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Ana Frank

FEMINISM AND ISLAM

Turkish Women between the Orient and the West

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INTRODUCTORY DILEMMAS IN REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN

This book analyzes different representations of Ottoman and Turkish women along the axis dividing the categories of the West and the Orient, and investigates how the discourse of creating differences between the Orient and the West (the Orientalist discourse) has characterized women as objects and bearers of the main national constitutive ideologies in Turkey: Islam, secularism/Kemalism, and nationalism. These ideologies are embedded in a binary division between the Orient and the West as two completely opposing (and homogeneous) worlds. In the book I also present different interpretations of religion in the context of these ideologies, which use religion or secularism as underlying assumptions for defining women and their roles. In discussing the representations of women within the Islamic-secular division, which create a specific understanding of Islam, secularism, women in Islam, and religious practices, the book focuses on religious covering. Since these representations have provoked responses among women, I also present feminist responses to this so-called woman question. Different groups of women face the dominant representations of themselves through feminist activism. Due to the particularities and diversity of women's movements, I give special attention in the book to women's Islamic feminism and activism. The book thus attempts to critically address homogenized interpretations of (Turkish) Muslim women.

I present the main streams of thought after the end of the Ottoman Empire throughout different historical periods. I begin with the Ottoman reformists and traditionalists, who – under the influence of European Orientalism – first tackled the representations of women and the treatment of the "woman question". I continue the analysis with the emergence of the modern republic of Turkey and the ideology of Kemalism, which saw women as having a special role as bearers of secular and nationalist ideas. Kemalism also drew on Orientalist assumptions and thus created the so-called Kemalist woman, who was the antipode of the Ottoman/Islamic woman. Kemalism was the principal national ideology up until the end of the 1980s, when sociopolitical life in Turkey became pluralized, many women's movements emerged, and many marginalized groups, which had long been excluded from the Kemalist secular-nationalist project, gained power. These were primarily Kurdish and Islamist groups who were struggling for an active role in society; women from these groups

were struggling for different representations of women since in the Islamic and Kurdish imaginary women were deployed as the essence of either the Kurdish national movement or the Islamic view of society and women.

The 1980s saw the emergence of diverse feminist movements struggling against the dominant representations of women, in opposition to (as well as in support of) mostly patriarchal representations of women. Kemalist women or Kemalist feminists continued propagating Kemalist ideology and thus did not represent a major shift, while other feminist groups problematized discrimination against and domination over women, which was still prevalent in society. I thus also discuss Kurdish and especially Islamist feminists, and in this context the so-called turban feminists, who are typical of Turkish feminism – which they have marked with their fight for the right to wear head coverings. Not only were these rights restricted, covered Muslim women were prevented from attending educational institutions and practicing their professions. However, Muslim women were victims not only of a Kemalist interpretation of secularism but also of conservative Islamists, who appropriated the right to define the role of women in Islam.

Theoretical approaches and concepts

My theoretical basis derives from the *social constructivist approach*, which assumes that the meanings of concepts and social phenomena are not fixed but rather are constructed by social and political discourses which are dependent on the social context[1] and actors. Every society and the different actors within that society understand, interpret, redefine, and negotiate meanings and norms regarding the role and rights of women and gender relations in a specific way. This does not mean that these meanings and norms are always the same, i.e. fixed and hence typical of a particular "society, culture, or religion", but rather that it is necessary to parse the conditions of the construction of these meanings and norms, which are influenced by external and internal factors. In every society there exist different groups of actors and different power relations among them; these groups interpret the role of women in society differently and diverge in their understandings and representations of women. In Turkey the dispute over differing representations is usually (inadequately) explained solely as a dispute between Islamists and secularists, whose world views and views of women and women's roles are assumed to be mutually exclusive. This either/or

[1] I define context as the historically, spatially and culturally, politically and socially specific environment or structure; this contains a set of processes, institutions, cultrual practices and traditions, ideologies and discourses which determine and define the individual, their thinking and behavior, and influence their reflection of events.

view neglects the complex reality of relations, the ways different actors/groups interact, and not least the similarities and differences among these actors in their understanding of the role of women. It is therefore necessary to analyze the historical conditions in which the relationships among different sociopolitical views and actors arose, as well as to analyze the discourses accompanying these specific constructions of reality.

In this book I use the terms *discourse* and *discourse analysis*. The social constructivist conception of discourse, which is based on the work of Foucault (Foucault 2001, cf. Kendall and Wickham 1999), understands discourse as a structural system of knowledge, ideas, and practices that influence the thinking and actions of social actors. Discourse is thus an analytical concept which denotes the way in which concepts, ideas, behavior, institutions, language and practices are constructed with respect to certain assumptions about the nature of phenomena and things in a political and social environment. These assumptions, interpretations and representations which the discourses (re)produce are reinforced depending on the power of the discourses or rather the power of the social actors who (re)produce the discourses in question. The analysis of discourse focuses on the ways and processes through which the object of research is attributed certain meanings within a certain social context (Potter and Wetherell and Burr in Bacchi 2009: 22, 26). Through analysis of discourse I therefore analyze specific institutionally and culturally supported interpretative assumptions (discourses) which (re)produce a particular understanding of events or objects of observation and ascribe a specific meaning to phenomena and objects.

In this book I present different *feminist movements*. Although I understand feminism as a concept which was created in the “West”, at the same time I want to emphasize that the idea of feminism (feminist consciousness, the struggle for women’s rights) can be present in different societies and cultures and also in different times, and that there is no one (“true”) feminist paradigm. A critical distance is required – primarily towards the paradigm of feminism that developed in the West during the period of colonialism and was gradually established (similar to Western discourses of the “Other”) as a universal paradigm which denies the possibility of the existence of “non-Western” “feminist” ideas. The assumption of a uniform feminist identity or “sisterhood” (cf. Lorde 1984) can lead to the creation of hegemonic feminist discourses or pre-constructed and unreflected knowledge which excludes all voices that are different from the dominant and hegemonic feminist discourses (Lombardo et al. 2009). It is often the Muslim woman who is specified as “different” since she is presented as particular, culturally determined, unfree, and unequal, which helps create the impression of the neutrality, self-evidence and *a priori* legitimacy of hegemonic

western feminist discourse (Şişman 2005: 35). I take a critical approach to this western feminist paradigm[2] and strive to emphasize that it is important to support the demands for the recognition of the feminist nature of non-Western forms of feminist consciousness. In the specific case this is Islamic feminism, in which Muslim women themselves decide to adopt feminist ideas, but in a manner which challenges the dominant paradigm of western "white" feminism. In the case of Islamic feminists their demands are articulated in the language of Islam.

In this study I apply the concepts of *West* and *East* or *Orient*, but I must stress that I am aware of the difficulties in using these concepts as homogenous ideological categories. West and East are not homogeneous, stable, and uniform but rather heterogeneous concepts: they comprise a set of cultures which have met and merged throughout history. I deal mainly with the representations or imaginaries of both one and the other imagined community and with the relations between the two, which are co-created. Orientalism thus not only homogenizes the Orient (the East), but also the Occident or West, polarizations that not only mistakenly interpret the Orient but also the Occident (West) (Lewis 1996: 16). I examine and apply primarily idealized categories which otherwise, as stated by Joan Wallach Scott (2007: 154), emphasize established and prescribed norms and neglect diversity. I use them purely for analytical purposes since I am interested in those idealized representations which are created by discourses on the differences between the West and the Orient. When I refer to Orientalism and the Orient, I thus have in mind primarily the (Western) discourse of Orientalism as a narrative which creates, categorizes, and (re)produces (usually negative) representations of geographical, religious, cultural, and gendered "realities" of the Orient.

The logic behind Orientalist discourse

The emergence and manner of operation of Orientalist discourse do not need to be analyzed in detail in this book: they can be summed up in a few key findings. During the period of colonial discovery, Europe was shaped through a scientific discourse that Said (1996) calls *Orientalism*. Said shows how Orientalism, as a discipline or discourse creating the Orient polarized the "world" into two entities of being: the "European" and the "Oriental", i.e., the "non-European, Asian". Said argues that there is a European hegemony in European ideas about the Orient, which constantly re-establish European superiority over Oriental

[2] Cf. also the critiques of the following authors: Braidotti 2005: 171, Lorde 1984: 116, Wekker and Lutz 2001: 4, Mohanty 1991: 69, Yeğenoğlu 1998: 9, Spivak 1988.

"backwardness", from the Renaissance to the present day, when the hegemony of Western knowledge and science has led to cultural and economic domination, particularly over Arabs/Muslims, who are subordinated in knowledge (Said 1996: 18–19, 398–399). Said summarizes this in four principles or characteristics of Orientalism: 1. a systemic difference between East and West; the traits of the first are negative (the barbaric, uncivilized East), while those of the second are positive (the rational, developed, superior West); 2. the abstractness of the Orient, since priority is always given to "classical" texts about the Orient while the reality of the modern Orient is neglected; 3. the assumption that the Orient is something eternal and uniform; 4. the presumption that the Orient is something to be feared. The antagonisms which were created at that time and which are today still commonly in existence can be illustrated by means of a whole range of binary signifiers and contradictions: free Europe vs. the unfree Orient; democratic Europe vs. the despotic and barbaric Orient; European reason vs. Oriental instinct and sexuality; Europe as developed, cultured, and urban, the Orient as undeveloped, uncultured, and rural (Hay 1995, Said 1996, Debeljak 2004).

During the colonial period and its hegemonic Orientalist discourses, *normative knowledge (episteme)* or knowledge about the differences among races and cultures was created,[3] and was reinforced by the reproduction of knowledge and creation of norms which are still applicable today. The production of knowledge is inseparably connected to power relations between dominant and subordinate groups (the colonizer – colonized or master – slave) (Hill Collins 1998). The production of knowledge during the colonial period showed that interpretations and representations are dependent on power relations which (re)produce normative categories (understood as "normal"). These normative categories became part of the "normative knowledge" or discourse (according to Foucault); the latter is not challenged since it represents pre-constructed knowledge which is based on racist and sexist prejudices and their mutual interaction. These prejudices have developed into a scientific discourse which exists and is maintained by means of constant repetition. For this reason any explanation or critique is assumed to be unnecessary since these concepts are based on knowledge which over the course of years has acquired the status of undeniable validity (Wekker and Lutz 2001).

I understand Orientalism not as inherent to the West and Western representations of the Orient, but as a process of *othering*. I understand it as a system or discourse (linguistic, intellectual, visual) in the construction of the constitutive

3 Orientalism, which dominated based on racial differences and racism, has developed into neo-racism, in which differences are grounded in (assumed) unbridgeable cultural differences and the danger of mixing cultures (cf. Balibar 1991).

"Other" which is necessary for the creation of specific identities and differences between one group and another or among several groups of people. Of primary importance in Orientalism is the fact that a Western understanding of the "Other" is predominant. We can understand Orientalism as a mainly Western hegemonic discourse or as a Western normative assumption of knowledge and history (Lombardo et al. 2009) that attributes meanings to the object of observation, that is under the influence of historical interpretations and scientific repetitions, and that regards itself as universal, or as Nandy says: "the West is everywhere, 'in structures and in minds'" (Nandy in Ahmed 1992: 236). Orientalism thus represents a theoretical approach which is, as Cox says (1981: 128) "[...] always *for* someone and for some *purpose*". Orientalist discourse and representations thus mean above all a mobilization of Western discourse or Western narrative – regardless of who expresses it. Colonialist discourse is thus represented not only by the colonizers and Western explorers but also by the colonized (Kahf 2006: 2–3, Erdoğan 2000). Thus although Orientalism has been created from Western representations, these are not based on the type of author (the West) but on the manner of construction of the "Other". Constructions and representations can be created by virtually anyone. Lisa Lowe (in Lewis 1996: 4) describes Orientalism as a changing matrix of Orientalist situations at different cultural and historical points in which each Orientalism is internally complex and unstable. Orientalism can thus also mean that the local inhabitants internalize the Orientalist discourse, that the Orientalized "Other" consents to it, since he/she was led to recognize the value of Orientalist knowledge and to consider, support, and implement it. Thus Orientalism as a discourse in its logic of operation can be present everywhere, even in non-Western societies (for instance the "Other" which is created by the "East" itself – which I explore below in the case of "Turkish Orientalism").

Orientalist representations of women

Stereotypical representations of minorities or "Others" are constantly (re)produced ideologically in the cultural, political, and social sphere. The most important Orientalist "object" of the discursive representation of the Islamic Orient is the "Other woman", since Orientalists regard woman as the bearer of cultural essence. Colonialists associated women and their (supposedly subordinate) position with culture and thus concluded that the "Other" culture was backward and oppressive, thereby justifying colonial rule and Western/European superiority. Representations of the Orient thus deal mainly with the representation of woman and everything concerning her; the Orient/East is therefore feminized since it is characterized by the female, *feminine* element. Much

has already been written and produced about how Westerners (mainly upper class travelers, diplomats, bureaucrats, and military personnel) represented or rather created the image of Oriental (Muslim, Turkish) women.[4] The most prominent images in academic, literary, and artistic Orientalist representations are of oppressed and secluded Muslim women, sex slaves in Ottoman/Turkish harems. A woman in a harem was usually associated with sexuality, eroticism, exoticism, immorality, and nudity, and in terms of character with hypocrisy, stupidity, and laziness. Women were defined by the harem and the practice of covering as its symbolic extension.

Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998) therefore emphasizes the meaning of the colonial gaze, since the domination of colonized peoples was highly dependent on visual domination. Since the Oriental woman could not be viewed and thereby controlled, the secluded and covered woman acquired a central role in the colonial-Orientalist representation. Western representations of women in the Ottoman Empire relied on an inseparable connection between the position of women and religion/culture, i.e. Islam, which was assumed to be inherently and unchangeably oppressive towards women, and covering and segregation of women in the harem were the Islamic symbols of this oppression. These customs were regarded as the main reason for the backwardness of Islamic societies (Ahmed 1992: 152). The covered Muslim woman thus became the referential representative of the Islamic Orient. In the opinion of some authors (Servantie 2005: 39–40, Ahmed 1992: 5, Minai 1981: 44), the treatment of covering[5] as a religious sym-

4 However, in the Ottoman Empire Arab, Persian, and Turkish women lived as did women from varius religious and ethnic tribes and peoples, including of Jewish and Christian origin. The diversity of the Ottoman Empire is frequently ignored, since this empire like the Orient has become a synonym for Islam and women in Islam. This book focuses on representations of Turkish women which are the result of understanding Turkey as the successor state of the Ottoman Empire.

5 For more detailed analysis of why (head) covering became such a strong symbol, cf. Ahmed 1992, Şişman 2005, 2009, Yeğenoğlu 1998, Bullock 2002, El Guindi 2000, Kahf 2006, and Fanon 1965. The practice of covering was present in all three monotheistic faiths as well as in cultural environments in various geographical regions throughout history (the Byzantine Empire, Mesopotamia, Persia, ancient Greece, etc.). Covering is thus not a static category with just one meaning but rather was differently negotiated in each social context and takes on different roles and meanings like any body or dress. Some of these roles can be interpreted as negative, others as positive, but the determination of the negative or positive value of some practice is also dependent on context and discourse. Covering can also be an oppressive practice, but that is not inherent to covering and Islam, but rather is part of the context in which social actors attribute meaning to some object and change it into an ideologically charged symbol. When it is imposed, covering can be interpreted as oppressive; however, some also regard it as a liberating practice. The meaning of covering is thus highly dependent on context and interpretation as well as on women, who themselves interpret domination. The reason for different interpretations of covering within Islam can also be found in the fact that it is not possible to derive one clear and explicit conclusion regarding the need for and manner of

bol limited to Islam is a new phenomenon, given that covering, seclusion, and polygamy were known and practiced by all Mediterranean societies, including Jewish and Christian ones, but over time these practices acquired the meaning of an exclusively Islamic phenomenon. Covering became the central symbol of women's oppression (and repression of sexuality), irrationality, barbarianism, static nature, and backwardness of Islam, and so the covered woman became a metaphor for the oppression of women. The headscarf or veil represented the signifier of this religion, tradition, and culture, hence the colonial Orientalist view considered that covering needed to be abolished in order to change and civilize the Orient. The West and also Western feminists[6] thus focused on the civilizational mission of liberation, i.e. the uncovering of women in the Orient. In accordance with this understanding of Orientalism as a discourse which is not inherent and unique just to the West, Ottomans and Turks themselves created representations of Ottoman women. Various authors who collaborate in the reproduction of Western discourse on the Orient make up *imagined communities in interpretation* (Tomlinson in Lewis 1996: 25).

covering from the Koran (El Guindi 2000: 41). In particular the diversity of covering practices in Islam is dependent on interpretation, since the Koran is ambiguous and contradictory and hence subject to a plethora of explanations. Interpretations which gradually came to prevail are the product of the practice of Orthodox Islam, especially due to the power represented by Orthodox Islam in the connection between the group in power and the ulema (religious scholars). These managed to assert a specific reading and interpretation of the Koran while all other variations were proclaimed heresies. For a more detailed analysis of the diverse meanings of covering cf. El Guindi 2000, Kandiyoti 1987, and Mernissi 1987.

6 Leila Ahmed (1992: 151, 155) thus labels feminism as the other hand or extension of colonialist conquest and calls it *colonial feminism*, Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1992) calls this form of imperialism (after Gayatri C. Spivak) *benevolent imperialism,* and Joan Wallach Scott (2007: 172) refers to it as *racist benevolence*. For more on how Western feminists represented Ottoman women and how through benevolent analyses they reproduced Orientalist discourse, cf. Yeğenoğlu 1998, Lewis 1996, 2004, 2006, Ahmed 1992, Schick 2000, Haffernan 2000, Minai 1981, and Servantie 2005.

SOCIAL CHANGES WITH THE COLLAPSE OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE

As a result of European imperial and technological advancement, the Ottoman Empire gradually lost power *vis-à-vis* Europe. The defeats it experienced in the 18th and 19th centuries, in particular in the areas of trade and economy, the military, and territory, caused considerable alarm and triggered a search for the reasons for this situation and the backwardness of the Ottoman Empire. In order to improve conditions, power was centralized and the central collection of taxes was introduced. The paid military, the Janissaries, was abolished. Power was concentrated in the hands of a new, distinctly Western-oriented Ottoman bureaucracy and middle- and upper-class bourgeoisie, which became the new driving force behind modernizing reforms. Craftsmen, artisans, and lower classes were excluded from this process, and became the center of resistance against the changes. From the signing of the Treaty of Karlowitz between the Austrian Monarchy and the Ottoman Empire (1699), when the Empire was subdued and began to yield to the new power, Europe, all the efforts of the Ottomans were directed towards achieving European standards. Territorially Turkey was not under colonial domination but nevertheless it had intensive relations with Europe and it felt the influence of European streams of thought in trade, technology, education as well as fashion and national ideas. The newly formed local elites, who benefited from cooperation with European countries, also adopted Orientalist discourse about the Orient. This gave rise to what is called Turkish Orientalism, which is not an isolated case.[7] The internalization of Orientalist discourse among Turks is called *local Orientalism* and Orientalists *local Orientalists* by Ayşe Kadıoğlu (1994) and Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998).

Ottoman and Turkish Orientalists

As it disintegrated the Ottoman Empire was receptive to learning from the West. Many Ottoman intellectuals turned to Europe, learned its languages, and in this way became a Western-oriented elite. Europe (especially France, Great

[7] The acceptance of Orientalist discourse was characteristic of many colonized lands; among others, Leila Ahmed (1992) provides an analysis of Egypt, and Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998) and well-known psychologist Frantz Fanon (1965) of Algeria. In these lands primarily the masses and newly emerged educated middle class (but not the elites) resisted the colonization of Great Britain and France.

Britain, and Italy) also desired cooperation with the Ottoman Empire and wanted to influence it. At first schools, as well as missionaries, played a major role in this project of influence and change. Following the Western model, schools disseminated Orientalist ideas among the local residents about themselves, and likewise local scholars learned about themselves through Western disciplines. Orientalism thus also entailed pressures on their mindset (thinking) and its constraints in accordance with Western discourses about the Orient as backward (Bullock 2002: 26, Minai 1981: 49). Local residents became burdened with a sense of backwardness which functioned on a material as well as ontological level (Shayegan in Şişman 2005: 52). Ottomans thus adopted (internalized) the Western representation of the Ottoman Empire. In the view of Leila Ahmed (1992: 129) this also meant adopting Western diagnoses of problems and acceptance of European solutions. Local elites also tried to modernize their population by imitating the West. As early as in the second half of the 18th century Ottoman sultans undertook reforms since they did not want to appear exotic in the eyes of Europe. They tried to "create an image" of themselves in contrast to the European "image" of them in order to become worthy of Europe's attention and to become part of Europe. According to Deringil (2002: 171) Turks became troubled over and obsessed with their image. They are (were) "afraid" of how the West viewed them and they tried hard to become similar to the West. Thus following the European model, local elites focused on destroying the internal enemy, which according to the Orientalist discourse was represented by Islam and all its features. In this way they internalized primarily Western Orientalist conceptions of the harem, covering, seclusion, and polygamy.

The Ottoman Empire initiated intensive reforms in the period of administrative reforms called *Tanzimat* (1839–1876), under the leadership of Sultan Abdülmecid I.[8] It was followed by the *First Constitutional Era* (1876–1908), during which reforms were delayed, and the *Second Constitutional Era* (1908–1920), in which reforms continued. Four factions evolved in the search for solutions to the backwardness of the Ottoman Empire: besides the Ottoman bureaucracy during the Tanzimat period, which was extremely *Western-oriented,* there later developed an *Islamic*, *Ottoman* (Ottoman reformists), and *Turkish* faction, also known as *Turkism*,[9] which

8 *Tanzimat* means reorganization and refers to the modernizing reforms introduced under the leadership of Sultan Abdülmecid I. Deniz Kandiyoti notes that this period was under the obvious influence of the expectations of Western powers, which Ottoman bureaucrats strove to accommodate (Kandiyoti 1988a: 47, 1988b: 223).

9 Usually only three factions are mentioned: either Islamic, Ottoman, and Turkish (Kandiyoti 1988a: 48) or Islamic, Western, and Turkish (Sirman 1989: 5, Şişman 2005: 64, Kandiyoti 1991b). Since the Western-oriented ideology which arose during the time of the Ottoman Empire differs from the Ottoman-oriented ideology as well as from the Turkish or Turkism of the Young Turks, in this study I distinguish among the four mentioned.

later came to be represented by the *Young Turks*.[10] These factions analyzed the reasons for the backwardness of the Ottoman Empire and each one offered its responses to the question of how to save the Empire from decline, or in short, how it should "modernize". This meant above all centralization, and for some factions also laicization and secularization. All factions focused also on the woman question as one of the most important issues in reforming the Ottoman Empire; thus modernization (which, as we will see, begins to be equated with secularization) also came to mean the modernization of woman.

Most of the Western-oriented Ottoman reformists during the time of Tanzimat were educated in Europe and were strongly influenced by the ideas of the French Revolution. They argued that the advantage of the West was not only in its technological advancement but also in its rationalist and positivist modernism, liberated from the darkness of religious dogma and superstition, and so they argued in particular for the separation of religious and state authorities. In their view Islam was the main culprit for the decline of the Ottoman Empire (Kandiyoti 1988b: 221–222). They regarded the position of women and their emancipation as an indicator or test of the degree of civilization and modernization of a nation. Members of this group thus advocated the emancipation and education of women and emphasized woman's role as wife and mother, since only an educated and emancipated woman could be a good wife and mother, ensuring well brought up and modern citizens. Woman thus became the symbol of modern civilization based on the Western model, which was the main objective of the Western-oriented faction (Sirman 1989: 5).

