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Halide Edib: Turkish Nationalism and the Formation of the Republic

By

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A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the degree of
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Department of History
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Halide's Nationalism.....	20
References.....	33

Abstract

Halide Edib positioned herself as a main agent and figure of the Turkish nationalist movement, as both visionary and defender of her nation. Contributing to the evolving discourse on what it meant to be Turkish; Edib placed the family at the center of the state and identified women as state-builders. Through her interpretation of Turkish nationalism, I argue that Edib obscured the division between the public and private realm and classified women as agents in the creation of the Republic. I further contend that by doing this she contributed to the legitimization of Turkey on an international scale. This thesis focuses on the speeches Halide Edib delivered at the university Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi in 1935. These particular speeches are significant because they work towards a legitimization of Turkey, still in its infancy, as a nation, by addressing the “woman question.” Halide Edib’s view of a “new nation” and a “new woman” articulated in these speeches challenged contemporary views on women in a society at a political and cultural crossroads, overwhelmingly dominated by men. The power dynamics within the family and society at large are nuanced by Halide Edib’s understanding of Turkish women’s part in the national process during the formative years of the Turkish Republic. She depicted women as agents of nationalism and creators of the state. In doing this, she challenged both the ideological and applied position of women in the private realm, through her

own discursive understanding of nationalism. Edib's definition of nationalism included the tenets of gender relations, family, and Islam and described each as a necessary component of a successful state.

Chapter 1:

Introduction

Halide Edib positioned herself as a main agent and figure of the Turkish nationalist movement, as both visionary and defender of her nation. Contributing to the evolving discourse on what it meant to be Turkish; Edib placed the family at the center of the state and identified women as state-builders. Through her interpretation of Turkish nationalism, I argue that Edib obscured the division between the public and private realm and classified women as agents in the creation of the Republic. I further contend that by doing this she contributed to the legitimization of Turkey on an international scale. This thesis focuses on the speeches Halide Edib delivered at the university Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi in 1935. These particular speeches are significant because they work towards a legitimization of Turkey, still in its infancy, as a nation, by addressing the “woman question.” Halide Edib’s view of a “new nation” and a “new woman” articulated in these speeches challenged contemporary views on women in a society at a political and cultural crossroads, overwhelmingly dominated by men. Nations are not natural entities, they are constructed and Halide Edib’s articulation of Turkish nationalism contoured the debates on nationalism and the “woman question.”

Halide Edib, or “Mother of the Turks,” as she is regarded in popular Turkish history, gave an account of her life in her two-volume autobiography, *Memoirs and the Turkish Ordeal*. Born in 1882 to a wealthy family, Halide’s mother passed away during Halide’s infancy. Halide’s Father, Edib Bey, worked in the palace as a secretary for Abdulhamid II and sent her to live with her maternal grandparents until the age of four. She credited her grandmother as the molder of her religious outlook. When her father remarried she returned home, where she experienced the privilege of an education. English chaperons and Turkish religious sheikhs were in charge of her education until she attended the American College for Girls. During her time there, Halide received an education in Eastern and Western literature, religion, sociology, and philosophy. Exposed to the teachings of Durkheim and Comte, she declared their specific influence on her views on nationhood and modernity. In 1901, she graduated from college and married her math teacher, Salih Zeki Bey. This marriage ultimately ended in divorce with his decision to take on a second wife. While her personal events contributed to the way she viewed the world and influenced her view on politics, her intense engagement in political activities and writings characterized both Halide’s life and historical significance.¹

Expressed through her writings and participation in politics, Halide Edib concerned herself with the contemporary issues facing women such as education and political access. She became specifically interested in issues dealing with nationalism, and the ideological debates on “Turkism.” Halide noted the period

¹ Halide Edib, *House with Wisteria: Memoirs of Halide Edib* (New York: The Century Co.,1972), 30-252

from 1910-1912 as “a prelude” to her “final plunge into nationalism, which took an intense form after the disaster of the Balkan War.”² After World War I and the demise of the Ottoman Empire she became even more ardent in her nationalist activities and became an orator for the nationalist cause. In her most famous speech, delivered in 1919, she urged Turks to fight against the occupation forces (French, Italians, British, and Greeks). Immediately after delivering this speech she traveled to Anatolia to participate in the Turkish Independence War (1919-22). Following the war Mustafa Kemal Atatürk established the Turkish Republic in 1923.³

