

THE MODERNIZATION OF TURKISH WOMEN

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TURKEY has long been cited as the most important pioneer in the Middle East in modernizing the life of its female population. Now, 50 years past, we have to ask: How was it possible to transplant completely alien laws to a country of totally different culture and be able to administer this legislation with success for about half a century? The answer lies as much in the attachment to the values produced by Western civilization which Atatürk so fervently attempted to implant in Turkish society as in the changes produced by the slow but constant evolution which already began during Ottoman rule. Although these early attempts did not result in any successful and meaningful reform, it was these kinds of social challenges that prepared the ground for the later decisive and deep changes.

Indeed, emancipation of women began in Turkey in the first half of the nineteenth century. Those in favor of radical Westernization of Turkish society asked for the introduction of monogamy into the Imperial Household, including the elimination of the Sultan's *odalık* (concubine); free choice of feminine garments; non-interference by the police in the private lives of women; greater consideration toward women in general; freedom of choice in matters of marriage; the suppression of intermediaries in marriage arrangements; the creation of a medical school for girls, the adoption of a European civil code; the abolition of polygamy in general and the outlawing of repudiation, that is, arbitrary and summary divorce.¹

Another group of intellectuals of that period, deeply imbued with ideas of Turkish nationalism, who deemed the call for European education nothing but Montmartrian immorality deplored polygamy, repudiation and the veil.

1. Pervin Esenkova, *La femme Turque contemporaine, éducation et rôle sociale*, Extrait de la Revue IBLA, (Tunis, 1951), p. 285.

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Even the Islamic traditionalists who advocated segregation were ready to concede women the right to dispose of their own property, to walk alone in the streets, to frequent women's organizations and to attend primary and secondary schools.

Although women's life in the Ottoman empire was hemmed in by innumerable restrictions, it would be erroneous to assume that they were completely passive sufferers. Their struggle for more and better education was carried on vigorously in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. As a matter of fact, as early as 1863, under Sultan Abdul-Aziz, a college for the training of women teachers was founded in İstanbul, followed by the opening of primary schools for girls. The first women's magazine, entitled *Progress* (*Terakki*), appeared in 1869.² Under Sultan Abdulhamit another weekly, called *The World of Women*, began publication. Its contributors and editorial staff were all women. Women writers of that time were no longer mere poets singing of love, of nightingales and nature; they studied deeply the social and educational questions which affected their lives.³

Turkish women got their real chance in 1908. The return to constitutional monarchy brought men into positions of power whose political and social creed laid strong emphasis on women's education. During this period women started to organize themselves. The first women's club, *Taali Nisvan*, not only invited lecturers and opened courses, but founded, under the vigorous and energetic leadership of Halide Edib, the famous writer, day care centers for children. During the Balkan war, the women's section of the Red Crescent, founded in 1877, trained the first nurses. After the creation of a kind of "women's university" (*Nisvan Darülfünun*), regular courses for women students were started on February 7, 1914, at the University of İstanbul. In January 1914 the first seven Muslim female employees were recruited by the telephone company in İstanbul.⁴

Nevertheless, all these innovations and achievements were the accomplishment of members of a privileged, urban élite. The majority of the Muslim-Ottoman population still clung to the idea that there is definite male supremacy. Well known writers such as Namık Kemal and Tevfik Fikret repeatedly deplored the traditional anti-feminine attitude in the realm of education.⁵

It was the abrupt entrance of the Ottoman Empire into World War I which helped the Turkish middle class urban women enter new fields of activity such

2. Gotthard Jaeschke, "Die Frauenfrage in der Türkei," *Saeculum X*, Heft. 4, p. 361.

3. Halide Edib, *Conflict of East and West in Turkey*, 3rd edition (Lahore: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf, 1963), p. 194.

4. Charlotte Lorenz, "Die Frauenfrage im Osmanischen Reiche mit besonder Berücksichtigung der arbeitenden Klasse," *Die Welt des Islams* 6, (1918), p. 82.

5. Enver Ziya Karal, "Kadın Hakları Sorunu ve Atatürk," *Türk Dili*, Vol. XXXII, No. 290 (Nov., 1975), p. 608.

as employment in post offices, banks, hospitals, and municipal and central administration. Although unaffected by the suffragette movement which was raging in Europe during the first quarter of the twentieth century, Turkish women, when confronted with concrete situations of national distress, quickly gained political consciousness. Its most obvious evidence was the astonishingly high participation of women protesting in the Square of Sultan Ahmed in May 1919 against the occupation of İzmir by the Greeks. The support of educated women as well as countless anonymous peasant women at the front or in auxiliary services represents an important aspect of Turkey's struggle for independence.