The Islamic-oriented faction can be divided more generally into conservative Islamists and moderate Islamists, whose representative was also the first Turkish woman novelist Fatma Aliye (Aliye 1892/2009, Sirman 1989: 6). Conservative Islamists saw the source of a weakened Ottoman Empire in the abandonment of an Islamic way of life, and argued for the return of Sharia law, which had been restricted during the reformist period when women were given greater rights, particularly in marriage, and rights in divorce, inheritance, property and so on. They did not want women to have more rights regarding education, par-

[10] The Young Turks were divided into two groups: adherents of Pan-Turkism, and Turkish nationalists, from whom the Kemalists arose after the First World War (Kandiyoti 1991b: 33–35). The Turkism of the Young Turks developed further into a Turkish movement (Turkism) under the leadership of the sociological theoretician Ziya Gökalp, and from Turkism after the creation of the Turkish Republic arose the Turkish nationalist movement or Kemalism under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, leader of the war of liberation and the first Turkish president. Turkism movements (Ottoman and/or those from the period soon before and after the creation of the republic) are rather imprecisely explained in the literature, so here I use a chronological distinction between the Turkism of the Young Turks (characteristic of the Second Constitutional Era), the Turkism of Ziya Gökalp (between 1876 and 1924 during the period of founding the republic), and Kemalism (after the founding of the republic).

ticipation in society, greater freedom in dress and in marriage. They regarded and limited women's activities to the domestic sphere. A woman was allowed to be educated, but not at the expense of her domestic tasks and caring for her family and husband. They also opposed men and women gathering in the same place, believing that this would create social disorder, and so they advocated for separate spaces (*haremlik/selamlık*).[11] They also supported the return of polygamy and strict covering of women (Şişman 2005: 66*ff.*).

Moderate and enlightened or modern Islamists were among the first to deal with the "woman question" and the need for changes in the position of women (Durakbaşa 1987: 51–52). Whereas conservative Islamists emphasized moral decline and the contamination of women with Western values, the modernists were opposed both to Western views, which saw the cause of Ottoman backwardness in Islam, as well as to Islamic conservatives, who accused the West of being responsible for the decline of the Ottoman Empire. Modern Islamists rejected the idea that the poorer position of women was a consequence of Islam as a religion, and saw the cause in the mistaken application of Islamic rules and in the disintegration of social rules under the influence of the Persians as well as in the introduction of the harem as an institution fostering rivalry, a lavish lifestyle, and corruption. For them "true Islam" was accessible in the Koran and Sunnah (Muhammad's practices), which had already given rights to women, for example the right of divorce, inheritance, and so on. They emphasized the role of women as social actors with intellectual capabilities that could contribute to the progress of civilization. Education was an important part of this, since it allowed women to preserve their honor and cultural integrity. An educated woman was also regarded as being a good mother and good wife, beneficial for the social advancement and welfare of Turkish society. Women who in the context of moderate Islam struggled for their rights also argued that Islam had already granted women all those rights that they acquired in the late Ottoman Empire/Turkey only through reforms. In their view Islam did not represent an obstacle to women's rights (Çakır 1996: 155).

The Ottoman reformists represented a synthesis between the Ottoman Westerners and the Islamists. Among them also belongs in part the secularized Ottoman bureaucracy, called the Young Ottomans, that carried out the reforms. The Young Ottomans were, however, critical of "superwesternization" (Mardin in Sirman 1989: 5). The most visible representative of the Ottoman reformists was the Turkish writer Namık Kemal, who otherwise came from the modernist Islamic perspective. Their ideas were something of a mix between European ideas of nationalism and liberalism, but they were also conservative. They ar-

[11] *Haremlik* denotes the women's area, *selamlık* the men's, or separation of spaces.

gued for the preservation of a multi-ethnic empire, something that was difficult in the face of secessionist movements by Christians and other minorities. Later on they split due to differing views on the role of women and on changes in family law. The modernist version saw women as lagging behind and thus supported legal reforms, while the conservatives opposed the reforms because they considered family law to belong to the personal sphere (Kandiyoti 1991b: 25–27, 1988a: 48, 1988b: 221).

The Turkish faction, or rather the Turkism of the Young Turks, emerged after the revolution, which they carried out against the absolutist rule of Sultan Abdulhamid II (the First Constitutional Era), and represents the beginning of the Second Constitutional Era. The Young Turks were made up of the Turkish intelligentsia, among them Ziya Gökalp and Halide Edip Adıvar,[12] who later became well-known reformers. The Young Turks mainly adopted the rhetoric of the Westernizers; during the Tanzimat period the beginning of Turkism was limited purely to the cultural sphere, while the Young Turks during the Second Constitutional Era adhered to a nationalist ideology at the state level. The Young Turks were subjected to a lot of criticism from *Ottoman feminists*, since supposedly only men benefited from the new reforms and freedoms after the revolution and not women, even though the emancipation and freedom of women was among the main objectives of the Westernizing reformists (Sirman 1989: 6, Çakır 1996: 141, 143).

Deniz Kandiyoti (1991b, 1991a: 3) and Ayşe Durakbaşa (1987: 53–58) note how the role of women was exploited by all the factions. Deniz Kandiyoti sees the abuse of the role of women as an ideological terrain on which battles for either the progressive changes of the secularist-Turkist elite or the cultural authenticity of the Islamists was fought. Ayşe Durakbaşa cautions that the Islamists as well as the other factions and later on the Kemalists shaped the *ideal woman's role*; there were in fact no significant differences among the factions with respect to the conservative attitude towards the role of women: a woman must be a morally pure, honorable, educated intellectual who works comprehensively for the benefit of society; as a mother who educates future members of Turkish society, as a good wife who represents a respectful attitude towards her family and husband, and as a worker who helps advance the social progress of society. Within these mentioned factions, women also became active. The press contributed significantly to informing Ottoman women about the struggles for women's rights in Europe and elsewhere, and so they also demanded these rights for themselves.

[12] Halide Edip Adıvar, who was educated in Europe, regarded positivist science as an alternative to the religion which had caused the Ottoman Empire to lag behind (Mardin in İlyasoğlu 1996: 49, Şişman 2005: 65).

The origins of Turkish feminism and Ottoman feminists

The beginning of the development of the women's movement and feminism in Turkey, in the contemporary sense of the word, dates from the late Ottoman Empire. Although in general the origins of the women's movement and feminism are set in the Western world (19th century Europe and America), it is problematic to assume that women's movements did not develop independently also in other parts of the world, including in Turkey. But whether we use the expression feminism for some movement and activism is also dependent on whether a given group of women call themselves feminists. A problem arises when women who otherwise promote equality and women's rights at the same time criticize "feminism" as a product of "the West" and of modernization and Westernization (Şişman 2005). Thus the border between feminism and a politically undefined movement or activism of women is blurred. The definition of some movement as organized feminist activism was often complicated, even though women supported many things which are advocated by feminism (Bock 2004: 172, Tekeli 1992: 142, Yalçınkaya 1995: 89). Deniz Kandiyoti (1987: 324, 337) thus uses the expression *feminist consciousness*, which represents "a minimalist definition" for "whenever women act as the self-conscious subjects of their own struggle, that is, when they recognize a set of demands as explicitly their own" and along with this also themselves determine and recognize elements of discrimination and oppression. Regardless of what they call themselves and regardless of the criticisms of the feminist paradigm as Western, an important criterion is the activity of women in a feminist spirit or with a feminist consciousness – when they fight for their rights. It is thus important to note that the women's movement or feminism in Turkey was an autonomous initiative which addressed woman and her specific way of living and existence in Turkey, which is shown above all in the emergence of feminisms/movements with a Turkish character (the Ottoman feminists at the end of the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century and in the 1980s also the turban/Islamic and Kurdish feminists).

In general authors[13] cite three historical periods of Turkish feminism: 1. the Ottoman period (from the end of the 19th century to 1923), 2. the early period of the republic or the beginning of Kemalism (from 1923, especially in the 1920s and 1930s) and the third period after 1980. The first and second period are often also cited as the "first and second feminist wave" (Tekeli 1992, Grünell

[13] Primarily based on the classifications of Deniz Kandiyoti (1988b), Nükhet Sirman (1989) and Şirin Tekeli (1992), which are followed by other authors (Erol 1992, Grünell and Voeten 1997, Özkaya 1998, Çubukçu 2004, Kerestecioğlu 2004a).

and Voeten 1997, Çubukçu 2004), and some refer to the period from the 1980s on as the period of feminism as an extension of Kemalism (Arat 1993), since up until then the "state feminism" of the *Kemalist feminists*, who operated in the framework of Kemalist ideology, predominated. Şirin Tekeli (1992) thus characterizes them as apologists of Kemalism and Atatürk.

None of the authors call the members of the women's movement during the Ottoman period "Ottoman feminists", which I am unable to explain since some women and movements from that time openly called themselves feminists and displayed feminist consciousness with their activism and initiatives. In some views they were even more progressive than the Kemalist feminists, who merely praised the achievements of Kemalism and Atatürkism and never went beyond superficial generalizations and chronological descriptions of the creation and improvement of women's rights after Kemalism. I therefore call them *Ottoman feminists*; otherwise, in the 18th and 19th centuries the expression *women's movement* is usually used to define the activities of women and in a smaller number also men, in the field of women's rights. As a result of changes in the sociopolitical and economic spheres (wars, Industrial Revolution, famine, migration) women also took on various social activities: they founded charitable and social societies and hospitals, societies for financial and material assistance, educational and cultural societies, societies for solving the problems of the empire, societies for the defense of the state, and also political, legal, labor, and feminist societies. In 1898 the first women's aid society was created in Thessaloniki, followed twenty years later by a women's society in Istanbul, which was founded by the representative of the moderate Islamists Fatma Aliye (Çakır 1996: 43–78, 1994: 354–355).

The period of rapid reforms during Tanzimat strongly influenced the lives of women: slavery and concubines were abolished, inheritance rights for daughters were introduced, and in the second half of the 19th century compulsory and free primary education was introduced and vocational and secondary schools for girls and women were founded, and for the upper classes also home education. During the Second Constitutional Era compulsory "civil" marriage in the presence of a state official was introduced (as an addition to religious practice, which considered just two witnesses to be sufficient), and the woman's consent was required for the marriage to take place; marriage could not be terminated unilaterally any more, and in asserting the Islamic right to two and more wives, the consent of the first wife was required.[14] In the 20th century as a result of

[14] Previously civil law had been regulated by the Ottoman Code, which was grounded in Islamic law, but otherwise also influenced by European and French *Code Civile*; that is *Mecelle-i Ahkam-ı Adliye* (Civil-legal law), which entered into force in 1876. Later on *Mecelle* was expanded with more detailed provisions in family and inheritance law, and in 1917 the Act on Family Law

the First World War women were also encouraged to work outside the home, mainly in factories, due to the shortage of the male labor force. In 1914 the first university for women was founded, and in 1921 women were allowed to attend higher educational institutions alongside men.

Ottoman women (especially those of higher status and influence) were aware of the shortcomings of their own position in their environment, and they thus also fought for their rights in opposition to tradition and practices which prevented them from realizing their potential. At the same time they also defended the Ottoman woman from erroneous Western perceptions and representations, and they fought against imposed Western feminist assumptions, in particular against the negative perception of the harem, which was their home and not a public house as Westerners imagined it (Lewis 2006: 148, 150–154, 184–185). It is important to note that Ottoman feminists were against polygamy but not against the harem *per se*.

Women also made great use of the opportunities offered to them by the press, and from Tanzimat onwards they were active in (women's) newspapers. The first newspaper that dealt with the woman question, *Terraki* (Progress), came out in 1869. However, the newspaper was edited primarily by men, who supported women's rights often only at the symbolic level. The first entirely female women's newspaper (the owner and editor was a woman, and the articles were written solely by women) was *Şükûfezar* (Flower Garden), which was first published in 1886. Ottoman women were also active in the fairly radical newspaper *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women's World), which was published between the years 1913 and 1921, with interruptions due to the First World War and the War of Independence. In 1913 there were an estimated 45 different women's publications. With the help of the press Ottoman women became aware of themselves and of women in the West, and they were able to acknowledge and communicate with one another. They translated and published works of feminists from the West, and Ottoman women were also written about in the foreign press. The newspaper made possible connections and consultations, and the feeling of community of Ottoman women was also strengthened (Çakır 1996, Çakır in Grünell and Voeten 1997: 223). Since some women did not know how to read, others would read aloud to them in order to acquaint them with different alternatives, including those outside the Western model of modernization (Lewis 2006: 173–174).

In this way Ottoman women analyzed the position of women in the Ottoman Empire and highlighted the most pressing issues of that time. In newspapers

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(*Hukük-i Âile Kararnamesi*) was introduced – this is the first Turkish document to regulate family law until its abolishment in 1919 (Ünal 1977).

they advocated for change in the position of women in the family, society, and education, and in law, politics, and public life. They demanded that the rights of citizenship arising from the revolution of the Young Turks also be granted to women. They blamed mainly men for the situation in which women found themselves, criticizing the economic situation of women and their financial dependence on their husbands, and they advocated the introduction of education and professional training of women. They stressed that the unfavorable position of women was also bad for men and for the country, they resisted the social place of women as objects of male entertainment and pleasure, they complained about the harassment of women in public and accused husbands of not taking enough time for their families and children, they opposed the definition of the man as head of the family, they supported women's rights in marriage and in divorce. They also demanded childcare (kindergartens), greater job security, and not least of all the right to vote and to run for political office (Çakır 1996).[15]

Although the newspaper *Women's World*, which some women found too radical and reformist, openly defended the West and strove for the creation of a new type of women according to the "Western model" (in the way of dress, in family relationships, etc.) and criticized the East and the "Ottoman", which indicates that it, too, was caught up in the Orientalist discourse, the women writers in this newspaper did not blame Islam for women's lack of rights. On the contrary, they even invoked it in demanding their rights, arguing that Islam *per se* was not the main culprit for discrimination against women, but rather a patriarchal interpretation of the Koran. They saw Islam as a legitimate means for demanding that women's rights be respected (Çakır 1996: 132, 155), something that Kandiyoti (1988b: 225–226) also notes: "most of the 'feminist' writing of the time emanated from an 'enlightened' Islamic perspective [...] Islam need not be an impediment to progress of women. [...] Islam was the only available body of discourse in which the woman question could be debated. [But...] what starts out as a plea for women's rights increasingly reads like an apologia of Islam." Gradually the influence of the newly emerging modern nationalist discourse could also be observed in *Women's World*, since it constantly reiterated the viewpoints that the development and liberation of the country and the nation are dependent on the development and liberation of women, that the

15 In the view of Naila Minai (1981: 59–60) the Turkish women's newspapers at that time were easily comparable to today's women's newspapers and magazines, since articles focused on equality between men and women and on raising consciousness; men were called upon to share the obligations of taking care of children and housework with their wives (cf. *Kadınlar dünyası*). Authors wrote about health, published advertisements on educational opportunities for women, warned about the lack of educational possibilities, opposed arranged marriage and unilateral divorce, and so on (cf. *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, The Newspaper for Women Only, which was first published in 1895).

power of the nation lies in the family, hence in women's role in the family, and that feminism is also part of a modern nation, which clearly shows the association of the creation of a modern state with feminism and the woman question. All crucial issues (family, education, work, and rights) are linked to the welfare of the nation. Thus a woman is educated not only for her own sake but also for the nation's sake, since she is responsible for the upbringing of future citizens and represents the mother of the nation. Children should be brought up in a national spirit and national feelings should be conveyed to them. Clothing should also change following the Western model, but it should preserve a national character, and therefore "national dress" was proposed (Çakır 1996: 117, 235).

As women began to gain a more visible role in society, through educational and professional activity, it was also necessary to ensure their modern image at the symbolic level, and this purpose was served by a change of attire. Mükerrem Belkıs, one of the Ottoman feminists, called for abolishing the *peçe*[16] (veil), before it abolished "us", since in her interpretation the *peçe* had no religious, moral, or health basis, and called for founding a society for the support of "national attire" (Çakır 1996: 177, 181). However, Mükerrem Belkıs criticizes one form of social attire (Islamic) while calling for the establishment of another (national), which, as a means of control and shaping a woman's role does not differ from the manner of domination that she herself criticizes. Critics of the *peçe*, which covers the face, can be found, but not of covering in general.[17] Women demanded a change in (but not the abolition of) the çarşaf,[18] and the abolition of the *peçe*, regarding it as is humiliating and unnecessary since it covers the woman's face. The *peçe* was regarded as a hindrance, especially while working. They wanted women's attire in general to be more casual so that the woman could perform her new work role (Aksoy 2005: 66–67).

Ottoman feminists were thus not opposed to Islamic rules and attire, but in all the reforms they strived for they demanded that these reforms be carried out in accordance with Islam, which supports education and work as women's rights. Many newspapers of the time were Western-oriented, but women combined these Western views with the study of Islamic sources on the "ideal woman"

[16] The *peçe* is a veil which covers the face except for the eyes. It is called "peča" in Slovene.

[17] While reading a biography of Huda Sharawi (1987) I came across a similar but undocumented fact. Huda removed her veil in 1923 but nowhere in her biography or the foreword to it (by Margot Badran) is it written that she only removed the veil from her face, not her head covering, since in photos we see her with covered hair and an uncovered face, which in her biography meant a final "uncovering". This fact is important due to the differences in how someone understands covering and "uncovering".

[18] The *çarşaf* is an article of clothing in one or two pieces, which covers the whole of the woman's body from head to floor (or from head to waist and then from the waist down with a full skirt). Only the face is visible, or just the eyes and nose. The *çarşaf* is similar to the Iranian chador.

from the early period of Islam in order to justify their demands (Minai 1981: 58). This viewpoint was also defended by the well-known female representative of the moderate Islamists and Ottoman feminist Fatma Aliye, who demonstrated the existence of women's rights in Islam through examples of educated women who were active in many different areas from the time of the prophet Muhammad (Aliye 1892/2009, cf. Çakır 1996: 30, Sirman 1989: 6, Kandiyoti 1988b: 226). Fatma Aliye defends Islamic rules that protect the rights of women and argues that these were gradually changed to the detriment of women in her book *Osmanlı'da Kadın: Cariyelik, Çokeşlilik, Moda* or *Nisvân-ı İslâm* (Women in Islam) (1892/2009: 67–72). In her view Islam is erroneously interpreted in order to deprive women of their rights. She thus commented on the most important topics such as slavery, the harem, and covering. Fatma Aliye stresses that the practice of Islam is influenced by existing traditions and customs. She supports the belief that women in Islam are not prohibited from mingling with men and that where the seclusion of women is practiced it is due to certain local and cultural customs. Fatma Aliye advocates "moderation" in attire and a synthesis of Western and Islamic style. She does not oppose the Western manner of attire and says that she also sometimes dresses in accordance with European fashion (1892/2009: 100–101). Although she supports covering the hair and dressing in full clothing, at the same time she emphasizes that the *çarşaf*, *peçe* and *yaşmak*[19] were clothing and coverings that were introduced later as the result of local customs, and hence are not in accordance with Islam. Some women who cover their faces are in her view doing this in opposition to the teachings of Islam. Among other things she observed that in some places men are also covered and that covering does not imply the seclusion of women since especially in rural areas women work and live together with men. Moreover, she tells of the disappointment of a European family who during a visit wanted Fatma, her family, and her women friends to wear the traditional Turkish attire. They were not satisfied with any of the dress since they "expected" something completely different – i.e. something that was created and represented as typical Turkish attire in the West (1892/2009: 115–121).

In the newspaper *Women's World* contributors also emphasize that (Ottoman) feminism does not mimic feminism in the West but rather is a spontaneous and natural phenomenon around the world. In the newspaper some women label themselves as feminists and defend and attempt to define feminism. They label it with the Turkish word *kadınlık* or the Ottoman *nisaiyyun*, which means "womanhood". They also distinguish between radical and moderate feminism; the *women's movement* is described as a movement and activities by women for

19 The *yaşmak* is a covering similar to the *peçe*, covering the hair as well as the face.

changing woman's place in society and for the creation of "new woman". Thus the women's movement or feminism deals with primarily political, economic, social, and intellectual changes, advocates the equality and freedom of women, and individual and collective consciousness and activity of women (Çakır 1996: 113, 116–118, 314–315). They further stress that feminism is committed not only to improving the position of women but also that of society and the nation. Feminism is thus inseparably linked to the development of the modern nation-state, as reaffirmed also by Serpil Çakır (1996: 315), who says that the effort of the Ottoman Empire to become a modern, laic nation-state influenced the emergence and articulation of the women's movement and that the creation of a nation-state is its foundation, and Deniz Kandiyoti (1988b), who links the nation-state and feminism with Turkish nationalism or Kemalism. A strong note of Eurocentrism or Orientalism can be detected in the writing in the newspaper *Women's World*. The newspaper defines itself a publication in support of the Western faction since it is committed to the complete acceptance of European values, material and otherwise: it advocates the Western way of life, Western achievements, and Western morality (Çakır 1996: 157). On the other hand women also defend Islam, through which they demand their rights.

It seems that the Turkish mind was caught up in a schizophrenic relationship between the West with its achievements and the Ottoman world with its traditions. The prevailing mindset seemed to be: "Become a Westerner in spite of the West" (*Batıya rağmen batılı olmak*) or "Become a Westerner with thorns and flowers" (*Gülüyle dikeniyle batılılaşmak*) (Çakır 1996: 257). The dilemma was "successfully" resolved only by the Turkish nationalism of theorist Ziya Gökalp and later on by the Kemalism of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. However, changes were dictated primarily by men, while women were compelled in large measure to adapt. Despite the many reforms introduced during the period of Tanzimat and the Second Constitutional Era, there was little change for women, particularly in patriarchal relations, which modernization left untouched.

Ottoman reformers and the emancipation of women

The Orientalist discourse in Turkey was thus "disseminated" in particular by means of internalization. Reformers concentrated mainly on the woman question as one of the most important questions in the reformation of the Ottoman Empire, since they believed that progress was dependent on the position of women in society and that the advancement of women was crucial for overcoming backwardness. Men saw in woman and her emancipation a symbol for the level of civilization and modernization of the nation. The rhetoric about liberat-

ing women therefore eventually took on the elements of the Turkish discourse of modernization. And with modernization, in the opinion of Nazife Şişman (2005: 52–59), arose also the "woman question".

During the time of Tanzimat and later during the time of Atatürk's modernization and Westernization, the harem and polygamy represented a major problem for the Western-oriented reformers, who strove to become like Europe in accordance with Orientalist perceptions. According to Duben and Behar (1991: 158), for the West and Turkish reformers these two practices played the symbolic role of the anti-modern. Deniz Kandiyoti (1988b: 223, 226–227) also notes the interesting fact that it was primarily men (and not women) who criticized the Ottoman patriarchal family and referred to the "civilized" nature of Western romantic love in contrast to the practice of arranged (*görücü usullu*) marriages in their country. Men criticized the traditional family that separated men and women, since they saw segregation as an obstacle to the "civilized communication between the sexes", and stressed the importance of "partnership" in the "new family" (Durakbaşa 1987: 60). Although the Ottoman reformists were against polygamy in order to appear "modern" in the eyes of the West, it often turned out to be the case that they themselves had two wives, although they tried to hide this (Davis in Lewis 2006: 171).

Women behaved more cautiously (and for that reason men accused them of being passive) since they feared that in a system that valued the family very highly, changing that would mean losing the security it provided for them, and they would lose much more than they would gain. Women thus tend to operate and design a strategy that helps them best survive given the specific limitations and defined roles in the systems in which they live (the patriarchal system is indeed not monolithic, unitary, or universal). Deniz Kandiyoti (1988c: 275) calls this strategy "bargaining patriarchy". Women, and also men, interpret, redefine, negotiate, and challenge the roles that a given social system allocates to them. Thus although women supported a monogamous family and the companionship of husband and wife, it was more in the name of "social hygiene" than in the name of rights and equality. They were cautious because they were aware that despite its negative aspects, the old system ensured some stability, security, and a role that they could negotiate. For this reason in the transitional period they were more supportive of a conservative approach than of a new system, since in the old one they could demand that men fulfill their traditional (religious) obligations, for example providing for the family and ensuring the security of its members (Kandiyoti 1988c: 282–283, 1988b: 225), whereas the new system filled them with uncertainty.

