Kurç, Gökçen Art, and Aynur Demirdirek. Another recent study that used women's magazines is Aynur Demirdirek's *Osmanlı Kadınlarının Hayat Hakkı Arayışının Bir Hikayesi* (Ankara: İmge Yayınevi, 1993). Finally, the latest work produced using the women's journals is Serpil Çakır's *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1994).

A proclamation of 1839 paved the way for Tanzimat (1869-76)², a series of reforms in the administrative, legal and political institutions of the Ottoman Empire. One of its purposes was the establishment of equality among various ethnic groups. It also aimed at curbing the absolute power of the Sultan. Tanzimat sought to transform cultural life by introducing patterns of Westernization. Swiftly, the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution fired the imagination of the Ottoman intelligentsia, who began to combat political absolutism, oppression and corruption. Leading poets, novelists and journalists championed the ideals of liberty and progress. Many of them were imprisoned or banished.

During the period of the Tanzimat, far reaching reforms were undertaken by bureaucrats and intellectuals in the fields of administration, legislation and especially in regard to education. Unfortunately, women of Ottoman Empire did not included to this reformation period and excluded from areas which needed most work such family law and women's rights. At this juncture, reformist men sought ways to revive a floundering empire and voiced concern about the position of women in Ottoman Turkish society. The first steps were taken during the period of Ottoman reforms instituted by the *Jön Türkler* (Young Turks) in the middle of the nineteenth century. Bureaucrats, as well as young thinkers educated in Europe, had begun to discuss the meaning of the French Revolution and the new ideas derived from it. Freedom, equality, education and the notion of citizenship for women were among these ideas.

² Tanzimat (1839-76) meaning "reorganization" refers to a period of modernizing reforms initiated by Sultan Mahmud II (1808-39). The actual program was started under sultan Abdülmecid I (1774-89), and corrupted and destroyed by Sultan Abdülaziz (1861-76). Participants in the Tanzimat sought extensive reforms in the field of military technology, training, organization, administration, legislation, and education. Ottoman reformers realized that if the Ottoman Empire kept its traditional system the Empire would eventually be defeated and swallowed up by the Europeans.

Individual rights, the ability to reason and citizenship for women have long been ceased to be mere ideas.³ Women's rights in the public and private spheres, as they relate to education, employment and politics, as well as home life and the family, respectively, became more evident during the progressive era in Ottoman history. Breaking with the stereotypical images of Middle Eastern women, Turkish women fought for equality by asserting their voices in the male dominated public sphere much like their European counterparts. The evolution of the Ottoman Turkish women's movement allowed women greater agency. Alongside a discussion of this more positive and proactive image of Ottoman women, it is also vital to consider the stereotypical images against which these women were struggling in order to understand and appreciate the gains they made.

In her article, "Gender and Islamic History," Judith Tucker explains a prevalent image of Islamic women. "Harems and belly dancers, the oedipal and the aging master puffing on his water pipe, shadowy black forms gliding through hostile public space, men who rule and women who submit"⁴ are but a few of the many powerful images presented in the Orientalist⁵ vision of the Harem⁶ and of the Ottoman Empire before the twentieth century. Unfortunately, when European missionaries, colonialists, artists and merchants began traveling to the Muslim world, prejudice on their part towards Middle Eastern culture led them to depict Muslim women as erotic subjects in their writings and paintings.⁷ Creation of this false image, or "sexual fantasy," blinded a large population of Europeans to the actual

³ Sheila Rowbotham, *Women in Movement: Feminism and Social Action* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 27.

⁴ Judith Tucker, "Gender and Islamic History," in *Islamic and European Expansion*, ed. Micheal Adas (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 37.

⁵ For further reading look at Edward Said's book *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994) in which he addresses women's role in orientalism and the ways in which orientalism itself was gendered.

⁶ The harem described in Leslie P. Peirce's fascinating book *The Imperial Harem: Women and Sovereignty in the Ottoman Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) is not the obscene sexual playground of the Western imagination but the focal point of power in the Ottoman Empire. Peirce demonstrates that the Royal women's power was a logical, indeed an intended, consequence of political structures in which they were custodians of sovereign power. In an earlier chapter on "The Myths and Realities of the Harem," she writes, "We in the West are heir to an ancient but still robust tradition of obsession with the sexuality of Islamic society," (p. 3).

⁷ John Frederick Lewis RA (1805-1876), one of the most prominent orientalist painted harem scenes while living the life of a Turkish nobleman.

lives of Islamic and Middle Eastern women. Women, it was supposed, were often secluded in harems and, therefore, were barred from participating in public life, which meant that they could not pursue economic occupations, divorce their husbands or go to court to defend their interests and legal rights.⁸ This popular image gave rise to the assumption that Muslim women had long been subjugated in male constructed societies and unable to ask or fight for their rights.

In fact, Muslim women had direct participation in the public sphere and it was increasing during the 18th century. While women were absent in the registration of commercial and guild affairs in Islamic courts during the 17th century, by the 18th century women were becoming visible as litigants and defendants in lawsuits and property transactions in the court records of İstanbul, Kayseri and other major commercial cities. Women were also active in Islamic courts when it came to protecting their rights. Women came freely and openly to the court as litigants; they sued and were sued by others. They also initiated law suits to claim their bride price (*dowry*), child support fees (*mehr, nafaka*), and inheritance. The legal system recognized and protected these rights of women.⁹

Unfortunately, scholars of the Middle East traditionally erased the variables among women by compressing them into a single image that portrayed all Muslim women in social and economic life as virtually the property, first of fathers or older brothers, then of their husbands. The suggestion, of course, is that their lives were largely uniformed and oppressed without exception. The assumption was that women held an inferior status embedded within

⁸ The fantasy logic of Orientalism is also discussed in Selma Ekrem's autobiography, *Unveiled* (1930). Ekrem is the granddaughter of Namık Kemal, a poet and writer. Namık Kemal was one of the founders of the Young Turks who were against the absolute patriarchy of the Ottoman sultan in the mid-1800s. *Unveiled* was originally written in English when Ekrem was living in the United States. The book was translated into Turkish 68 years later and titled as *Peçeye İsyân* [trans. Gül Çağalı Güven (İstanbul: Anahtar Kitaplar Yayınevi, 1998)]. Ekrem describes how her female American friends started to look at her with admiration after she revealed the fact that she was from Turkey. They commented on how lucky she was to live in a household full of servants and did not need to do anything except lie around all day. Ekrem, with confused and wondrous eyes, responded, "I don't know such a house. Where are you talking about?" The girls said, "Harem." Ekrem, looking even more puzzled, replies, "Oh, you are talking about the Harem, but it is not such a place."

⁹ Ahmet Akgündüz, *Şer'iye Sicilleri* vol.1 (İstanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı Yayınları, 1988).

the patriarchal familial arrangement, and that the latter was the backbone of Islamic social structure. Traditional scholarship has argued, therefore, that all Muslim women were thought of as neither able nor willing to manage or control their own property and that they had no say in marriage arrangements into which they were sold or forced by fathers or guardians. observers' limited and misleading conceptions of Muslim women have discouraged other scholars from studying private and family life in Turkish society during the Ottoman period.

Although Muslim women owe much of their awareness to Western feminist discourse, Western scholarship on gender and society in the Middle East has also tended to reinforce this traditional and very negative image of Middle Eastern women, by implying that Muslim women were also at times working against their female counterparts. From the 1950's to the present day feminist opinion has blamed the Qur'an and Islamic law for dishonoring and humiliating Muslim women. For instance, in the *Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir argues that, "The Qur'an treats women with utter scorn."¹⁰ She adds, "When the family and the private patrimony remain beyond question the bases of society, then woman remains totally submerged. This occurs in the Muslim world."¹¹ Beauvoir supports the standpoint of traditional scholars who blamed the Qur'an and Shari'a law for the subjugation of women.

Ironically, feminists of an earlier period had a more positive and accurate representation of the Middle Eastern women. One of the most precise accounts is contained in the letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Her letters illustrated that Ottoman women enjoyed an active role going back to the early 18th century. In 1718 Lady Montagu reproved European men who "lament[ed] the miserable confinement of the Turkish Ladys, who [were] (perhaps) freer than any Ladys in the universe, and [were] the only Women in the world that

¹⁰ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. & ed. H. M. Parshley (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1976), 80.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 84.

lead a life of uninterrupted pleasure, exempt from cares...”¹² In 1789 Lady Elizabeth Craven made similar observations saying, “I think I never saw a country where women enjoy so much liberty, and free from all reproach, as in Turkey.”¹³ She stated further, “...I repeat it Sir, I think no women have so much liberty, safe from apprehension, as the Turkish—and I think them, in their manner of living, capable of being the happiest creatures breathing.”¹⁴ Although the accounts of Lady Montagu and Lady Craven’s observations only addressed elite Muslim women of the Ottoman Empire, their accounts indeed require consideration.

Twenty years ago, Ottoman studies could boast of but a handful of research efforts regarding women. As Madeline Zilfi has observed, “despite the wide and durable dominion of the Ottoman regime over the principal Arab and Turkish populations of the Middle East, historians of the Ottoman Era, with few exceptions, have not ‘attended to women’.”¹⁵ In other words, owing to the limitation of published and available sources, the actual lives of women, their role in the economy, and their interaction with the rest of society have not been studied thoroughly. Beginning in the 1970’s, the work of scholars such as Ronald Jennings, Haim Gerber, Judith Tucker, Suraiya Faroqhi, Leslie Peirce, Madeline Zilfi, Donald Quataert, Juan Cole and Fatma Müge Göçek have made major accomplishments studying the variety of experiences of women in Ottoman society.

WOMEN’S JOURNALS

The Ottoman newspaper, *Terakki Muhadderat (Progress of Women)* contains a letter submitted by an ordinary Ottoman woman, Rabia, criticizing the preconceived notions about women prevalent before and during the reformist era of Ottoman Turkey (ca.1860-1880). The

¹² Lady Mary Wortley Mantagu, *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Mantagu*, ed. R. Halsband v.1 (Oxford, 1965), 406.

¹³ Lady Elizabeth Craven, *A Journey Through the Crimea to Constantinople*, (New York: 1970), 270.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 305.

¹⁵ Madeline Zilfi, ed. “Introduction” in *Women in the Ottoman Empire: Middle Eastern Women in the Early Modern Era* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1.

same newspaper contains discussions of current feminist movements within Europe, as well as Western women's struggles in general:

It has to be acknowledged that neither is man created to serve his wife, nor is the woman created to be the slave of man. If a man is able to support both himself and his family with his skills and expertise, why should a woman not demand the same knowledge and skills? What is the difference between men and women if we have the same hands and feet, eyes and brain? Aren't we human beings as well? Is the reason why we have remained in the same place since our creation the difference of our sex? No one who has common sense can accept this! If we as Turkish women are supposed to remain uneducated and ignorant, then shouldn't the European women also be like us? If the reason for our illiteracy is the necessity of being veiled, then what about the peasant women who are working with their men in the fields and helping them by all means?¹⁶

Ottoman women's movements had been pressing hard since the early nineteenth century for women's rights and equality, as well as a realization of their potential. Some disadvantages like education, inequality between spouses in the family, economic burdens and political power, were partly in the process of being overcome, but the historical, sociological and psychological barriers, which were the most difficult to overcome, persisted.