As an avid nationalist and intellectual, Edib served as a model for the ideal “Turkish woman,” during the immediate aftermath of the new Turkish Republic. However, her own thoughts pertaining to state formation and sovereignty departed significantly from those expressed by Kemalism. Where Edib insisted on ideals of democracy and liberalism, Atatürk prioritized secularist and republican ideals over democratic demands. Her ideological contradiction to Kemalism crystallized when she accused Atatürk of establishing a despotic regime. In 1924, her second husband, Adnan Adıvar, along with others, founded an opposition party named *Terakkiperver Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (Progressive Republican Party). In 1925 the government decreed a shutdown of the PRP and subsequently filed a case against them, claiming the party instigated a religious insurrection and plot to assassinate Atatürk. This prompted Halide Edib and her husband into self-imposed exile from 1924-1939. They only returned to Turkey

² Ibid, 272

³ Halide Edib Adıvar, *The Turkish Ordeal: Being the Further Memoirs of Halide Edib* (New York: The Century Co., 1928), 326-382.

after Ataturk's death.⁴ During her time in exile she continued to write a number of significant works and upon her return to Turkey, the University of Istanbul's Department of English Language and Literature hired her. Politically she served as the Izmir deputy in the Turkish Parliament from 1950-1954. She passed away ten years later. Throughout her works and life Edib presented herself as a defender of her nation, making her one of the main figures of the Turkish nationalist movement.

Halide Edib's life and career in its entirety was laced with historical significance. However, the speeches delivered in India present a unique access point to the larger political, social, and cultural happenings in Turkey in its infancy. In *Conflict of East and West in Turkey*, as the speeches would subsequently be published as, both the opportunities and limitations experienced by women during the initial stages of the Republic were addressed by Edib. She wrote and lectured in a period of successive waves of modernization and the accompanying cultural tensions between modern and traditional, rising nationalist movements and intensified attempts to carve out new national identities, as well as in the midst of debates over the "woman question." In order to fully understand Edib's motivation behind the speeches she delivered and appreciate the insights they provide, a close examination of the ideological debates addressing the issues of nationalism, the "woman question," and modernization from the second constitutional period to the formation of the Republic, is pertinent.

The second constitutional period began in 1908 when officers who were members of the Committee for Union and Progress, an outgrowth of the Young

⁴ Ibid, 408-416.

Turk movement, demanded the restoration of the Ottoman Constitution of 1876. The ideological roots that motivated the revolution of 1908 and the Young Turk movement in general extend back to aspirations of Ottoman westernization and the modernization of the bureaucracy. This period of adaptation for the empire culminated in the formation of the Turkish Republic. The Ottoman Empire faced a legitimacy crisis during the latter half of the second century that resulted from both internal and external factors. Externally, the empire needed to legitimize their place on the international stage, while internally there was an unprecedented permeation of the state in all aspects of Ottoman society.

From the world perspective the Ottoman Empire, similar to other monarchies during the interim of the French Revolution to WWI, invested in a “recharged state mythology.” The empire invested in the technical signifiers of modernity such as railways, censuses, telegraphs, steam ships, world fairs, clock towers, art-deco palaces. The Ottoman Empire during this period looked at its European peers to see how they played the part of a functioning empire, mainly France.⁵ Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century contact with Europe and movements into modernization through the imitation of the West produced unsolicited results for Ottoman statesman. The intellectual emulation of Europe was intended to import technology in order to attain superiority over the West.⁶ However, a distinguished group of Ottoman intellectuals emerged and envisioned an ideal society antithetical to the Ottoman Empire.

⁵ Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire 1876-1909* (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2011), 166-76.

⁶ Sukru Hanioglu, *The Young Turks in Opposition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 7.

The Ottoman government sent students to Paris to study the latest scientific advances from Parisian instructors. While in Paris they were ordered to speak only Arabic and Turkish among themselves and to not be influenced by revolutionary thoughts and principles espoused throughout Europe. Ottoman statesman emphasized that the motivation for a European education was singular in purpose, to acquire the necessary knowledge to become technologically superior to the West.⁷ Regardless, the epistemological shift experienced by Ottoman intellectuals exposed to western ideas proved catalytic to the formation of the Young Turk movement, the subsequent formation of the Committee of Union and Progress, and ultimately the constitutional revolution of 1908.