Education alone was not sufficient to change women's role, a woman above all had to "look" modern. Along with the harem and polygamy, Turkish modernists

held the practice of covering, which supposedly made participation of women in the public sphere impossible, responsible for the oppression of women and "feminization". Abdullah Cevdet (1869–1932), a writer and ideologue of the Young Turks, thus proposed the well-known slogan "uncover women and open the Koran", as a variation on the slogan of French colonizers: "close the Koran and uncover women" (Şişman 2005: 65). For the progress of the state, as measured by the situation and participation of women in society, women had to uncover themselves. Some Turkish women authors (Mert 1994, Göle 2004, Aktaş 2006 and Şişman 2009) therefore note that Turkish modernization was merely superficial, since it was based primarily on changes in external appearance, not on the overall mindset of the society, and as such was destined to fail. Modernity and emancipation of women as the emancipation of appearance is characterized by İlhan Selçuk (in Aktaş 2006: 335) as *wardrobe Atatürkism*, by Nazife Şişman (2009: 13) as *wardrobe modernization*, and by Ayşe Kadıoğlu (1994: 652) as *modernes de robe* (after *noblesse de robe* in France).

In the last days of the Ottoman Empire, during the time of the Turkish war of national liberation,[20] in which women were also mobilized, the Turkish national consciousness and identification with Turkishness began to grow stronger. A new symbolic battle arose both against the Ottoman structures as well as against Western invaders and exaggerated imitation of the West. According to Deniz Kandiyoti (1988b: 1, 220, 234–235) in this battle women became merely symbolic pawns for whom, primarily in novels, a symbolic battle was fought. In these texts women were treated as slaves of the Ottoman structures or as corrupt temptresses who uncritically mimicked Western values (i.e. the *alafranga* style, which was not desired) or as comrades or sisters in the struggle for national liberation (i.e. the *alaturca* style, in which women are heroines who sacrifice for the Turkish nation). In the newly emerging national symbol imaginary the true Turkish women are portrayed as pure, immaculate, innocent, and dedicated to Turkishness (Kandiyoti 1988a, 1988b: 234).

Thus between the Western and Ottoman factions a more suitable Turkish variant took shape, which was also chosen for the state ideology. Many of the Ottoman feminists adopted this discourse and identified with the nationalist image of women created by the national movement or Kemalism. The very well-known Turkish novelist Halide Edip Adıvar, for instance, participated in the national liberation struggle and propagated the ideal of women's patriotic social activities and new way of life (Tekeli in Lewis 2006: 184–185).

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20 The occupation by Western allied forces during the First World War and the defeat of the Sultan with the Treaty of Sèvres (1920), which entailed the partitioning of the territory of present-day Turkey among the Western powers and their allies, caused strong national resistance.

TURKEY – THE CREATION OF A NATION-STATE

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk led the Turks' war of liberation against the occupying forces of the West and their allies. Atatürk distanced himself from Islam and theocratic Ottoman structures. Circumstances at that time had led to rivalry between him and the Sultan in Istanbul, who had entered into an agreement with the occupying forces in order to crush the resistance under Kemal's leadership. There was even a *fatwa* (an Islamic ruling) issued against the "rebels from Ankara", under which Mustafa Kemal was sentenced to death. At that time relations between the Islamic theocratic authorities in Istanbul and the rebels in Ankara had been broken off, and the rebels became the new legitimate Turkish representatives in the struggle for national liberation. Kemal and his followers regarded the Sultan and Caliph's[21] rule as religious reactionism (*irtica*), which from that time on became the biggest enemy of Turkey (Kandiyoti 1988b: 238). Thus Islam became for Turkey the "internal Other", standing in the way of the creation of the Turkish state. For this reason laicization of the state and Turkish history became the principal condition for the transition from the theocratic Ottoman system to a modern nation-state.

In 1923 the Republic of Turkey was created, with Mustafa Kemal voted in as its president. Later with the law on last names he legally acquired the last name Atatürk (father of the Turks). However, Turkish nationalism was a completely fresh ideology, still searching for its symbols and discourses. According to Deniz Kandiyoti (1988b: 239) this led to a revision of Turkish history, something that the Young Turk Ziya Gökalp had already begun earlier. Turkish history was retrogradely rewritten, and Kemalism became the republican reconstruction and consolidation of this tradition (Arat in Grünell and Voeten 1997: 223).[22] This new invention of tradition became the official Turkish history that all Kemalist generations grew up with. The internalization of nationalist discourse, the discourse of ancient Turks, and the golden eras of Turkishness (particularly Turkish women), which according to Kemalist interpretations had been destroyed

[21] The Sultan simultaneously held the position of Caliph, the highest religious representative in the empire.

[22] Just as the nation is the re-traditionalization and invention of tradition (Gellner 2006, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983) and Islamic fundamentalism is the re-traditionalization of Islam (Bhatt 1997, Frank 2005).

by the adoption of Islam, culminated in the formation of the ideology of Kemalism and of Kemalist feminists (Kandiyoti 1988b: 239–240).

Turkish nationalism has its roots in the Turkism of Ziya Gökalp (1876–1924). Gökalp separated the concepts of culture and civilization. According to his theory Islam and the West were two civilizations whose influences were compatible with Turkish national culture. He carried out a synthesis of these concepts while also creating an original Turkish culture independent of the influences of other civilizations. Gökalp also accorded religion a role in national identity (Turkishness) or culture, since in his view religion was part of an individual's personal life and consciousness and determines his ideals. Thus Gökalp considers that there exist on the one hand national, traditional, and also religious cultural values which determine the ideals of an individual and along with this also of a nation or society, while on the other hand there is contemporary civilization, which offers the means for achieving progress (Mert 1994: 69–71, Davison 2006: 148–201). Since Gökalp understands religion as part of someone's personal sphere while also seeing in it a role for strengthening national identity, Davison (2006: 148) believes that for him religion was a partly public and partly private affair.

Gökalp sought the foundations of Turkish identity in history, anthropology, myths, and legends, and applied them to language, religion, economics, philosophy, law, and morality. The foundation of Turkish identity and Turkish values lay in the old, "ancient" Turkish family and sexual moral system, which also represents the fundamental approach to the treatment of the woman question (Kandiyoti 1988b: 221, 235–236). Through a synthesis of ancient and contemporary, Gökalp focused attention on the new family, which also simultaneously represented the Turkish national and contemporary family. New concepts were developed (new family *yeni aile*, national family *milli aile*, contemporary family *çağdaş aile*) which were also applied to woman (new woman *yeni kadın*, national woman *milli kadın*, contemporary woman *çağdaş kadın*). For him the ideal family stemmed from the period of the "ancient" Turks, when the family was democratic, nuclear, and monogamous, and when husband and wife had equal rights, in contrast to the widespread traditional patriarchal family. The Turkish family for Gökalp was thus in its essence already feminist (Durakbaşa 1987: 64, Kandiyoti 1991b: 36).

Turkish nationalism aimed at carrying out not only a political revolution but also a social revolution for the transformation and modernization of the Turkish nation. Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998: 12, 122, 140) points out that the Turkish nationalistic discourse is thus reverse Orientalism and that nationalism is a colonial invention, since the search for some authentic national origin is essentially a consequence/product of hegemonic colonial history. Moreover, the newly created Turkish nationalism is highly selective: although experts search for ancient national roots, they are at the same time highly selective about what

they choose as the origin of Turkish nationalism and about what they adopt from the West. They understand "modernization" of the nation as being primarily on the technological or material level, while the spiritual level must be true to "Turkish culture."

Aslan (1999: 50) notes that Turkish statehood is created and legitimized not only in national consciousness (which was created primarily from the top down) but also in the postwar state and through military intervention. During the period of the creation of the nation, writes Mardin (in Keyman 2007: 220), the Turkish nation as a general will or national identity did not exist, but was invented by Atatürk. Aslan points out that the military in Turkey had influence until the end of the Second World War in the form of a one-party regime, but even after the war Turkey did not experience what most countries did in this period: the demilitarization of politics. Just the opposite: the bureaucratic-military synthesis of power was consolidated, and this prevented the democratization of Turkey for long decades.

The Kemalist reforms and the understanding of modernization and secularism

In 1923, after the War of Independence, a powerful reformist movement developed in Turkey under the leadership of Atatürk. The implementation of reforms which had been initiated during the movement of the Young Turks in the 19th century continued. From 1924 to 1934 the so-called Kemalist reforms were carried out, marking the beginning of the period of Kemalism.[23] According to Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998: 140) Kemalism combines *secularism* and Turkish *nationalism*, which represent the antithesis of the multi-faith and multi-ethnic

[23] Kemalism originally referred to the political ideology of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Soon the expression came to be applied to the Kemalist national elite as well as the state bureaucracy, among which also belong the Turkish Armed Forces (*Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri*) and the National Security Council (*Milli Güvenlik Konseyi*), whose task is (was) to support and implement Kemalist principles (Karakaş 2007: 6). The fundamental principles of Kemalism are republicanism, nationalism, secularism, populism (which in this instance means the rule of the people), statism, and reformism/revolutionism (Tekeli 1992: 142 note 2). Today Kemalism characterizes, in addition to the bureaucracy and governmental elite, also nongovernmental organizations, individuals, and (economic) institutions which express support for and consider themselves followers of Atatürk's ideals – hence nowadays they are also referred to as *Atatürkists* (*Atatürkçüler*). Today the following organizations can be categorized as Kemalists/Atatürkists: the Republican People's Party (CHP – *Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi*), the business association TÜSİAD, certain media, especially *Cumhuriyet* (Republic), also *Hürriyet* (Liberty) and *Milliyet* (Nation) as well as some (women's) organizations such as *Atatürkçü Düşünce Derneği* (Atatürkist Thought Association), *Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği* (Association for the Support of Contemporary Living) and *Çağdaş Kadınlar Derneği* (Contemporary Women's Association), in which women Kemalists are the most active (Göle 2004: 116).

Ottoman Empire; the Kemalists equate the two with *modernism*. Kemalism also represents Turkish Orientalism, since it envisaged reforms which were intended to "modernize" and "civilize" Turkey. These reforms were certainly positive, especially with regard to the rights and freedoms of women, who gained the right to vote and new opportunities in education and employment. They brought progress that women had also fought for during the period of formation of the Republic of Turkey. However, the traditional and patriarchal representations of the role of women were not eliminated; on the contrary, they were transferred from the explicit language of Islam to the language of nationalism, with only the explicit Islamic references being withdrawn (cf. Frank 2013). The secularism and laicism of the state did bring opportunities for emancipation and rights to women that the orthodox Islamic interpretation had denied. But in this regard I would like to point out that the Kemalist interpretation of secularism turned into undemocratic practices, as noted also by some other authors (Benhabib 2009, Kreinath 2009, Keyman 2007). In this book I therefore devote attention mainly to an analysis of the Kemalist version of secularism as secularism *sui generis*, which caused a lack of democracy, a conservative understanding of women's roles, and the control of religion, not the separation of religion from secular affairs.

Numerous reforms were introduced in Turkey in the 1920s and 1930s. In the first half of the 1920s the Sultanate was abolished and the republic was founded. The Caliphate and Sharia law were ended, secular schools for boys and girls were established in the wake of the abolition of all religious schools, a constitution was adopted, the religious order of Dervishes was abolished, as was the fez head covering for men, who were expected to wear a Western-style hat instead. Covering of women, although not legally banned, was a central subject of controversy, since in practice its abandonment was encouraged and the adoption of Western fashions in dress for men and even more so for women was promoted.[24] In the second half of the 20th century the Western or Gregorian calendar was introduced and a new civil, criminal, and commercial code was developed along the lines of the European model (the new civil code abolished polygamy and unilateral divorce and introduced civil marriage), the first systematic population census was carried out, the Latin alphabet was introduced, the state was proclaimed as a secular entity and the constitutional provision on Islam as the official state religion was abolished. In the 1930s the call to prayer (*ezan*) was changed from Arabic to Turkish, public reading of the Koran was required to be in Turkish, women received the right to vote and run for office, a law on last names was adopted, Sunday became a day of rest, and the constitution accorded the state an active role in regulating the national economy. In 1937 laicism as a principle of the republic was written into the constitution. The reforms were a formal step toward the modernization of the Republic of Turkey.

[24] Women's clothing modeled after the French *tailleur* was promoted, called *tayyör* in Turkish.

However, the dominant paradigm was of a modernization that presumed linear development and a sudden transition from the traditional to the new, from the past to the modern era. Thus the past, according to Davison (2006: 12, 38, 46, 49–50), became an invention of modernity, which excluded, marginalized, and "othered" the past. Davison writes that under this kind of understanding of modernity everything that belongs to the past must cease to exist or disappear from the public sphere into the private. According to this logic, whoever is modern must not return to the past. Modernity assumes the secularization of society and that religion occupies space in the private sphere. Modernity assumes the highest level of development of humankind, something that all nations will achieve sooner or later and is thus inevitable. Since this development is regarded as inevitable, Western powers have tried to "civilize" (*mission civilisatrice*) and "modernize" the world that they colonized (Şişman 2005: 49). Modernization in Turkey developed over a very short period, in a harsh manner, and above all as modernization from the top down, since it encompassed and adopted a narrow republican political and bureaucratic elite. Despite the fact that the state elite modernized, broke with the Ottoman past, and aligned itself with revolutionary ideas, the majority of the population did not immediately adapt. In fact, for Turkey modernization from the top down represented a crisis of identity (Mert 1994: 11–12).

Many authors (Keyman 2007, Yeğenoğlu 1998, Mert 1994, Arat 2001) thus note that the Turkish understanding of modernization was primarily a Westernized one, a striving towards the achievement of a level of Western civilization which included the Western type of secularism and scientific rationality. This purpose was served mainly by a nation-state and its institutions, which the Kemalists saw as the key to the modernization project of progress and civilizing of "backward" believers (Heper in Keyman 2007: 221). Yeşim Arat (2001) believes that the modernizers were not preoccupied with liberalism and freedom of choice for the individual, but rather that the reforms were communitarian in nature and demanded that the individual contribute to the unification of society. The establishment of a nation-state thus becomes a necessary evil and a form of violence against those who fail to integrate because they are not part of the dominant, fictitious "imagined communities" (Anderson 2003) or "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), or in other words, because they belong in the category of "Other". Certain primary identities (religious, linguistic, historical) are thus not recognized as a legitimate mediator or reinforcer of secondary identity, i.e. a nation-state, and therefore threaten the stability and reconstruction of the imaginary integrity of a nation-state, which by applying its levers of power "ensures" that certain primary identities are incompatible (or at least regarded as such) with those primary identities, which are considered constitutive for the nation-state.

The top-down Turkish project of modernization and homogenization of public life and public space thus anticipated a melding of all differences and their subordination to a higher identity defined by laicism and Turkishness – in contrast to the Ottoman Empire, which was a multi-faith (in which Islam was of course the predominant one) and above all a multi-ethnic space. This kind of definition of the public space meant that no one with a different identity could enter the public sphere (Aksoy 2005: 14). The state established a monopoly over the sacred by appropriating the role of control of the sacred from religious institutions and the family. Their domain was pushed back into the private sphere while secularized sovereignty was implemented in the public space. Likewise a citizen was compelled to subordinate their primary identity (faith, language, ethnicity, etc.) to the nation-state, which represented a secondary identity. Nevertheless, certain primary identities resist integration and unification (the problem of multicultural states), and the state therefore forces these "rebels" to integrate by imposing structural violence (assimilation, national education, violation of the rights of minorities, which in Turkey could be seen in the case of the Kurds) (cf. Balibar 2004). In the nation-state some categories of primary identities have the role of reinforcing secondary identities, since they are constitutive elements of the nation-state (primarily language, religion, and ethnic origin), while other categories of primary identities became minorities. The nation-state thus establishes a fictitious foundation for a secondary, national identity. Turkey thereby changed from a multi-ethnic, multi-faith empire into a nation-state with only one legitimate identity: Turkishness, which excluded in particular Islam (the people's version of it), religious minorities (Alevis, Christians, Jews, etc.) and ethnic identity (Kurds, Armenians, Greeks, and so on). These groups were pushed out of society, the public space, and not least of all participation in government, while the nationalist, secularist elite from the ranks of the military strengthened their position in power.

It is interesting that, as noted by Karakaş (2007) and Keyman (2007), Islam was not entirely excluded from the project of constructing a Kemalist-secular Turkish national identity but was instead, paradoxically, included within it as the only homogenizing force that had validity and power in the society at that time. Islam was nationalized for that purpose. This is because, as pointed out by Mardin (in Davison 2006: 250–252), Kemalism did not offer any tangible identity; it was ethically empty, since at the personal level it did not contribute anything but rather created an ethical schizophrenia. The secular Kemalists thus, ironically, used and shaped Islam (since in this way they above all kept it under control) to serve their nationalistic efforts. Karakaş (2007: 10–12) thus refers to a *Kemalist* or contemporary Islam, which is distinguished from Ottoman, "regressive", and "popular" Islam by being a "state", "modern", and "pro-la-

icist" Islam. Karakaş (2007) calls this the politicization of Islam from above, and Keyman (2007) calls it objective secularization,[25] which otherwise separates religion and state, but in the Turkish case the organization of the state requires the control and subordination of religion/Islam and religious institutions to state institutions and not their separation (cf. Özdalga 1997, Arat 2001, Davison 2006, Mert 1994, Keyman 2007, Karakaş 2007, Roy 2007). In this way the state administers and supervises religious practices and institutions. The Kemalists would have had difficulty succeeding without Islam, yet for the purposes of the new interpretation they separated "true and innocent Islam" from "political Islam", or in other words, paradoxically, the Kemalists also politicized Islam.

Davison (2006) thus considers Kemalist laicism to be rigid and militant, and Turkey as a laic state is in fact just a myth of republicanism, since Islam never retreated into the private sphere but instead was merely newly interpreted, and the control of religion was given the name of separation. The primary purpose of institutional control was to repress local culture and the remnants of the Ottoman Empire, and limit Islam to the private sphere as a personal belief system; at the same time the Kemalists through this institutional control and objective secularization/laicism hoped to achieve the modernization and secularization of all segments of the state, society, and culture (Keyman 2007: 222, Lewis in Olson 1985: 163–164, 165). Secularism was thus a means for politically, ideologically, and symbolically delegitimizing and undermining the Ottoman Empire in the name of a new Turkish nation-state. Elisabeth Özdalga (1990) stresses that Turkish nationalism is already understood as a "civil religion". In order to control the use of Islam, the Ministry or Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı*) was established, which functions as a "substitute church" (Karakaş 2007: 11). The purpose of the Diyanet is state control that prevents non-state and anti-Kemalist groups from influencing the interpretation of Islam.[26]

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[25] According to Berger (in Keyman 2007: 217–218), who divides secularism into objective and subjective, in which objective secularization implies the separation of political institutions – which Roy (2007), Mert (1994) and Davison (2006) characterize as laicism –, subjective secularization means the cultural process of the secularization of consciousness, when the individual no longer relies on sacred authority but on nature, science, and objective reason, and this shapes the modern person. Casanova (in Keyman 2007: 218) summarizes the fundamental characteristics of secularism as the separation of religion from politics, the withdrawal of religion into the private sphere, and the reduced influence of religion and its institutions.

[26] The Diyanet today employs more than 80,000 people, among them imams and theological experts. The Diyanet organizes religious education (study of the Koran), builds mosques, and finances imams employed by the state (who draw a regular salary). Among other things it is responsible for the translation and printing of religious texts and the writing and publishing of religious opinions on a wide variety of contemporary issues (Karakaş 2007: 11).

Niyazi Berkes (1998), an authority and pioneer in the study of secularism in Turkey (with the book *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, first published in 1964), also equated secularism with modernization. In his view the fundamental conflict in secularism is not necessarily between the sacred and the profane, as in the Christian world, but rather "between the forces of tradition [...] and the forces of change" (1998: 6). Thus in traditional and non-secular systems there is no room for change (1998: 6). Every society which becomes modernized at the same time ceases to be religious, whereas the religious contains all that does not change (1998: 413). Niyazi Berkes considers Atatürk's reforms to be a complete revolution in the sense of appropriating Western civilization. The unconditional change into a Western civilization in his view will destroy all reactionary forces (*irtica*), since only the values of Western civilization could change Ottoman society from an "Oriental" to a Western form of society (1998: 412).

Berkes also confirms that Turkish secularism did not mean the separation of religion from the state but rather the merging of both, and the administration of religion and faith-based matters through a public institution, which the Diyanet became. However, writes Berkes, the Diyanet did not have the purpose of "indoctrination" of the people, but rather to offer the true, "natural Islam", which is a "factor of enlightenment", "freed from emotion" and "superstition", "in line with the approach to religion of the Turks throughout their history" (1998: 485). The state must not privilege a particular religion but must be "active [in] prevention and suppression of acts or movements that aimed at or tended towards the limitation of individual rights and conscience". For this reason there must exist a "relevant legislation [for] [...] the prevention and prohibition of the exploitation of beliefs for political, pecuniary, or immoral purposes." (1998: 498). The Kemalist discourse, which understood a laic state above all as the protection of non-religious citizens from the pressures of believers, was grounded in this approach.

The Kemalists thus created a monopoly over the interpretation of Islam. Keyman (2007) and Karakaş (2007) write that the state elite uses Islam for the homogenization of the society and country, since the Kemalists most feared that the country would collapse or break apart.[27] Therefore Turkish secularization, which is an amalgam of religion, nationalism, and strict laicism – what

[27] This fear is still present today in Kemalist discourses. As Aslan (1999: 50) notes, the Kemalists still turn to the military in times of crisis (loss of authority and power) and expect that it will unite the country and eliminate all disruptive factors. Nilüfer Göle (2004: 171) states that liberalism, Islam/Sharia, the Kurds, and communism are the four greatest phobias of Turkish nationalism. A detailed analysis of the relationship between the Kemalists and the military is unfortunately beyond the scope of this book.

Karakaş calls the "Kemalist tripod" –, is in the view of Casanova (in Keyman 2007: 225) and Karakaş (2007) an undemocratic process doomed to fail, since it favors Sunni Islam over the Islamic Alevi minority, Islam over non-Islamic religious minorities, and a laicized interpretation of Islam over devout Muslims, and in its connection to nationalism it favors Turkishness over the Kurdish minority, which has caused a highly undemocratic and unrepresentative form of Turkish secularism and modernization. As with many other revolutions in the 20th century, the political revolution was appropriated by a single option, which despite initial reforms for greater democracy began to exclude those who think differently. It became a revolution of the Kemalist elite and it dealt forcefully with its opponents. Roy (2007: 54, 62) and Ulusoy (2003) thus argue that after the revolution Atatürk introduced a Jacobin dictatorship which at its core was distinctly anti-religious and militant but this nonetheless did not prevent it from exploiting religion for political purposes. Roy argues that Atatürk made use of a Fascist and socialist political system: one party, a charismatic leader, and a strong role for the military and national defense.

Although Turkey is frequently cited as a paradigmatic case of the transition from a traditional to a modern society, in Davison's view (2006: 69, 283, 291–310) many Western academics uncritically "praise" Atatürk and his Republican People's Party (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi - CHP*) due to the "revolution" carried out, which separated religion from secular authority, without a true understanding of it. Davison cautions that there is not a simple transition between one period and another, that relations between the state and religion are not simple, that laicism does not necessarily mean opposition to religion (but rather is by definition only anti-clericalist), and that based on the assumption that every state power which is not theocratic is secular and laic, a fundamental error is committed in understanding Turkey.[28] Turkey is cited by quite a few authors (Karakaş 2007, Davison 2006, Roy 2007) as laic, but not secular, since the most recent studies[29] show that Islam has not lost influence and that it remains the strongest element of identification in the society. Some authors (Davison 2006, Roy 2007, Mert 1994, Karakaş 2007, Keyman 2007) therefore explain secularism as a social phenomenon in which religion or religious institutions lose significance in the organization of everyday life and thus denotes the secularization of society (which is not necessarily anti-clerical), while laicism entails political secularization and the separation of religious and the secular institutions. A

[28] Cf. Frank 2013 for a detailed analysis of religious discourses in Turkish politics, by Islamic as well as secular actors.

[29] A study led by Ali Çarkoğlu and Binnaz Toprak (2006) as part of Türkiye Ekonomik ve Sosyal Etüdler Vakfı (hereinafter the TESEV 2006 study) was performed twice, in two periods, 1999 and 2006, with around 1500 interviews in an urban and rural environment.

laic state thus provides for the independence of state institutions (education, health, civil laws) from religious influences, but the forms of secularism and laicism differ from country to country.[30] Roy (2007: xii, 8–9) points out that laicism is a system of separation of religion from the state that arose in France under a 1905 law, and this in Roy's view is a political choice that does not limit religion to the private sphere but rather simply determines the boundaries of its visibility in the public sphere.