In the 1850s, a time of progressive efforts, scattered voices of elite women began to be heard in newspapers and journals. In the new atmosphere of freedom created by the Tanzimat Era (1839-1876), a number of exclusive women's organizations were formed and new women's journals began to appear. The writings of Ottoman women showed that there was a visible feminist aspiration among urban Ottoman women. Several women's journals were published in major Ottoman cities, in which women writers addressed women's issues, along with more general problems of the country. Prior to the pre-Republican period (1919-1923), there were at least forty women's journals, most of which were owned and published by men. A few of them had male owners but were actually published by women. Some were owned by women and had only women writers. Among these were *Terakki-i Muhaddarat* (*Progress*

¹⁶ Rabia, "Birinci Mesele: Terbiyet-i Hatıramızın Vucub-i Islahı," in *Terakki Muhadderat*, vol.5 (1869), 30.

of Women) (1869-70), the supplement of the *Terakki (Progress)* newspaper, *Âyine (Mirror)* (1875), *Aile (Family)* (1880), *Şükûfezar (Flower Garden)* (1883-4), *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete (Newspaper Particularly for Women)* (1895-1909), *Demet (Bouquet)* (1908-9), *Mehâsin (Things Beautiful)* (1908-9), *Kadın (Woman)* (1908), *Kadınlar Dûnyası (Women's World)* (1913-21), *Kadınlık (Womanhood)* (1914), *Türk Kadını (Turkish Women)* (1918-19), *İnci (Pearl)* (1918-22) and *Sûs (Ornament)* (1923). Articles and letters from the readers of these journals indicated that unlike men's political discourse, these journals primarily focused on women's duties at home, such as cooking, better housekeeping and child care. The secondary concern was to eradicate men's beliefs that women were "useless," and "unable to use their brains in intellectual issues." Women debated women's rights, and discussed inequalities in the family and in the home. Secondly they demanded education, incorporation into the workforce for women, and participation in public affairs.

Some of the articles that appeared in these journals were critical of the heavy burden placed on women in the home and in the family. For example, in a regular column entitled *Musahabe-i Nisvaniye (Conversations with Women)*, *Zühre Hanım*¹⁷ argued that ideas about the nature or the division of labor were not the same for men and women. While men were not expected to be both soldiers and *imams*, women were asked to act as wives, mothers, cooks and seamstresses, all at once. *Zühre Hanım* nevertheless urged women to do everything in their power to fulfill their duties as wives and mothers, since these roles were best suited to them.

The women writing in these journals focused on a number of issues. One prominent theme in their articles was their disappointment with the new era of "freedom." Freedom, they argued, turned out to be only freedom for men, and reformists had forgotten their pledge

¹⁷ *Hanım* refers to Miss or Mrs. in this context since Ottoman women were still using either their father's or husband's last name. Women who were writing in the magazines preferred to be called by Miss or Mrs. which did not involve any male attachment; trying to show that they were independent women.

to emancipate women once they obtained state power. In 1910, Emine Seniye *Hanım* replied to a letter by Makbule *Hanım* from İzmir who was disappointed with the silence of male representatives in Parliament. In her reply, Seniye *Hanım* urged women to form committees in every province, to institute women's schools, and other women's organizations. These articles were published in the wake of the 1909 uprising after which the *Terakki Perver* (*Union and Progress*) shelved reforms regarding the family and women's education. This development led some of these articulate women to argue that it would only be women who could liberate the women of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁸

Let us confess, today a woman lacks the right to live and be free. Because she can never express her ideal, will, desire and tendency to obtain and sustain it [a free life]; her life is dominated by a father, a maternal or paternal uncle, a husband or a brother who takes advantage of traditions and customs. It is possible for her to set a goal or an ideal for herself... In our society, a woman does not have an individual existence; she has never had [one].¹⁹

In 1868, the first newspaper, *Terakki (Progress)*, which was published by Ali Raşit *Bey* and Filip *Efendi*, appeared in the Ottoman Empire. *Terakki* dealt with women's issues and, in 1888, the same publisher offered a separate paper especially for women entitled, *Terakki Muhadderat (Progress of Women)*.²⁰ One of the articles in *Terakki* described how they [men] need to help women achieve their rights.

In this progressive age, all advanced nations' male and female citizens get higher degrees in science and art. Why are we not working for Ottoman women to go further from where they stand now? In France, women attempt to gain the right to vote and work in government institutions. They gained this courage only through education.²¹

Between the years of 1868 and 1908, a number of journals were published (some by women) dealing with women's problems. Comparing women to their European counterparts,

¹⁸ Emine Seniye, "Terakkiyat-i Nisvaniyye'yi Kimlerden Bekleyelim?" (From Whom Shall We Expect the Progress of Womanhood?) in *Mehasin* (1910).

¹⁹ Anonymous, "Kadın ve Hürriyet-i Şahsiyye" (Women and Personal Freedom) in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, vol. 135 (March, 1914).

²⁰ Şehmus Güzel, "Tanzimattan Cumhuriyet'e Toplumsal Değişim ve Kadın," in *Tanzimattan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 3 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), 858.

²¹ Tezer Taşkiran, *Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında Türk Kadın Hakları*, (Başbakanlık Kültür Müsteşarlığı: Cumhuriyetin 50. Yıldönümü Yayınları, 1973), 30.

the articles mainly criticized Ottoman society and the reasons behind the backwardness of Ottoman women. *Terakki Muhadderat* followed the women's movement in the West and included several articles on feminism. The articles raised some concrete demands such as women's right to attain higher education and equality in public life, politics, employment and marriage. Some attacked the institutions of polygamy and the general oppression of women.

An article published in *Terakki* in 1868 and signed by "three ladies," dealt with the issue of discrimination between men and women.²² They complained about segregation in trains, ferries, restaurants, theaters, and unsanitary and filthy places mandated for women in public transportation simply because they were women. They questioned poor conditions for women, even though they charged both men and women exactly the same fee. It claimed that this practice was for the security and the protection of women's honor, but this was sheer hypocrisy since women had to use side streets and alleys instead of well-lit streets in order not to encounter men. The article maintained that these problems were caused by the attitude that women should be subjugated to men, and since men did not allow women to receive education but referred to them as uneducated and illiterate, even sons would not take their mothers seriously. In an earlier issue of the same newspaper, published in 1869, an illiterate woman, with the help of a mediator, questioned polygamy.²³ *Terakki Muhadderat* was a successful newspaper that provided a voice and an agenda to Ottoman women. A year later in 1869, this newspaper continued under the name *Kevkebi Şarki (Doğu Yıldızı)*.²⁴

Between the years 1874 and 1876, a journal called *Ayine* started in Thessalonica. Mustafa Hamdi Bey, the owner of this journal, targeted its content towards women and children.²⁵ *Vakit* or *Mürebbi-i Muhadderat* was another newspaper published specifically for

²² Tezer Taşkiran, *Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında Türk Kadın Hakları*, (Başbakanlık Kültür Müsteşarlığı: Cumhuriyetin 50. Yıldönümü Yayınları, 1973), 30.

²³ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁴ Hıfzı Topuz, *100 Soruda Türk Basın Tarihi*, (İstanbul, 1973), 43-46.

²⁵ Şefika Kurnaz, *Cumhuriyet Öncesinde Türk Kadını 1839-1923*, (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Aile Araştırma Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1991), 42.

women by Filip *Efendi* in 1875.²⁶ *Aile*, probably the first women's journal, began publication on May 27th 1880 and was owned by Şemseddin Sami *Bey*. The journal focused entirely on children, women and housework. In 1875, Teodor Kasap, a well known Turkish humorist and publisher of *İstikbal*, started a special edition for women with Filip *Efendi*, publisher of *Vakit*. Although Server İskit *Bey* mentioned a special edition called *Hanımlar* (1882) in his book *Türkiye'de Matbuat Rejimleri*, unfortunately we have little information about it.²⁷ Another journal that started for women with the contributions of Mahmut Celaleddin *Bey* was *İnsaniyet* (1882). Unfortunately, we have had access to only two issues of this journal from February, 1883.

Şükûfezar was the first women's journal published by a woman, Arife, in 1883. It was a minor journal that was published every fifteen days and did not circulate for a long period of time. When *Şükûfezar* first started its run, "the woman question," Westernization, modernization and social progress were discussed as primary themes. Around the same period two supplementary newspapers for women, *Muhadderat* and *Aile*, began to appear. At this time the graduates of the *Muallime Mektepleri* (Female Teachers' Training Institute), who were frequent writers to these magazines, were increasing in number. In other words, they were not only teachers but also the voice of the newly educated Ottoman women. Arife *Hanım* stated the mission of the journal in the prologue of the first issue.

We are a group of people who were made fun of and mocked by men just by saying that we 'have long hair and are absent minded.' We are going to prove the opposite of this statement. By not preferring either manhood to womanhood or womanhood to manhood, we are going to progress in the working life with endurance. It is said that, justly or not, they [men] will protest and raise objection to our writing [articles]. It is none of our business. It is in the limits of our knowledge to respond to fair or unfair criticisms.²⁸

²⁶ Şefika Kurnaz, *Cumhuriyet Öncesinde Türk Kadını 1839-1923*, (Ankara: T.C. Başbakanlık Aile Araştırma Kurumu Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1991), 40.

²⁷ Server İskit, *Türkiye'de Matbuat Rejimleri*, (İstanbul, 1939), 53.

²⁸ Arife, "Mukaddime," (Preface) in *Şükûfezâr*, vol.1 (1886), 1-9.

Münif Paşa who published one of the first journals in Turkish, *Mecmûa-i Fûnûn*, was the father of Arife Hanım. An intellectual and reformist, he served as the Minister of Education (*Maârif Nazırlığı*). His article, “Ehemmiyet-i Terbiye-i Sıbyan”²⁹ (“Importance of Adolescent Education”) was very influential among the elite population of the Ottoman Empire. Arife Hanım certainly was influenced heavily by her father.

However, the editors of *Şûkûfezar* were not keen on politics and did not place much emphasis on the situation of women in the period. There were almost no articles on the demands of women; rather the journal concentrated on poems and writings, trying to prove that women were not mindless creatures. Such assertions were defended by Arife Hanım, Seher Hanım, Münire Hanım, and Fatma Nevber Hanım in the journal.

Another journal, *Mürûvvet Dergisi*, a supplementary issue of the newspaper *Mürûvvet*, gave great importance to education for women and was supported by Abdülhamid II. Unfortunately, *Mürûvvet Dergisi* did not circulate for a long period. It started in February 28, 1888 and ended in April 24, 1888.

In 1895, another newspaper that had great significance in the history of the women’s press began its run. *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, which circulated from 1895 to 1909, started to run two days a week and was later reduced to one day for a publication total of 580 issues. Mehmet Tahir Bey, the editor of *Tarık Gazetesi*, made it possible for *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* to be published. With Mehmet Tahir Bey’s petition to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the newspaper received permission to publish from the Sultan. The first issue included a long commentary on Sultan Abdülhamit II’s encouraging messages on opening more public schools. The commentary reflected the mission statement of the newspaper which centered on women and their demands. “A tribe is made up of the unification of families. If only one side of the family, man, improves himself with what he has gained from science, and woman

²⁹ Münif Paşa, “Ehemmiyet-i Terbiye-i Sıbyan,” (Importance of Adolescent Education) in *Mecmua-yı Fûnûn*, vol.1 (1862).

lacks the advantage of doing the same, the family, and therefore the society, can not show further development. (...) The more a woman is informed, the higher the chances are of a child reared by that woman having a higher-quality education.”³⁰

Although İbnül Hakkı Tahir *Bey* owned the newspaper after the first couple of years of its publication, Şadiye *Hanım* continued to administer it. Bearing in mind the period and the circumstances of the restricted gender roles in a business center, it can be assumed that Şadiye *Hanım* and Tahir *Bey* were a married couple.

Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete was devoted to education, fashion, embroidery, child care, and social activities for women. It also reported on newly established women’s organizations and printed articles on the lifestyle of Western and Islamic women. The contributors to *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* were encouraged to share their ideas through letters. They were paid a copyright fee if their poems or articles were published in the newspaper. It is also significant that the longest lived woman’s weekly of the time, *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, to which Fatma Aliye *Hanım* was an important contributor, proclaimed on its title page that it served three principles: being a good mother, a good wife, and a good Muslim.

The articles published in *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* indicated that the newspaper not only gave great importance to the education of women, and commented on the success Muslim women achieved in and around the world, but also made room for articles on being good parents, as well as raising children, doing housework and health. On a more political level, women in and outside of the country sent articles about women to the newspaper’s columns on internal affairs (*Dahilî Havâdât*) and international affairs (*Haricî Havâdât*). Along with these encouraging journalistic achievements, *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* announced that it would provide social aid by “giving five percent of its revenue to girls who [were] preparing to get married and to orphan girls as dowry money.”³¹

³⁰ “Tahdîd-i Nimet – Ta’yîn-i Meslek,” in *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, vol. 1 (August, 1895), 1.

³¹ “Önsöz,” (Prologue) in *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, vol. 1 (August, 1895), 1.

Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete became the place where women sent their essays, tales, and poems. Fatma Aliye, poet Nigar, Makbule Leman, Emine Seher, poet and composer Leyla Saz, Fahrúnisa, Hamiyet Zehra and Keçeçizade İkbâl *Hanımlar*, were some of those that published their own books after gaining valuable publishing experience and the encouragement of the newspaper. Among these were Makbule Leman *Hanım*'s *Ma'kes-i Hayâl* (1898), a compilation of her poems and tales published in *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, and Fatma Aliye *Hanım*'s works *Levâ-yih-i Hayât* (1899) and *Tedkîk-i Ecsâm* (1899).

Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete had a supplementary edition called *Hanım Kızlara Mahsus* that was published by Hatice and Samiha *Hanımlar*. The articles were designed to appeal to adolescent girls. The aim of the newspaper was announced as: "To spread education among women, and to serve as a vehicle to publish our female writers' works. It signals the national advancement of women. It is published only once a week with pictures, and costs one Lira."³²

After the defeat of Abdülhamid II in 1908, bolder steps were undertaken by women such as the discarding of veils, special lecture series for women, publishing women's journals and establishing women's organizations and clubs. With the *İkinci Meşrutiyet* (Second Constitutional Regime) the role of women's magazines in the changing society became more clearly defined. The magazines of this period were an important factor in the adoption of Western life-style and behavior. The most dramatic illustrations of this new direction were the covers of the magazines. The photographs and drawings of women on the covers were definitely far from the identity of Ottoman women. With the *İkinci Meşrutiyet* these journals started attacking the institution of polygamy, which was widespread among the ruling class. They called for equality between men and women and clearly defended the rights of women. As a result of the various governmental policies on behalf of women and with the atmosphere

³² Münir Süleyman Çapanoğlu, *Basın Tarihine Dair Bilgiler ve Hatıralar*, (İstanbul, 1962), 31.

of the relative freedom created by the revolution of 1908, women began to protest against the existing status of women through panels and meetings. With the increasing numbers of journals and women's associations, Ottoman women were beginning to gain authority in political affairs as well.

Demet began two months after the formation of the *İkinci Meşrutiyet* (Second Constitutional Regime) on September 30, 1908 as a weekly journal but it was published only seven times and closed down in November, 1908. The owner and the editor of *Demet* was Celal Sahir Bey. With its mission statement, the first issue of the journal announced that they “accept and publish various articles and art forms beneficial and appropriate to all Ottoman women.”³³

Even though this was a journal for women, in the first two issues there were more male writers than female ones. Among the male writers were: Celal Sahir, Cenap Şahabettin, Hüseyin Cahit, Ahmet Samim, Mustafa Namık, Selim Sırrı, and Fazıl Ahmet Beyler. In the following issues there were at least fifteen articles and among them at least three to four written by women. Nigar Bint-i Osman, Jülide, Ulviye, Şiven Perîde, Fatma Müzehher, Ruhsan Nevvâre (poem), İsmet Hakkı (prose), and Halide Salih *Hanımlar* (Halide Edip) were among the female writers of the journal.

The peculiarity of this journal was that articles about current political events were in high demand by women. In 1909 *Demet's* sudden disappearance disappointed many women who considered it an important journal that started right after the reformation and which gave women the right to be heard. Women wrote their disappointment in other women's journals and supported *Demet* to flourish. In 1908 and the following years the press became the means of reaching out to the rest of the world, a symbol for reform that created high expectations for many Turkish speakers.

³³ Mission Statement, in *Demet*, vol. 1 (September, 1908), 7.

The same year, the first issue of *Mehâsin* was announced in one of the issues of *Demet*, and began as a monthly journal in September of 1908. While it was owned by two Turkish men, Âsaf Muammer (Kütâsis) and Mehmet Rauf, the majority of the articles were written by women. This journal was a perfect example of cooperation between both men and women who were dedicated to educating women and raising consciousness among them. Most of the journals that were started helped the formation of the *İkinci Meşrutiyet* (Second Constitutional Regime), but failed to circulate for long, and *Mehâsin* was the longest lasting among them. It ran from September 1908 to November 1909, a total of twelve issues. Unfortunately, during the *31 Mart Vak'ası* (1909) *Mehâsin* did not circulate in April, May and June.

The publishers insisted on having more articles written by female authors in the journal. When Feride Leman *Hanım* asked whether it was possible to publish her article in *Mehâsin*, the publishers were astonished by this request, saying that *Mehâsin* was a journal belonging to women. Emine Seniye, Münevver Asım, Fatma Sabiha, Şükûfe Nihal, Halide Salih and Zühre *Hanımlar* were among the regular writers for *Mehâsin*.

Around the same period, *Kadın/Selanik* started in Thessalonica in October 26 of 1908 as a weekly journal and circulated until May 7 of 1909, thirty issues. Like *Demet* and *Mehâsin*, although the owner of *Kadın/Selanik* was male, this was a journal where women participated with their writings. The owner of *Kadın/Selanik*, poet Süleyman Bahri *Bey* and the editor Enis Avni (Aka Gündüz), were supporters of women's rights and freedom. One of the most important features of *Kadın/Selanik* that captured the attention of readers was the subject matter. For instance, the journal had special columns dedicated to childcare, clothing and embroidery. *Kadın/Selanik* made its readers aware of the newly opened schools for girls and initiatives taken on this particular subject, and other organizations that had opened for women as well. It also published articles specifically defending the rights of women and their

right to be educated. According to the first issue, the aim of the journal was to reach from “hut to mansion, palace to a poor house, eloquent to ordinary people, mediocre to the most advanced, like an intellectual information web consisting of small and big knots that surround womanhood through a triangulation.”³⁴

Some of the male writers of *Kadın/Selanik* were Ali Ulvi, Abdülhak Hamid, Abdullah Cevdet, Mehmet Emin, Celal Sahir and Kazım Nabi *Beyler*. *Kadın/Selanik* also had many women writers. Zekiye, Seniha Hikmet, Pakize Senniye, and Ayşe Ismet *Hanımlar* were among the regular and outspoken women writers of *Kadın/Selanik*. Especially the president of *Cemiyet-i Hayriyye-i Nisvan* (The Association for the Charity of Women) Zekiye *Hanım* wrote in almost all the issues of the journal. An active spokeswoman, she helped to increase the numbers of schools for girls and revitalized women’s organizations.

In 1911, two other journals started to run. While there is not much information about them, *Musavver Kadın* was a weekly journal that focused on political, scientific and literary issues, and *Kadın/İstanbul* attended to poems, tales, plays, and biographies of famous women. Health and beauty were some of the types of entertaining writings women readers wanted to see in *Kadın/İstanbul*. A column entitled *Beyaz Konferans* (*White Conference*) was an interesting part of this journal because it was providing information about the current events happening in Europe concerning women’s movements.

Kadınlar Dünyası started in April 17, 1913 and circulated until 1921. It was owned by Ulviyye Mevlân *Hanım* and directed by Emine Seher *Hanım*. While the first hundred issues were dailies, later the journal became weekly. Its publication was suspended during the First World War (1914); although it reappeared in 1918, it experienced a second interruption, and then resumed publication only for a brief period, in 1921.

³⁴ “İfâde-i Mahsûsa,” (Peculiarity in Expression) in *Kadın/Selanik*, vol.1 (October, 1908), 2.

Kadınlar Dünyası was a product of the organization *Osmanlı Müdafaa-ı Hukûk-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti* (The Defense of the Rights of Ottoman Women Association) which was founded in 1913 to promote paid employment and education for women. It called for the replacement of the veil with a headscarf, thus leaving the face uncovered. Journals published and written by women aimed at creating an information network among women. It had an explicitly feminist agenda and held the stated purpose of “promoting women’s legal rights.” The staff of this journal was entirely composed of women. Ulviyye Mevlân, Aziz Haydar, Belkıs Şevket, Mûkerrem Belkıs, and Nimet Cemil *Hanımlar*, wrote for *Kadınlar Dünyası*. Their articles raised some concrete demands, for instance, women’s attire and women’s right to higher education were among some of them. They reported and commented on the advances that women had made, and analyzed the status of women. These writers expressed their opinions in a lively and inviting environment. Even when they fell short of making demands, they repeatedly stated that women were treated as second class citizens, did not enjoy equal rights with men in marriage, and were dependent on men for their livelihood. They also argued that men held restrictive and oppressive attitudes towards women, while criticizing the mentality behind it. Condemning arranged marriages, they advocated unions that would give the wife an equal say and that would have the couple live in their own domicile as an independent family.

Kadınlar Dünyası seemed to have closely followed all developments and expressed opinions and comments on them. As stated earlier, it demanded and struggled for a women’s right to higher education. In 1914, when some classes for women were initiated at *Darülfünun*, the authors criticized the program for offering what they considered to be the most important course, “Hukûk-ı Nisvân” (Women’s Rights), at an hour inconvenient for women. Similarly, important events elsewhere, such as the stagnation of the suffrage movement in England, were not missed, but addressed with care.

Kadınlar D nyası was also the first journal that published photographs of Muslim women. The women who were photographed happened to be the authors of the journal and members of the *Osmanlı M dafaa-ı Huk k-ı Nisv n Cemiyeti*. These women were the representatives of the modern Turkey with their Western looking dresses and were detached from *tesett r* (the concealing of women’s hair, face, and body) which symbolized their past. Through *Kadınlar D nyası*, it is clear that the association had some foreign membership; the journal published their articles, as well as articles about them, and some issues included material in French.

The contributors to *Kadınlar D nyası* demonstrated mastery in polemical writing in the way they answered reactions and criticisms. As a response to various accusations about being an “imitation,” instead of providing superficial defenses, they calmly explained the meaning of their work both for women and society.