Public reaction to the constitutional revolution throughout the empire was extremely positive. A sense of relief ensued among people of all walks of life and among different communities. With the revolution an expectation for a better life occurred. The freedom of expression, association and thought ushered in by the revolution, empowered people to politically demonstrate their joy, or anger. Regardless of feelings of resentment towards the empire, the revolution did not result in the overthrow of Sultan Abdulhammid II. The sultan had manipulated the revolution through public opinion. He posited that he was behind the revolution from the beginning and that it was his advisers that were against it, making him a hero of the revolution and gaining the support of people. Also, in Ottoman society, age and seniority signified authority and as majors and minor bureaucrats in their late twenties and early thirties, the Young Turks had neither.

⁷ Ibid. 8

Therefore the Committee of Union and Progress chose to leave politics in the hands of the existing cabinet under Grand Vizier Sait Pasha.⁸

Beginning in August 1909 a real constitutional and parliamentary regime took effect and drastically decreased the authority of the Sultan over imperial matters. The sultan only had the right to appoint the grand vizier and the *seyhulislam*. Parliament could now only be dissolved if the cabinet lost a vote of confidence, and if dissolved, elections needed to occur within three months. This was the first of many steps in reforming the Ottoman state. From 1913-18 the CUP implemented a series of political and social reforms that included the army and provincial administrations. The CUP further secularized the judicial and educational systems, which undermined the position of the *ulema*, the educated class of Muslim legal scholars who engaged in several fields of Islamic studies and were best known as the arbiters of *sharia* law. In 1916, the *seyhulislam*, the highest religious dignitary was removed from the cabinet. In 1917 the *sharia* courts were brought under the control of the (secular) Ministry of Justice, the *medreses* (religious colleges) were brought under the control of the Ministry of Education and a new Ministry of Religious Foundations was created to oversee charitable foundations. At the same time the curriculums of the more advanced *medreses* were “modernized.” For example, learning European languages became a compulsory component of education.⁹

Beyond the religious realm, the CUP made it a point to implement social reforms that dealt with women and society. Though family law remained in the

⁸ Eric Zürcher, *Turkey a Modern History* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2004),121.

⁹ Ibid 122

terrain of the *sharia*, some inroads were made. 1913 saw the implementation of new inheritance laws. The policies of the CUP coupled with the effects of WWI changed the position of middle and upper-class Turkish women. They had the right to initiate divorce with more ease, however polygamy was never outlawed. The family law of 1917 increased the marriageable age of women to 16. The Young Turks encouraged women to take part in social life in the form of attending events with their husbands. At the Turkish nationalist clubs of the Turkish Hearth movement, women were both in attendance and delivered speeches. Most significantly the CUP regime created educational opportunities for women. In 1913 girls primary education became compulsory and from 1914 onwards college courses were open to women at the University of Istanbul. Few employment options existed for women prior to WWI, but the mobilization of men for the war served as a catalyst for the hastened entry of women into the workforce. The Unionists founded Kadınları Calistirma Cemiyeti (Society for the Employment of Women), which recruited women to work in industry, and also regulated their working conditions.¹⁰

In addition to the political and social reforms ushered in by the second constitutional period, this particular moment in Ottoman history marked a concentrated increase of ideological debates.¹¹ These ideological currents coursed through the empire. Censorship and intolerance marred the later years of the reign of Sultan Abdulhamit II. With the end of his reign and the freedom to engage in public discourse, an explosion of public debate on a variety of social

¹⁰ Ibid 123

¹¹ Ibid 127

and political questions ensued.¹² Three competing ideologies dominated the political and social debate of the time: Ottomanism, (pan) Islamism, and (pan) Turkism. Ottomanism, as an ideal suggested a union of different communities around the Ottoman throne; Islamism sought the regeneration of the empire through Islamic practices and solidarity within the Islamic community (*Ummet*); while Turkism pursued the union of Turkic people under the Ottoman flag.¹³ Turkism would ultimately serve as a springboard for Turkish nationalism and the formation of the Republic. These three ideologies served as umbrellas for the multi-faceted debates that resulted from the uncertainty of the Ottoman Empire. These ideologies stemmed from the need to facilitate loyalty among those who resided in the empire; there was a demand for a proto-citizenry. The primary concern of the second constitutional period was the renewal of society and state.