This also explains why Atatürk started his speech on February 3, 1923, with acknowledgement of the deeds of Anatolian women. Rightly he promised: "The Turkish women have fought bravely for national independence. Today they should be free, enjoy education and occupy a position equal to that of men; they are entitled to it."⁶

Legal Emancipation

The bold reform undertaken by Atatürk, especially in regard to the status of women, was a gigantic swing towards the West, which no other Islamic society had ventured.⁷ By liberating Turkish women, he wanted to lay the foundation for more egalitarian and harmonious family life. He wanted Turkish women to have the same goals as men, that is to develop a life style that uses their energies and capabilities in such a way that they function in their various rôles efficiently and productively. Atatürk was determined to liberate women from their secondary and subdued rôle that consisted solely of being a commodity of exchange, a producer of offspring, in short, an object. He said in March 1923: "Our enemies claim that Turkey cannot be considered a civilized nation, because she consists of two separate parts: men and women. Can we shut our eyes to one portion of a group, while advancing the other and still bring progress to the whole group? The road of progress must be trodden by both sexes together, marching arm in arm"⁸

Of all Atatürk's Westernizing reforms, the emancipation of women carries a double distinction: it definitely represents priority over a number of planned innovations—as an example one can cite the administrative decision of İstanbul's head of the police four days before the proclamation of the Turkish Republic to abolish the segregated compartments on the street-cars of İstanbul, October 24, 1923⁹—and the fact that none of the vital innovations

6. Enver Ziya Karal, ed., *Atatürk'ten Düşünceler*, (Ankara: İş Bankası, 1956), p. 52.

7. Halide Edib, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

8. Enver Ziya Karal, ed., *Atatürk'ten Düşünceler*, p. 52.

9. *50 Yıllık Yaşantımız*, 1923–1933, Vol. I., Milliyet Yayını, 1975, p. 115.

concerning women were embodied in any law. Whereas the turban and fez were outlawed by the Hat Law (No. 671-25.11.1925), only local ordinances were directed against the veil. But Atatürk was not satisfied simply by introducing bold innovations in relatively narrow, élitist circles. He wanted, above all, to change the fate of Turkish women at large. And because of his remarkable attachment and respect for law and organization,¹⁰ he set out to introduce a completely new legal framework for the regulations of family relationships in order solidly to implant his most cherished ideal, equality between men and women.

The most important date for the advancement of Turkish women was the adoption of the Swiss Civil Code on October 4, 1926. With the adoption of a complete system of Western private law, Turkey's legislators wanted to emphasize the importance they placed on the initiative of equality before the law irrespective of sex and the strengthening of the status of Turkish women within the family. This decision, qualified in legal terms as "reception", made polygamy illegal, gave the right of divorce to women as to men, made civil marriage obligatory, by its significant silence allowed marriage between Muslims and non-Muslims, and removed any difference between men and women in terms of inheritance.¹¹ In one respect, however, the weight of custom had forced a change in the new code. The minimum age for marriage, which was 20 for men and 18 for women in the Swiss Civil Code, were reduced first to 18 and 17 and, later, in June 1938, to 17 and 15 respectively.

The Turkish Civil Code, in line with its Swiss prototype, does not allow absolute equality between husband and wife. The husband is the head of the family, the wife must follow the husband, who alone is entitled to choose a domicile, unless the wife, by applying to the court, can justify on acceptable grounds such as health, *etc.*, her own choice. The wife is required to participate in the maintenance of the household by assuming tasks in the household. If the wife wants to practice a profession, she has to obtain the open or tacit consent of the husband; in case of refusal she may apply to the court for arbitration. Since the law is based on a system of separate ownership of property, she may dispose freely of her material goods and has unlimited rights of ownership over all her acquisitions.¹²

10. Dankwart A. Rustow, "Atatürk as Founder of State, *Abadan Armağani*, (Ankara: SBF Yayını, 1969), p. 545. Throughout his career this thought prevailed in Atatürk's decision: "There is a Right, and Right is above Force."

11. Nermin Abadan, "Turkey", in Raphael Patai, ed., *Women in the Modern World*, (Free Press, 1967), pp. 94-95; Paul J. Magnarella, "The Reception of Swiss Family Law," *Anthropological Quarterly*, 46, pp. 100-116.