An article in a 1914 issue of *Kadınlar D nyası* noted that *Osmanlı M dafaa-ı Huk k-ı Nisv n Cemiyeti* received no financial assistance from the state, unlike other associations such as *Hil l-ı Ahmer Kad nlar Cemiyeti* or *Esirgeme Derneđi*, but that it received moral support from some prominent members of *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*; Cemal PaŐa, the Minister of the Navy; Enver PaŐa, the Minister of Military Affairs; Talat Bey, the Minister of Internal Affairs; and Cavit Bey, the Minister of Finance. Despite the lack of monetary aid from the state, it was still recognized and supported by some the country’s most powerful statesmen.

In sum, *Kadınlar D nyası* served as the intellectual foundation of the *Osmanlı M dafaa-ı Huk k-ı Nisv n Cemiyeti* that maintained the goal of establishing educational institutions for women, which in themselves worked to improve workplace conditions for women. It also created outdoor attire that would be appropriate for the religion but would allow women to be active outside the home. The magazine argued in favor of abolishing all unnecessary and wrong traditions related to marriage, strengthened women’s position within

the family, educated mothers to raise children following the new pedagogical guidelines, and brought women into public life. In a dynamic and vibrant setting, it brought together different women who tried to develop the conditions suitable for the kind of existence they desired. This is why in its pages one could find articles entitled “İnsanlığın İki Kanadı, Feminizm ve Sosyalizm” (Two Wings of Humanity: Feminism and Socialism)³⁵. In a sentimental tone Mükkerrem Belkıs *Hanım* stated that they would attain the socialist ideals of equality and freedom along with feminism. She indicated that these two currents did not emerge as an unplanned desire but were developed —by women, scientists, and workers through centuries as a response to people’s needs— as a means of relief that would elevate society. Current studies on early leftist movements in the Ottoman Empire indicated that there was no comprehensive knowledge of socialism; the expressions of leftist thinking had little depth. Although Mükkerrem Belkıs *Hanım* did not claim to be a spokesperson for those groups, her article reflected the traces of these socialist writings and their intellectual framework.

Some of the other important women journals that were published before 1923 were *Osmanlı Kadınlar Alemi (Ottoman Women’s World)* (1914), *Hanımlar Alemi (Lady’s World)* (1914), *Erkekler Dünyası (Men’s World)* (1914), *Seyyale (Stream)* (1914), *Siyaset (Politics)* (1914), *Kadınlık Hayatı (Life of Womanhood)* (1915), *Bilgi Yurdu Işığı (Homeland of the light of Knowledge)* (1917), and *Genç Kadın Dergisi (Journal for Young Women)* (1918). Among these, the magazine which reflected the new Ottoman woman’s identity for the first time was *İnci* (1919). With hairs peeking from under a tied headscarf, pearls on an open neckline, and make-up, a new image of the Ottoman woman was created on the covers. The magazine *Sûs* (1923) also had a similar look. With the Republican era, the image of the woman in publications was just the same as the Western woman with her clothes and life-style. Woman’s journals played an important role in achieving this change.

³⁵ Mükkerrem Belkıs, “İnsanlığın İki Kanadı, Feminizm ve Sosyalizm” (Two Wings of Humanity: Feminism and Socialism) in *Kadınlar Dünyası* (1918), 3-4.

EDUCATION

Women's journals showed that by the end of the nineteenth century, upper class Ottoman women found the opportunity to articulate their demands within the context of a well thought out agenda and the changes produced by the modernization process. The articles emphasized that the education of girls was the first step in creating conditions for change. Families were continuously encouraged to abandon their old attitudes towards their daughters who were, it was argued, imprisoned at home instead of being sent to school. Their families believed that they should be prepared for marriage and might lose sight of this goal if they were educated.

Until then contemporary psychologists had explained the low achievement of women simply by restating the patriarchal creed of a dichotomy between men and women in which men were described as active and intellectual and women as passive and emotional. This belief in the psychological and intellectual differences between men and women is basic to the process of the different socialization of boys and girls. This belief system allowed males to discourage females from seeking higher education because an improved education would help stimulate changes in the fields of work, political participation and all the other aspects of women's lives. Evidence for this attitude was segregated education for women in women's colleges; women's reluctance to compete directly with men in professions; their selection of certain specialties as particularly suitable for females in education and professions; and so on. Some examples of this kind of discrimination were women's dominance in teaching, and nursing and their scarcity in other fields of medicine and educational administration.

By the time the first journal, *Şükûfezar*, was published in 1886, several secondary schools existed for girls with increasing numbers of students. The graduates of these schools, along with those of the Teachers Training Schools for Girls (*Darülmualimat*), which had been established in 1870, formed a body of readers and contributors. Male reformists, by

emphasizing the significance of the “woman question” for the modernization and development of society, were generally supportive of women’s demands.

Ottoman women’s demands paralleled the struggle for women’s rights in the West. Ottoman activists followed women’s movements around the world but stressed that living in an Islamic society set different conditions for them. When they discussed their demands within the framework of Islam, they preferred to provide examples from the early Islamic period when Prophet Muhammad ruled. It is interesting to question whether religious concerns were more obvious in Islamic societies than they were in contemporary Western Europe.

At the turn of the twentieth century, when social issues started to be addressed in a secular framework, women participated in the debates by raising secular arguments. The structure of Ottoman society and the prominence of Islamic law allowed women to see the hierarchal order and power relations between men and women. Many women did not ignore the gender dimension and defined their problems in terms of manhood and womanhood. However, during the transition period from the traditional Ottoman age to the Republican era, the emphasis on gender disadvantage was weakened, partially due to the emphasis put on the ideal of a new united society.

By speaking in public, writing and approaching issues from their own life experience, and making diagnostic observations about male domination women began to generate a “discourse” that explained their situation. In the process of writing and publishing articles by the journals’ authors, as well as letters and articles sent by readers, a definition of desirable womanhood appeared. It included the right to education, the right to work outside home, the opportunity to be a good mother, and the right to make one’s own decisions about one’s life, education and marriage.

However, when one examines the demands of the women's associations, and the content of the journals, it is hard to identify different feminist perspectives. While different tendencies may be identified, no theorized differences can be found. Differences are observed mainly in the ways the writers attempted to articulate and justify the same, shared demands. While one group stressed the "benefit to society," others, though still emphasizing "social good," reflected a more militant tone against restrictions on women and their confinement in traditional roles. Nevertheless, those who wanted women to be good mothers and wives and those who wanted women to be able to enter nontraditional areas still agreed on the need for women's education.

Starting with the Tanzimat, radical reforms started to take place in the educational system. In 1848, *Darülmüallim* (Male Teachers' School) opened. *Sübyan Mektepleri* was the only school where no gender restrictions were present. Unfortunately, religious obligations prevented the female children from going on to secondary education. When they hit puberty, they had to be separated from the rest of the world. It was necessary to open formal education for female students. Gradually the perception of women and the discourse about them changed, thus creating a more favorable environment for women's education. Beginning in 1842, government schools, ranging from primary to the high school level, were opened to female students under Sultan Abdülaziz (1830-1876).

Apart from the Tanzimat reforms, the 1856 *Islahat Reformları* (Improvement reforms) aimed to revitalize the education system. The principles of the *Islahat Reformları* were "regardless of gender and politics, schools are going to be opened for everyone but, their [schools] curricula and teachers are going to be assigned and controlled by the *Meclis-i Maarif* [Ministry of Education]."³⁶ In 1858, a secondary school for girls (*Kız Rüştiyesi*) began to operate in İstanbul. Although it was not desired, the education was provided by male

³⁶ Necdet Sakaoğlu, "Eğitim Tartışmaları," (Discussions on Education) in *Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 15 (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), 5.

teachers. This problem brought the demand to educate female teachers, and thus the *Muallime Mektepleri* (Female Teachers' Training Institute) was established in 1870. Those who graduated from the *Muallime Mektepleri* were sent to different parts of the country to educate other women.³⁷ But, until then older men with good moral reputations served in the girls' schools.

Later, in 1868, *Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi* (Regulation of Public Education), the government required all female children between the ages of 6-11 to enroll in primary school.³⁸ In the 1876 *Kanun-i Esasi* (Constitution of 1876), the Ottoman Sultan directed that "all the Ottoman population [including women] would compulsorily receive primary education."³⁹ Even though *Kız Rüştiyesi* started to function, it was way behind in curriculum compared to that of the secondary school for males (*Erkek Rüştiyesi*). Female students were educated in narrow, tight and dark classrooms with barred windows. The curriculum was organized according to Ottoman social expectations for women and the classes were: embroidery, handicrafts, home economics, ethics and morals. The government explained the goal of the *Kız Rüştiyesi* as, "It is important to read and write both for men and women. But because a man works hard to support his family, a woman should make him comfortable at home, be on familiar terms with religion and world, obey her husband's commands and avoid unwanted desires, protect their honor, and be faithful and domestic."⁴⁰ Unfortunately, the whole purpose of the girls' schools was to create responsible housewives. Women were struggling for the right to be educated as equals to men, and they wanted to improve themselves which would later help to raise self-conscious, intellectual children for the future, not just responsible housewives. The graduates of the *Muallime Mektepleri* emphasized that a

³⁷ Faik Reşit Unat, *Türkiye Eğitim Sisteminin Gelişimine Tarihi Bir Bakış*, (Ankara: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1964), 42-44.

³⁸ Emel Doğramacı, *Türkiye'de Kadının Dünü ve Bugünü*, (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 1989), 20.

³⁹ Suna Kili and A. Şeref Gözübüyük, *Türk Anayasa Metinleri: Sened-i İttifaktan Günümüze*, (Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Yayınları, 1985), 43.

⁴⁰ Osman Ergin, *Türkiye Maarif Tarihi*, vol. 2 (İstanbul: Osmanbey Matbaası, 1939), 382.

teacher is one of the biggest factors in the socialization, and the cultural and behavioral development of a child's life.

Another educational institution, which evolved during the Tanzimat period, was the *konak* (mansion) system. Unfortunately, only the daughters of generals, scholars or judges gained access to such education. In the age of Mahmud II (1808-1839), wealthy families had their children learn Persian, Arabic, French, literature and music. Such education was obtained either privately from foreign teachers or from their parents. Fatma Aliye *Hanım*, daughter of Cevdet Paşa, was an enlightened member of the *ulema* and the main author of the *Mecelle*, the Ottoman Civic Code and a member of the upper class, who had benefited from private *konak* education. In her autobiography, Fatma Aliye (1864-1924), one of the leading literary figures of the late Ottoman period, described herself as the first woman intellectual of the *konak* system. She was an author, a translator and a pioneer who wrote articles in women's magazines and became the first woman to take a public stand against polygamy. In 1895, she published an article in the newspaper *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, in which she argued that the precepts of the *Qur'an* did not necessarily require polygamy. In her articles she also demanded the education of women saying,

It appears that in civilized societies men advance first in knowledge and science and women follow their path. But men, as they enter this treasure house, get jealous of women who follow them and want to deny them the gems of this treasure. When we say this has always been the case, it means that they [men] have done it. However, since Cenab-ı Allah [the Almighty], who is the possessor of the virtue of knowledge bestowed it to all of his subjects, male and female, [then] is it the right of men to deny it to women?⁴¹

Among the other most important figures of the Tanzimat were the poet and composer Leyla Saz (1850-1936), Nigar (1862-1918), Makbule Leman, İhsan Raif and Emine Seniye

⁴¹ Fatma Aliye, in *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* (1895), 2-3.