For the majority of the Young Turks, the state served as the only logical vehicle for change. However, for a select few, society rather than the state achieved change. In addressing the problem of renewal, two reoccurring themes dominated these debates. What would the role of Westernization (i.e. modernization) need to be? What would the basis of identification to the Ottoman state be? The proponents for Westernization varied in degree. Some were extreme in their advocacy of Westernization. For example, Dr. Abdullah Cevdet, a prominent figure of the CUP wanted to discard traditional Ottoman civilization completely in exchange for a total adoption of European ways. At the opposite end of the spectrum religious activists rejected any and all adoption of Western

¹² Ibid. 128

¹³ Sina Aksin, *Turkey From Empire to Revolutionary Republic: The Emergence of the Turkish Nation from 1789 to Present* (New York: New York University Press, 2007) 82-85.

models. However, the majority of figures contributing to the ideological debates of the time, fell somewhere between the full adoption and complete dismissal of Westernization. According to Erik Zürcher the main question these ideologues contended with was “how to bring about a synthesis of these European elements with Muslim Ottoman Civilization; in other words how to become modern while remaining oneself.”¹⁴

Islamism, Ottomanism, and Turkism did not function as mutually exclusive ideological currents. Prior to the Young Turk revolution, the Ottoman Empire as a sovereign Muslim power went through a fundamental recasting of Ottoman identity. This period saw the rise of the term “non-Ottoman” Muslim and the shared identity of the Sunni muslim population gave way to the importance of ones passport.¹⁵ Young Turks supported the idea of Ottomanism, had a visceral reaction to pan-Turkish nationalism, and were also Muslims. Ottomanism was the idea that irrespective of creed or language all Ottoman subjects would become loyal citizens with equal rights in the new constitutional state. The Young Turks deference to Ottomanism signified the intellectual Ottoman baggage they still carried. Ottomanism was the official ideology of the Young Turks until it became clear that nationalism had already established footing among all of the major communities of the empire. Soon after the initial euphoria brought on by the revolution, Greeks, Macedonians, Armenians, and Bulgarians sought out particular goals that were embedded in an understanding of national identity.¹⁶

¹⁴ Zürcher 128

¹⁵ Deringil 176

¹⁶ Zürcher 129

Turkish nationalism was the last ideology to appear. It had initially emerged as a cultural movement in the beginning of the twentieth century. One of the main figures of Turkish nationalism was Yusuf Akcura. Akcura came from a Tartar family, but immigrated to Turkey with his mother and attended the War academy in Istanbul, where he was caught passing out Young Turk propaganda and banished to Tripolitanian in 1897. In 1904 he wrote an article that appeared in the Young Turk *émigré* paper *Turk* in Cairo entitled *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Three Policies). It compared the merits of Islamist, Ottomanist and Turkist policies; he wrote “I am an Ottoman, a Muslim, and a Turk. Therefore I wish to serve the interests of the Ottoman state, Islam and all Turks.”¹⁷ Akcura acknowledged that the interests of the Ottoman state, Muslims, and Turks were not contradictory to one another, but did have competing interests. Ultimately, he argued that (pan) Turkism as a policy would be most beneficial for the Ottoman Empire.

Akcura’s essay is significant because it was the first time a statement on the political aims of (pan) Turkism had been addressed. This work functioned as a manifesto for Turkism. Akcura argued, “By such a policy all Turks living in the Ottoman Empire would be perfectly united by both ethnic and religious bonds and the other non-Turkish Muslim groups who have been already Turkified to a certain extent would be further assimilated. Those who have been assimilated under such a program would be entirely assimilated under such a program.”¹⁸ In other words, pan-Turkism would facilitate a unifying identity for people throughout the Ottoman Empire, as well as beyond its borders, “the main service of such a

¹⁷ Yusuf Akcura, “*Uc Tarz-i Siyaset*,” ed. and trans. David s. Thomas, *TURK*, Cairo, no. 24-34 (1904).