12. Sabine Dirks, *La Famille Musulmane Turque* (Paris and The Hague: Mouton, 1969), pp. 34-40. The French Civil Code as well as the German were rejected because they attribute a too subjugated rôle upon the woman within marriage. See Sauser-Hall, *Réception des droits européens en Turquie*, p. 344.

The Turkish Civil Code grants both sides the right to ask for divorce. The grounds for divorce can be classified in two groups: specifically stated ones of desertion, ill treatment or adultery, and those of a general nature such as incompatibility of character. Since the adoption of the Turkish Civil Code divorces have rapidly increased; divorce is mostly sought in large cities, by couples married from six to ten years. The majority of the divorces are those of childless couples and the most frequently quoted grounds are incompatibility of character, followed by desertion.¹³

Another innovation brought about by the Turkish Civil Code is temporary separation of the marriage partners (Art. 38) with a duration of one to three years. At present much discussion goes on in the media about the rigidity of the Turkish jurisdiction in regard to divorce, favoring a more flexible approach to dissolved unions with little hope for reconciliation.

Legally, religious marriages are not recognized. They may be carried out after the civil ceremony. However, religious practice as the sole basis for marriage is still widespread in the countryside under the name of "Imam marriage" The absence of formal registration of a large number of newly formed households has given way to urgent demands in the field of legitimization of children. The recognition by law of these children born out of wedlock has been realized by a sequence of special laws: No. 2330-1933, No. 4727-1945, No. 5524-1950, No. 6650-1956. The total figure for registrations under these laws is 7,724,419 children.¹⁴ Since then another set of laws has been discussed and promulgated which concerns the registration without a fine of children born of illegal unions, the enlargement of the competence of local authorities in terms of recognition of these illegitimate children and the establishment of a legal link between the child and the mother. These laws are No. 461-11.3.1964, No. 554-8.4.1965, No. 578-17.4.1965.¹⁵

The legal emancipation certainly strengthened the position of Turkish women within the family. With the threat of repudiation, of polygamy, being banned at least partially—and especially among the younger generation—a new concept of family life has emerged which is based on mutual rights and duties. Equality within the family not only changed the status of women once they were widowed or orphaned by equalizing inheritance, but also by

13. Nermin Abadan, *Social Change and Turkish Women*, (Ankara: SBF Yayını, 1963), pp. 21–23; Kemal Karpat, "L'Etat de la famille Turque," *Çağdas*, (İstanbul, 1946); Ü. Gürkan discusses the legal implications which might occur in case a married woman takes up a remunerated job outside the home without the explicit or tacit consent of the husband and its probability to be grounds for divorce. Ülker Gürkan, "Kadının Emeginin Değeri ve Evli Kadının Çalışmasının Kocanın İznine Bağlı olmasının yarattığı Sosyal ve Hukuksal Sorunlar," *Hacettepe Sosyal ve Beşerî Bilimler Dergisi*, Cilt 8, Sayı 1–2, Mart-Ekim 1976, p. 116ğ132.

14. Nermin Abadan, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

15. A. I. Inan, *Filî Birleşmelerle bunlardan doğan çocukların tesciline dair kanun, yönetmelik ve sözleşmeler* (Les lois, l'administration et les conventions concernant l'enregistrement de enfants des unions illégitimes), (Ankara, 1965).

supplying the women with some kind of coercive legal power. In case of adultery, if the husband's involvement was proved *in flagrante*, the Penal Code provides—upon grievance on behalf of the other spouse—a penalty for both partners of from three to 30 months. (T.C.K. Art. 141). These penalties can be dispensed in case the plaintiff, in this case the wife, takes back her complaint.

Even so, traditional institutions such as the paying of the bride price and elopement of minors—punishable by law—are still exercising their influence because their disappearance largely depends on the economic evolution of society.

Status of Women in Urban and Rural Settings

The extraordinary change of the status of Turkish women, be it within the family or in a larger context, is closely related to de-peasantization and rapid urbanization. Since Turkish society bears a strong, homogeneous Muslim character, traditions, mores and even superstitions still prevail wherever rigid social stratification patterns remain intact. As Fatima Mernissi pointed out,¹⁶ Muslim sexuality is a territorial one, a sexuality whose regulatory mechanisms consist primarily of a strict allocation of space to each sex. The universe of men is related to the universe of religion and power and the universe of women to the domestic universe of sexuality and the family. Wherever rural women are living in a secluded *Gemeinschaft* type of community, little attempt is made to make use of personal abilities for the development of a free personality.