Additionally, the development of secularism and laicism is attributed by some authors (Mert 1994, Roy 2007, Ulusoy 2003) to the Christian world and Europe, which arises from the historical relationship between Christian religious institutions and secular authorities as they fought for supremacy over the other (Mert 1994: 24, 42). In Islam this is treated differently since Islam does not have independent religious institutions or a priesthood, but does have Sharia (Arkoun in Davison 2006: 291); for this reason we cannot argue that in Islamic lands laicization that could be compared to that in the West was not introduced, since laicism in the West arose as a result of the power struggle between secular and sacred/Christian authorities (Davison 2006: 225).[31] Explanations that Islam and politics are entangled (Berkes 1998: 8, Mert 1994: 42–45) are opposed by those who claim that the Islamic religion was never an autonomous authority and source of power, but rather that state power was always above religion, and religion was subordinated to the state (Roy 2007). For all of the

[30] Thus we have countries which recognize a "state religion or church" (Denmark, Greece, Great Britain), countries which define themselves as neutral and practice cooperation between political authorities and religions or church institutions (Austria, Germany, the Netherlands) or recognize the role of religion in the public sphere (USA), and we also have countries with a strict separation of institutions which are therefore the only ones called "laic" states – these are France and Turkey. Although as we saw Turkey cannot be considered a classical laic country because it does not have separation, at the same time it assumes strict control over religion due to which it is considered with respect to laicism as even more radical and militant than France (Davison 2006: 253). Ulusoy (2003) writes that France even envies Turkey for such a system; laicism is in fact considered a French invention (Ulusoy 2003, Roy 2007, Davison 2006).

[31] Gellner (2006: 70, 74–77) says of Islam that it was both "high culture" and "folk culture", in which he sees the reason for the survival of Islam during the time of the emergence of nations (in the modern period), something that Christianity was unable to manage due to the status of high culture (since Christianity expresses primarily the culture of educated elites and important religious figures); as high culture Christianity – if it wanted to survive during the time of the emergence of nations and become an idiom of the whole nation, and not just a select elite – had to secularize. Christianity had the status of high culture due mainly to the language of the liturgy, Latin, which the people could not understand. The Reformation was therefore necessary to facilitate the communication and recording of the word of God in local languages. For these reasons Gellner considers Islam as a continuous reformation, which perhaps explains the fact that in Islam there was no Western-type secularization – Islam did not need it, since it was high as well as folk culture.

reasons listed some authors (Karakaş 2007, Roy 2007, and Davison 2006: 306) characterize the Turkish case as laicism *sui generis*.

Those who were not in sympathy with the new system were therefore immediately characterized as "religious reactionaries" (*mürteci*, derived from the word *irtica*) (Davison 2006: 242). Elisabeth Özdalga (1990) points out that a given group was labeled as reactionary because it was viewed from an enlightened anti-religious perspective. This ideological "enlightened despotism", as Elisabeth Özdalga calls it, was resisted by Islamic factions only after the introduction of a multi-party system. In the political and also wider expert and lay public this ideological antagonism continues to the present day. During the period in which the Republic of Turkey was built and modernized, there was a firmly established belief that to be against secularism meant to be against modernization. For the purposes of modernization the symbols of the past were replaced with the symbols of civilization, and the symbols of Islam with the symbols of secularity. Symbols which were previously used in everyday life, for example the fez hat (which although not a religious system was a symbol of the old regime), were prohibited, as was praying at the graves of holy people and mystic sects and brotherhoods (*tarikat*), and *ezan* or the call to prayer was translated from the Arabic and performed in Turkish, religious education was temporarily abolished, then later performed under the auspices of the state[32] – and so it is today, since religious education cannot be carried out without the control of the state. Only covering for women was not abolished; Atatürk did not dare to carry out such a radical revolution that it would have sparked resistance from the predominantly Muslim population.

Orientalized Kemalism and the project of the "new woman"

The Kemalists and Kemalist reforms are described by some authors (Yeğenoğlu 1998, Kadıoğlu 1994) as local Orientalism, since the domestic Kemalist elites strove to "civilize" and "develop" the local population, as is evident in particular in their attitude towards Islam and the covering of women, which they considered to be backward. Through the modernizing perspective local Orientalists thus saw Muslims, Islam, and covered women as a limitation and barrier to progress towards civilization, and the Kemalist reforms served the pragmatic political goal of a cultural and political transformation moving towards West-

[32] After the coup d'état in 1980 religious education was introduced into schools as a compulsory subject, but once again in the role of reviving Kemalist Islam as a homogenizing factor during the time of the Kurdish crisis and the rise of "people's Islam"– more on this subject in the continuation.

ernization and modernization (cf. Durakbaşa 1987: 14). In order to affirm their own civilized nature, the Kemalists also needed an uncivilized (negative) Other; in the opinion of Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998: 5–6, 135) and Bobby Sayyid (2000: 95) Islam therefore became for them the constitutive Other or constitutive outside (following Derrida's concept of the *constitutive outside*). The construction of the subject needs an element from which the subject is distinguished – the characteristics of the "other" are opposite to and different from the characteristics of the subject, and the "Other" is for this reason an object of comparison. Meyda Yeğenoğlu and Bobby Sayyid therefore see a process of Orientalization of the Orient in the Kemalist attempts at modernization, since the Kemalists first had to Orientalize the Orient. But at the same time Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998: 122) notes that the meaning of the word "Oriental" or "native" lacks an essence since the categorization is imposed by the Orientalist discourse.

The Kemalist nationalist discourse gave women a new role and created the "new woman" as the antithesis of the traditional Ottoman woman. Şirin Tekeli (in Göle 2004: 90–92) and Deniz Kandiyoti (1988b: 219) point out that the rights and emancipation of women, which was the foundation of the Kemalist reforms, were strategically exploited and linked to the fight against religious influence and for the separation between the republic and the theocratic Ottoman Empire. The basic difference between the old and the new lifestyle was in symbols, which represented the new or old regime, respectively, and with the help of which the defenders of one or the other pole were mobilized. Although women in Turkey had already gained the right to vote in the 1930s, much earlier than in many European countries, we must view Turkish modernization in the light of those who modernize, and of those who are the means of modernization, who lack the status of independent "speaking" subject – and that is woman.

The "woman question", which had already appeared at the time of Tanzimat, thus continued under the ideology of Kemalism. This ideology treated women as "lagging behind" and as a "problem which needed to be 'solved'". The "new woman" had to renew herself with respect to the new Kemalist ideals. The symbol of this new woman (primarily educated women with a career) served the image and legitimization of Turkish modernization (Durakbaşa 1987). The position of women in public was important, and a crucial role was played in particular by the educated woman at the time of the founding and consolidation of the republic. The "female" professions of teacher and professor were emphasized and encouraged, as a result of which there are still today many woman professors in Turkey,[33] which creates the impression that women are therefore very

[33] In 1993 about 32 percent, in 2012 about 41 percent; in certain disciplines the percentage is even higher, which according to some sources is the highest percentage in the world (Grünell and Voeten 1997: 221, KSGM 2012: 15).

emancipated (Sirman 1989: 9), even though at the same time many women are still illiterate (cf. TÜİK 2012, MEB 2000). Öncü (in Kandiyoti 1987: 323) concludes that this was above all a strategy for reinforcing the position of the elite: the need for women in professional circles represented a way of disseminating Kemalist ideas in the new republic. In order to avoid recruiting women from the lower classes, women from higher, elite classes were mobilized, which caused even greater class differences. The education of women was also supported because the educated woman was assigned the role of a mother who offers her children a good education, and a companion for the modernized Turkish man (Yeğenoğlu 1998, Ahmed 1992, Şişman 2005, Kadıoğlu 1994). For Atatürk the role of woman was primarily to be a mother and wife, i.e. a role in the domestic, private sphere. To this he added the important patriotic role of bringing up the nation (caring for society and its members– children) and performance in the public sphere – as a woman with a career (Jayawardena in Erol 1992: 110–111, Lewis 2006: 186). Woman was thus the basis for constructing a new nation and how its progress and level of civilization was measured.

However, Turkish nationalism in the view of Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998: 126), Deniz Kandiyoti (1988b: 219, 1987: 320–321) and Ayşe Durakbaşa (1987) represented a new form of subjugation and exploitation for women, since focusing on the Kemalist reforms and the women who were emancipated by them conceals the fact that Kemalism exploited women for its own political and ideological ends, and that the Kemalist reforms impacted primarily women from the middle and upper classes. Through the strategic exploitation of women's emancipation and the new image of woman, the republic demonstrated and legitimized the existence of democracy, which was a great achievement in the period when Fascism and Nazism were raging across Europe. If the modernists from the end of the Ottoman period associated the woman question with *civilization*, the Kemalists linked woman with *democracy* (Sirman 1989: 13). Kemalism opportunistically used women's emancipation (feminism, which fought for the right to vote) to assert itself as being more progressive compared to the old regime and to compare itself favorably to Europe, since women gained the vote in Turkey (1934) before they did in Italy and France, and their position was also different from that of women in Nazi Germany (Tekeli in Lewis 2006: 181).

Paradoxically, Turkish nationalism was symbolically linked with the Turkishness of the center of Anatolia, but the discourse was led by a narrow, secularized, Westernized elite of state bureaucrats (Yalçınkaya 1995: 29–30). Although Atatürk praised the Anatolian woman, the new woman project was reserved for the elite because he did not want to offend the traditional sensibilities of the Anatolian peoples, knowing that it would be difficult to change them. The changes were legitimized in such a way that the modern woman in the city did

not threaten the Anatolian woman in rural areas (Durakbaşa 1987: 83). With the creation of a new nation-state and a "new woman" the question of the "new" attire also opened up.

Symbolic battles for the representation of woman's appearance

Since woman was given a special role by the Kemalists in founding the new state, her appearance had to be in keeping with the values promoted by Kemalist ideology. This meant "looking civilized" in accordance with Western norms. For the new nation and national identity it was important how a woman dressed, comported herself at home and in public, how she ate, was educated, and entertained. Or, as Deniz Kandiyoti (1991a: 9–11) states, Turkey needed the new woman in order to establish and portray itself as a modern, contemporary nation. The reformists thus advocated the uncovering of women as a sign of their emancipation, freedom, and entry into the public sphere. In keeping with the Turkism of Ziya Gökalp there had been a widespread belief that Turkish women had not covered themselves until the arrival of Islam between the 9th and 11th centuries, something that the Kemalist regime made use of in the process of creating the new Turkish woman (Aksoy 2005: 41).

Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998) notes that the nationalist discourses in Turkey claimed that "the true Turkish woman was never covered". Although a law was never adopted by the Republic of Turkey that would explicitly prohibit covering, the authorities encouraged a ban on covering and at times also imposed it. Since Kemalism had difficulty breaking with conservative Islamic tradition, it created "compensatory symbolism and a new veil" (Kandiyoti 1988a: 47) or a spiritual and moral "symbolic veiling" as opposed to a physical veiling (Durakbaşa 1987: 93). Religious conservatism was thus merely replaced with national conservatism – with sexual repression since although women were uncovered they could not display their sexuality and physicality.[34] A woman must still remain moral, honorable, and pure. Sexual repression became the new "symbolic shield" (Berktay in Erol 1992: 117–118) that the new woman had to bear if she wished to

[34] The perception that a woman was a "victim of sexual repression" because she had to "repress" her sexuality and physicality in public, is based on the assumption that a woman "must" express femininity (be *feminine)* and display her sexuality and physicality. The repression and control of a woman's sexuality in patriarchal societies is criticized *per se*, but the new feminist views in Turkey and around the world also criticize the assumption regarding this requirement for the "visibility" of a woman's sexuality, since such approaches objectify the woman, her body, and her sexuality, and can represent part of the patriarchal structure that manipulates the female body as an object. In both cases the woman is deprived of her subjectivity and possibility for independent interpretations of herself and her body.

work alongside men and be respected. This meant wearing the dark *tayyör* clothing, short or fastened hair, and no makeup for working women. Women wore the "invisible veil" in the image of a sister (*bacı*) and female friend or comrade (*yoldaş*) (Berktay in Erol 1992: 117–118, Kandiyoti 1988a, Durakbaşa 1987).

The distinction between Islamic traditionalists and Kemalist modernists was thus essentially more apparent than real, since neither were interested in any actual change of the position of women. Woman was not treated as woman, but as a symbol of the break with the past – as a symbol of the difference in external appearance between the old Ottoman woman and the new Kemalist woman – representing the opposition between Westernization and religion. The symbolization operated through the female body and a binary division between the covered and the uncovered body. Woman was thus exploited as a symbol and emblem of differing ideologies (Seni in Erol 1992: 112, Seni in Kandiyoti 1988b: 225, Durakbaşa 1987, Lewis 2006: 181). The new woman had to change with respect to the European modern standard, in particular in external appearance and style of dress, but the position of woman in her traditional roles did not change. Deniz Kandiyoti (1987: 323–324) thus considers Turkish women during the period of Kemalist reforms to be emancipated, but unliberated, since the reforms left untouched the most important relations between the genders.[35]

Atatürk highlighted the role of woman and her appearance in many public speeches. He mentioned that the Turkish nation is *obligated* to elevate the Anatolian woman to a companion since she participated in the struggle for national liberation (Kandiyoti 1991b: 35). For Atatürk, who adopted several daughters, among them Afet İnan and Sabiha Gökçen (in a society that valued sons more highly), a decent woman was dressed in pants and short-sleeved shirts, went to dances, drank cocktails, and could even be a soldier.[36] This new identity called for an educated, professional, and patriotic woman. For Atatürk a modern and civilized woman was dressed in modern attire, which meant Western (international) clothing, which is universal, whereas the Islamic manner of dress he considered to be uncivilized. Atatürk wanted to change the Turkish nation from a backward one to an advanced one, and this in his view could be achieved above all by uncovering women (Yeğenoğlu 1998: 133, Erol 1992: 112).

Atatürk and the Kemalists undertook a comprehensive reform of the dress code, for men[37] as well as for women, since they wanted to get rid of the Orien-

[35] Cf. Frank 2013 for an analysis of the Kemalist reforms and legislation.

[36] Afet İnan became a professor and was a Kemalist feminist, and Sabiha Gökçen became the world's first woman aviator.

[37] Atatürk also regarded the fez for men as an emblem of ignorance, neglect, fanaticism, and hostility towards the progress of civilization, and it was therefore necessary to abolish it and adopt the style of hat worn in the civilized world, which would show that the Turkish nation

tal appearance that Atatürk was ashamed of. He felt it made the Turkish nation an object of ridicule in the world, since it was regarded as the social practice of primitive clans. Since the new woman's clothing symbolized the political goals of the male republican elite and since Atatürk was quite occupied with women's dress, almost all the women around him changed their manner of attire and uncovered themselves (Durakbaşa 1987: 14, 61, Kadıoğlu 1994: 652, Olson 1985: 163). His wife Latife Hanım also uncovered her hair in keeping with the new ideology and to set an example for others (Çalışlar 2007). Atatürk thus believed that women must "uncover their faces" and (under the same conditions as men) live in the same way as their peers in Europe. "When we will advance in dress we will achieve a national spirit and fulfill our life's desires", he said of the Turkish nation, and also: "This situation [covering] shows our nation in a ridiculous image and it is therefore necessary to fix it immediately" (in Yakut 2002: 25–26). Atatürk intended to abolish the *peçe* and *çarşaf* and introduce modern clothing since he also regarded the uncovered woman as a symbol of national unification and modernization. The modernization of clothing was introduced by various measures in schools and public institutions (cf. Yakut 2002: 26, 31). However, the project did not immediately curb the practice of covering and in many places women could still be seen wrapped in a *çarşaf*. The Minister of Internal Affairs at the time, Şukru Kaya, therefore linked (from that time inseparably) the *peçe* and *çarşaf* with anti-regime activity and with religious fundamentalism (*irtica*): "The Turkish civilized regime in no way supports this ugly and shocking attire. Whoever fails to adapt to the revolution and the regime will be treated as a supporter of reactionary forces, ugly desires, and sick tendencies" (in Yakut 2002: 30–31).

The similarity of the Turkish "civilizational struggle" with the colonial *mission civilisatrice* (in particular the French in Algeria) is striking. The Kemalists were convinced of the need for the final elimination of unsightly "covering", which was at odds with a modern and civilized appearance; in its place it was necessary to introduce "clothing" for women. However, notes Yakut, there were no radical changes in the way women dressed. The Kemalists were convinced that covering as a symbol of backwardness had been done away with only because there were no (unduly) covered women in the public sphere, as represented primarily by schools and public administration. Despite the fact that women in the

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is part of that world (Lewis in Olson 1985: 164). Men resisted this ban, since the hat did not allow them to bow their heads to the ground in prayer. The male head covering on the top of the head was also banned, which triggered even greater resistance since in Islam established practice requires men and women to cover their heads during prayer (Olson 1985: 164).

streets continued to cover themselves, this clearly did not bother them as long as the women who did so did not cross into "their" public sphere.[38]

Atatürk also supported, or at any rate pragmatically made use of, religious-conservative values. During the national liberation war, when it was necessary to mobilize women as well as men, he tried to convince the masses that reforms were not in contradiction to "true Islam" or the true spirit of the Turkish nation, but rather that they represented a return to Turkish authenticity. He therefore stated in 1923 that it was not necessary for women to be "either covered up too much or too uncovered", if they respected the true guidelines of Sharia and religion (in İlyasoğlu 1994: 55). Covering must be modest, in keeping with morality and moral behavior, and must be such that it would not prevent women from being active in public, social, and economic life. Atatürk interpreted covering as a religious requirement but from a modern and functional perspective, according to which it must adapt to modern life. He argued that if the role of covering was to protect a woman's honor then that honor would be protected in the reform of the dress code as well, since women would be taught the importance of morality and national ideals (Taşkıran in Durakbaşa 1987: 78–79). This implicitly meant that women must be kept under control, and that the reforms did not mean a loss of this control over women since the traditional gender division and role of woman as mother and wife had not changed. Although covering disappeared for Kemalist women, its symbolism continued. The identity of Kemalist women was conflicting: they represented a modern, educated, professional and asexual working elite of women, and they were active in social clubs and activities, but at the same time they were important as mothers and wives in the domestic environment, which reinforced their traditional role. Woman and man were ideologically equal according to the Kemalist conception (although civil law had not yet made them equal under the law!), but woman acquired, in addition to her traditional obligation to care for the family, new obligations towards the nation and society, which made her role more difficult (Durakbaşa 1987: 84–86, 90).

Atatürk's views on covering and his actions against it were contradictory: he tried to accommodate the aspirations for modernization but at the same time he did not wish to offend conservative and traditional groups, and so in some cases he advocated for complete uncovering while in others for modest covering. But this contradiction was resolved by the fact that for the most part it was the daughters of the elite class who were uncovered, while members of the

[38] A controversy arose in Turkey in the 1980s when large groups of covered women began to study at universities. This greatly disturbed and threatened the Kemalist elites and Kemalist feminists, who therefore sharply opposed the covering of women in the public sphere of universities, where up until recently they had "dominated".

lower classes were able to cover themselves along the lines of "not too much, not too little". In this way Atatürk achieved a compromise as part of Western-oriented modernization and confronted the "European myth of the isolated woman in the harem". He claimed that such women did not exist in Turkey, but that there were honorable Anatolian women who worked hard and were adapting to the principles of Western civilization. He wanted to show the West a modern and civilized woman who preserved her honor (purity, innocence) and behaved morally (Durakbaşa 1987: 82).

Atatürk and the Kemalists thus occasionally collaborated with Islamic traditionalists regarding woman's role in the private sphere despite their apparent battle with them. This hampered the independent development of the women's movement since only the state version of "feminism" was permitted, in which only a select group of women from influential urban families were allowed to participate, while it did not allow for the development of a women's movement from the bottom up (Arat in Lewis 2006: 179–181). In the view of Deniz Kandiyoti (1988b: 235, 1991b: 42) Kemalism, which supported only state-sponsored feminism, became the only legitimate discourse of women's emancipation.

Kemalist feminists

The discussion on women's emancipation is grounded in Turkish nationalism as the principal legitimizing discourse on the woman question. Ziya Gökalp mentioned "Turkish feminism", which was believed to originate from Shamanistic rituals in which woman was endowed with "sacred power". According to Ziya Gökalp democracy and feminism were fundamental principles of ancient Turkish life. The emancipation of Turkish women in his view could not be something foreign, borrowed from the West, but must be inherent to Turkish culture with its roots in ancient Asia. Ziya Gökalp thus established the foundations from merging nationalism and feminism (Kandiyoti 1988a: 36, 1988b: 237–238).

In contrast to Ottoman feminism, the women's movement during the creation of the Turkish republic and the years following lost impetus and self-initiative, while so-called state feminism began to emerge (Tekeli 1992). Soon after the creation of the Republic of Turkey, and much earlier than elsewhere in the world, women gained civil rights, which was a huge emancipatory achievement of Atatürk's politics and secularization, and indeed also of secular feminists. Women entered into the public space and gained education and employment opportunities, something that in the view of Islamic feminist Ziba Mir-Hosseini (in Mesarič 2007: 100) would not have been possible without secular feminism. For this reason women regarded Kemalism as a kind of salvation. Over time they no longer considered it necessary to continue with an independent

women's movement and critique; instead, the women's movement turned into an apologist for the state ideology of Kemalism. Since Turkish women gained these rights before women in Europe did, the state also concluded that a women's movement and organization was no longer necessary (Tekeli 1992: 140). In 1935 the Federation of Turkish Women, which from 1926 to 1934 had fought for women's rights, was shut down based on the argument that women had already gained their rights and that therefore such an organization was no longer required. However, rights were granted by the state, "from above", and the ideals of women's emancipation were written primarily by men, which in the view of Ayşe Durakbaşa (1987: 45) was a significant difference in comparison to the West, where women continued to struggle for political and civil rights on their own initiative.

Kemalist feminists thus did not question the patriarchal structures of Kemalism and the state,[39] and Emine Özkaya (1998: 66) therefore believes that Kemalism in effect suppressed the women's movement which had begun at the end of the 19th century with Ottoman feminists and their initiatives. Kemalism remained or became for women the only option. The deeply entrenched belief arose that women (already) had the same rights as men. Deniz Kandiyoti's assertion applies here: Turkish women were emancipated but unliberated. Of course we cannot deny that the reforms also brought progress and that women also fought for them, at least in the early period of shaping the Turkish republic (Sirman 1989: 13).

Ayşe Durakbaşa (1987) believes that Kemalist women and Kemalist feminists preserved traditional roles in private and took on modern roles only in the public sphere. This created a schizophrenic and conflicting relationship between the different roles that women were allocated. The Kemalist identity, which was based on morality, the importance of education and career, and the identification with the nation and the new republic, was not chosen by women themselves but rather was imposed on them by the state ideology. Kemalist women internalized the ethic of female modesty and moral behavior that was grounded in purity, faithfulness, decorous public behavior, asexual attire, respect for women's traditional roles, family reputation, and social respect, all of which was expected to be ensured through supervision by men (husbands, fathers, brothers) over their (sex) lives. Women thus had no actual choice in deciding about their own rule in public, which Ayşe Durakbaşa calls pseudo-emancipation. Women had to subordinate their individual morality to national morality and honor: Ayşe Durakbaşa and Deniz Kandiyoti (1988c: 282–283, 1988b: 225) ob-

39 In civil and criminal law there were still many discriminatory articles which feminists began to actively criticize only after 1980 (cf. Frank 2013).

serve that women lost even that power which the Ottoman woman had had in the private sphere, since during the period of transition women were expected to give greater support to a conservative system.

The first generation of Kemalist feminists began with Afet İnan, the adopted daughter of Atatürk. İnan adopted the discourse of Turkism in her writings and did not blame Islam *per se* for the backwardness of Turkishness, but rather the Arabs and the Persians (Kandiyoti 1988b: 239). Kemalist feminists compared their position with that of women from rural areas, in which of course the criterion of class and not gender was more important. They were in a better position than women who were poorer but they did not problematize their inequality relative to their male peers. Due to the class element of the comparison, Kemalists and Kemalist feminists are even today called “white Turks” (*beyaz Türkler*), where “whiteness” refers to the privilege of the upper class. Kemalist feminists thus used the discourse of self-affirmation but not of self-reflection of their own position.