Hanımlar. They were all privileged daughters of intellectual fathers who considered the education of their daughters of utmost importance.⁴²

Another significant Turkish woman in this list was the novelist Halide Edib Adivar⁴³ (1884-1964) who is also said to have received private lessons in French. Emerging in the first decade of the twentieth century, Adivar was an important women writer of Turkey. In her two-volume autobiography, *Memoirs of Halide Edib* (1926-1928), she wrote that she discovered her vocation as a writer during the constitutional reform movement of 1908 led by the *Jön Türkler* (Young Turks). She was involved in the events of 1908 to 1922, a period of wars and revolutions, both as an activist and an author. She published articles and gave speeches about women's emancipation.

With the departure of Abdülhamid, more Muslim girls entered the American College for Girls. In 1908, Halide Edip Adivar, one of its graduates, helped organize one of the first women's clubs, the *Teal-i Nisvan Cemiyeti* (Association for the Elevation of Women). This association arranged courses and conferences for women in İstanbul.

After the creation of a women's department within the University of İstanbul, (*Nisvan Darüflunun*), regular courses for women began in February 1914. Atatürk greatly admired the support he received from women and praised their contributions: "In Turkish society, women have not lagged behind men in science, scholarship, and culture. Perhaps they have even gone further ahead."⁴⁴ Unfortunately, only members of the small privileged, urban elite accomplished these achievements. It is likely that the majority of Ottoman women, especially the ones living in the rural areas of the country patiently accepted male supremacy.

⁴² Zehra Toska, "Çağdaş Türk Kadını Kimliği'nin Oluşumunda İlk Aşama: Tanzimat Kadını," in *Tarih ve Toplum* vol.21, (İstanbul, 1994), 59.

⁴³ Halide Edib Adivar, a novelist, university lecturer and politician was leader of the women's emancipation movement in Turkey. During Turkey's War of Independence she was a close associate of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the nationalist movement, and was given the honorary rank of colonel. For more information see *Memoirs of Halide Edib*, (New York: Arno Press, 1972 [c1926]).

⁴⁴ Halide Edib Adivar, *Memoirs of Halide Edib*, (New York: Arno Press, 1972 [c1926]), 180.

In their published articles, the women writers argued that women, as the ones responsible for raising children, should be educated in order to further the nation's progress and development. However, women did not demand education only in order to contribute to the society by fulfilling their duties as good mothers and wives. The overall context and spirit of the writings suggested other motivations as well. The women emphasized education because they also believed that only through education could they establish a presence and equality with men. Through education women could capture the sense of self-confidence that they had been lacking. In their concrete demands for education, women wanted the number of schools for girls to increase and the constitution and form of the educational system to improve. What kind of an education system were women proposing? What were some of the suggestions and solutions put forward about this problem? What kind of rights did women demand from the government?

In the magazine *Demet* which has started in 1908, İsmet Hakkı *Hanım* emphasized the significance of reading, writing and a broad education with these words:

The time of tiring our hands in the textile industry has passed. We are tired of manual jobs. Let us operate our minds. With our needles and threads, let our ideas and hearts grow tired. In my opinion, a girl must read and know everything about science. (...) Their education should be as strong and skillful as men: among the jobs as necessary and obligatory as embroidery, women must study science, and be able to form an opinion when asked.⁴⁵

Women emphasized that the only tool to eliminate ignorance and bigotry was education. Only through education could women question whether the values required of them reflect the truth or not; only then would they be able to satisfy and be acquainted with themselves. In *Kadınlar Dünyası*, Perihan Arif Sarıgüzel, among the women contributing on the education issue, wrote, "one of the reasons for this catastrophe is the absence of knowledge and education. Today women are created solely for the purpose of men and dedicate all their strength and sacrifice themselves and their life to their husband's needs. To

⁴⁵ İsmet Hakkı Hanım, "Kadınlarımız ve Maarif," (Our Women and Education) in *Demet* vol. 2 (September, 1908), 24-27.

this slavery is added ignorance...”⁴⁶ To explain women’s lack of education, many reasons were proposed, among them the intolerance and narrow-mindedness of fathers as the most important. Aziz Haydar, also in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, wrote,

Our men find us [women] guilty all the time. Whatever happens, they claim that ‘women are ignorant.’ Our women are illiterate! Yes, this cannot be denied. But, who are the ones that leave them uneducated? Is it our precious fathers who raise an objection against their daughters’ pursuit of higher education after they are twelve? Let’s say that our mothers are not conversant. I wonder how benevolent our men are towards us. What kind of a self-sacrifice and endeavor did they show us? None! Is not it? What do they expect from us? What right do they have to make demands on us?⁴⁷

Unfortunately, around this time it was commonly held that education would corrupt women’s morals. In *Kadınlar Dünyası* these views were criticized. The women writers insisted that if women were to have morals, they would require an education:

Ignorance, bigotry and captivity... As you can see these three unfortunate judgments are oppressing our very souls and killing us. Today most of our teenage daughters are deprived of education. It is their parents’ hindrance in this matter. We constantly hear in great amazement and grief about ‘what is the use of educating daughters? Once they learn to write, they will only produce love letters and be wicked.’ It is extremely painful to hear these crude words that hurt our ears. We insist that it be acknowledged that those who are trapped in the corruption of ignorance are the ones who were denied the light of education.⁴⁸

Lütfü Üsküdar, one of the writers in *Kadınlar Dünyası* went even further in blaming those who forbid the education of women saying, “I think those who argue that scientific, technical and social knowledge is not for women and hinder their education are treacherous and enemies of our nation.”⁴⁹ Women claimed that it was Islam that required giving women the right to be educated, “Prophet Muhammad required education and science to every

⁴⁶ Perihan Arif Sarıgüzel, “Azim ve Sebat,” (Determination and Perseverance) in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, vol. 34 (May, 1911), 3-4.

⁴⁷ Aziz Haydar, “Bizde Kız Evladlarının Tahsili,” (Education of Girls in our Country) in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, vol. 13 (April, 1911), 2-3.

⁴⁸ Feride İzzet Selim Gedikpaşa, “Kadınlarımızda Lüzum-ı Tahsil,” (The Necessity of Education for Women) in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, vol. 160 (1911), 4-5.

⁴⁹ S. Lütfü Üsküdar “Muhterem Kadınlar Dünyası Vasıtasıyla,” (With the help of Women’s World Magazine) in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, vol. 115 (October, 1911), 7.

[female, male] believer. It is clear that the continuity of humankind is through knowledge and our Prophet ordered us to be educated; then why remain in ignorance?”⁵⁰

The more power women gained in society, the more they felt comfortable with their own identity. Women used education as an instrument that allowed them to exist as individuals separate from men and able to represent themselves without using the name of their father or husband as a source of identity. For instance, while in earlier publications women signed as *Mustafa Beyin haremi* (The wife of Mustafa Bey), or *Hakkı Paşa kerimesi Fatma* (Fatma, the daughter of Hakkı Pasha), later publications showed that women used their full names, (eg. Aliye Cevad).

FAMILY

The aim of this section is to address widespread misconceptions about the status of Islamic women in the family, especially during the Tanzimat period of Ottoman rule. I will try to provide a brief explanation of Ottoman Family Law, supported by evidence from several Ottoman court records. However, the main goal of this section is to account for how Ottoman women viewed their circumstances and family life, and how they voiced their frustrations in the journals.

Islamic Family Law, which includes all matters of inheritance for Muslims, is an integral part of a rich, complex and highly sophisticated system of Islamic jurisprudence (commonly known as Shari’a) that can be traced back to the eighth and ninth centuries C.E. Significant theological and jurisprudential differences existed from the very beginning not only between Sunni and Shi’a Muslim jurists, but also among the different schools of legal interpretation, and indeed often within the same school of thought. Ottoman Family Law principally originated from Islamic Law (Shari’a), practiced over six hundred years. The

⁵⁰ Anonymous, “Avrupa’da Osmanlı Kızlarımızın Sadası,” (Voices Ottoman Girls in Europe) in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, vol. 42 (May, 1911), 1.

most important evidence for an accurate understanding of the Ottoman legal order is the Shari'a court records (*sicils*), preserved and maintained by the Ottoman courts.

Shari'a court records of the Ottoman Empire primarily handled Islamic family law but in addition to marriage, divorce and inheritance agreements, they also recorded sales deeds, commercial partnership contracts, *waqf* (endowment) deeds and building authorizations.⁵¹ These documents have been preserved in different places of the former Ottoman Empire either fully or partially, and included documentation of trials and other legal procedures that took place in the courts of the Ottoman Empire. These court records provided more opportunities in Middle Eastern studies, especially regarding the Ottoman Empire. They are regarded as one of the most important sources for the study of the history of Middle Eastern societies, especially as regards the role of women. There are over 20,000 registers in these cases alone for İstanbul and its suburbs. A rich amount of information on the social and economic conditions of Ottoman women's daily experiences can be found in these court records. They contain information on women's lives within the family: property ownership, child custody, marriage and divorce, petitions, and inheritance distributions. Of course, one must use these Islamic court records carefully.

One of the first studies made on the position of women in societies, using the Ottoman *kadı*⁵² court records, was Ronald Jennings' well known work "Women in early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records-The Shari'a Court of Anatolian Kayseri."⁵³ Through analyzing the *Şer'iyeye Sicilleri*, that is, the records of the Shari'a⁵⁴ courts, Jennings showed that women in the seventeenth century participated in public life and frequently made property transactions. Women came freely and openly to the court, as litigants, sued people and were sued by others.

⁵¹ Ahmet Akgündüz, *Şer'iyeye Sicilleri* vol.1 (İstanbul: Türk Dünyası Araştırmaları Vakfı Yayınları, 1988).

⁵² Kadı, who is appointed by the highest office of the State or authorized officials, execute judicial tasks and apply possible reliable solutions at the Shari'a courts. Kadı also formulates Shari'a judgments and marriage contracts.

⁵³ Ronald C. Jennings, "Women in Early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records—The Shari'a Court of Anatolian Kayseri," in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. XVIII (1975), 51-52.

⁵⁴ The Shari'a that is the Islamic law, provided set of legal rights to women, such as inheritance shares, right to own property, and initiate divorce.

Haim Gerber, for his part, analyzed the position of women in Bursa, a foremost commercial city in seventeenth century Anatolia, stating, “From over 2,000 estates of males read, it is estimated that in no more than twenty cases did a man have two or more wives. Polygamy evidently existed only in theory, at least in Bursa.”⁵⁵ Thus Gerber argues that the lives of women appeared differently than depicted by the common stereotype.

The age of Tanzimat and the era of Mahmud II (1808-1839), along with the period that followed, were times of new developments affecting the judicial bodies in the Ottoman Empire. One of the main consequences of this process was that the Shari’a court system, previously the principal court system of the Ottoman state, lost its exclusivity in favor of a multiple-court system which conducted legal procedures according to various codes, of which the Shari’a law was only one. The jurisdiction of the Shari’a court system shrank considerably, and the Shari’a law of the family became its only field of concern. Another aspect of these reforms was a reorganization of the hierarchy of the Shari’a courts and their judges, as well as the instructions and regulations regarding the work of the court and its procedures. It would thus appear that all these changes forced the Shari’a court to redefine its position as a representative of state justice in relation to its legal counterparts and clientele.