This general trend has been upheld by empirical findings of social scientists such as M. Kiray and D. Kandiyoti. It appears evident that only where changing economic conditions of village life have produced a new type of community life do attitudes toward family permissiveness and liberalism to women substantially change. Turkey, especially since 1950, has undergone rapid change in rural areas, largely provoked by the mechanization of farming¹⁷ as well as internal and external migration.¹⁸ As a result, various forms of modernization, including a growing awareness of political issues, can be witnessed in rural areas as well as urban areas. However, the stronghold of traditionalism, especially in regard to women's status, still remains in rural regions.

16. Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil, Male-Female Dynamics in a Modern Muslim Society* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975) p. 81.

17. *Türkiye'de Toplumsal ve Ekonomik Gelişiminin 50 Yılı*, Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, Nr. 683 (Ankara, 1973), p. 111.

18. Erol Tümertekin, "Gradual Internal Migration in Turkey," *Review of the Geographical Institute of the University of Istanbul*, 1970-1971, No. 13, pp. 157-169. Nermin Abadan-Unat, *Turkish Workers in Europe 1960-1975, A Socioeconomic Reappraisal* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975) pp. 7-9.

The great discrepancy between rural and urban centers no doubt explains the sharp difference of skill acquisition, educational level and vocational orientation between rural and urban women. In spite of the rapid degree of urbanization—the annual average rate of population growth in large cities was 5.2 per cent in 1940–50, nine per cent in 1950–60 and 11.1 per cent in 1960–70—Turkey is still an agrarian society.¹⁹ Sixty-two per cent of its population of 40 million lived in rural settlements in 1973. Again, 75 per cent of its active population of 10.9 million belongs to the peasant class. When we consider that 49 per cent of this active population is female and that in Turkish villages,²⁰ females between the ages of seven and 70 are engaged in all kinds of agricultural activities, one comes to the conclusion that half of the agricultural output of Turkey lies on the shoulders of its female peasant population, who still are far from being able to benefit from the legal reforms implemented half a century ago.

This fact becomes even more relevant when considering its relationship to literacy and fertility. According to the census of 1970, out of a total population of 29.4 million who are six years old and above, there were 8.7 million (62 per cent) women versus 4.6 million (38 per cent) men who were registered as analphabets. If one considers those primary school graduates who completed only a three year education and had no opportunity to do any reading after that time, the actual rate of illiterates no doubt will be even higher. This situation has an important impact on various factors, especially the rate of fertility.

While the fertility rate in the urban sector amounts to three per cent, it climbs to seven per cent in rural surroundings. Until the early 1960s, the Turkish government's official stand was for the encouragement of population increase. It was only after 1960 that the idea that existing policies might be in opposition to national goals gained some recognition. Thus a change in the existing laws was formulated in the first Five Year Plan, which went into effect in 1963. A General Directorate of Family Planning was subsequently established within the Ministry of Health and, in 1965, the sale of contraceptives and the dissemination of information concerning them were legalized. However, the impact of family planning still remains limited owing to the fact that, among the rural population, it is predominantly women who already have an average of four to five live or eight to ten live/still births who are volunteering for the usage of intrauterine devices and other contraceptives.

While the average number of children in rural areas of Turkey is 6.12 it is around 3.88 in urban areas. Further broken down, we see that it totals to 3.30 in Ankara, 2.91 in İzmir and 2.65 in İstanbul.

19. Ruşen Keleş, *Urbanization in Turkey*. (New York: Ford Foundation, 1974).

20. Baha Tunaliğil, "Kırsal kesimde kadın," *Politika*. 4/11/1975.

It is often claimed that the most important determinants of fertility are the level of education and level of income. Both of these determinants are closely related to urbanization and industrialization, since increased urbanization also means increased literacy and a higher degree of education. While the average amount of fertility among illiterate women is 4.2 children, this average falls to 3.2 among literate, to 2.8 among primary school graduates, to two among secondary graduates and to 1.4 among university graduates.²¹ The same trend can be witnessed in terms of income.