However, Aynur İlyasoğlu (1996: 50) emphasizes that although women under Kemalism participated in public discourse that separated urban, educated, and enlightened women from devout women from rural areas, there was a duality in the identity and life of urban women, who lived a parallel life in private. Analyzing the oral history of these elite women, Aynur İlyasoğlu finds that women Kemalists still continued to learn about religion, mainly from older women in the family. As active practitioners of religion, they had a positive attitude towards it; they just did not believe that covering one’s hair was the path to god. They were therefore not atheists; they simply interpreted religion and covering differently so that they could pass more easily between the different roles that had been assigned to them. They were mainly opposed to covering, since they regarded it as a symbol of traditionalism and backwardness, and hence wore Europeanized attire (*tayyör*).

Kemalist feminists are typical not just for the period immediately after Atatürk. Their discourse has also continued into the 21st century – one example is Emel Doğramacı, whose book *Women and Turkey and the New Millennium* (2000: 10–14) adopts the discourse of Turkism and Kemalism. She regards the Kemalist reforms as the ones that will lead Turkey to the same level of development as the Western world. In her view Atatürk elevated women and granted them the same rights as men not just legally but also in practice. She does not, however blame Islam *per se* for the loss of rights which women had in the ancient period, but holds responsible the influences of other nations and civilizations. She reiterates the discourse of Ziya Gökalp: that the patriarchal system which is responsible for the seclusion of women was not a feature of early Turkish peoples but that the patriarchy passed into Turkish customs from

elsewhere, in particular from Persian society. Necla Arat (1996), the founder of the first Turkish Center for Women's Studies (1989) at Istanbul University,[40] also adopts the Kemalist discourse when she says that women were encouraged to abandon the practice of religious covering since it is a symbol of religious and patriarchal repression. Among the activities of the Center for Women's Studies in Istanbul she also mentioned the widespread protests against the "threat" of religious fundamentalism and intolerance. A quote from a speech of Atatürk is also not lacking: "Women ought to show their faces to the world, and they ought to look on the world with their own eyes" (1996: 400).

The writing of Kemalist feminists does not go beyond the usual chronology of events (the rights of women before and after Kemalism, in the pre-Islamic and the post-Islamic period). The purpose of such rhetoric is to show how some periods are superior to others (ancient Turkey and Kemalism). This kind of writing in the view of Yeşim Arat (1993: 121) is nothing more than a superficial generalization since it does not analyze the context of a particular period but merely creates an idealized image of the past and the present. Feminism in the framework of leading ideologies such as nationalism does not liberate women – that is only a feminism that is designed by men within the boundaries determined by the reformists (Erol 1992: 111). Ayşe Durakbaşa (1987: 72) therefore describes Kemalist feminists as national feminists. In the West women gained more rights for themselves through changes in legislation while in Turkey, apart from a circle of Kemalist feminists, women did not engage in or abandoned a feminist critique of the system. Despite the formal equality of women under the law, because of the patriarchal system they were still subordinated to their husbands in the private sphere as well as in legislation (they needed their husband's permission to work, the husband was defined as the head of the family, etc.) (Frank 2013).

In my view feminism and the women's movement in Turkey from the end of the 19th century up until the 1980s have been the result (and the victim) of the creation of "imaginary communities" of the nation-state, the nation, and national consciousness (cf. Anderson 2003, Gellner 2006), and of the Orientalist discourse on the creation of an inferior "Other" (cf. Said 1996, Yeğenoğlu 1998,

[40] Istanbul University and some others with radical secular political beliefs until recently strictly prohibited and controlled the entry of covered women on campus. Many female students were excluded, and the case of Leyla Şahin, who lost the case she brought to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) when she was excluded from pursuing her education due to wearing a headscarf, is well known. The court ruled that covering is counter to the principle of laicism in Turkey. Although all universities are under the control of The Council of Higher Education (*Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu* – hereinafter YÖK), which since 1982 had indirectly dictated a ban on the entry of covered women to universities, in some places, for example at Boğaziçi University, the implementation of this ban was avoided in part. More on this topic in the continuation.

Kadıoglu 1994, Şişman 2005, Sayyid 2000). Women have frequently been a tool of discourses based on these concepts. Turkish women have become stuck in a schizophrenic situation which demands sacrifice of them more than it brings them “liberation”, and a critique of this situation began only after 1980.

PLURALISM, LIBERALISM, AND DEMOCRACY

After the introduction of a multi-party political system and democracy in the 1950s, groups which had been excluded since the creation of the Turkish republic – mainly Islamists (or Islamic-oriented groups) and Kurds – began to engage in the political and public sphere and demand their rights. This was constantly resisted by the republican-Kemalist bourgeois elite. Yeşim Arat (2001: 51) believes that the Kemalists regarded the democratic reforms as an undermining of secularism and therefore "anti-democratic" and a "tyranny of the majority over the minority". Seyla Benhabib (2009: 27) writes that members of the Kemalist elite (the military, bureaucracy also teachers, lawyers, engineers, and doctors) regarded these changes as a failure of the republican experiment, but I believe just the opposite to be the case – that they were a manifestation of its success. While the Kemalist republican ideology, though it considered itself as a project of enlightenment, equates citizenship with ethnic Turks and Muslim identity, demands for democratization and the human rights of minorities and of other ways of practicing Islam and of "being Muslim" are spreading (ibid). In the eyes of Kemalists this threatens the role of secularism as an instrument of civilizational change and modernization. The Kemalist regime was not firmly stabilized and felt itself to be "threatened", and so the Kemalist elite together with the army "had to" maintain the status quo by means of a military coup[41] in order to restore the laic system which in their view was under threat. The military and the Kemalist/Atatürkist elite still considered themselves the defender of laicism and modernity – principles of Atatürk's republic (*cumhuriyet ilkeleri*). The first wave of democratization was thus cut short by a coup d'état in 1960, when then Prime Minister from the Democratic (though still conservative) Party, Adnan Menderes, was executed by hanging because he was considered too soft on Islamists.

However, liberalization continued nonetheless, and in the 1970s enabled the rise of Islamic-oriented organizations with which the lower classes identified, due in large part to the economic crisis. As a result the Islamic nationalist-conservative National Salvation Party (*Millî Selâmet Partisi* – MSP) gained in strength.

41 There have been quite a few military coups in Turkey, about every decade: 1960, 1971, 1980, and the postmodern coup in 1997; in Turkey the "general's warning" that was posted online in 2007 is also considered a coup; it was given the name "internet coup".

There also emerged higher classes and companies whose members came from Islamic ranks. Thus Islam began to be integrated into politics and the economy, something that Karakaş (2007: 12) calls "the politicization of Islam from below". Precisely because of the growing strength of Islam, the military under the leadership of General Kenan Evren executed a coup on 12 September 1980. The military is believed to have taken this step because it disagreed with the pluralization of the political discourse in recent decades, but especially due to "historical concerns" and religious fundamentalism (*irtica*), i.e. due to the increasingly powerful (people's) Islamic political options in the 1970 as well as to leftist (Kurdish) groups, which were perceived as a threat to Turkish national unity. After the military coup, the military dissolved the parliament, abolished parties, and proclaimed military rule until 1983. Kenan Evren was "selected" president and in 1982 a new constitution was adopted under military direction, introducing numerous bans affecting freedom of speech, assembly, and democratic principles in general.

However, paradoxically, write Karakaş (2007: 17) and Keyman (2007: 230–231), during the period after the coup, the military and the state once again "politicized Islam from above", something called the Turkish-Islamic synthesis (TIS). Islam was (again) used as the connective tissue of the Turkish nation. The Sunni version of Islam was of course the one that was used, as in the 1920s and 1930s with the purpose of again creating its own interpretation of Islam, primarily counter to the Alevi Muslim minority, the secessionist Kurds, and the then powerful communists. Compulsory Sunni Islam religious education was introduced into the schools. These measures in the view of Karakaş (2007: 19) nationalized Islam while at the same time Islamizing the nation, by which means they strengthened national solidarity and integration while distracting attention from the poor economic conditions, unemployment and inflation, and the Kurdish crisis, which military intervention had failed to subdue. Despite this, pluralization of political life nonetheless opened up a space for the functioning of civil society. Of particular interest are feminist movements and feminist pluralism and discourses on the practice of covering.

Feminist pluralism in the late 20th and the 21st century

Not until the 1980s did the women's movement break free from the shackles of the ideological discourses of nationalism and Orientalism. Under the influence of the second and third waves of radical feminism (first in the USA and Europe), the Turkish women's movement and feminism have been gaining new dimensions and are finally beginning to deal with the real problems of women

and with woman *per se*, and not with her state representation and symbolic role. The women's movement for the first time is independent of state ideology. One of the most important factors, which opened up a path towards a free women's movement in the 1980s, was the 1980 coup (Arat 1991: 12, 13); a vacuum was created in those political circumstances, and it was exploited primarily by women. Modern feminism and the women's movement in Turkey and around the world struggled for the *equality* of women and alongside it also for the right of women to be *different*, as became evident especially with the development of contemporary critiques of Western "white" feminism.

In Turkey this conflict and critique can be seen primarily in the emergence of and attitude towards *Islamic* and *Kurdish feminists*, characterized by some as being the new feminism, since it appears only after 1990 (Kerestecioğlu 2004a, cf. 2004b), while others (implicitly) exclude them from the women's movement by always mentioning them separately, as a sort of addition to the women's movement (Çubukçu 2004). Yeşim Arat (1991) argues that feminists from the 1980s are an extension of Kemalist feminists and for this reason she categorically excludes Islamic feminists from the women's movement and feminism that arose in the 1980s, considering them a "problem" and a "difficulty" for the women's movement, since the principal norms of the women's movement were laicism and Kemalism. For this reason some authors (Şişman 2005, Çağlayan 2007) define Islamic women (although in Turkey 98% of the population belong to the Islamic faith) along with Kurdish women (who are the largest minority) as "minorities" subjected to additional discrimination. Due to the ban on covering, Muslim women are kept out of public service and education, while men who share their religion are not discriminated against in the same way. Kurdish women and their movements, societies, and organizations are not considered equal to other women's movements, organizations, and societies; they are frequently criticized or not even mentioned. It is a typical example of intersectional discrimination in which gender and religious or ethnic discrimination are reinforced (Crenshaw 1991, Wekker and Lutz 2001).

There thus began a movement of women who had been ignored and neglected and are now speaking for themselves about their real problems and needs. From the 1980s on women (and women's bodies) were also physically present in public life, especially in the form of various protests, movements, campaigns, and rallies. The women's movement was a completely unstructured, autonomous, individual, and democratic action. Women advocated for freedom, opposed patriarchy and the military dictatorship, criticized the Kemalist vision of asexual women, and increasingly defined themselves as feminists (Erol 1992: 113–114, Sirman 1989: 19, Özkaya 1998: 66–70, Arat 1991: 10; 1993: 128). The main slogan of the women's movement, following the example of radical

feminists from the West, was *the personal is political*, and the primary targets of criticism were the family and the everyday lives of women as the true arena of the unchanged norms of the patriarchy. Feminists thus criticized the Kemalist emphasis of woman's role in the public sphere and demanded that attention revert to the private sphere, in which discrimination against women was still present (Grünell and Voeten 1997, Arat 1991, Çubukçu 2004, Durakbaşa 1987: 140, Frank 2013).

In 1982 a group of women who definite feminism as an ideology and themselves as feminists, among them also one of the first academic feminists Şirin Tekeli, organized the first feminist symposium under the auspices of the newspaper *Yazko*. In 1983 the first feminist periodical *Somut* (Concrete) was published and a year later the same group organized itself into the society Women's Circle (*Kadın çevresi*). At the beginning of the 1980s foreign and domestic feminist literature began to be published. In 1986 7000 women signed a petition on initiating the implementation of the *UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW), which Turkey had signed a year previously, and in 1987 a group of 3000 women in Istanbul protested publicly against violence against women.[42]

Women's organizations were created in Ankara and Istanbul as well as groups such as *Perşembe grubu* (the Thursday Group), *Ayrımcılığa Karşı Kadın Hakları Derneği* (Women's Rights Association Against Discrimination), the first center and shelter for assisting women victims of violence *Mor çatı* (Purple Roof), and other institutions, organizations, and associations struggling against violence against women. Feminist picnics, feminist weekends, and in 1989 also the first feminist congress in Ankara were organized. Also of impact were campaigns such as the campaign against sexual harassment of women in public, called "Our bodies are ours, say no to harassment", in which according to an old Turkish custom purple needles were given out to women for use in defense against molesters, and the campaign against virginity tests in student dormitories. The practice of virginity testing sparked a wave of outrage when some female students committed or attempted suicide after being subjected to it. At the end of the 1980s the first Center for Women's Studies (*Kadın Sorunları Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi*) was established at Istanbul University; this was followed by the creation of another 14 such centers at other universities throughout Turkey. During this period the Women's Library and Information Center Foundation (*Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Vakfı*) was also opened, with an extensive

[42] The protest was triggered by the ruling of a judge who rejected the request of a pregnant mother of three children for a divorce from her physically abusive husband, in which the judge wrote "a woman's womb must not be without a child or her back without a stick", which created a wave of outrage and protests (Sirman 1989).

collection of women's publications from the time of the Ottoman Empire to today. In the second half of the 1980s the radical feminist newspaper *Feminist* and the socialist feminist newspaper *Kaktus* began publishing; currently in Istanbul only *Pazartesi* (Monday), which combines several feminist groups,[43] is being published. In the newspaper *Kadınca* (Womanlike), which was first published at the end of the 1970s, and in her books *Kadının adı yok* (The Woman Has No Name, 1987) and *Aslında Aşk da Yok* (Actually, There Is Also No Love 1988) the well-known Turkish activist and feminist Duygu Asena speaks freely about female sexuality and the female body, openly mentions women's genitals, and in so doing criticizes the social control of female sexuality and pleasure. The authorities branded her book as obscene (Erol 1992).

Women's struggles focused primarily on Turkish civil and penal law, which were discriminatory towards women (Frank 2013). Through the campaign "We are all prostitutes" women expressed their opposition to Article 438 of the Penal Code, which provided for a reduced sentence for a rapist if the rape victim was a prostitute. Sentences for rapists also differed depending on whether the raped woman was married (i.e. not a virgin) or unmarried (i.e. a virgin), with sentences for the rape of a married woman being harsher since this was considered to stain the honor of her husband and family; this provision discriminated against women on the basis of her civil and physical status. Women likewise protested against the Civil Code, which stipulated under Article 159 that a wife who wished to have a career and work outside the home must obtain the permission of her husband. The women's movement in the 1980s had reacted with protests over similar articles and achieved the elimination of both articles by the authorities in 1990, and a reform of the entire Civil Code in 2001. The new Civil Code eliminated the characterization of the man as the head of the family: now both spouses are equal, with equal rights and responsibilities in marriage and in the family. In 2004 similar discriminatory articles were withdrawn from the Penal Code: the article that provided for the dismissal of punishment of a rapist who subsequently married his victim; marital rape was defined as a criminal offense; crimes against women which had originally been defined as "crimes against social honor and social morality" were renamed "crimes against the integrity of a person".[44]

Through their campaigns and protests women directed attention to social hypocrisy and sexist norms, to the hegemony of patriarchal structures and to

[43] Archives of the journals *Kaktus* and *Feminist* are available online at http://www.pazartesidergisi.com/.

[44] These reforms were adopted at a time when the Islamic-oriented Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi* – AKP) headed by Prime Minister R.T. Erdoğan was in power. For more detailed analysis, cf. Frank 2013.

male domination in society, since the Kemalists and Kemalist feminists had not touched on any of these traditions that continued to discriminate against women (Grünell and Voeten 1997). However, some authors, for example Şirin Tekeli (1992: 141), argue that the difference between the Kemalist and the new feminists from the 1980s is in their conceptions of the secular state. Although the new feminists do defend the secular state, which is a precondition for democracy and women's rights, at the same time they believe that freedom of choice should be respected, and this freedom is limited by the politics of radical secularism even as it restricts radical Islamism. This is evidenced also by the fact that the feminists of the 1980s – in support of the need for a tolerant and pluralistic society – did not support the campaign spearheaded by the Kemalist Association for the Support of Contemporary Living (*Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği*) curtailing the freedom of covering of devout Muslim women at universities. Members of the association were primarily contemporary Kemalist women, among them Prof. Necla Arat and the former prorector of Istanbul University Prof. Nur Serter. Kemalist feminists were also among the main organizers of republican meetings at which Kemalists opposed the Islamic-oriented presidential candidate Abdullah Gül, who, after the repeat victory of his party in the early elections in 2007 (and the defeat of the laicist-oriented and Kemalist Republican People's Party – CHP), was elected by the Parliament as the first Turkish Islamic-oriented president.[45] The fact that the president's wife wore a headscarf was a huge stumbling block and triggered protests from the republicans (for the most part members of CHP) and the Kemalist feminists, since in their view Turkey could not afford to show such a "backward" image of Turkish political representatives in the world. At meetings they openly called for the army to intervene in politics – to "do its duty" (*ordu göreve*). The Kemalist feminists also consistently supported barring entry to the university to covered women, although in this respect their position was riddled with contradictions since at the same time they supported the literacy and education of women, certainly important in a country in which a third of the population was illiterate (of which the majority were women).

Ayşe Durakbaşa (1987) argues that the Kemalist feminists and women persisted in these views because they were afraid of newly educated Islamic women, since such women would threaten the position of Kemalist women as the only "emancipated" women, who were privileged and superior to ordinary women (housewives, rural workers). Ayşe Durakbaşa believes that Kemalist women

[45] The expression "Islamic-oriented" can be ambiguous. Here it refers to the fact that the president and prime minister come from Islamic-oriented parties and actively practice the Islamic faith, and their wives are covered. The Justice and Development Party otherwise describes itself as a conservative democratic party and not an Islamic party.

were unable to reconcile themselves to the presence of covered Islamic women in public since they regarded them as rivals. Kemalist feminists argued that they had fought for the emancipation of all women and that covered women betrayed modern ideals. In the view of Nazife Şişman (2005: 20–25) the Kemalist feminists had appropriated the public sphere for themselves, and no one who was not "modernized" could enter into it. The public space (*kamusal alan*) in Turkey means the state, and the state is Westernized and laicized. All other symbols (for example, headscarves) were regarded by Kemalists as a threat to laicism.

Thus as far back as the 1980s, and even more intensively in the 1990s, the feminist movement decentralized, differentiated, and pluralized, and women's studies began to develop as an academic discipline. At the end of the 1980s radical and socialist feminists gathered around the newspapers *Feminist* and *Kaktus*. *Radical feminists* began by taking up a critique of Kemalist feminists and Kemalism and its sexist ideology. They challenged and demanded a radical change in the political, socio-cultural, and legal system, the very one in which rights for the equality of women had been granted. Radical feminists also advocated a different, alternative way of life, freedom of choice regarding abortion, homosexual rights, and so on. *Socialist feminists* focused on the causes of inequality between men and women. In their view this was fostered not only by state ideology but also by socio-economic relationships that control gender and reproduction. They focused on the class struggle and the struggle within the family and accused the extreme political left of failing to give sufficient attention to the woman question and the struggle for the liberation of women. In the journal *Kaktus* possibilities for cooperation with other feminists were opened up, in support of the common struggle for an independent women's movement. There also existed a movement of *independent feminists:* groups of women who did not identify with any of the feminist factions but had nonetheless been very active in the women's movement in the 1980s and 1990s (Arat 1991: 11–14, Sirman 1989: 18–21, Çubukçu 2004: 68–70).

The independent, democratic, and pluralistic nature of the women's movement during this period contributed to women's ability to finally deal not only with actual women's problems but also with other difficulties that women experienced as members of various social (religious, ethnic) groups. At the same time this was a criticism of the Orientalized Kemalist feminists, who neglected the fact that due to their social and political status they have privileges that other women lack. Moreover, they failed to consider factors such as ethnicity, class, religion, sexual orientation, age, culture, and gender that affect discrimination against women, as explained by the theory of *intersectionality*. Due to their religion and ethnicity, Islamic and Kurdish feminists were particularly discriminated against.

Kurdish feminists struggled primarily in the context of preserving Kurdish identity, but just like Turkish women they also had to go through the painful process of creating an independent women's movement, which became possible only after 1980. Prior to this time the dominant discourses of Kurdish resistance were those which in a particular period determined the role of Kurdish women in society: from nationally conscious Kurdish modernists who, despite their "modernity", did not liberate women from the patriarchal structures of the family and tribes in which the majority of Kurds lived in the 19th and early 20th century, to the leftist ideology which, similar to the Kemalist one, exploited Kurdish women for their ideological struggle with the state and with Kurdish tribal leaders. The Kurdish left, which gained in strength in the 1960s and 1970s, used women for the purposes of class and national struggle. Those Kurdish women who dared to draw attention to the problems of exploitation and discrimination of women within the community were accused of being traitors (Özkaya 1998, Çağlayan 2007).

Handan Çağlayan, a Kurdish feminist academic activist, in her book *Analar, Yoldaşlar, Tanrıçalar – Kürt Hareketinde Kadınlar ve Kadın Kimliğinin Oluşumu* (Mothers, Comrades, Goddesses: Women in the Kurdish Movement and the Formation of Women's Identity, 2007), the first comprehensive work on Kurdish women in both Turkey and more widely, shows how the Kurdish nationalist discourse appears to offer women emancipation and liberation when it "invites" them into the public sphere and participation in the national struggle, but the reason for so doing is usually due to the shortage of male fighters or the exploitation of women in the public sphere to justify modernization (in keeping with the belief that a civilized society implies a civilized, emancipated woman). The Kurdish woman is thus a symbol of a modern nation and civilization; she was the "mother" of the Kurdish nation and future Kurdish generations. Woman's symbolic role culminated in the guerilla struggle of the Marxist-leaning PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party – *Partîya Karkêren Kurdîstan*), in which women were able to participate but only in the role of honorable, pure fighters who were willing to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the nation (Çağlayan 2007: 102–113). An analysis of these discourses shows that the relations between men and women as well as the social role of women that had been established previously were merely suitably adapted and transferred to the level of the Kurdish nation; there was no break with the previous tradition, it was simply its distorted mirror image. There are many similarities in the Kurdish national discourse with the Turkish or Kemalist discourse, which makes use of representations of women and the symbolism of women's roles in creating the modernity and civilized nature of a nation in the same way. Similarly as in the Turkish case, a symbolic struggle against the old (tribal/Ottoman) structures on the one hand

and against the (European or Turkish) occupier on the other can be detected in the Kurdish nationalist discourse (Çağlayan 2007: 63–78).

It was only at the beginning of the 1980s that Kurdish women adopted a more critical stance towards nationalistic discourses and organized themselves in a struggle for the rights of Kurdish women as women *per se*. According to Handan Çağlayan the personal experience of these women was the main reason why they voiced their criticisms in the public political arena. Human rights violations, injustice, suffering, torture, poverty, and migrations impacted women and so they decided to fight for peace (becoming known as *barış anneleri* – mothers for peace). In these adverse conditions women took on a more active role in the Kurdish struggle for national liberation since they frequently had to fight for the release of their imprisoned husbands, fathers, and brothers; at the same time they criticized the patriarchal structure of the national struggle. This role was taken on by the organization KAMER, which was founded in 1997 in Diyarbakır in eastern Turkey on the initiative of Kurdish and some Turkish women activists. KAMER advocated for the empowerment of Kurdish women, especially in poor regions settled by Kurds, and highlighted the problem of domestic violence and exploitation. The organization functioned independently from the Kurdish national movement, and Kurdish women activists often encountered resistance since any demands by women for emancipation were frequently branded as traitorous, especially when they demanded rights as members of minority communities who resisted violence and discrimination within the national movement. Kurdish men regarded the Kurdish women activists as "traitors", while Turkish feminists never accepted them as equals (Çağlayan 2007: 28, 95–97, 138): the Turkish state and Turkish feminism rejected the legitimacy of the struggle of Kurdish women who were resisting abuse, while Kurdish feminists accused them of class privilege and a nationalistic and imperialistic discourse against the Kurds. Due to Kurdish feminism the expression "Turkish feminism" itself is controversial, since it excludes the feminisms of women with a different ethnic/national identity (Kerestecioğlu 2004a: 94–95, Kuyucaklı-Ellison 2009).