¹⁸ Ibid

policy would be to unify all the Turks, spread over a great portion of Asia and over the Eastern parts of Europe.” Pan-Turkism gained the full support of the Young Turks in 1913, when the Balkan War highlighted Ottomanism as an impossibility. The primary platform of Turkism was the Unionist social and cultural organization, Turkish Hearth (*Turk Ocagi*). Halide Edib was a prominent figure in the Turkish Homeland scene stating in the beginning of her memoir, *The Turkish Ordeal*, “I was myself occupied with other things at the time. Apart from my work at the Ojak, where in the new executive committee I was striving with the other members to change the statutes of the old Ojak laws...”¹⁹ This organization founded clubs that promoted Turkish nationalism through lectures, performances, and exhibitions. It even had its own widely read journal, Turkish Homeland (*Turk Yurdu*).²⁰

The initial interpretation of Turkish nationalism gave way to a more nuanced understanding during WWI. A specific strand of Turkish nationalism emerged and concentrated on Anatolia as the heartland and idealized Turkish peasant culture. The city-bred, romanticized movement, facilitated and supported by the CUP, aimed to create national solidarity through populism. The CUP recognized the social tension arising from years of war and viewed a shared national identity as the solution.²¹ The ideologue behind this certain notion of Turkish nationalism was Ziya Gokalp. He attempted to synthesize Ottoman heritage (Islam, Turkish ethnicity, Ottoman State with European-style modernization. As an ardent

¹⁹ Halide Edib- Adivar, *The Turkish Ordeal: Being the Further Memoirs of Halide Edib*(New York:The Century Co., 1928), 4.

²⁰ Zurcher 129

²¹ Ibid 132

nationalist he believed the nation was the natural social and political unit. Gokalp made a connection between culture (the set of values and traditions current within a community) and civilization. He identified this connection as an international system of knowledge, science, and technology. Gokalp contended that the Turkish nation had an individual, strong culture that was lost during the medieval period. He further contended that a modern European civilization should replace the Ottoman one, while holding on to Turkish culture (which included an unadulterated version of Islam).²² Gokalp's ideas allowed the reconciliation of national pride with the European model. The unionists would eventually be known as the nationalists of Turkey and be considered traitors of Islam, and the empire.

In 1920 the *seyhulislam*, at the request of the government, issued a *fetva* (legal opinion) identified the nationalists as rebels and anyone who declared themselves a true believer of Islam should endeavor to kill nationalists. As a result of this *fetva* Mustafa Kemal (who would ultimately become the first president of the Republic of Turkey) along with other prominent nationalist figures were condemned to death in absentia. The nationalists countered with a *fetva* of their own which identified the government as traitors.²³ This ultimately led to the Independence War of 1921. The struggle for independence lasted a year and ended with the Treaty of Lausanne.

The Treaty of Lausanne, signed on July 24th, 1923 ended the Turkish War of Independence between the Allies of the WWI and the Ankara-based Grand

²² Ziya Gokalp, *The Principles of Turkism*, trans. Robert Devereux (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1968), 1-15.

²³ Zurcher 152

National Assembly of Turkey led by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. This treaty led to the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire and the international recognition of the new Republic of Turkey's sovereignty. The Republic of Turkey was created under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. Turkey emerged as a young republic out of a nationalist struggle. Ataturk's objective was to ensure Turkey's position as a legitimate, internationally acknowledged country. After years of warfare Turkey was impoverished, depopulated, in ruins, and it demographically exhibited the effects of mortality and mass migration.