According to S. Timur's findings the number of children among married women between 14–44 averaged according to yearly income, indicates that persons with the lowest income (11–500 TL) had 4.6, and those with the highest yearly income (4,000 and above) only 2.7 births.²² The relationship between fertility and income level has been verified through other empirical findings as well. Ç. Kağıtçıbaşı has shown within a comparative survey on the value of children that case studies in Turkish urban or rural settings produce quite different attitudes towards children. Comparing urban middle SES respondents with urban low SES and rural respondents, it came out that while the modal value of children for urban middle class is providing happiness, for rural respondents it is providing financial help. These value variations also reflect the life styles and basic needs of various social classes. While psychological benefits are important for the middle class parents, material benefits of children are more real and thus have more salience in the rural setting.²³

After having briefly investigated the impact of rural residence on education and fertility, it seems important to verify also the validity of the hypothesis whereby, as a result of industrialization and urbanization, the extended family is superseded by the independent nuclear family. According to the most detailed research so far undertaken, S. Timur has proven that family types vary depending upon the types of economy and relations of production and that property ownership (especially land) is an important determinant of the extended household. The proportion of nuclear families is highest among illiterates and the highest educational group, whereas it is lowest among those with middle level education. Nuclear families predominate among farm workers and small farmers in rural areas and among unskilled laborers in urban areas, all of whom are mostly illiterate or poorly educated. The characteristic family type among professionals and civil servants in urban areas who have university education is also nuclear. On the other hand, extended families are prevalent among large land owners and among those who own

21. Serim Timur, *Türkiye'de Aile Yapısı*, (The structure of family in Turkey), Hacettepe Yayını, No. D-15, (Ankara, 1972) p. 176.

22. Serim Timur, *op. cit.*, p. 178.

23. Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı, *Value of Children*, paper presented at the Second Turkish Demography Conference, Çeşme, İzmir, Sept. 29–Oct. 1, 1975.

middle sized farms in rural areas and among artisans, retailers, *etc.* in urban areas who have a medium level of education.

When the family ceases to be the unit of production, the patriarchally extended family breaks down. Economic limitations prevent all but the fairly well-to-do from actually maintaining such extended households. Extended households, functioning as common production and consumption units, form a small percentage of village households; one of the major factors to sustain the brideprice tradition is the extended family.

Family types thus not only determine the continuation or end of institutionalized traditions such as the brideprice, but also help to define the status and rôles of the family members. It is the family type which determines the power structure in the family and family modernity. In both urban and rural areas, the patriarchally extended families represent the most traditional and nuclear families the least traditional.

TABLE I *Degree of Modernity According to Family Type and Settlement Places in Percentages*

Degree of Modernity	Nuclear	Family type Transitional	Extended	Total
	Three big cities/villages	Three big cities/villages	Three big cities/villages	Three big cities/villages
Modern	69-5	59-3	47-22	62-3
Transitional	27-25	32-26	7-13	28-24
Traditional	4-70	9-70	46-85	10-72

Source: Timur, Serim, *Türkiye'de Aile Yapısı*, Hecettepe Yayını, No. D-15, Table 60, p. 111.
Three big cities: İstanbul, İzmir, Ankara.

The table clearly indicates that wherever extended (patriarchal) family relationships prevail, which means even in metropolitan centers, such as İstanbul, İzmir and Ankara, traditional behavior on the part of women is expected. One of the most blatant examples of the impact of family type on the status of women reveals itself in the eating pattern of rural women.

Timur's inquiry on eating patterns in villages according to family types has shown that while in nuclear families living in villages 91 per cent eat together, among the extended families of rural background only 71 per cent eat together. In 23 per cent of these families there is segregation at meal time and with five per cent of them, the daughters-in-law eat separated even from the other female members of the family.²⁴

24. Serim Timur, *op. cit.*, pp. 112-113.

Migration and Emancipation

Next to education, income level and family structure, both internal and external migration appears to have a strong influence on the modernization of Turkish women. Although internal migration is an old process, its impact, because of little change in family structure, did not affect drastically the left behind family members. However, in the case of external migration, new features produced important changes. First it should be kept in mind that a considerable number of the Turkish female workers employed abroad—that number reached 143,611 in 1975 in Federal Germany alone—came from rural areas. Furthermore, the left behind family members even in rural areas have in part embraced a different type of living than those dependents left behind in the case of internal migration. The recently carried out Boğazlıyan survey has revealed that an important segment of the left behind family members are living in a form of nuclear family and have adopted new, independent forms of conducting family affairs. In other words, the migratory process has changed, among other things, the decision making process, patterns of authority within the family and rôle expectations among the spouses. This trend is reflected in the following table:

TABLE II *Financial and Other Decision Making According to Family Types in Boğazlıyan and Villages in Percentages*

	Nuclear		Extended		Total	
	Financial	Other	Financial	Other	Financial	Other
Male in household	7	9	34	43	17	22
Male out of household	7	28	2	8	5	21
Elderly female in family	5	6	18	23	10	12
Wife	68	50	28	20	53	39
Others	6	4	11	2	8	4
No answer	7	3	7	7	7	4
	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Nermin Abadan-Unat, R. Keles, *et al. Migration and Development, A Study of the Effects of International Labor Migration on Boğazlıyan District*, Ajansturk, Ankara, 1976, p. 334.