With the transformation of the Shari’a courts, a new *Mecelle* (or Ottoman civil code, compiled from 1869 to 1876) became the first codification of Islamic law in history. It comprised the law of property and some general principles, in particular a number of rules concerning ownership and transaction. However, the code did not touch upon the topics of family or succession, treated by the *Hukuk-u Aile Kararnamesi* (Ottoman Family Law) of 1917. The Ottoman Family Law aimed at abolishing the privileged status of foreigners and consolidated the laws governing family, regardless of ethnicity or religion. When Turkey became a republic in 1923, the Swiss Civil Code of 1907 was taken as the model for her civil

⁵⁵ Haim Gerber, “Social and Economic Position of Women in an Ottoman City, Bursa, 1600-1700,” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 12, issue 3 (1980), 232.

code. However, because the law was adopted quite suddenly, the judicial system was unable to adapt, and even now, there is a gulf between the law and its practice.

Following this period the position of women in Ottoman political affairs became an ideological terrain upon which progressive and traditionalist points of views argued their differences. Like Rousseau and Condorcet, Ottoman traditionalists saw women as mothers and wives who were responsible for the well being of the Ottoman man and for the creation of future enlightened generations. To create responsible citizens, it was necessary first to educate and enlighten women who were the mothers of the modern citizens of the Ottoman Empire. Women trapped in the shackles of tradition and superstition could not fulfill this role. Traditionally arranged marriages, divorce laws leading to the easy repudiation of wives, polygamy, and the segregation of the sexes were seen as constituting the major obstacles to the education and liberation of women.

The progressives argued that the emancipation of women was a prerequisite of advancement in civilization. Şinasi's satirical play, *Şair Evlenmesi* (*The Marriage of the Poet*), written in 1859, is considered one of the earliest criticisms of the traditional arranged marriage system.⁵⁶ It was a comedy criticizing the established marriage system based on female go-between. In his article "Aile," Namık Kemal (1840-1888), the editor of the newspaper, *İbret*, also criticized the oppressive and unreasonable aspects of marriage and family life, as well as women's overall position in society. He wrote, "Hey Unfortunate mother! What is the trouble that while you were so used to having your dearest child inside you that when she left your body, you tore apart; you hand your dear child to a foreigners' bed without her consent and shift her from soft cotton cushions to her grave."⁵⁷ Ahmed Mithat Efendi (1844-1912), founder of the newspaper *Tercüman-ı Hakikat*, also criticized the

⁵⁶ Şinasi, *Şair Evlenmesi* (*The Marriage of the Poet*) (İstanbul, 1982 [1860]).

⁵⁷ Namık Kemal, "Aile," (Family) in *İbret*, vol. 56 (20 November, 1872).

institution of marriage in his article “Bekarlık Sultanlık Mı Dedin?”⁵⁸ Şemseddin Sami (1850-1904) addressed the need for women’s education in his pamphlet *Kadınlar (Women)*. He believed that only through the education of women, could families function in their proper way. He added, “What woman means is equal to what family is.”⁵⁹ These writers called for reforms in women’s education, legal status and rights and condemned the ignorant state in which Ottoman women were kept.⁶⁰

During this transition process, women discussed their status within the family in journals and magazines, and made suggestions on the betterment of their position in their domestic life. It is known that women’s real grievances, burdens, frustrations and inequities in their lives occurred behind closed doors. Most women presented a good face in public, but on the inside, they were being torn apart. Family life demanded more adjustments and sacrifices on the part of the woman. Throughout history, and the Ottoman period was no exception, women have been viewed as the linchpin of successful marriages. In the past and because of the compromises forced on women, it was usually assumed that a woman adopted her husband’s politics and his way of life. Changes had occurred, but law and social custom have not yet adjusted to them. Feminism and feminist writers had to make the private public, the invisible, visible and the personal, political. With the help of new publications, Ottoman women expressed their immediate thoughts about marriage by discussing the disadvantages of

⁵⁸ Ahmed Mithat Efendi, “Bekarlık Sultanlık Mı Dedin?” (Did You Say Bachelorhood is a Sultanship?) in *Letâif-i Rivâyet* vol. 10 (İstanbul, 1877), 38-81.

⁵⁹ Şemseddin Sami, *Kadınlar* (İstanbul : Mihran Matbaası, 1893), 3.

⁶⁰ For more information on important books and articles about family, woman, children and household please look at, Fatma Aliye and Mahmud Esad, *Ta’addüd-i Zevcat-Zeyl* (KostantiniyeMalumat Kütüphanesi, 1898); Ahmed Rıza, *Vazife ve Mesuliyet: Kadın* (Paris, 1906); Abdullah Cevdet, “İcmâl-i Mukadderât-ı Nisa,” in *Kadın*, vol.16 (1906); Halil Hamid, İslamiyette Feminizm Yahut Alem-i Nisvan’da Mûsâvât-ı Tâmmе (İstanbul: Keteon Matbaası, 1908); Şeyhulislâm Musa Kâzım, “Hürriyet-Mûsavat,” (Kadın Hakları) in *Külliyât-ı Şeyhulislâm Musa Kazım, Dini, İçtimai Makaleler* (Sırat-ı Müstakim, 1908); Ruşen Zeki, “Bizde Hareket-i Nisvân,” in *Nesvâl-i Milli* (1911); Celal Nuri, “Türk Kadınının Vaziyet-i Hazırası,” in *Kadınlarımız* (İstanbul: Matbaa-ı İçtihad, 1912); Tüccarzâde İbrahim Hilmi, “Aile Hayatımızda Avrupahlaşmanın Tesiri,” in *Avrupahlaşmak, Felaketlerimizin Esbâbı* (Dersaadet Matbaa-ı Hayriye, 1914); Said Halim Paşa, “Hürriyet-i Nisvâniye,” in *Buhranlarımız* (İstanbul: Şems Matbaası, 1919); Ziya Gökalp, Aile Ahlâkı-3: Konak,” in *Yeni Mecmua*, vol. 12-17 (1917); Ahmed Refik, “Osmanlı Tarihinde Kadın,” in *Yeni Mecmua*, vol. 65 (1918); Mehmed Şemseddin, “İslam Hanımı,” in *İslâm Mecmuası*, vol. 55 (1915-1917); Haşim Nahid and Şeyhulislâm Mustafa Sabri, “Aile Hayatı, Tesettür Meselesi, Kadın Hukuku,” in *Dini Müceddiler Yahut Türkiye İçin Necat ve İtila Yolları’nda Bir Rehber* (İstanbul: Şehzadebaşı Evkaf Matbaası, 1919-1921).

arranged marriages. Almost all the Ottoman women who wrote on the subject of arranged marriage did so with conviction and compassion.

The kind of marriage desired by Ottoman women readers and contributors was set forth clearly. The desired marriage was the union of a man and a woman who choose each other as partners. Although traditional family relations at the time would not have supported nuclear family structures, the discourse of Ottoman women's articles reflected a new desire by women to live in nuclear families. However, we should not see this preference for nuclear families as stemming from the exposure to various alluring images and discourses of Westernized lifestyles in cities such as İstanbul, Thessalonica, and İzmir. Women's writings on this subject clearly stated that their insistence on independent domiciles stemmed from the discomforts of their own living arrangements such as the difficulty of living with the husband's family and their yearning for breathing space.

Two journals published in 1908, *Mehasin* and *Kadın/Selanik*, frequently addressed topics such as problems with arranged marriages, unnecessary marriage traditions, and the need for suitable matches. The writers considered educational opportunities as necessary for women to catch up with men and to share everything with men. *Kadınlar Dûnyası* further emphasized the empowerment of women within nuclear families, women's right to divorce, and the transformation of demands into legal rights. *Kadınlar Dûnyası* also included articles on polygamy. However, the topic was not made a priority, probably because at the time polygamy was not common and usually not well received within educated and wealthy circles in cities like İstanbul. When it was raised, women referred to polygamy as unacceptable and expressed their belief that it would disappear once women could earn their own living. Two of the most prominent women of the period who wrote their life stories, the poetess Nigar *Hanım* in the late nineteenth century, and the novelist and feminist Halide Edib Adivar in the early twentieth, both had arranged marriages. Having had the personal experience of

polygamy – both her father and her first husband had taken second wives – Halide Edib Adivar expressed her abhorrence, “On my own childhood, polygamy and its results produced a very ugly and distressing impression. The constant tension in our home made every simple family ceremony seem like a physical pain, and the consciousness of it hardly left me.”⁶¹ A fine example of this attitude is seen in Nimet Cemil’s article, “Yine Feminizm, Daima Feminizm!” (Feminism Again, Feminism Always!), written as a response to famous male novelist Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu following the establishment of the new Family Law in 1917, criticizing polygamy and the necessity for legal rights in marriage:

I wish the Turkish woman had as many rights as Yakup Kadri *Bey* thinks and that we were in the position of working on expanding our rights; unfortunately the situation is completely different. Although, due to the feminist movement of the last five or ten years, some rights were acquired, we were not able to reach our goal. There are still some important rights to acquire. Especially in marriage, women’s legal rights are far behind men’s legal rights. How can a woman who does not even have the right to see and meet her prospective husband be an equal of a man who can divorce his wife any time he wants or who is completely free to take another wife while already married to one? If you approach this issue from a woman’s perspective, you can easily understand how tragic it is.⁶²

Kadınlar Dûnyası was described as “the voice of Ottoman women, an advocate for women’s rights and a pioneer in creating an awareness of these issues.”⁶³ It called attention to wife beating, societal pressure on women, arranged marriages; second-class treatment and denial of entry to the work force due to claims that housework, childcare and care of one’s husband would suffer. These issues were debated by readers and their contributions were solicited. Solutions were sought, and an independent movement seen as necessary. In one of the articles, the lack of understanding and recognition by the Ottoman women’s husband was discussed: “It must be understood that women were not created to be a whim, a machine, a

⁶¹ Halide Edib Adivar, *Memoirs of Halide Edib*, (New York: Arno Press, 1972 [c1926]).

⁶² Nimet Cemil, “Yine Feminizm, Daima Feminizm!” (Feminism Again, Feminism Always!) in *Kadınlar Dûnyası* (1921), 2.

⁶³ “İki Söz,” (Two Words) in *Kadınlar Dûnyası*, vol. 154 (1919), 2.

vehicle for bearing children. We must tell our men that women do not only exist for pleasure and entertainment, and they serve a venerable purpose for the well-being of humankind.”⁶⁴

Kadınlar Dünyası sought to reform existing family law by encouraging acceptance of the model of the egalitarian family. Members of the association attacked the traditional privileges given to men in such areas such as marriage and divorce and particularly in regard to the practice of polygamy. The magazine interrogated the image of “woman” in society: “[I]n this country woman is not respected, she does not have her rights and she does not belong to any class. In these circumstances, the woman who is not privileged to have her own rights and is treated poorly is obviously unhappy.”⁶⁵ The magazine asserted that Turkish women should not be covered in a black veil destined to live in darkness, but liberated. Ulviye Mevlan’s article “İçtimai Derdlerimizden Zevce-Zevce” (One of Our Social Suffering, Husband and Wife) reflected many women’s thoughts on the subject of marriage and how a family needed to be associated:

What does womanhood wants? ... First of all [women] want to acquire their legal rights, to obtain status in their homes, and to be good wives and good mothers. To make a home, to arrange a house and to organize a happy family requires a good wife and a good mother, it also requires a good father and a husband as well. (...) Both sides need to be equal emotionally, ideologically, and practically; to be exact, they need to be partners, friends.⁶⁶

Another essential subject that animated the minds of the Ottoman women was the right to divorce. In her article “Talak” (Divorce) Nimet Cemil demanded the right to divorce for women and presented her requirements not only for men (husbands), but also for the government. Cemil *Hanım* asked for laws to protect women and their children from their husbands and against the harsh realities of life in *Kadınlar Dünyası*.