By 1923, the population of Turkey had declined by 20 percent due to mortality. The First World War was followed by the War for Independence and military campaigns were fought throughout the country. It is estimated that by the end of the War for Independence over three million Ottomans lost their lives. The high mortality rate was not only caused by continued warfare, but also the disrupted infrastructure and agricultural labor shortage. Cholera and typhoid epidemics soon followed widespread famine, increasing the demographic strain on Turkey.²⁴

Along with mortality, migration was another demographic phenomenon Turkey experienced during this time. During WWI, several hundred-thousand Armenians and large numbers of Greeks who lived in the west emigrated from Turkey. Under the provisions of the Treaty of Lausanne, the remainder of the Greek Orthodox population in Turkey, about 900,000 people, were exchanged for 400,000 Muslims who resided in Greece. These migratory movements meant an additional population loss of ten percent. These population changes significantly

²⁴ Ibid 163.

altered Turkey's cultural landscape. The Ottoman Empire's larger Christian communities practically disappeared. Turkey's religious makeup shifted from about eighty percent Muslim before the First World War to ninety-eight percent after the war ended. Linguistically, only two large groups were left: Kurdish and Turkish people.²⁵

The wars also wrought economic havoc on Turkey. Since there were relatively few industrial installations in Turkey at the time, the actual physical damage was limited to the destruction of railways and bridges. The exodus of Greeks and Armenians also meant a loss of entrepreneurs and managers. In economic terms, their departure meant the population loss of a people with industrial and commercial know-how. International trade in 1923 was one-third what it had been ten years before, and Turkey depended on the agriculture industry to maintain its economic strength. Turkey would not reach gross national product levels that rivaled pre-WWI levels until 1930. It is in this setting that Mustafa Kemal Ataturk consolidated his political position in the new republic.²⁶

Ataturk's consolidation of political power was buttressed by the assembly and the People's party, which were both under his control. The exact nature of the new Turkish state was uncertain. The Ottoman Sultanate was abolished the year before, leaving the national assembly to rule the country. The assembly elected the president and every *vekil* (minister) directly. The constitutional relationship between the assembly and the caliph, Abdülmecid Efendi, was

²⁵ Ibid, 165.

²⁶ Ibid, 166.

indeterminate at the time. As conceived in 1922, the caliphate had a purely religious function and many continued to see him as the head of state. The religious power bestowed on the caliph allowed for his jurisdiction to, in theory, transcend Turkish borders and encompass the Muslim world in its entirety.²⁷

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was elected by the assembly as the first president. As president, Atatürk was determined to establish Turkey as a republic. He believed Turkey's success as a republic rested on the abolition of the caliphate. Immediately after opening the new parliamentary year on March 1, 1923 Atatürk officially abolished the caliphate and ordered all members of the Ottoman dynasty to leave the country. After discussions, the assembly enacted a new republican constitution to replace the old Ottoman constitution of 1876.²⁸ Along with the Kemalists, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk ushered in the modernization period in Turkish history through a specific ideology intended to pragmatically make Turkey a political force in the Western world. Nationalism was a key factor in Kemalist ideology. The regime defined the *millet*, or nation, as "a social and political formation comprising citizens linked together by the community of language, culture, and ideal." Turkish nationalism aimed to ensure a cohesive Turkish Republic that would prevent separatist movements from threatening the unity of the country. This Kemalist concept of the nation ignored religious, racial and ethnic issues, and chose instead to focus on the country's linguistic and cultural components. The naïve belief that vigorous "turkification" would be

²⁷ Ibid,167.

²⁸ Ibid, 168.

sufficient to successfully assimilate ethnic groups into the Turkish nation supported the nationalist aspect of Kemalist ideology.

In addition to nationalism, Ataturk chose republicanism to define the new Turkish regime. During the first few years of the new regime, Kemalists cited republicanism as their ideological foundation, comprising notions of popular sovereignty, freedom, and equality before the law. Ataturk's speeches were often punctuated with an emotional defense of the republican system. Ideas of equality before the law directly impacted the way Turkish women would fit into the new republic. In a speech delivered at Kastamonu, Ataturk stressed the importance of republicanism and the need for equality among the sexes, stating:

"Is it possible that, while one half of the community stays chained to the ground, the other half can rise to the skies? There is no question- the steps of progress must be taken... by two sexes together, as friends, and together they must accomplish the various stages of the journey to the land of prog-ress[sic] and renovation. If this is done our revolution will be successful."²⁹

The stress on republicanism intended to help accustom Turkish people to the idea that far-reaching change needed to occur to achieve progress and democracy. The institutional machinery set up by the government attempted to transform Turkey into a true democracy, but the Kemalist regime fell short of its models. Ataturk established a mixed government system that could be characterized as ad-hoc absolutism and futurist democracy, and possessed a more liberal vein than other Western democracies, especially in regards to female enfranchisement.³⁰ In 1930, Turkish women received full suffrage rights.