External migration seems no doubt to have increased orientation predispositions favoring the educational outlook for girls. It causes a substantial amount of marital strain and conflict. High mobility and fragmentation of family induced men to share responsibility with women. Increased income induced women to adopt a conspicuous consumption pattern. Thus, the

inclination for working outside the house seems to be rather a corollary function of an industrial society, rather than a consequence of change affecting the status of women. Yet even where external migration seems to have contributed to the reinforcement of traditional values, it still has opened the door for social dynamism.²⁵

Finally, the impact of mass media on rural women or inhabitants of squatter houses seems definitely to have increased the political knowledge level of female listeners/viewers as O. Tokgöz has shown. Mass media consumption during electoral periods substantially increases the cognitive level of female voters, even if there seems no open correlation between increased knowledge and increased political participation.²⁶

Turkish Women in Industry

The influx of Turkish women to industrial jobs, at home and abroad, is no doubt one of the consequences of rapid urbanization and industrialization. In 1970, 35.8 per cent of the Turkish population was living in urban areas and it is estimated that the last census will round out this figure to 40 per cent. Not only the percentage of urban population, but at the same time the number of cities, namely those settlements of 10,000 and more, increased to a great extent in the last three decades. The number of cities has risen from 98 in 1945 to 264 in 1970 and it is expected to reach 350 in the last census. Since this urbanization is not a healthy one, but a "demographic concentration",²⁷ the first question to be treated is whether the surplus population pouring out from the villages into the towns due to the mechanization of agriculture is able to find any employment and what is the position of women in this respect?

Legally speaking both urban and rural female citizens enjoy, according to the 1961 Constitution, special protection (Art. 35, 43, 58). However, since most of these women enter the labor market with a minimum level of education, the service sector seems to be their only outlet, which basically does not provide social security privileges. Indeed, there is a remarkable increase within this sector—75,334 in 1960, 103,968 in 1965.

Those women who, owing to a partial or completed primary school education, are able to find gainful employment in industry, where they can benefit from a multitude of social measures, are in an overwhelming majority concentrated in the category of production workers, craftsmen and repair work.

25. Nermin Abadan-Unat, "Impact of Migration on Emancipation and Pseudo-Emancipation of Women," *International Migration Review*, 1977, 1, pp. 50–52.

26. Oya Tokgöz, "Televiyonun kadının siyasallaşması üzerindeki etkisi (The impact of TV on the politization of women), (Ankara, 1976, unpublished Doçentlik thesis).

27. Turan Yazgan, *Türkiye'de şehirleşmenin nüfus ve işgücü bünesine tesirleri*, (The impact of urbanization on population and manpower), unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Istanbul University, Faculty of Economics, 1967.

The number of women employed in these occupational groups increased from 136,670 in 1960 to 144,948 in 1965.²⁸

While the women active in agriculture so far have not been covered by any substantial social security organization except for sporadically scattered mother and child health centers attached to the Ministry of Health, the Turkish female worker employed in industry is in a much better position in terms of legal protection and social welfare, even if a great amount of it remains so far only on paper.

To begin with, the vital question of equalization of wages between sexes has been settled within the Labor Law, according to Art. 26 which guarantees equal pay for equal work and prohibits any discriminatory provisions in collective bargaining. The same law prohibits the working of female employees six weeks prior to and six weeks after birth (Art. 79). Furthermore, the General Hygiene Act (Art. 177) states that pregnant women may not be employed in any functions which endanger the health of mother and child three months before birth. In addition, mothers who are nursing their babies have to be given permission to go home one hour earlier to nurse their babies or rest at work during the first six months twice every day for a duration of half an hour during working hours (Art. 177). A new decree treating special conditions concerning night work for women workers (Decree No. 7/6909-27/7/73) prohibits extra work at night, classifies the various types of dangerous work unsuited for women, prescribes the obligation for the employer to provide transportation for female workers employed on night shifts, prohibits the employment of women at night within six months of their last birth giving. Another decree, promulgated also in 1973 (No. 7/6821-20/7/73), deals with the obligation of establishing nurseries in work places with 20 female workers and day care centers and kindergartens in establishments with over 100 women workers. The nurseries have to be at a distance not more than 250 meters, the day care centers for children of 0–6 years not further than 1,000 meters (Art. 6) from the place of employment. The financial aid providing agency to the expectant mother in case of delivery, during her nursing period and for regular medical visits are cited under the heading of "Motherhood insurance" (Art. 43–51) in the comprehensive Social Security Law, No. 506 of 17/7/1974.