As it is apparent to all that one of the biggest, in fact the biggest social problems of our society, is the abundance of divorce cases and how this problem is not handled by the

⁶⁴ Rabia, “Birinci Mesele: Terbiyet-i Hatramızın Vucub-i Islahı,” in *Terakki Muhadderat*, vol.5 (1869), 30.

⁶⁵ Feride Magmum, “Bir Hasbihal” (A Chitchat) in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, vol. 164 (1918), 14.

⁶⁶ Ulviye Mevlan, “İçtimai Derdlerimizden Zevce-Zevce” (One of Our Social Suffering, Husband and Wife), in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, vol. 128 (1921), 2-3.

law. Let us take pity! It is almost unimaginable to have a family which is arranged to last for a life long period be separated and wretched just because a man without thinking or when he is drunk says ‘I divorce you.’ (...) Halide Edib *Hanım* mentioned the importance of this problem countless times. One of the few feminists in our country has requested a law where a divorce can only happen in Shari’a courts with intelligence and logic. They asked for effective precautions to protect the rights of women and children who are thrown into the streets. (...) What we request from our readers is to have our women talk and discuss this vital societal crisis with their men and instead of wasting the time with vain promises, they have to be forced to investigate a solution for this community; because we as women and men are very much concerned about this matter.⁶⁷

EMPLOYMENT

Contrary to the commonly held Western view that dismisses women’s input into the economy in the Middle East, recent research has shown that women played an active role in both rural and urban economic sectors of the Ottoman Empire. Women were engaged in a variety of economic activities, and invested in real estate. Women participated in the textile industry of Bursa, Ankara, and İstanbul as weavers, dyers, and embroiderers. Yet the nature of women’s labor in and out of the household varied by region. While women were actively engaged in manufacturing in Bursa, they apparently were not as active as they have been said to be in Kayseri. Women were active in silk manufacturing in Bursa as Haim Gerber argues in his article “Social and Economic Position of women in an Ottoman City, Bursa 1600-1700.”⁶⁸ On the basis of thorough research in the Ottoman archival materials, especially the Islamic court records (*Şer’iye Sicilleri*),⁶⁹ Gerbers argues that women appeared differently than what was depicted by the common stereotype; for example, women’s labor in

⁶⁷ Nimet Cemil, “Talak” (Divorce), in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, vol. 142 (May, 1914), 4-5.

⁶⁸ Haim Gerber, “Social and Economic Position of Women in an Ottoman City, Bursa, 1600-1700,” in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 12, issue 3 (1980), 232.

⁶⁹ These documents have been preserved in different places of the Ottoman Empire either fully or partially, and include documentation of trials and other legal procedures that took place in the courts of the Ottoman Empire. These court records opened up the possibilities of Middle Eastern studies, especially within the Ottoman Empire. They are regarded as one of the most important sources for the study of the history of Middle Eastern societies, especially as regards the role of women. There are over 20,000 registers in these cases alone for İstanbul and its suburbs. A rich amount of information on the social and economic conditions of Ottoman women’s daily experiences can be found in these court records. They contain information on women’s lives within the family: property ownership, child custody, marriage and divorce, petitions, and inheritance distributions. Of course, one must use these Islamic court records carefully.

manufacturing, property transactions and their engagement in economic activities were common. On the other hand, Ronald Jennings' in his well-known work "Women in early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records-The Shari'a Court of Anatolian Kayseri"⁷⁰ argues that the participation of women in the economic activities in the city of Kayseri was slight. While Kayseri was rather a remote city, Bursa was the primary commercial center of the Ottoman Empire during the 17th and 18th centuries.

It would be wrong to view Ottoman women as having been only wage earners in the modern factories of the 1700s. Manufacturing in the household was a common feature of the growing economy of the Ottoman Empire. Directly or through appointing their male kin as their proxy in business transactions and contracts middle and upper class women freely invested in the marketplace. Although as a general rule, they were not included in the membership of guilds, women still indirectly participated in the public domain. In addition to manufacturing in the household, women also maintained business relations as workshop and property owners in urban centers.

Unfortunately women suffered greatly from the economic decline of the Ottoman Empire during the early nineteenth century. Migrations into the cities started with the breakdown of law and order in the country side. Thanks to private initiatives in the cities and towns, women continued working in the manufacturing sectors. Even though it was cheap labor, women helped to improve the industrial expansion of the Ottoman Empire at a time of growing economic upheaval. Unfortunately, the decline of the Ottomans signaled by two centuries of military defeat, territorial loss and debt called for radical reforms. During the early nineteenth century the Ottoman government began to adopt Western style reforms.

These reforms had far reaching outcomes in that they were influential in the rise of a new class of secularized bureaucrats who had weakened the political power of the clergy

⁷⁰ Ronald C. Jennings, "Women in Early 17th Century Ottoman Judicial Records—The Shari'a Court of Anatolian Kayseri," in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, vol. XVIII (1975), 51-52.

(*ulema*). However, these reforms have long been discussed in terms of their controversial results which by some have been denounced as capitulation to the West. It was obvious that the Ottoman Empire had serious problems and the creation of a western minded central administration was a means of smoothing interactions with and manipulations of the states' economy by the European powers.

The Ottoman Empire was essentially an agricultural state. The economy was shaped and given direction through agriculture. Agricultural technology was limited to plowing. The weight of the agricultural economy was on the shoulders of peasant families, especially on women who worked as unpaid family workers with no social security coverage. After long hours of working in the fields, women were expected to serve the needs of the family and raise responsible children. The situation of women in the urban settings, especially in İstanbul, was not very different from that of the rural parts of the Ottoman Empire. Middle and lower class urban women not only worked as wage earners in the cottage industry within the extended household as carpet and silk cloth weavers but they also worked as industrial workers in modern factories. Unfortunately, for women to be able to participate in the government institutions and earn reasonable wages was nearly impossible. Urban women were no longer willing to endure the conditions in the work place, and they also wanted to enter spaces that were closed to them. They wanted to be able to choose what they truly desired to do instead of doing what was said to be best for them.

There were still a considerable number of socio-economic obstacles before women in the realm of work and property. Special concern was urgently needed for poor and working-class women, as well as housewives and mothers. All those should not be denied the right of indulging freely in their inclinations. Women were still not accepted as men's equals. Thus feminists still had obstacles to overcome, the biggest of which was that of equal pay for women for equal work with men. They had to defeminize poverty and eliminate a woman's

shift at home, to save her from the dilemma of her dual role between two spheres: work and home. Women were kept, as a result, at a disadvantage in the world of work, and it was the world of home and family, rather than of work, which carried the higher status in the Ottoman society. Women were hired with lower wages than men, and even when they did the same kind of work and were paid the same wage, they were promoted more slowly.

The starting point for women's demands for employment in the journals appears to be an effort to legitimize the situation of women whose primary duties were still defined as being mothers and wives who had to seek work outside the home because of necessity such as poverty or the absence of a male provider. Writers also emphasized the need to work for the country and to help its development. They also accentuated the need for women actively to engage in economic life to be liberated from their husbands' and fathers' homes. They insisted that women would gain social benefits and change their status as second-class citizens:

We, the Ottoman women have been living in indolence, living on our spouse's salary, and become wretched from extreme poverty when left alone by our men. We were illiterate, lazy, unskillful, and unable to support a family with our low income. From now on we need to come to our senses, help each other to reinvigorate the working and educational life [for women] and let us be saved from the wretchedness and destitution that continually threaten us.⁷¹

It is quite obvious that women were questioning the patriarchal system, challenging the pre-established rules of their society and wanting to better their conditions to protect themselves from poverty. Women, seeking meaningful work, argued that it was unacceptable for men to support the whole family. In their view, women needed to help their spouses not just in the house by looking after the children but also working outside of their homes. They were declaring that only this type of a support mechanism in the family would bring prosperity and happiness to their families and ultimately contribute to the welfare of the

⁷¹ Meliha Canan Fatih, "Kadının Hayat ve Mesai-i Umumiyyeye İştiraki Lazımdır," (It is Important for Women to Participate in Work Life) in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, vol. 85 (June, 1912), 2-3.

country as a whole. Women were keen on the idea of the family working cooperatively like a factory:

Let's think; it is on the shoulders of one single man to nourish, clothe, provide and care for a family of seven-eight, sometimes an even larger a household. Is this fair? Why should a man be forced to work for a family of seven-eight and bigger? Why would those seven or more individuals be sentenced to lethargic, unemployment and as a result be condemned to be the subject of gossip and accusations of immorality? There is no reason and logic behind this... Let's think once again; what does family means? Isn't it a small company? A company is constituted by a leader and members [workers]. Shouldn't these people work commensurate with their distinct capacities? Bring separate earnings and leave it to the company? Let's think even more; how tasty the food would be in a household when every member contributed to it by their salaries. In a household like this instead of poverty, happiness and fortune will rule.⁷²

Women working outside the home and gaining economic independence were major themes discussed in the *Kadınlar D nyası*. Women demanded their independence but it was a different type of liberty, a liberty to be able to work. Women saw the problem of employment as a national concern, and they agreed that the only solution to this problem was collective cooperation between the government and the citizens. Associations and foundations were assigned to work towards the betterment of women's position. *Osmanlı M dafaa-ı Huk k-i Nisvan Cemiyeti* (Defense of the Rights of Ottoman Women Association) was established just for this cause. Through the *Kadınlar D nyası*, founders of the association announced their mission to the public and undertook to become the spokesmen for all women. By raising consciousness and offering guidance, the association aimed to give a new identity to Ottoman women. The goal of the association was:

To arouse the desire for social and working life, [it is necessary] to reform the external appearance of Ottoman women, to prepare self-aware mothers who are expected to raise enlightened generations; [such reforms] are only possible through altering the clothing women wear in exterior spaces, finding out what requirements factories look for in their women workers, and finally raising the scientific knowledge of women.⁷³

⁷² Anonymous, "Her Aile bir Őirkettir," (Every Family is a Company) in *Kadınlar D nyası*, vol. 31 (May, 1912), 1.

⁷³ "Osmanlı M dafaa-i Hukuk-i Nisvan Cemiyeti Programı," (Program of the Defense of the Rights of Ottoman Women Association) in *Kadınlar D nyası*, vol. 55 (May, 1912), 1-2.