²⁹ Lord Kincross, *Ataturk: The Rebirth of a Nation* (London:Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1964), 420.

³⁰ Paul Dumont, "The Origins of the Kemalist Ideology," *Ataturk and the Modernization of Turkey*, Jacob M. Landau, ed., (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, Inc., 1984), 26.

This was an attempt to dissociate the single-party regime from other European dictatorships of the time, such as Germany and Italy. The primary motivation for female enfranchisement was not female liberation, but the need to legitimize Turkey's place among Western democracies. Turkish women received the right to vote much sooner than other European women. While all of the historical happenings addressed so far represent relevant events in Halide Edib's life and contribute to her intellectual formation, the issue of women's rights in the context of the newly formed Republic of Turkey and Turkish nationalism is germane to this thesis. Halide Edib's preoccupation with women's rights was clearly expressed by her and her ideas on what it meant to be Turkish.

In the context of Kemalism, the issue of women was a primary issue on the agenda, so far as it led to the identification of Turkey as a secular nation. The Kemalist movement identified itself as defender of secularism. Since one of the leading indicators of a secular nation dealt with women's rights in a Muslim county, Ataturk saw Turkish women as a bridge between civilization and nation. Since the Tanzimat Period, or the age of reforms experienced in the Ottoman Empire, the question of women were linked to the advancement of "civilization," and with the onset of the republican era women were necessary to the validation of Turkey in Ataturk's political agenda. Ataturk glorified Anatolian women as both the savers and the saved ones stating, "It is always they, the noble, self-sacrificing, godly Anatolian women who plough, cultivate the land, fell firewood in the forest, barter in the market place and run the family; above all, it is they who carry ammunition to the front on their shoulders, with their ox-carts, with their

children, regardless of rain, winter and hot days.”³¹ According to Nilufer Gole, Anatolian women represented a change in the national consciousness and its formation was directed toward Western civilization. Anatolian women were depicted as main figures, in contrast to their Ottoman counterparts who both coquettish and alienated.³² As a product of these historical events Halide Edib situated herself in a position that contended with issues of identity from an individual perspective and a national perspective, and contributed to the discourses on women and Turkish nationalism in a profound manner.

³¹ Ataturk'un Soylev ve Demcleri(The Speeches of Ataturk), Konya Kadinlai ile Konusma, 21, March 1923, 147.

³² Nilufer Gole, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*(Ann Arbor:The University of Michigan Press, 1999), 64.

Chapter 2: Halide's Nationalism

There are few women more controversially debated or widely known in Turkish history than Halide Edib Adivar. As an activist, novelist, and soldier she actively shaped the cultural, political, and social setting of twentieth-century Turkey. Edib was militarily, ideologically, and morally invested in the success of Turkey during its transition from a multi-ethnic empire to a secular nation-state. Her position in mainstream Turkish historiography is intriguingly complex. In one instance she is depicted as the penultimate “Turkish woman,” and in another her nationalist credentials are challenged and she is deemed a traitor. Halide Edib’s collected works nuance our understanding of nationalism, gender relations, identity politics, and her role as an historical figure during Turkey’s path to modernization. Halide Edib is a multi-dimensional figure; she wrote as an Ottoman, a Turk, a Muslim, a woman, and an intellectual. She is responsible for creating a point of intersection among competing ideologies such as modernity, Islamism, Westernization, and the so-called “woman question,” made no more evident than in her lecture series *Conflict of East and West in Turkey*, delivered at the university Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi in 1935.