Islamic feminists

Islamic feminists in Turkey were accused of not understanding feminism. Socialist feminists writing in the journal *Kaktus* argued that Muslim women could learn the fundamentals of feminism and the prospects for the struggle against patriarchy from them and that Islam cannot solve the problems of women. They strictly defended the laicism of the state and secularism in society, which they regarded as a condition for women's rights and a women's movement, and

for this reason they believed that a women's movement and feminism were "incompatible" with Islamic feminists. In their view Islam as a religion is *a priori* oppressive towards women since there is no equality to speak of (Arat 1991: 17). Seda Yalçınkaya (1995: 94) sees the difficulty in the failure of socialist feminists to listen to Islamic feminists and in such conditions two-way communication is impossible. Leila Ahmed (1992) notes that the search for differences between Islamic and other feminists obscures the similarities they share, since they all demand the right to education, employment, occupation, and political, economic, and other rights. For this reason Islamic feminists are unconventional in comparison to the traditional role of Muslim women (as mothers and wives in the domestic sphere), defined by the dominant patriarchal view of women.

Nazife Şişman (2005: 72–73) notes that a synthesis between Islam and feminism was made impossible since in the process of creating the new Turkey, the new woman became a symbol of the level of civilization. It was thus impossible to think of Islam and feminism or women's rights and liberation together, since Islam was *a priori* rejected on the grounds that it was incompatible with modernity and civilization, hence also with feminism. The Kemalist ideology and the identity of the new Kemalist woman and Kemalist feminism were grounded precisely in this creation of contradictions between tradition and modernity, backwardness and progress, from whence arose the rejection of the Ottoman-Islamic tradition. In the view of Nazife Şişman (2005: 74) the woman question was more in the role of laicizing the state (a distancing from everything Islamic) than in granting rights to women. A similar rejection of feminism could be detected among Islamists themselves: they considered feminism a product of the West, which Muslim women did not need, since Islam already granted them full rights. But this view was rejected by Muslim women themselves in the 1980s, when they took in their hands the representation of the Muslim woman.

Whether it is appropriate to use the expression feminism for a women's movement thus depends on whether a given group of women call themselves feminists and whether women express a feminist consciousness in their demands. In the moderately Islamist Turkish newspaper *Zaman* (Time) Muslim women emphasized that Islam could only stand to gain something from the ideas promoted by feminism. Muslim women actively use feminist concepts such as, for example, *male domination* and *domestic violence*, since women in the family are frequently discriminated against and subordinated to men. They blame primarily sexist male perspectives in tradition and in modern capitalist structures for discrimination against women in Islam, and these are considered to have negative impacts on men as well. Men on the other hand rejected this view by women and accused them of being traitors (Şişman 2005: 77–78, Sirman 1989: 24–27, Göle 2004: 160–169). Islamic feminists have thus claimed

feminist ideas as their own and argued that their "Other" is no longer the laicist woman but the Islamic patriarchal man. They thus sometimes consider as their opponent the West, sometimes the modern woman, and sometimes traditional male Muslims (cf. the feminist Barbarosoğlu in Şişman 2005: 75). Although some claim that Islamic feminists are not critical of patriarchal structures in the Islamic religion (e.g. Çubukçu 2004: 68), in fact they fight against patriarchal interpretations of religion and the Koran that are often unfavorable towards women, which is an important contribution towards overcoming entrenched traditional values; these are for the most part legitimized by religion (Kerestecioğlu 2004a: 93–94).

Islamic feminists criticize traditional interpretations of Islam, which frequently restrict women, and argue for the need for a re-reading and re-interpretation of Islam. Women do not accept Islamist interpretations uncritically but rather question Islamist interpretations of the role of women in Islam in a feminist spirit, albeit not using the same concepts as those applied by Western feminists. But they do display feminist consciousness and demand and defend rights that they feel they are entitled to. Islamic feminists look for the cause of the inferior status of women in patriarchal tradition, not in Islam *per se*, and see the solution to today's problems of women in Islam and the Koran; they therefore strive for the re-establishment of Islamic community. In their view men and women are called on to serve God and carry out obligations assigned to them by Islam. If these obligations are different for men and women, in their view this arises from the different nature of woman and man. Islamic feminists are not just passive in accepting the roles of motherhood and marriage but rather demand greater participation from men in household tasks and rearing children (Yalçınkaya 1995: 77). Just like their Western counterparts, Islamic feminists stress the sharing of labor between the man and the woman in the family[46] as well as the necessity of education and work for women, but they do not justify their demands by using the principle of "equality", which is a Eurocentric term: instead, they base their arguments on the principle of complementarity, which does not necessarily imply a division between the public and private sphere between men and women. The difference between man and woman in Islam is functional and not hierarchical, and from this is derived the viewpoint that we should not seek the concept of equality in Islam but rather complementarity and equilibrium. If the family role overburdens the woman (especially in light of work outside the home), this is something that also Islamic feminists criticize; however, they are usually denied this originality because they base their

[46] The division between work outside the home and care for the family has changed in the policies of the majority of European countries to "reconciliation of work and family", which, paradoxically, assigns the greater part of this "reconciliation" to women.

arguments on Islam and defend the right of women to not give birth and become mothers.[47] Muslim women say that if the Koranic concepts were applied correctly, then "equality" (as Islam understands it, of course) would already be achieved; they criticize the Western concept of equality, which arises from individualistic, rationalistic, and materialistic philosophy. Islamic feminists defend a different way of modernization and do not wish to give up their identity, difference, and personality (Sirman 1989: 24–26, Yalçınkaya 1995: 57, Göle 2004: 35).

The struggle of Islamic feminists for the right to their own difference and for Islamic feminists to be called feminists brings us to the concept of difference. The history of feminism is the history of passing from equality to difference, as İnci Kerestecioğlu puts it (2004a: 96). It is necessary to recognize differences such as ethnicity, religion, gender, age, class, etc. without fixing them as unchanging concepts. This according to Kerestecioğlu would be the best way of empowering women against racist, nationalist, and culturally essentialist policies. In her view the concepts of nationality and secularism in Turkey, which at present exclude an important part of the population (e.g. Kurdish women, Muslim women), need to be expanded.

Given the characteristics of Islamic feminists I therefore see no reason not to call them *Islamic feminists* and attribute to them the characteristics of feminine consciousness, albeit in a non-Western manner, since in the spirit of feminism they demand rights for themselves. Fadwa El Guindi (2000: 182) also stresses that feminism in the context of Islam, or Islamic feminism, is the only way that Muslim women can be liberated and empowered. Ziba Mir-Hosseini (in Mesarič 2007: 100-101, 102) sees the possibility and significance of Islamic feminism in the context of political Islam precisely because Islamic feminism addresses Islamists in their own language, which has its own symbolism and own codes. In this regard secular language and secular feminism cannot offer something more that would elicit the Islamic discourse.

Nazife Şişman (2005: 75, 77, 90–91) notes that within Islamic feminism there exist several feminisms. The most interesting for Turkey is *turban feminism* – the expression was first used in the Turkish magazine *Nokta* (Dot) in 1987, when some Islamic feminists (spontaneously, not in an organized fashion) mobilized around the issue of the ban on covering in schools and public offices, which earned them the nickname of "turban feminists".[48] They founded The

[47] Fadwa El Guindi (2000) cites that a woman need not necessarily care for the family; moreover, in Islam it is permissible to reject breastfeeding, and a replacement (wet nurse) and the performance of household tasks must be provided for by the husband.

[48] The name turban feminists is based on the new form of covering with a scarf or shawl which is wrapped completely around the head and neck and is described as *türban*.

Women's Rights Association Against Discrimination (*Ayrımcılığa Karşı Kadın Hakları Derneği* – AKDER) in 1999 in order to fight discrimination against covered women. Turban feminists used feminism for their fight against the ban on covering, since they regarded this type of ban as a form of sexist discrimination, for which feminists who opposed covering are also to blame. Turban feminists considered covering as a civil liberty and a woman's and a human right.

THE POLITICS OF DRESS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MODERN COVERING IN TURKEY

In contemporary Turkey the Islamic manner of dress is usually called *tesettür*, which comes from the Arabic word *satr* (with the root s-t-r), meaning to cover, conceal, protect (El Guindi 2000: 88). The traditional Turkish *tesettür* includes *başörtüsü*, which means literally "covering for the head", often in combination with a coat called a *pardesü* or *manto*. *Tesettür* of modern Muslim women includes mainly a new way of covering the head, the *türban*, which differs from the older conventional covering, the *başörtüsü*. The treatment of the covering and representation of Muslim women expanded from having solely religious to political connotations through the concept of the turban.[49] In the 1960s and 1970s the ever increasing number of covered female students at universities in Turkey triggered an onslaught of bans, opposition, and protests which continued until 2012, when covering was allowed at universities. Economic migrations, political pluralization, and increased literacy among women triggered an increase in the number of women students, some, but not many, of them covered. In 1968 for the first time a woman student at the theological faculty of Ankara University was expelled for being covered. Prior to this incident, in 1964, for the first time a covered woman student who had graduated in medicine at the top of her class was denied the opportunity to give a graduation speech that traditionally goes to the best student. Since that time such cases became increasingly common and pressures also mounted outside state institutions. In the 1970s male moustaches and beards and female headscarves were already regarded as expressing a political view against the state and after the 1971 coup there was pressure and firing, and covered women students were not allowed entry to examinations, seminars, and conferences. In the 1970s a woman lawyer was excluded from the bar association since she began to cover her head, and the Ministry of Labor banned covering for male and female officials. Beards and long mustaches were also prohibited and men were required to wear a tie. The pressures on covered women and their education were mitigated somewhat with the creation of İmam Hatip lycees, in which girls were able to

[49] For a more detailed analysis cf. Yalçınkaya 1995, Göle 2004, Saktanber 2002, Özdalga 1990, 1997, Arat 2001, Kadıoğlu 1994, and White 2002.

enroll beginning in 1975, and two years after that a special school for girls was opened which allowed covering.

However, after the 1980 coup the prohibition on covering became even stricter. In 1982 the new Law on Civil Servants was passed: excessive makeup, narrow trousers, short skirts, and covering for women and excessive beards, mustaches, and long hair for men were prohibited, and the wearing of ties was compulsory; at the same time the law stipulated that the prohibitions be justified based on the requirements of the occupation, and restrictions must not violate principles of democracy.[50] Covering at universities was not regulated by this law. Although there was no law that would regulate the attire of students or prohibit covering in general, the provisions of the law that referred only to officials began to be applied to students as well (Erdoğan 1999, Ulusoy 2003) and soon the bans extended to universities. The Council of Higher Education (YÖK)[51] issued a ruling in 1982 affecting all higher education institutions and specifying in detail acceptable attire: male and female students as well as male and female teachers must have uncovered heads, covering is explicitly prohibited, and clothing that excessively stands out in any way is not allowed. After this ban was issued, covered female students were barred from entering campuses, faculties, or other higher education institutions. Many women students abandoned their studies, some uncovered themselves, while others moved abroad; there were also students who wore wigs. The ruling created a legal and political problem, since it enforced a ban without a basis in any law and was therefore disputable.

In the 1980s there thus arose the "turban problem" (*türban sorunu*). In spite of all the bans there were still increasing numbers of women who wanted to pursue their studies and who insisted on being covered at universities, thereby expressing disobedience and resistance to the restrictive state and university rules. For this reason Ayşe Saktanber (2002: 254–276) describes young Muslim women and also men as a subculture challenging the state Kemalist policy. There were a series of protests and strikes. As a result YÖK in 1984 invented a specific manner of covering or a turban that represented an "acceptable" form of covering since it was supposed to be Western, "modern", and "neutral". YÖK even ordered the production of turbans at the Development Institute for women students of theology at the Theology Faculty of Ankara University, but the women who cov-

[50] In 1999 the legitimately elected Merve Kavakçı was expelled from Parliament for wearing a headscarf (2004). After that time, Turkish female members of parliament were able for the first time to enter Parliament covered on 31 October 2013.

[51] YÖK (Yüksek Öğretim Kurulu) is separate from the Ministry of Education and has the primary task of organizing higher education. Turkish army generals also had a voice in the reforms of YÖK, which means that universities and rectors were under direct military control.

ered did not accept it (Aktaş 2006). In my own field studies I also encountered the dissatisfaction of women with the fact that their covering was called a turban when they themselves say that they wear *başörtüsü*. Some women, albeit a minority, nonetheless claim that they wear a turban[52] and consider themselves as representatives of a new, modern, and urban form of covering. Gradually the turban became an expression for all types of covering regardless of whether a woman wears a turban or *başörtüsü*. The definition of covering thus became arbitrary, since any covering that differed from the traditional, "innocent" covering in rural areas could be considered by the opponents of covering as "dangerous" (the new covering was typical mainly for young urban women and female students, who covered themselves in a variety of ways). This "new covering" or turban paradoxically acquired the meaning of a political symbol (in contrast to the traditional *başörtüsü*); as such it became a target of attacks by Kemalist men and women and in the end was once again prohibited.

In different periods YÖK sometimes allowed covering and at other times prohibited it. In 1987 the turban was banned, then in 1988 allowed again. Subsequently YÖK decreed that decisions regarding the allowing or banning of covering would be made by universities and their rectors, whose decisions were arbitrary, with bans continuing in many places. During this period of "anarchy" the turban regime varied greatly, with some universities banning it while other more liberal as well as some provincial universities allowed it (Aslan 1999: 56–59, 61). In the 1990s at some universities there were established so-called "persuasion rooms" (*ikna odaları*) for Muslim women who insisted on being covered, where they were interrogated about their reasons for being covered (they were asked about who supports them, who they represent, how much money they are paid for being covered, who threatens them, and so on) and were pressured to uncover themselves. In the fight against the aesthetic and ideological threat of religious reactionism, Kemalist women also organized laicist gatherings, propaganda campaigns, educational seminars, and meetings against covering, at which women symbolically tore up headscarves. They also organized courses for modern women at which women and girls were "taught" a modern way of life and dress, and some advised covered women to go to Europe and learn "contemporary dress" since they were old-fashioned (Aktaş 2006: 247–305, İlyasoğlu 1994: 28–30).

For the first time a request to the European Court of Human Rights against the turban ban was also submitted, but the court overturned it. Grounds for rejection were among other considerations that women students could opt for

[52] Data from a study by TESEV (2006) showed that in 1999 15% of women reported covering their heads with a turban and in 2006 11.4% did so.

private schools (as in France), which indicates the complete lack of information that the court has about circumstances in Turkey: private schools and universities are subject to the same control and the same rules as dictated by YÖK (Erdoğan 1999, Ulusoy 2003). The matter was again submitted to the European Court of Human Rights in 2005, when Leyla Şahin was expelled from the Faculty of Medicine at Istanbul University in 1998. The ECtHR ruled that the country sued (Turkey) did not violate the European Convention on Human Rights, which in Article 9 guarantees the right of the individual to freedom of conscience and religion, and that the measure was legitimate since Turkey faces "growing Islamic fundamentalism" (Şişman 2009: 67, Kuhelj 2004). In the next few years there were also bans on the covering of teachers outside work time, which stimulated a discussion about the boundary between the public and the private sphere and about where and when women were allowed to wear headscarves (cf. Karakaş 2007: 34, Şişman 2005, 2009: 72).

Umut Aslan (1999: 53, 62) and Elisabeth Özdalga (1997) see the cause of the emergence of the "turban crisis" mainly in the increasing power and desire of Islamic groups for participation in the political as well as economic and social fields. In the view of Aslan (1999), Karakaş (2007), Ulusoy (2003) and Keyman (2007) Islamic groups do not represent a threat to the state and the system,[53] despite the Kemalists' portrayal of them as the greatest enemy; besides the historically determined antagonism, the reasons they are portrayed this way are also in the fact that they want to participate in political power and on the market, and because they criticize interpretations of laicism/secularization and the excessively strict control of freedom of conscience and religion. Covering as a "visible symbol" was a harbinger of the entry of Islam into the public sphere, which surprised the Kemalist revolutionaries, who thought that they had already dispensed with the "backwardness" problem. In the opinion of Elisabeth Özdalga (1997: 480) and Ayşe Durakbaşa (1987: 11) the ban on covering is thus primarily a response by Kemalists to the increasingly visible Islamic groups, since Kemalists could not accept the rise of a new, counter-elite. Anti-Islam groups had strong support especially in schools, universities, and public administration, and in Elisabeth Özdalga's view they are characterized in particular by ignorance about the position and thinking of their fellow citizens as well as a lack of understanding of religion, which fostered an ideological polarization in the conflict over covering.

Another factor contributing to the turban crisis was that the turban affected primarily the woman (question), who was the bearer of ideas regarding progress

[53] A study by TESEV (2006) provides similar results; in 2006 73% of those surveyed believed that secularism and laicism were not in danger.

of the country. According to Aslan (1999), the state and the Kemalist elite thus returned to the 1930s, when they justified their rule with military power and ideological mechanisms (particularly the politicization of Islam from above), by means of which they wanted to create the impression of national unity against what they interpreted as religious reactionism and regression. The problem of covering also ignited a renewed "debate on laicism" since the Kemalist laicists interpreted covering exclusively as a political symbol of Islamization and saw in it a threat to the laic republican regime. The Islamic community saw in covering a religious duty and a right in accordance with freedom of conscience and religion as guaranteed by Article 24 of the Turkish constitution, while supporters of the ban uphold the principle of secularism and the laicism of the republic which can be found in Article 2 of the constitution but is not clearly defined there. These two principles are not necessarily in contradiction; in the case of the turban it is mainly a matter of differing interpretations of particular articles (Özdalga 1997: 480–481).[54] Laicism can be interpreted differently – depending on the "understanding" of Turkish conditions, since a definition of this concept is not present in the constitution, even though laicism is one of the constitutional principles (Aktaş 2006: 194).

Turkish interpretations of laicism and the continuity of Orientalist discourses

Kemalists, their supporting organizations, and some media have interpreted the emergence of political Islam as a polarization between Turkish nationalism and Muslim identity, or between laicism and Islam. For the secularized and educated Kemalist elites secularism means following Atatürk's ideals (so-called Atatürkists), that is, the principles of modernization and laicization. These assume the practice of Islam in the private sphere only; hence Islamism in the form of covering women is interpreted as a violation of Atatürk's legacy. Educated women who cover themselves are regarded by Kemalists as betraying these principles and as a threat to Turkish society, since for them it is not possible for covered women to share the same (public) space and values as educated elites (Olson 1985: 164–167).

Laicism had become "sacred", and so the Turkish public was divided over the renewed covering of women. Kemalists make reference to the constitutional

[54] Yeşim Arat (2001), Cihan Aktaş (2006) and Ali Ulusoy (2003, 2004) note the legal uncertainties and biased judgments of the courts regarding the right, or lack thereof, to be covered. Studies by TESEV on the judiciary and the European Commission in a report on the progress of Turkey (2009: 11–14, 70ff.) also highlight the military influence and pressure on the independence and impartiality of Turkish courts.

principle of the laicism of the state, which is equated with modernity, and hence their conception of laicism also included a contemporary/modern way of dressing. For Kemalists this constitutional principle has priority over the constitutional right to expression of faith, and they argue that no one is prohibiting freedom of conscience and religion in the private sphere (Olson 1985: 167). Kemalists explain the renewed practice of covering in the context of a modernist-laicist understanding as a return to backwardness, as primitive and ugly, as a symbol of the subordination of women to Islam and Sharia law and as an embarrassment for Turkey. For Kemalists the covering of women was evidence of a renewed, extremist Islamism and the manipulation of women as symbols of the relentlessly expanding Islamist movement (Abadan-Unat in Yalçınkaya 1995: 4). Kemalists therefore regard covering as a violation of the laicist demand for contemporary attire and as a threat to those who do not cover. Among other things they argue that if Islamists are not stamped out they will divide Turkey and impose Sharia law. Using these arguments the laic Kemalists also justified the entry of the military into the political arena. The statements mentioned indicate the presence of the Orientalist discourse.

As Nilüfer Göle (2004: 21) writes, in Turkey the emphasis is less on "being modern" than on "becoming modern" or "becoming contemporary" *(çağdaşlaşmak)*. Turkey is still believed to be experiencing cultural schizophrenia, since the Kemalist reforms happened "from above", and thus the term *çağdaşlaşmak* (to overcome backwardness, to become contemporary/modern) is very significant in Turkey. Cihan Aktaş (2006: 222–223) notes the continuity of the superficial understanding of contemporaneity and modernity, which is limited merely to clothing and does not define contemporaneity in terms of rights and freedoms but in terms of forms and objects. Western-oriented reformers from the time of the late Ottoman Empire wanted to be modern and were embarrassed about their appearance in the eyes of the West, and so present-day reformers blame the "reactionaries" for Turkey's failure to Europeanize. In contemporary Turkey, when covered women can no longer be accused of being backward (because they are just as educated as uncovered women), there are instead warnings regarding the supposed danger of religious reactionism (*irtica*). Keyman (2007: 225) therefore sees the problem as being in the definition of secularism, which assumes that the privatization of religion will lead to decreased importance of religion in society. Due to the imposition of the Kemalist version of Islam and the undemocratic nature of the system, which does not acknowledge different identities and does not allow them to participate in society, there is today a process of sacralization and de-privatization of Islam. A decrease in religious practice does not necessarily also mean a decrease in the importance of religion: it merely means that at the institutional level the nation-state has taken over

the role of religion in society (Glasner in Mert 1994: 26). Nuray Mert (1994: 28, 33) observes that the problem also lies in the narrow definition of religion, since religion in addition to an objective or institutional aspect has a subjective aspect of belief, and for this reason the main feature of contemporary society is pluralism, not secularism. The Islamic segment of society therefore advocates participation in the public sphere and in society and politics.

Political Islamism and a critique of Turkish secularism

Political Islamism[55] in Turkey differs from Islamism in other societies since it did not develop as resistance against colonial powers and their collaborators from the ranks of domestic elites but rather managed – according to democratic political rules, in the framework of parliamentary democracy and a laic system – to pave a way for itself into the public social and political sphere primarily through the appearance of political parties and the strengthening of capital in the hands of Islamic-oriented businesspeople (Karakaş 2007: 15, Özdalga 1997: 479, Keyman 2007).[56] It should be emphasized that in Turkey political parties whose platforms include Islamic-oriented programs differ greatly among themselves with respect to the degree of Islamization that they desire or practice.

Political Islamists in Turkey argue that Islam is compatible with modernization and propose an alternative to the Western type of modernization, however not in the manner of fundamentalists – an apparent return to the golden age of Islam in history – but rather they propose *Islamic modernity*. Elisabeth Özdalga

55 Fadwa El Guindi (2000: xix) notes the frequently unjustified use of the expressions Islamism in place of Islam and Islamist in place of Islamic, which homogenizes and radicalizes all the movements within Islam and gives them a negative fundamentalist overtone. Some authors (Haynes 2011, Bhatt 1997, Dubuisson 2007) thus highlight that the concepts of religion and Islamic or religious fundamentalism are in fact empty concepts whose definition is usually grounded in assumptions and stereotypes, and this prevents an understanding of developments, dynamics, and reinterpretations in religion. The concepts of religion, tradition, and conservatism must therefore be understood flexibly and in context. For religious actors and movements that are socially, economically, and politically engaged, I use the concept political Islam and Islamists or Islamic actors. These can include religiously orthodox and politically very conservative viewpoints (for instance support for Sharia law and state) as well as conservative democratic viewpoints (an example is the so-called conservative democracy in Europe and in Turkey). However, nowhere do we find politically engaged Islamists referred to as "Islamic democrats", which is a shortcoming of the definition.