The leaders and members of this association emphasized the importance of having a productive social role and the need to earn a living by working for wages. They believed that only an encouraging and inviting atmosphere in the workplace would stimulate and liberate women. The debate on *tesettür* and changes in women's street attire occurred frequently in *Kadınlar Dünyası*. So the resolutions of the association that published the journal, *Osmanlı Müdafaa-ı Hukûk-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti*, included working toward changing women's attire. The first decision the association took was to alter the clothes women wore outside their homes, and in public spaces. The goal was to create a national dress for women. In line with this resolution, *Kadınlar Dünyası* provided articles on the issue, and presented photographs of fashionable outfits. Aziz Haydar argued that women wanted to have attire that was "religious," "moral," and "healthy," and she added that the veil and *çarşaf* met none of these criteria.⁷⁴

Moreover, just for this cause a foundation called *Sade Giyinen Hanımlar Cemiyeti* (The Plainly Dressed Women's Foundation) was established in 1918.⁷⁵ In this way, women would wear unadorned, plain and comfortable dresses that allowed women to work freely. Second of all, *Osmanlı Müdafaa-ı Hukûk-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti* aimed to open factories or places of employment only for women. That way not only women who wanted to work but, poor and needy women would also find a way to bring money into the home. In line with this decision, pictures of working women were included in the magazine, and women started to open teahouses and food production facilities. The post office became the first place for the employment of women. Aziz Haydar who was the accountant of the *Osmanlı Müdafaa-ı Hukûk-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti* was excited to announce the accomplishments of a woman called Feride Yaver:

⁷⁴ Aziz Haydar, in *Kadınlar Dünyası* (1913), 3-4.

⁷⁵ "Kadınlık Şuru: Sade Giyinen Hanımlar Cemiyeti," (Consciousness of Womanhood: The Plainly Dressed Women's Foundation) in *Türk Kadını*, vol. 3 (June, 1918), 44-45.

Now, I am giving you the great news about another step we have taken. The Ministry of Mail and Telegraph opened for us a new area of activity by admitting a sister named Feride Yaver to the post of stamp clerk. You cannot imagine the great happiness I felt today, when I went to see Feride Yaver, as I was given the duty of congratulating her on behalf of the *Osmanlı Múdafaa-ı Hukûk-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti* [Defense of the Rights of Ottoman Women Association]... Yes, till now we have been oppressed, and the main reason of this oppression is our livelihood being provided by men. If we too were working, if we were earning, we would not be this feeble.⁷⁶

While women's magazines were helping women to express themselves as individuals, foundations were ensuring that women transformed those demands into organizations and collective unions. Women's demands were no longer simply voiced; they were actively engaged in practice. The foundations varied in terms of their aims. There were foundations for aid for improvement in education and culture, as well as feminist and political organizations.

There was a negative reaction to the employment of women. According to these views, it was unacceptable for women to bear children and leave them unattended at home just because of the need for work. Ottoman women seeking equality with men reacted strongly to claims that childcare, housework and duties to their husbands would suffer. Aziz Haydar *Hanım*, challenging the response, pointed out the importance of educating women, especially mothers. She believed that if all women were to have careers and professions, then no women would be left to bear children. According to her this idea was fine, but did all women have the necessary education and knowledge to bear and bring up children anyway? Unfortunately, women presented in the journals, middle or upper class women were a small percentage that enjoyed privileges such as education. Women of other classes and sections of the society did not enjoy these rights in any real sense which formed only a small percentage of the urban minority. Pastoralism and patriarchal relationships were still dominant. On the

⁷⁶ Aziz Haydar, in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, (1912), 4.

other hand, simply by having access to wage jobs outside the home, did not in itself lead to equality for upper and middle class women, as women have long since found out.

POLITICS

Women writers in the Ottoman journals clearly felt the need to address the “Women’s Movement in Europe” and for various reasons. Almost all of them follow the developments in Europe with envy, and without skipping the “for now” qualifier, they indicated that they did not demand the right to vote but would struggle for it when the time is ripe. They considered it to be untimely, because they found demanding the right to vote meaningless when they were not able leave the house to work and participate in public life as citizens. Of course, making no attempts to justify women’s right to vote with any reason other than establishing equality between men and women, restrained them in their demands. Nevertheless, they noted that the impact of women’s awakening would be seen and that women would demand the right to vote in the near future. In fact, *Kadınlar Dünyası*, when it resumed publication in January 1921 after a brief period of discontinuity, included the right to vote and to run for office among its goals for the first time. Women were challenging the patriarchal underpinnings of their respective societies. After such emancipation, these women began to question the traditional limitations imposed upon them by the patriarchy and subsequently formed organizations to establish an active voice for women within their societies.

After the establishment of the *İkinci Meşrutiyet* (1908), one of the educational activities for women was organizing conferences on various topics. The first women’s conference, known as the “White Conference” (Beyaz Konferans), was held in İstanbul in 1911 and attended by approximately 300 women. Fatma Nesibe *Hanım*, the main speaker of the conference, gave a revolutionary speech. She, for the first time, stressed the need for political activity by women, criticized the money that was being spent on the military instead

of on the education of women, and emphasized that the impulse to associate women with certain tendencies such as passivity and incompetence, would disappear if women were given their personal and social rights. Ottoman women wanted to create their own public sphere in a traditional environment which had always suppressed women due to religious, traditional and social values.

Fatma Nesibe *Hanım*, in another lecture on John Stuart Mill, revealed her considerable knowledge about the women's movement in the West. She came across as an angry woman who would not hesitate to declare men as enemies. However, she also seemed to be aware that change would not happen soon; in addition to indicating that she believed in patience, she noted that it was necessary to assess properly the actual conditions for action. Fatma Nesibe *Hanım* defined women as the oppressed sex and as a group whose existence should be developed for the happiness of society. This approach shaped her demands; she was one of those rare women who did not compromise in formulating policies exclusively for women. In reference to the work of some women's associations that raise funds and hold meeting for the benefit of the navy or the army, she stated, "Of course, it is much more beneficial to work for our women and girls than serving navies and armies."⁷⁷

The abrupt entrance of the Ottoman Empire into World War I helped Turkish women gain greater political consciousness. The high participation of Turkish women protesting in the Square of Sultan Ahmed in May 1919 against the occupation of İzmir by the Greeks was an obvious indication of support coming from Turkish women. Educated urban women along with countless peasant women, rallied for the independence of the Turkish Republic. At this meeting on May 19, 1919, Halide Edib Adıvar said:

Turks, Muslims! We are living through our darkest hour! It is like night— the blackest of nights. But we will tear down this darkness and greet the morning sun... Swear your allegiance to the Ottoman flag and take your oath to die if need be. Even though we do not have weapons in our hands, there is a more effective weapon than

⁷⁷ Fatma Nesibe Hanım, "Beyaz Konferans," (White Conference) in *Kadınlar Dünyası* (1912), 2-7.

them all: God and His Justice... Cannons and rifles may be destroyed, but God and Justice are imperishable. We, Turkish mothers, have sufficient nationalistic feelings to spit at these cannons. We demand, together with our men, a courageous, strong, representative government!⁷⁸

Nimet Cemil's article on the International Women's Congress in Rome (1911) that was published in *Kadınlar Dünyası* described the realities of Turkish women's lives during the 1920's and explained how embarrassing it would be for the Turkish women to participate in the congress:

What will a Turkish woman say in that conference? 'Ladies, I am astonished when I hear your speeches. We would not complain in resentment and feel unfortunate if we had half of the rights you already hold in your hands. Even though you have all these legal rights, you complain in ill will? You are even trying to improve this fairly positive situation. If so listen: you will be startled at what I will tell you about the injustices that our women are encountering: ...Ninety percent of Turkish women have not been educated, and do not know how to read and write. Women in the villages plough the field like an animal and in the cities they are the sole pleasure and slave for men... In our country, a woman cannot live without her man and own property. If her husband dies and does not leave her a salary or a sum of money, she will starve because she does not have the capability to subsidize her life.... In our culture, a man can divorce his wife without a reason whenever he wants. No one will listen to her complaints about her husband. In the house, a man can treat his wife however he wants.... In our country women walk in the streets like a herd of sheep without an identity under a black veil....' Of course when the lecture comes at this point, the members of the congress will get up from their places with anger and hatred and ask 'Hey woman, what are you doing here? You do not have basic human rights in your country yet and still you come here to discuss women's rights with us in the same room?' and they will take her outside.⁷⁹

Many of the other associations were charity organizations and the journals, reflecting the effect of the Westernized lifestyle, carried articles assumed to be of interest to women on topics such as homemaking, childcare, fashions and health. There were a few among them

⁷⁸ Kemal Arıburun, *Milli Mücadelede İstanbul Mitingleri* (Ankara, 1951), 12-13.

⁷⁹ Nimet Cemil, "Roma'da Kadınlar Kongresi," (Women's Congress in Rome) in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, vol. 143 (May, 1911), 4-5.

that were more overtly political.⁸⁰ As a response to Yakup Kadri *Bey*, Nimet Cemil discussed the Western women's movements and criticized feminism in Turkey.⁸¹

... Yakup Kadri *Bey* takes the absence of a word that would be equivalent to feminism in our language as evidence of the absence of feminism [in our lives]. He should excuse us for rejecting this statement. Because there are some very important things that every nation has, but again many nations lack the words or even translations to name them (telegraph, automobile, ship ...). Therefore, we feel no need for [employing] words like *nisâsîlik* or *nisâiyyun* [as alternative translations]. We prefer to use the word "feminism" just like that. Let's have another foreign word in our language, what is the harm? However, it is impossible to deny the existence of feminism.⁸²

Turkish women were becoming so active in politics during the early years of the Republic that they helped to establish the first political party in Republican Turkey. The women who were the first active participants in the emancipation of Turkish women's movements during the *İkinci Meşrutiyet* (Second Constitutional Regime) period came together immediately after the war of Independence (1918-1920) and established the *Kadınlar Halk Fırkası* (Women's People Party) in 1923. The organization aimed to fight for women's rights in social, economic and political fields and to motivate women to be conscious of their rights. But the party was officially unacceptable. Therefore the members founded a union substituting for the party. Thus, in 1924, they established the *Türk Kadınlar Birliği* (Union of Turkish Women) and struggled against the government until they received the right to vote.

CONCLUSION

Ottoman women's associations and weekly published papers showed that women in Turkey had fought for their rights and found their voices in the public sphere. Women of Turkey underwent critical transformations in the transition periods between Tanzimat (1876)

⁸⁰ *Mehasin*, vol. 3, (1908-9).

⁸¹ For more information please look at Aynur Demirdirek's book entitled *Osmanlı Kadınlarının Hayat Hakkı Arayışının Bir Hikayesi* (*The Story of Ottoman Women's Search for the Right to Live*) (Ankara: İmge Yayınevi, 1993). This is a through work on the first feminist movements-before they found courage to label it as feminism-of the last fifty years of the Ottoman Empire.

⁸² Nimet Cemil, "Yine Feminizm, Daima Feminizm!" (Feminism Again, Feminism Always!) in *Kadınlar Dünyası* (1921), 2.

and Second Constitutional regime (1908). Feminism liberated women from many of the restrictions that had impeded them throughout centuries of oppression. Equality was a burden, but subordination was untenable. Feminism helped women by opening up new opportunities for them. Woman's consciousness as a woman and a mother was not like before. Now, she could see, hear and read other women in various journals, expressing the same criticism.

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Mürebbi-i Muhadderat	1875
Terakki	1897-9
Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete	1895-1909

Journals

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Aile	1880
İnsaniyet	1882-3
Şükûfezar	1883-4
Mürüvvet Dergisi	1888
Demet	1908-9
Mehâsin	1908-9
Kadın/Selanik	1908-9
Kadın/İstanbul	1911
Musavver Kadın	1911
Kadınlar Dünyası	1913-21
Kadınlık	1914
Hanımlar Âlemi	1914
Osmanlı Kadınlar Alemi	1914
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