However, as can be witnessed even in the most advanced countries, legal provisions are by themselves unable to ameliorate or change a given situation. Implementation depends to a large extent on the size of trade union affiliation. In this respect it should be stressed that young female workers especially

28. *Statistical Yearbook of Turkey*, 1973 (Ankara: D.I.E.-State Statistic Institute, 1974), Publ. No. 710, p. 48; Gülten Kazgan, "Labour Force Participation, Occupational Distribution, Educational Attainment and the Socio-Economic Status of Women in the Turkish Economy," paper presented at the "Women in Turkish Society" seminar, İstanbul, May 16–19, 1978, pp. 32, Table XIII.

are increasingly joining trade unions, participating in union seminars and assuming rôles in strike organizations, *etc.*

Looking over Turkey's industrial female manpower, one should not forget that almost the equivalent of the gainfully employed women within Turkish industrial establishments works abroad as migrant workers. It is quite relevant that of the great majority of the women migrant workers in Federal Germany, 78 per cent are married and of these 88 per cent are together with their husbands. In many cases a complete reversal of the traditional rôles can be witnessed.

Independent wage earning wives want to establish separate bank accounts and to decide mutually on joint investments. All these innovations, together with the grave problem of raising children either in alien surroundings as "bilingual" illiterates or deprived of parental care and affection in the home country represents only some of the many problems which Turkish families are facing abroad.²⁹

Turkish Women in the Professions and Government Services

As pointed out by many social scientists, the disintegration of a traditional society does not assure modernity. Accordingly change occurs in an unequal, uneven way and affects some groups more than others. This seems to be particularly true in the case of the daughters of urban, middle class parents, who were able to benefit fully from the egalitarian educational reforms introduced by Atatürk in the late 1920s.

Although Turkey of today still has to look for a solution to reduce the rate of 67 per cent illiterates among its total female population, the ratio of enrollment of girls in higher educational institutions is almost equal to industrialized Western countries such as Great Britain. Thus in 1967 the ratio of girl and boy for every 100 university students was 25:100 in England, 21:100 in Turkey. Since then, this proportion has reached one quarter.³⁰ In 1974/75, out of 104,304 newly registered university and higher education students, 25,574 were girls. About the same rates prevail among the teaching staff. There were a total of 14,210 academic personnel at the same date, out of which 3,423 were women of various academic ranks.³¹

29. Ayşe Kudat, *Stability and Change in the Turkish Family at Home and Abroad: Comparative Perspectives*, International Institute of Comparative Social Studies, Berlin, 1975, Pre-Print, p. 91. Hrsgb. Franz Ronneberger, *Türkische Kinder in Deutschland* (Turkish Children in Germany) (München: Südosteuropa-Gesellschaft, 1976); Nermin Abadan-Unat, "Educational Problems of Turkish Migrants' Children," *International Review of Education*. Vol. XXI (1975), pp. 311-322.

30. Hasan Ali Koçer, "Turkiye'de kadın Eğitimi," *A. Ü. Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi*, 1972, p. 116; Ferhunde Özbay, "The Impact of Education on Women in Rural and Urban Turkey," paper presented at "Women in Turkish Society" seminar, Istanbul, May 16-19, 1978.

31. *Statistical Figures related to Higher Education Enrollment in 1974/75* (Ankara: State Statistical Institute, 1975), p. 119.

Actually, there is a steady growth of women in government services as well as in the professions.