56 Karakaş also emphasizes that Turkish Islam is strongly under the influence of mystical Islam or Sufism, which marks Turkish Islamists in their less "literal" understanding of Islam. Sufism is an esoteric mystical movement which arose as a response to materialistic Islam. Sufis stress the importance of asceticism (Smrke 2000: 271–272). The very well known adherent of Sufism Mevlana or Rumi lived in the region of present-day Turkey in the 13th century.

(1990) sees religious rebirth in Islam as a symptom, as a reaction to the search for answers to an existential crisis, and it therefore does not imply tradition but rather is the result of the modern age. In her view increased religiosity of people does not necessarily express backwardness but rather can be an expression of progress, renewal, and new interpretations.[57] Contemporary Islamists who appropriate the media, science, and technology are accused by some authors (Ahmed 1992: 229ff, Yalçınkaya 1995: 36) of appropriating only the material side of modernization, which they explain as a selective adoption of modernity. However, in the view of Keyman (2007: 224, 227) and Roy (2007: 84) new, economically oriented Islamic phenomena, which co-exist with the postmodern, globalized, and consumerist system, counter Orientalist prejudices that assume that Islam is not capable of modernizing. Islamic societies all through history have encouraged trade and dominated the field of science, something which is insufficiently stressed in the European imaginary.[58] Keyman (2007) thus states that Islam is not in contradiction to modernization and capitalism but rather merely challenges the Western assumptions about it and proposes a different understanding of these processes, for example a more communitarian approach to development and progress, which builds on trust and solidarity, and the articulation of a free market based on Islamic principles and morality. Roy (2007: 45, 52) believes that Islam has historically and geographically adapted to different cultural patterns and political authorities and hence cannot be the cause or the culprit *per se* for the inability to modernize.

The criticism of secularism in Turkey is directed mainly at the control by the state, which extends into "subjective secularism." In the view of Keyman (2007: 226–228) Islamic criticism is not aimed at undermining the foundations of objective secularism or the laicism of the state – a separation that should be kept – but rather at the subordination of religion to the state and the imposition of a single (Kemalist) type of Islam. Resistance to this is cultural as well as political and economic, and is directed against state control of Islamic identity, against the Kemalist ideology, the Westernization project, and in the case of the ban on

[57] Islam, Islamic practice and the Koran should thus be understood as a changing and living practice, as living phenomena. Believers thus attribute different meanings to religious symbols and also negotiate the temporal and spatial context in which they find themselves. Fadwa El Guindi (2000: xiv, 67–83) writes that religion changes in the organization, rituals, and belief systems. Islam throughout history has passed through many stages/levels, from the enlightened to the dogmatic, and developed numerous factions, from the militant to the peace-loving and spiritual. This development is still taking place, and it is necessary to transcend the conceptualization of development as the linear evolution from the primitive to the civilized.

[58] Leila Ahmed (1992: 237) notes that in conceptualizing the development of the civilizational and cultural heritage of Europe and the Western world it is necessary to have in mind also external, non-Western, local inventions and influences.

covering also against the control of women's bodies. For this reason Keyman believes that Turkish secularism is not unbiased and neutral,[59] but works against representative democracy and is therefore in need of reform. For Kemalists the interpretation of religion that is compatible with laicism is the one limited to the private sphere. At the same time, however, Kemalists do not consider the use of religion for political purposes, or the promotion of their own interpretation of Islam, to be controversial and contradictory. Kemalists thus interpreted laicism (and religion) based on their current benefits (Davison 2006: 277, 299). For this reason Keyman (2007), Karakaş (2007), Ulusoy (2003) and Erdoğan (1999) do not see a threat to Turkish democracy in the demands to allow covering in schools and consider the ban on covering to be a democratic deficit.[60]

Islamists thus emphasize the need for a different understanding of the public and private spheres. Aynur İlyasoğlu (1994: 111–112) and Joan Wallach Scott (2007: 92) stress that the dualism of the meaning of the private and the public in some other culture can be determined using different parameters, since different systems of belief do not separate the public and the private in the same way as does the tradition of the West and Western Christian communities, from which secularism and laicism arose. When a covered Muslim woman occupies space in the public sphere, this sphere also changes, according to İlyasoğlu, since the values of the private sphere are transferred into the public. *Tesettür* thus symbolizes the transition between the public and the private sphere. A similar view is held by Fadwa El Guindi (2000: xiv, 67–83), who finds based on ethnographic studies that Muslims change the public sphere into the private as necessary (praying can be done anywhere; upon hearing *ezan*, the call to prayer, Muslims speak certain words that change the space in which they are located into a sacred space, etc.), which indicates that the boundaries between spheres are not immovable. Instead of a bipolar division between the public and the

[59] Seda Yalçınkaya (1995: 1) calls it militant secularism.

[60] However, the question remains of how political Islam would have developed in Turkey in the absence of the political and historical circumstances that led to the control of religion and within it the caution of Islamists, who were aware that the army could have them removed and that their political activity was restricted. But this is only speculation that requires emphasizing that today's Justice and Development Party (AKP), despite concerns regarding its policies, represents a synthesis between reformism and conservatism and is succeeding in its democratic reforms and EU integration process (Frank 2013, Keyman 2007, Karakaş 2007, White 2002), which to date has not been achieved by any left-wing or right-wing party. The eventual accession of Turkey to the EU would for the Kemalists and the army, whose synthesis is based primarily on the co-existence for benefits, mean the loss of many privileges, in particular the army's influence on politics. For this reason the AKP (and political Islam) sees in the EU the possibility for more democratic expression and activity. As to whether their expectations are naïve, this will be demonstrated by the way in which Europe will acknowledge and accept its "Other", which is now becoming the increasingly larger Muslim minority.

private sphere, the devout Muslim woman or man can create a private sphere anywhere and anytime, including in "public". The Western concept of "privacy", according to Fadwa El Guindi, is associated with individualism and private property, whereas in Islam privacy is associated with women and the family and with women's management of the domestic sphere.

Islam must thus be conceptualized as a living system, so Fadwa El Guindi (2000: xv–xvi, 67–68) opposes the division of "one Islam" vs. many Islams, which assumes that there is only one "true" Islam and that it is static. Heresies are just as "Islam" as orthodoxy is. It is simply a question of the power and ensuing legitimization that any given community has won for itself. Different religious experiences are equally important, and it is also important how individuals understand, experience, and interpret Islam. Religious texts and practices are influenced by interpretations, dominant discourses, local habits and customs, political, economic, and social influences. The plurality of the Islamic world is thus in and of itself a source of dynamic and conflicting relationships among Muslims within Islamic lands (cf. İlyasoğlu 1994: 17–18, 58–59, Bullock 2002: xix, xxii, xxiv).

The emergence of religious revivalism and Islamization and the demands of Islamists can thus be misunderstood. The term religious revivalism (e.g. Islamization) can therefore be misleading since according to Roy (2007: xiii, 69, 79–82) it is not about a "growth" of religion but rather new demands and greater "visibility" of religion and believers who display their religiosity in public. Such movements are global, people's social movements that aspire to an affirmation of their identity and recognition (the politics of recognition – Charles Taylor 1992) in the public sphere. In Roy's view, religious revivalism is therefore a characteristic of all religions, and not just Islam, as it is often presented. For this reason Davison (2006: 12, 44, 74–79) believes that we need a new model of interpreting modernity that would be plural and inclusive of "Others" since different people and changing factors participate in contemporary societies, undermining the dominant narratives. Davison's view is that we have internalized certain assumptions (and along with them prejudices) about modernism, which provides for a reduced role of religion, and for this reason we are shocked when religion "again" appears. Arbitrariness and differing interpretations of religion and religious practice thus compel a new understanding of modernity, secularization, and religious practices such as, for example, covering.

Interpretations of covering in Turkey

Explanations for contemporary covering in Turkey (as well as elsewhere) encompass a wide range of reasons. Among the most evident is that it is a result

of resistance to modernization and Westernization and part of a search for an Islamic way of modernity, expressed in the external appearance of women who reject and challenge the Western type of modern woman as an imposed *norm*, and who represent a challenge to the Kemalist as well as traditional Islamic model and ideal of woman. In opposition to these norms and ideals Muslim women are creating a new or *modern type of Muslim woman* (Durakbaşa 1987: 92, Aslan 1999: 54). In my opinion this is also a consequence of the new wave of (postcolonial) feminism in which different women as previously silenced objects are now claiming ownership of their space and demanding subjectivity counter to Western representations and Western feminisms and counter to the local dominant and discriminatory (whether nationalistic, Islamic, etc.) discourses. By this means women gain subjectivity and power, and Muslim women gain a voice in decisions about how their bodies will be interpreted and how they will practice their religion.

As part of the resistance to the Western type of modernization, contemporary covering is understood as resistance to the system and as a reaction to the Turkish Kemalist secular discourse attempt at eliminating covering in the public sphere. While women are not officially prohibited from covering, it is restricted and prevented by means of various measures, which just generate even greater resistance. In the view of Seda Yalçınkaya (1995: 67ff.) the restriction of education and an administration which treats covered women in a humiliating way (persuasion rooms, forced uncovering, exclusion from school and work, expulsion from Parliament) has exactly the opposite effect of that intended. For this reason the re-appearance of covering and its greater visibility in the public sphere, especially at universities, in Turkey has represented a challenge to the conviction that covering had been rooted out of public life and that women were emancipated and liberated from Islamic traditionalism.

The feature of contemporary covering is treated as an "occupation" of the public sphere in which women fulfill their educational and professional aspirations. For this reason Nuray Mert (1994) describes modern covering as a university movement or a feature of urban environments. Paradoxically, covering becomes a symbol of visibility in the public sphere while in the Orientalist discourse it was regarded as a symbol of invisibility since it obstructs the view and control of the body. Modern covering is thus an indicator of class struggle since it is practiced by modern and educated women who enjoy more class mobility and are highly educated. For them education means greater autonomy and advancement up the social ladder, on which education and a higher economic position had previously been reserved for the secular and Kemalist elites. Their understanding of covering therefore represents a transition from the rural to

the urban, from lower to higher social class, from uneducated to educated (Göle 2004: 122ff, Yalçınkaya 1995: 83–85).

In the public sphere covering is also supposed to imply rational behavior. Covering can be moral compensation due to the expanded social understanding of the female body and behavior as provocative, hence covering is used as a defense against harassment; it is a search for respect and dignity in a way that frees women from sexual connotations since they wish to be understood as individuals and not as sexual physical objects. Covering is thus resistance to and protest against a public sphere that is uncomfortable for them, and they therefore consider it as an act of liberation, increased self-respect, and personal dignity. Covering thus means protection in society – from the gaze of men. However, in so doing women in the view of many authors[61] submit to an Islamist understanding of the traditional role of woman and her moral behavior; according to these explanations covering is consenting to the Islamist image of woman as sexually provocative (from which arises the need to cover up and repress her sexuality) and to the vision of the natural role of woman as mother and wife in the domestic sphere. Seda Yalçınkaya (1995: 77, 87) sees a contradiction in the demand for a career and motherhood, while Nilüfer Göle (2004: 124–127) associates covered women with politics and radical Islam, and regards them as "fanatic", since they cover themselves strictly, even more so than traditional women. In so doing they supposedly internalize and reproduce the dominant relations between the sexes and sexual control which is established in a Muslim community. Ayşe Kadıoğlu (1994: 659–660) has similar concerns, and sees the problem in the fact that Islam propagates the woman's role of housewife – women are supposed to opt for the household, covering places them in the private sphere, Islam and covering "protect women from sexual competition with uncovered women" and "they wish to emphasize more their identity than sexuality in public", in which the author creates the impression that this is something bad.[62] Joan Wallach Scott (2007: 156–158, 165) sees in this position the hypocrisy of feminists who criticize sexual objectification and

[61] On this question cf. in particular Göle 2004, İlyasoğlu 1994, Minai 1981, Yalçınkaya 1995, Saktanber 2002, Özdalga 1990; 1997, Arat 2001 and Kadıoğlu 1994.

[62] It is possible that this kind of understanding by Nilüfer Göle, Sede Yalçınkaya and Ayşe Kadıoğlu arises from an understanding of the strict separation *haremlik/selamlık*, but covering does not also mean the seclusion (exclusion) of women and a separation of men's and women's spheres. With it a sphere of privacy is established within the public, which allows women mixed contact with men. In my research I also found that covered women meet and mix with men and have more contact and relationships with them; young people (religious and non-religious, covered and uncovered women) in general socialize in mixed company. Similar results have also been obtained in a study by TESEV (2006), in which it was found that covered and uncovered women meet together, that different social groups have more relations and interactions at the micro level than the ideological separation can understand.

visual exploitation of the female body yet discard these criteria when a Muslim woman is involved.[63] Let us also recall that feminists of color demanded the right to have a family because during the time of slavery in America this was denied to them, and the demands of same-sex couples for the right to have a family (marriage and adoption of children), i.e. just those social institutions (families) that liberal Western feminism has criticized as a patriarchal tool for controlling women. The critique of marriage and family is legitimate when it deals with practices in the institution of the family, which place the woman or one of the partners in an inferior and exploited position without the freedom to make decisions, but a critique of the family *per se* (especially when it concerns a Muslim family) expresses double standards and bias and destroys a constructive critique of the family that Muslim women also perform.[64]

Migrations from rural areas to the cities also likely had an influence on covering, since migrants in cities became a marginalized population that preserved their traditional values, among them the practice of covering (Yalçınkaya 1995: 2). Economic marginalization and the resultant need for women to take jobs outside the home in a new and foreign environment presumably influenced the new significance of covering. Deniz Kandiyoti (1988d) writes that by covering women demanded security and respect in an unknown and uncertain environment. Covering would thus have been a continuation of traditional practices and customs and the need to safeguard a woman's honor, morality, and purity, since it gave a woman credibility. Through covering a woman communicates that she behaves in accordance with the principles of Islamic tradition and respects the care for social order and morality (Yalçınkaya 1995: 75).

Covering is (in principle) at its base primarily faith-dependent: women cover themselves because they believe it is their religious duty to do so (Göle 2004, İlyasoğlu 1994, Şişman 2009, Aktaş 2006) and that in this way they express their Islamic and cultural identity.[65] Nazife Şişman (2009: 10) emphasizes that the religious reasons for covering are generally neglected and that it is mostly explained in terms of political, social, and economic reasons. However, Nazife Şişman notes that neglecting religious perspectives and explanations of cover-

63 The feminist position that resists the sexual objectification of women while still emphasizing female sexuality and *femininity* indicates the contradictory and hypocritical nature of this position. What is problematic is the control of female sexuality, which in Islamic societies is religiously and traditionally highly restricted, but at the same time it is necessary to re-think the "ideal" of female sexuality against which "control over Muslim women" is established as negative. Sexual conduct is not a neutral category even in the West.

64 See the chapter on Islamic feminists.

65 Nazife Şişman (2009: 10), however, opposes the definition of covering as the identity of women or the search for some identity, since this reduces and objectifies the woman to merely "someone who is covered" or to "an advocate of covering".

ing obscures the fact that there exist differences in understanding of covering even among the Islamic-oriented population, but these are not expressed since Muslims have "mobilized" in response to the general attack on any kind of covering. MacLeod and Brenner (in Yalçınkaya 1995: 76) also state that, in a period when Turkey is undergoing cultural and social changes, covering expresses a personal stance and represents resistance. Women are aided in this respect by increasingly better education, which helps them feel better able to get to know Islam by themselves. For them covering thus means the achievement of a higher religious knowledge and a new way of existence and subjectivity. As believers they wish to express through covering a conscious belonging to a higher ethical and moral authority/religion, universal meaning and awareness.[66]

Leila Ahmed (1992: 220–226) defines the contemporary covering of Muslim women as "re-veiling" and understands it as a modern phenomenon since it represents a mixture of local and Western styles of dress. Individual women themselves interpret covering and dress by means of which they wish to legitimize their presence and visibility in public. For this reason in her view this re-veiling cannot be regressive or religiously reactionist even though the "uniform" that they wear is very traditional. Leila Ahmed considers it as a uniform of transition and not of returning, which in her view is a sign of modernity, and paradoxically also of the acceptance of a "Western way" of dressing, but in a manner that introduces changes and modification so that the new way of dressing is appropriate to new roles (work in the public sphere, education), while at the same time meets the Islamic requirements that devout Muslim women wish to fulfill. This viewpoint creates the autonomy of women and equality, which is defined in a completely different way than in the West. In this regard Leila Ahmed (1992: 230) emphasizes that women must strive to operate independently of patriarchal orthodox Islamists, who can become – or already are – authoritarian in interpretations of women's roles and their appearance and in the control of their bodily practices. The expression "re-veiling" is, however, opposed by Fadwa El Guindi (2000: 209), who says that it is not re-veiling but a completely new veiling, since it is not similar to the old way. The majority of authors who examine the case of covering in Turkey understand it in this way.[67]

[66] In a survey I conducted in Istanbul in 2009, the majority of female respondents (those who cover as well as those who do not) expressed the conviction that women cover because their religion requires it of them. Authors of the study by TESEV (2006) came to similar conclusions, finding that covering does not have political and identity associations. Thus 3.4% of respondents who cover say that they do so due to honor, 3.9% cover because it is part of their identity, 72% say they cover due to religion, and 4% say they cover because their family demands it from them.

[67] Cf. Göle 2004, İlyasoğlu 1994, Yalçınkaya 1995, Saktanber 2002, Aktaş 2006, Kavakçı 2004, Kadıoğlu 1994, Arat 2001.

Although some in the Turkish public, especially in the media, argue that covering has increased, this view is not supported by evidence from studies: on the contrary, it is disproved. A study by TESEV (2006) has shown that over time fewer women are covering (73% in 1999, 61% in 2006), yet people are convinced that more women cover (64% of respondents believed that over the past ten years more women were covering). The internalized belief that covering has increased is based primarily on the "visibility"; but it could also be a consequence of the Kemalist fear of Islamic symbols and propaganda about the danger of religious reactionism (*irtica*). Greater visibility can also be explained in that women who cover nowadays speak more about it. Women have formulated their strategies of movement between the private and the public sphere and they have invented unique and different ways of being modern, or as Aynur İlyasoğlu (1994: 26–28, 107) puts it: "They are creating their own modernity by themselves." One of these strategies in her opinion is also covering. Aynur İlyasoğlu and Cihan Aktaş (2006: 222) emphasize the diversity of interpretations and the individuality of forms of covering, which is expressed through different colors, forms, and combinations by means of which women create their own individualized image. Ayşe Saktanber (2002) describes the style of dress of Muslim women as a *bricolage*, since certain forms of fashion are used as subversion and women create resistance through style – for instance the use of a regular shawl instead of a headscarf. By this means young Islamic women subvert the Western type of emancipation of women and gender equality and replace it with an Islamic understanding. They create an Islamic popular culture that is fluid, open to change, unstable, commercialized, and active; under the influence of global changes it therefore has a *nomadic character* – every day women negotiate anew the given social structures and Islamic rules.

Understanding covering and the *tesettür* way of dress as something static and homogenous is misleading and unsatisfying since it precludes research of a dynamic movement of Muslim women and of individual interpretations and motives for wearing *tesettür* (White 2002: 208). Individual women are thus homogenized, and their subjectivity and individuality taken away in a way similar to that during the period of colonialism. If it is true that Muslim women have in common merely the practice of covering, then it is unproductive to seek just one true categorization and interpretation of covering, especially in conditions of "new covering": indeed covering differs from country to country and also from place to place, from group to group, from generation to generation, and from individual woman to individual woman.

Muslim women who cover are additionally discriminated against in comparison with their male peers: if they are more visible they are subjected to harsh reactions and exclusion from the environment, thus they face discrimination

both as women and as Muslims (intersectionality of discrimination). In particular, in school and in their occupations they meet with rejection and attacks. Some women students who participated in my study expressed a fear of covering in public and for "compensation" they only covered themselves at home (covering is otherwise intended for the public sphere, while at home, if there are no *namahrem*[68] men nearby, women need not cover) or just during prayer since (according to their own accounts) they feared the reactions of friends, family, and the wider environment, which indicates the strong desire to cover and the opposing pressure of society.[69] Some women students uncovered themselves before entering Istanbul University. The idea that all covered women follow Islamic rules is also mistaken, since in practice they also distance themselves from generally accepted Islamic rules – for example, they may be spendthrifts, smokers, they may not pray regularly and so on. It is therefore necessary, in accordance with the different interpretations of Islam, to separate the person and the individual's practice or interpretation of Islam from an idealized Islam, which each group idealizes in its own way.[70]

Covering is thus not a new phenomenon, but in light of sociopolitical changes it has acquired a new role since it has been politicized. Thus Islamists as well as Kemalists saw symbolism in covering: some of their modernity and Islamic identity, and others of backwardness (*irtica*) and threats to the laicist-Kemalist identity. The practice of covering has acquired a new symbolic meaning as more covered women have appeared and entered the public sphere, or rather they began to cover precisely so that they could enter the public sphere. Muslim women have always been present, but they became "visible" when they put on headscarves and entered the university in large numbers. Thirty years ago there

[68] *Mahrem* means domestic, private, *namahrem* means public, external, and so *namahrem* men are those in whose presence a woman must be covered.

[69] Of course there is also another side of the story. In my research I encountered a case in which a girl joined some religious community and not only began to cover herself but also no longer showed herself to men. That this is a case of indoctrination is attested to by the fact that not even male relatives could see her any more – I learned of the case through her male relatives. There is no doubt that this is an example of a radical interpretation of covering, or more accurately, seclusion of a woman.

[70] In the surveys I conducted the majority of women agreed that they should not wear excessive makeup and stand out in the way they dress since this is not in keeping with Islamic requirements for modesty in appearance and not drawing attention to oneself. However, on the streets of Istanbul as elsewhere in Turkey the situation is far from the "idealized" appearance; the appearance is accentuated and the makeup and expensive clothing of some covered women stand out greatly. However I see no reason to define this as "bad" or "good", what is important is the fact that women themselves interpret their appearance, covering, and role, which can be of assistance in understanding that the interpretation of covering, external appearance, and religion is in general highly arbitrary and diverse. It should also be stressed that not all women who identify themselves as (devout) Muslims are covered.

was no "turban problem" purely because there were not a lot of covered women students at universities. The greater number of covered women students today is also a consequence of the opening of religious secondary schools for girls in the 1970s, which gave them a path to university. Surprise over the appearance of "new" covering stems from the mistaken understanding of Islam in Turkey as a homogenous and static system, which is not capable of dynamics and internal dialogue, including disagreements. In Islamic society different viewpoints and interpretations of covering have developed, which are often ignored in the academic discourse on Turkey.

Discourses of Islamists on women and covering

There is thus no uniformity and homogeneity in Islamic society. Different groups mobilize around different issues, and some "Islamists" operate within the context of secularism and nationalism and not in opposition to it – also for the Islamic faction Atatürk is an important figure. An Islamic-nationalist synthesis has arisen, known under the expression national vision (*milli görüş*).[71] Similar to Kemalism, Islam is also linked to the discourse of nationalism, but in contrast to the Kemalists, Islamists, Muslim women and also some left-leaning liberals defend the right to be covered based on a constitutional right and freedom of religion and conscience. They argue that the right to covering is a democratic right and political freedom, and that Turkey therefore loses credibility as a democratic state by having these kinds of bans (Yalçınkaya 1995: 4). However, Islamists, similar to the nationalist and Kemalist ideology, exploit women and create an ideal type of woman as a means in the creation of the ideal Muslim society.

Muslims from some Islamic groups have attacked women and criticized them, in particular with arguments that not each type and form (interpretation) of *tesettür* is appropriate since some women are inclined towards overconsumption, fashion, makeup, and provocative dress. Yael Navaro-Yashin (2002: 221–253) sees a contradiction in this position since Islamists also commercialize covering and the headscarf as a consumer item. Consumption and the commodification of symbols is nothing new in Islam and religious movements. Some

[71] This vision in contrast to the Turkish-Islamist synthesis (TIS) places Islam at the forefront and represents the intellectual basis of political Islam and Islamic parties in Turkey from the 1970s on (Kanra 2009: 71). It is composed of mainly Islamic parties such as the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi* – RP) of Necmettin Erbakan in the 1990s and the Felicity Party (*Saadet Partisi* – SP) at the beginning of the 21st century. The AKP party has declaratively distanced itself from this tradition; otherwise since 2013 the AKP party has been organizing so-called rallies of national will (*milli irade mitingleri*), by means of which it is linked to the nationalist discourse.

Turkish textile companies specializing in *tesettür* (one of the most well-known is TEKBİR) have organized fashion shows and runways in which models were hired (also underclothed, reports the author) to promote the fashion design of *tesettür* and covering. This raises the question of exploitation of women as objects and bodies. In the view of Yael Navaro-Yashin TEKBİR has ironically realized the concept of the modern woman and turban created by the Kemalist rulers, namely the idea that women should be "modern" and beautiful even if they are covered and they are religious. Islamists (in particular political Islam and parties) thus paradoxically criticize Western society and the objectification of women while at the same time exploiting covered women and coverings, which become a consumer item and symbol of Islamists in order to demonstrate their modernity, gain the votes of believers, and criticize Kemalists and the state. Some Islamists have criticized fashion shows, shopping, and uncontrolled consumption in the many Turkish shopping centers, but like in other parts of the world the practice and the lives of Muslims go their own way, along which they participate in modern neoliberal consumer society.[72] In the context of criticism of modernization, the activity of Islamists on the market is not controversial in itself; what is controversial is the fact that women are criticized for their "consumption" while Islamists themselves also encourage consumption and exploit women as part of it.

Because of the commodification and manipulation of Islamic symbols, in particular with covering and *tesettür*, Jenny B. White (2002: 191–217) writes that Islamists in Turkey wish to create an elite Islamic identity that would distinguish itself from everyday Muslim practice. Through the commodification of covering and the promotion of expensive *tesettür* material they want to create a symbol of the upper class (parallel and in opposition to the Kemalist elite). They want to associate covering and *tesettür* with an urban, modern, and educated environment and for this purpose they use educated women who are fighting for the freedom to be covered; in this way they can assert that the covering of these women believers is a new, more aware, and intelligent practice, as opposed to the everyday automatism and cultural practice of "folk" Islam. On the other hand Islamists want to destroy the apparent class differences between

[72] Consumption and pop culture in Turkey culminated in Turkey also through globally known TV series such as Suleiman the Magnificent (*Mühteşem Yüzyıl*). The series has a wide audience also among Muslim men and women even though many Muslims, among them also R. T. Erdoğan, are critical of it since it "mistakenly" presents Sultan Suleiman. Similar to many strict Kemalists who oppose any criticism or "mistaken" presentation of Atatürk, some Islamists also do not tolerate "erroneous" presentations of their predecessors, i.e. the Ottoman sultans. However, it is precisely in the case of these phenomena that the diverse dynamics of differing opinions and interpretations in groups of people, who are supposedly bound together by a feeling of belonging to a particular identity (Muslims, Kemalists, etc.), can be seen.

upper and lower classes, and so some political parties interpret covering and *tesettür* as a homogeneous practice. By concealing the (visual) class differences they wish to strengthen the identification with the lower classes and communicate that they have the same values (i.e. honor). In the view of Yeşim Arat (2001) Islamists deal with the problem of the ban on covering only superficially, in order to deflect attention from other inequalities and to gain the votes of Islamic voters. Islamists and Islamic political parties want to make use of the connection between them and young educated women who are fighting for the right to be covered as a means of mobilizing the Islamic masses.

However, Islamists also criticize the activism of covered women and try to shape it according to their conceptions. Islamists accuse covered women of making use of public protests against the ban on covering, which they claim is reminiscent of "communist methods". Clearly they are bothered by women's interpretation of their own role, which manifestly demands their rights to covering, and by women's activity and independence as displayed by these protests. Women thus interpret their role and manner of dress both counter to the Kemalist as well as to the Islamist discourse of the model woman. For this reason activist covered Muslim women are in a difficult position, caught between persecution by the state bureaucracy on the one hand and Islamic criticisms and difficulties with their families on the other. They also ran into trouble because they did not wish to uncover themselves, or because they uncovered due to threats of being barred from studying. This created a schizophrenic psychological state in many girls (Aktaş 2006: 6, 46–51, 113, 236).

Chetan Bhatt (1997) writes that modern Islamists use new forms of activity, new political speeches, and new forms of social formation; they manifest themselves in new forms of the social body, and these are represented by the national state and civil society, which according to Islamist principles must be based on religion. The exploitation of women and interpretations of covering for creating the ideal of woman as a symbol of modern Islamic society belong in this category. Through this exploitation Islamists oppose the conception of Islam as backward since they use educated, "modernized" devout Muslim women to their advantage, in order to create a new image of Muslim men and Muslim women. At the same time, similar to the nationalist Kemalist discourse, Islamists also create an image of woman as mother and wife and emphasize the importance of education for bringing up children for the benefit of Muslim society. Although professional work outside the home is welcome, it should not be at the expense of the family. Some Islamists, in the opinion of Leila Ahmed (1992: 194, 236–243), are just as authoritarian and hypocritical, since they selectively adopt Western discourses and achievements while claiming to oppose the West. Moreover, they also selectively interpret Islamic sources and they

are uncritical of Islamic history and the "golden age of Islam." The Orientalist discourse on differences among levels of civilization can also be seen among Islamists. The Istanbul society ISAV (*İslâmî İlimler Araştırma Vakfı* – The Foundation for Research in Islamic Sciences, 2005) regards covering as part of the "progress of civilization" and nakedness as a state of "primitivism". In contrast to Islamic feminists, they understand gender relations in terms of hierarchy in which the man has priority since woman was created for man's pleasure.

Women are therefore once again used as a means or "symbolic pawns" (Kandiyoti 1988b: 234) in the achievement of modernization ideals of Islamists, something which is (paradoxically!) the same as what Kemalism and Orientalism do. The Islamist discourse is similar to the Kemalist one, since both demand that women participate in the public and private sphere. Seda Yalçınkaya (1995: 4) is critical towards Kemalists as well as Islamists; the first overlook the fact that women themselves decide to cover themselves and at the same time reinterpret the practice of covering, Islam, and their lives, while the Islamists (political Islam) exploit the meaning of covering and women for Islamic political goals. Leila Ahmed (1992: 230) emphasizes that even if women do not want to identify with political Islam, which can be authoritarian and conservative regarding their role, they have become a symbol of Islamism whether they want it or not. Regarding Islamist conceptions of women we can wonder where, then, is the difference between their and Kemalists' conceptions. For these reasons Islamic women constantly repeat that they are caught between two discourses, neither one of which allows them to speak for themselves. Muslim women see the problem in that if they demand their freedom within Islam, Islamists will label them as Westerners, while if they defend their rights as adherents of Islam and their desire to practice their religion, secularists and Kemalists, including feminists, label them as Easterners or members of the Orient. I am therefore primarily interested in what women in Turkey themselves say, since – similar to the development of feminism in the West – what is important is the voice of women who express their (dis)satisfaction, determine their viewpoints, and define their feminism.

Views of Muslim women on covering

I focus on the understanding and interpretation of covering, whether in the public or in the private sphere, through an analysis of the written works of those Muslim women who cover themselves and who discuss theoretically the "problem of covering in Turkey." I regard this writing as (feminist, political) engagement, both activist and scientific, in the position of a subject that has power – since just a scientific analysis of Muslim women as "objects" of analysis

assumes that they themselves do not formulate scientific theoretical and epistemological positions, but rather only "respond" to questions.

Many women who defend the right to cover refer to democratic principles (among others also to Western institutions such as the United Nations and the European Court of Human Rights), and they are not categorically against secularism and in favor of Sharia.[73] Just the opposite: Muslim women criticize Islamists for exploiting them for their political discourses (cf. Kaplan 2005), and it is therefore disputable to think that women who cover uncritically advocate the same goals as Islamists. The fact that they also oppose some dominant Islamist ideas (for example to parties in power) is frequently overlooked; more accepted is the belief that they are directly connected with political Islamism than that they are critical towards it. Not all women who cover and belong in the category of young, educated, and urban women are also politically engaged Islamically (in favor of Sharia, against secularization) and their purpose is not to use covering (the turban) as a political symbol (Kaplan 2005, White 2002: 191–217). Women who cover and are also educated represent a telling example that Islam is not backward and that covering is not an obstacle to education and career fulfillment of women. Through education, women can diverge from traditional views of Islam.

Regarding the practice and the prohibition of covering in Turkey, Islamic feminists deal more with discourses on covering than with the meaning of covering for themselves. Hilal Kaplan (2005) and Nazife Şişman (2005, 2009) criticize different discourses for the homogenization and reduction of Muslim women to covering and criticize the explanation of covering as new covering. They argue that there is no new covering (in the manner and particularly in the meaning), since it has always been present, and there is only one reason for covering: it is a religious requirement that a devout Muslim woman must fulfill. Nazife Şişman argues that those who consider covering something new or foreign fail to observe the diversity in the wearing of the headscarf and likewise fail to compare other changes in clothing and external appearance among uncovered women. Hilal Kaplan writes that something unexpected happened for the authorities that saw the phenomenon as new covering: they had thought that covered women were dead but, as Hilal Kaplan paraphrases Lacan, "They were not buried properly, something has gone wrong during their funeral". More-

[73] Leila Ahmed (1992) even cites that many people (women and men) claim that they are in favor of Sharia yet they do not even know what Sharia means. In a practical sense Sharia often serves authoritarian Islamist regimes, which Ahmed criticizes. A similar assertion is supported by a study by TESEV (2006), in which it is found that 21% of the population supported Sharia in 1999 while in 2006 only 8.9% did. Authors also say that through detailed questions (e.g. if they would like Sharia to regulate civil law, marriage, and marital infidelity etc.) it is clear that the population of Turkey does not support the harsh laws of Sharia.

over, *tesettür* defines a specific way of dress and also way of conduct, for women as well as men. The authors oppose in particular the claim that the new covering is political. Cihan Aktaş (2006), who is also a covered Islamic woman activist, describes the new covering of girls as "different" from the traditional, but in her view it is primarily a consequence of the fact that women who are adapting to the modern way of life in cities are interpreting covering in a new way. In cities there are different manners of covering and different views of it that change over time, and so it is difficult to determine what is actually a "new manner of covering" or who covers and how. Covering has also changed because it used to be considered something "ugly" and "backward", and hence young women interpreted it anew, in their own way, in order to suit the changed times and city life. Nazife Şişman (2009) argues that the "diversity" in the urban phenomenon of covering can also be interpreted in a different way: in the same way that women, who come from rural areas to the city dress differently, so do Muslim women who cover – they adapt covering to the urban way of life and to the demands of their working environment. Also greater access to different textile fabrics enables new interpretations for them. This is characteristic not only for covered women but also for the entire urban population. As I have mentioned already, there are no standards of covering that could be interpreted in a binary way as *türban* or *başörtüsü*. This division was primarily an "invention" of the authorities.

Accusing believers of being insincere in their decision to cover and that it is not a reflection of their free will is regarded by Cihan Aktaş (2006: ix–xix, 325–355) as a desire of the authorities and the opponents of covering to subordinate Muslim women. Subordination and imposition of uncovering on them in the name of "freedom" in her view no longer means freedom but rather turns into tyranny. The author stresses that the interpretation of Islam and covering in Islam depends on each individual even if the faith is just one. She also criticizes defenders of women's rights (women's nongovernmental organizations) for their hypocrisy, since they have frequently condemned forced covering but never forced uncovering. The author supports the view that women cover themselves because it is a religious demand and they never use covering as a political symbol. For her covering is a way of seeking their freedom and authenticity in modern life today, since they wish to be recognized and recognizable, while on the other hand they also cover in order to create protection and gain strength. Since covering and *tesettür* also have in general an ontological dimension for believers, in her view these dimensions were not understood, which led to the emergence of the "problem of covering". Otherwise Cihan Aktaş asserts that covered young women in cities, who in her view pay the price for a superficial and unsuccessful Turkish modernization, are resisting both traditional as

well as modernistic discourses on covering and the role of woman in Islam, and therefore represent novelty, resistance, enlightenment, and peacefulness. In the modern world they are seeking ways to live with faith. These women hold great potential since they create new possibilities, a new way of existence and a new public sphere that is outside the secular-modernist definitions, in which in her view unfortunately not all people are included equally. Cihan Aktaş argues that the public sphere can never be completely cleansed of symbols and that moreover covering is intended specifically for the public and it is not required in the private sphere. A similar view is put forth by Nazife Şişman (2005, 2009), who states that covering is intended specifically for the entry of a woman in the public sphere. In the opinion of Cihan Aktaş covered women are treated as "Others" since they are not allowed to express their opinions and participate in the public sphere, and (until recently) they were not even allowed access to higher education, while at the same time they were accused of politicization and ignorance, lack of education, and incapability of analytical though – all in the name of the laicism of the state. As long as the problems of Muslim women are treated solely according to the standards of Western women's emancipation, Cihan Aktaş believes that this will not bring a solution, but a greater "dependence", which is believed to be the mistake of Turkish feminism since it is too closely connected with the West or "white feminism" (2006: 247–253).

Nazife Şişman (2009: 35) criticizes the norm of the uncovered woman, who is at the same time a symbol of the secular way of life, and also writes that "the liberal and secular individual in the secularized public sphere expresses his or her (specific) way of life", which is not neutral. Nazife Şişman also opposes equating the identity of a Muslim woman with covering since such an equation represents a limitation which reduces the identity of a Muslim woman solely to the practice of covering, and this creates the construct of "the average Muslim woman". The author says of herself that she covers, but this is far from the only signifier of her identity that would define her as a person since her identity is not built on covering (Şişman 2009: 9–10). She likewise opposes scientific analyses of covering and covered women since in her view they are associated with (and thereby also limited by) explanations of Islamic political movements, with political demands, identity politics, and advancement along the social ladder that interpret covering as the "re-birth of political Islam" and do not treat covering as a religious requirement. Nazife Şişman believes that covering has grown into a problem because every demand by covered women to express their religion in the public sphere runs up against a political system that is based on modernization and secularism and has pushed religion into the private sphere. She wonders why it is at all strange if an individual as a citizen turns to the state and demands from it the fulfillment of that person's rights. Every indi-

vidual who demands their rights in some country is after all a political subject. A problem arises because these legitimate demands for the right to cover are labeled "political activity" in the struggle of Islamic political factions for power and they are linked to this inseparably. Such a political discourse associates covered Muslim women with Orientalist interpretations of Islam, which is believed to symbolize the past and backwardness and an oppressive practice in relation to women. Covering thus at the symbolic level bothers the Turkish urban elite which has modernized, and in the context of this modernization covering represents an aesthetic barrier (Şişman 2009: 14–18).

Nazife Şişman (2009) likewise criticizes Islamists who seek to modernize while still trying to stay traditional Muslims. She is particularly critical of their justification and search for "true Islam" since this process is similar to the Kemalist-nationalist discourse of the search for the "true Turkish identity", which turns to some distant history and thereby denies different historical periods and contexts. The author also criticizes the Islamic internalization of the Western discourse of "equality" and "sex/gender relations". She describes this discourse as a Western, particular interpretation of relations among people, which regards the West and the Western woman as a neutral norm, and everything that diverges from it as "cultural" or different. Nazife Şişman believes that some covered women have internalized the Western discourse since they say that covering "liberates" them, and they give it a different meaning from the religious. They also argue, in keeping with secular explanations, that they do not cover due to traditionalist commandments but do so more consciously and in a "modern" way – they wear makeup, dress differently, and say that they are "different" from other women who cover.[74] Nazife Şişman sees all this as problematical and says that it is a consequence of a secular language in which we articulate covering, which forces many covered women into a defense using the same secular discourses (Şişman 2009).[75] Nazife Şişman regards the discourse of liberation as an internalization of the Orientalist discourse and a neo-racist approach which fixes and locks up the "Other" in a supposedly oppressive culture. For this reason she sees the need for liberation of the "Other" woman from

74 Similarly Hilal Kaplan (2005) believes that the advocacy of "difference" represents an internalization of the Western view of the "Other": for something to be "different" requires a comparison with something that is supposedly neutral. In her view covered women are no different from the "mainstream" Turkish population and so she criticizes those Muslim women who have adopted the strategy of difference. Similar interpretations are provided by a study by TESEV (2006), since covered women do not considers themselves different from uncovered women and the general Turkish public.

75 However the criticism that certain individual women have internalized the Western discourse is contradictory, since on the other hand Nazife Şişman sees something welcome in the different strategies of some individual women who adapt to the modern way and style of life.

under the yoke of culture as yet another attempt at control. In her view the discourse of equality legitimates demands that all religious and cultural differences are eliminated from the public sphere so that all citizens will be equal. However, this equality is grounded in a Western norm in which modern citizens in the public sphere must abandon all their other identities if they wish to be "equal" (Şişman 2004), and women who cover are understood as "unequal". Thus in her view the entire debate is based on a specific Eurocentric type of person and interpersonal relationships. Muslim women are thus forced into an "impossible" choice: to be a woman or to be a Muslim woman. Western norms have become universal in politics (a liberal democratic state), in the economy (free market) and in culture (the secular individual), and hence all else has become a "problem", believes Nazife Şişman (2009).

Like Nazife Şişman, Hilal Kaplan (2005) also opposes the reduction of Muslim women purely to their covering and says that (covered) Muslim women do not deal just with the problem of covering. She is bothered by the association of girls with Islamism and an Islamic political movement. Hilal Kaplan opposes the assumption and definition of Islamists as some unified political movement since this homogenizes the diversity of Muslims' views. In her opinion Muslim women do not refer to some Islamic (women's) movement since they are not organized; there exists only a very fragmentary Islamic women's mobilization or an "Islamic women's mobility", in particular with regard to the question of the ban on covering at universities. She also believes that both the Kemalist as well as the Islamist discourse sees women as victims – for the Kemalists they are discriminated against because they must cover themselves while for the Islamists they are discriminated against because they are not allowed to cover themselves. Both discourses treat the Muslim woman in Turkey as a victim, who is placed in this position by a covering. But covered women say that they have more to offer than just opposition to the ban on covering. Hilal Kaplan also criticizes those liberal actors in society who otherwise oppose the ban on covering but on the other hand patronizingly advise women how they should mobilize in their opposition to Islamic men, which means that the liberal discourse also considers them inferior victims without an opinion or the capability of autonomous action.

The views of all three authors are quite similar, particularly with regard to the reason for covering (that is, religion), rejections of insinuations about political engagement in connection with Islamists (towards which they are essentially critical) and the rejection of views which regard covering as their identity. But considering the analysis till now and cases of covering in practice, it is clear that the opinions of Muslim women also conflict with one another and that they criticize other Muslim women. Some would like recognition of their difference,

others are opposed to this discourse, still others call their covering new, some are against, and again others interpret the ideal of covering and *tesettür* as modest and discreet, while many also stand out in the way they dress, since they wear excessive makeup, dress provocatively, and so on. Many covered Muslim women thus assert that they want to be autonomous and free in their decisions.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF ISLAMIC FEMINIST CONSCIOUSNESS

Turkish feminists and activists who have struggled for their own interpretation of their bodies, their roles, group membership, religion, religious practices, identities, and actions have acted in keeping with feminist consciousness and represent a changed paradigm for the understanding of feminism. Since Orientalist discourse generally connects Islam with the "Other", far from reason and secularism, the Islamic woman and feminism are forced to choose between materialism and spirituality, between individual rights and group membership, between reason and religion (Haffernan 2000: 207). Jasemin Zine (2004) stresses that religion, especially Islam, is not accepted as legitimate epistemology. Thus in the spirit of Western modernizing rationality women in Islam were silenced and ignored in their attempts to present "another mode of being female", by means of which they hope to take the representation of their bodies and selves into their own hands. Jasemin Zine calls for a spiritual (religious) feminist epistemology as a legitimate knowledge with which women could offer their own hermeneutics of the Koran and their own representation of the devout Muslim woman within their culture and religion. Although skepticism and criticism towards radical religious interpretations or other ideological discourses in radical form (nationalism, fascism, capitalism, secularism) that exploit the female body (particularly members of minorities, migrants, "Others", and those who are "different") as objects and truly oppress women in some societies (including Western ones) are understandable, it is a mistake, as Chandra T. Mohanty (1991) says, to take a specific practice in Islam (covering) and generalize this version to THE Islam as THE source of oppression of women.

It is therefore necessary to avoid double standards. Although some practices in certain societies/communities, cultures or religions are also oppressive towards women, we must ask: who defines these practices as such? Are they so defined by the women in this society? It is also necessary, as Leti Volpp (2001) believes, to acknowledge the fact that the views of women from these societies/communities, cultures or religions who would deny the claims that they are being oppressed by a particular practice are usually ignored. As Leila Ahmed (1992: 168) puts it: "The issue is simply humane and just treatment of women, nothing less, and nothing more – not the intrinsic merits of Islam, Arab culture, or the West". The practice of covering (and other religious practices) is therefore

understood by Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998: 98–99, 118–199) as part of subjectivity and it is necessary to understand it as a unique cultural experience. Bobby Sayyid (2000: 27) and Meyda Yeğenoğlu (1998) stress that an uncovered woman is the norm of the essential woman, which means that something which is basically particular has become a universally accepted norm, which determines a widespread conception of the appearance of the female body. However, wonders Yeğenoğlu, why would covering be different from not covering? Since "if veiling can be seen as a specific practice of marking and disciplining the body in accordance with 'cultural' requirements, so can unveiling. [...] What needs to be examined here is the presumption of the truth and naturalness of the unveiled body." (Yeğenoğlu 1998: 115)

The point of Islamic feminism in the view of Iranian Islamic feminist Ziba Mir-Hosseini (in Mesarič 2007: 98, 104) is in separating patriarchal values and interpretations on the one hand and Islamic explanations of egalitarianism as interpreted by Muslim women themselves on the other. Precisely this is what empowerment means for them. Islamic feminism is important primarily because it means a critique of Islam "from within": Islamic feminists defend the view that many rules of Islamic legal doctrine are the result of a specific legal understanding and of social and cultural understandings of the relationship between man and woman, which however does not mean that these rules are unchangeable.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In this study I find that Turkish discourses of modernization, nationalism, and secularization, merged together in the shared construct of Kemalism, under the influence of the Orientalist discourse. Typical of the predominant social and state ideologies was the creation of an Other that in keeping with Orientalist assumptions became Islam and the covered Muslim woman. Differentiation between the old and the new woman and the creation of various interpretations of woman's role, image, and especially covering were essential processes for the creation of Turkish discourses of nationalism, modernization, and secularism. As part of the construction of the Other as a negative image the main role was taken on by Islamic covering, which was understood as a symbol of Islam and therefore of the non-national, non-modern, and non-secular. Covering was connected primarily with the representation of woman, who needed to be liberated from this practice.

In the "liberation" of the Oriental woman the Kemalists internalized the Orientalist discourse. For them Islam, and covering as its practical extension, were that Other upon which they built their new ideology. The obsession with changing according to the European model is illustrated by the term *çağdaşlaşmak* or "become/make contemporary" as contrasted with religious reactionism or *irtica*, which are the most common expressions of Kemalist ideology. Their conception of contemporization is in keeping with the Orientalist understanding of the liberation of women, which, paradoxically, just pushed women even further into the subordinate position of an exploited object. The Kemalist inferiority complex is expressed in statements of "embarrassment" before Western civilization, it is seen in the fear of how Turkey will "appear" to the outside world if it has covered women students and a covered first lady, it is seen in the constant effort to "contemporize" through the creation of societies in support of the "contemporary" way of life (*Çağdaş Yaşamı Destekleme Derneği*), in rallies at which women tear pieces of cloth, or in attacks on covered women because they appear "ugly" and backward.

Discourses which create representations of women in accordance with the Orientalist assumption of inferior and superior cultures have caused a deep polarization in Turkish politics and society. For more than a century persistent dominant discourses constantly resist changes and create an undemocratic environment. However the groups that have been most affected by polarization

and representation have not remained passive. Although in practice and in civil society polarizations and divisions appear, people actively advocate for change, including through common initiatives. They create spaces of coexistence and mutual respect where at the micro level covered and uncovered women meet, where men and women, Kurds and Turks, the secular and the religious, wearing turbans and jeans, appear together. Rigid theories of modernism, secularism, national purity and Islamic conservatism are challenged – in favor of a more plural society, which is under the constant pressure of old narratives of division.

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