Indeed, the percentage of women among administrations related to the general budget has increased from 7.7 per cent in 1938 to 21.6 per cent in 1970. Similarly, in the economic state enterprises their rate has doubled from 10 per cent in 1938 to 19 per cent in 1970. The distribution of women among the various branches of the public sector is also interesting. The highest number of women working in government agencies is in the Ministry of Education (31.6 per cent), followed by the Ministry of Tourism and Information (26.3 per cent), the Ministry of Health and Social Assistance (22.2 per cent) and the Ministry of Labor (19 per cent). It seems that women officials show a tendency to work in increasing proportion in services which are being slowly preëmpted from men and which generally have a social service content.³² When trying to find the major reasons which push women to work as public officials, one has to cite, at first hand, economic ones. This economic pressure helps us also to understand the root of conflict many career/home-maker women are facing and which leads some women to discontinue work.³³ In this respect education plays the most important rôle in keeping the desire for professional activity alert. While only 16.6 per cent of women with higher education wanted to discontinue work, this ratio went up to 47.8 per cent among women with technical education. The decisive factor in continuing or giving up work is not primarily concerned with harmony in marital life, but rather economic necessities. Turkish women by and large are entering gainful employment in public services for financial reasons and are contributing to the family budget. Once relative ease of income is secured, the likelihood of discontinuance depends largely on their professional background. New legislation in the form of an amendment to the pension law affecting public servants (No. 1992-3/7/75) makes it possible for women public servants to retire after the completion of 20 years of active service.

The growth of professional women in Turkey represents certainly one of the most conspicuous steps toward modernization. Not only did Turkish women enter into almost all professions, but they even became a vanguard in certain male dominated fields such as the legal professions. The first woman to be elected to any Supreme Court of Appeals in the world was Turkish (the late Melâhat Ruacan, 1954). In 1973, out of 3,022 judges on the bench in courts throughout the country, five per cent (149) were women. In the case of

32. Mesut Gülmez, "Turk Kamu Görevlilerinin Sayısal Evrimi," *Âmme İdaresi Dergisi*, Vol. 6, No. 3 (September, 1972), p. 44. (The numerical evolution of Turkish Public Servants).

33. Oya Çitçi, "Women at Work," *Turkish Public Administration Annual*, (Ankara, 1975), p. 159.

notaries public in office this percentage reaches 11.2 per cent (266:30). As far as practicing lawyers go, the percentage for women is 14.9 per cent.³⁴

TABLE III *Women in the Professions (Selected Groups) 1953–1970*

	1953	1970
Teachers	15,309	70,553
Doctors	502	1,566
Medical Profession (Midwives, nurses)	4,807	33,967
Legal Profession (Lawyers, judges)	738	3,653
Fine Arts (Literature, music, plastic arts)	2,080	6,050
Engineers, architects	610	8,843
Managers	680	4,513
Saleswomen	4,000	21,259
Accountants	—	18,509

Source: For 1953 *Mesleki ve Teknik Öğretim Müesseseleriyle ilgili rakamlar*—Ankara, 1961; for 1970, *1970 Genel Nüfus Sayımı sonuçları*.

The most relevant trend seems to be, on one side, the steady, consistent growth in previously male dominated professions such as in the legal and medical fields and, on the other side, the conquest of business related fields such as engineering, architecture, management, accounting, salesmanship, *etc.* The rapid growth in these areas certainly proves the fast rate of industrialization and its impact on female motivation toward new jobs.

Summing Up

During the first half century of the Turkish Republic, Turkey's womanhood has been confronted with important challenges. Legal emancipation permitted Turkish women to free themselves of a legitimized disqualification in favor of men.

The second important challenge, the transition to a multiparty system and the extension of franchise to all citizens over 21, placed upon the shoulders of Turkish women voters a heavy and responsible task.

The third challenge came because of deep rooted structural changes such as rapid urbanization, industrialization, mechanization of agriculture, exposure to mass media, internal and external migration. Reformers believed that

34. Tezer Taşkıran, *Women in Turkey* (İstanbul: Redhouse Yayınevi, 1976), pp. 94–96.

education and the removal of discriminatory and seclusive treatment within the family would enable women to develop into better wives and mothers. Increasing entry of women into higher education and the pressure of rising standards of living within the middle class helped to strengthen the illusion of rapid improvement in their conditions and achievements of equality. As a result, the deteriorating situation, particularly of rural women, remained invisible. As Vina Mazumdar rightfully remarked, traditional society, while it certainly did not treat women as equals, did provide meaningful, necessary and guaranteed rôles to women. The claim for protection from society rested on the recognition of the value of their contribution. The process of modernization, particularly economic change, has disturbed these rôles and the guarantees are fast becoming inoperative. New guarantees are necessary but they cannot come by treating the women's problem as a marginal issue to be dealt with altruistically.

Turkish planners and policy makers have reached the point where they must adopt new approaches and ways of thinking in order to cope with problems of a rapidly modernizing social group: the rural and urban Turkish women of today and tomorrow.