Literary critic, Hulya Adak, produced a significant amount of scholarship on Halide Edib. Adak's article "National Myths and Self-Narrations: Mustafa Kemal's *Nutuk* and Halide Edib's *Memoirs* and *The Turkish Ordeal*," made a significant contribution to modern Turkish historiography, by arguing Edib's memoirs provide insight on the history of the Independence Struggle in Turkey, as well as, the establishment of the Turkish Republic. Ataturk, the commander-in-chief of the Nationalist Army in the Independence Struggle of Turkey and Turkey's first president delivered a speech entitled *Nutuk* (The Speech) in 1927 in Ankara to the Congress of the *Cumhuriyet Halk Firkasi* (Republican People's Party). Delivered over six days, *Nutuk*, hyperbolically described the accounts of the Independence Struggle of Turkey against the Allies, and his military prowess. According to Adak, this speech foregrounded Ataturk's role in Turkish history at the expense of ignoring other historically significant actors of the time and provided an incomplete historical understanding of the period. She contended Halide Edib's memoirs not only have the ability to challenge the monopoly *Nutuk* held over Turkish historiography, but could help better understand the events surrounding the creation of the Turkish Republic.³³

In the thesis, "*The Rebellious Daughter of the Republic*" or "*The Mother of the Turks*": *Re-considering the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic through the Politics of Halide Edip Adivar*, Ozgun Basmaz expands on Adak's findings and suggested not only the *Turkish Ordeal*, but the wider body of Halide Edib's work provided a more nuanced depiction of Turkish history.

³³ Hulya Adak. "National Myths and Self-Narrations: Mustafa Kemal's *Nutuk* and Halide Edib's *Memoirs* and *The Turkish Ordeal*," *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, no 102 (Spring/Summer 2003): 509-12.

Basmaz argued throughout Edib's political and literary career, she created an alternative ideological framework, where nationalism, modernity, Westernization, and the so-called "woman question," intersected; while at the same time reproducing the dominant discourse to a certain extent. His study focused on Halide Edib's ideological complexities and her original discourse, which he contended cannot be summarily characterized as Westernist, nationalist, or feminist. Rather than trying to fit her into a single category he stressed how her unique discourse emphasized diversity, humanity, and continuity of history. The political environment of the time attempted to unite people around a constructed national idea that created "others" and eradicated people's sense of the past, which is what Mustafa Kemal's vision largely did, Halide Edib's embraced social heterogeneity.³⁴

Contrary to Basmaz's understanding of Edib as a multi-dimensional figure, some scholars have tried to fit Edib and quantify her historical significance within a single paradigm, namely feminism. In *Halide Edib: Turk Modernlesmesi ve Feminizm*, historian Ayse Durakbasa argued Edib's engagement with the "West" and the "woman question" failed to exceed the boundaries set by orientalist and patriarchal discourses and as a result she cannot be classified as a feminist.³⁵ While Durakbasa's argument is compelling, it is also reductive. Attempting to fit Halide Edib into a single category creates a historical sift impervious to her

³⁴ Ozgun Basmaz. "The Rebellious Daughter of the Republic' or 'The Mother of the Turks': Re-considering the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic through the Politics of Halide Edip Adivar" (MA Thesis, The University of Akron, 2008), 1-5.

³⁵ Ayse Durakbasi, *Halide Edib: Turk Modernlesmesi ve Feminizm* (Istanbul: Iletisim Yayinlari, 2000), Beyhan Uygun Aytemiz. "Halide Edib-Adivar ve Feminist Yazin", Masters Thesis, (Ankara: Bilkent University, 2001).

contributions beyond a single category of analysis. Similar to Durakbasa, historian Emel Sonmez, tried to place Halide Edib in the context of feminist ideology, but contradicting Durakbasa, she argued Edib was a feminist. Sonmez argued Halide Edib's contributions both as a corporeal in the Turkish War for Independence and as a novelist, made her a pioneer in the new Turkish Feminism Movement. However, Sonmez failed to link her argument to the larger historical context and did not address the historical significance of Halide Edib's identification with feminism.

In Zeynep Beril Saydun's, *Construction of Nationalism and Gender in Halide Edib's Autobiographical writings*, the issue of Halide Edib's relationship to feminism is once again addressed and historically situated. Saydun argued that Halide Edib's approach to feminism remained skeptical, at best. She further contended that Edib never declared herself a feminist, but did a lot of things for women and women's education in Turkey.³⁶ In conjunction to her dynamism towards women's rights as a strong and self-made woman, Halide Edib, purposefully or not, engaged in feminist politics. Saydun also addressed the concept of nationalism as Halide Edib understood it and presented it in her memoirs. For Edib good nationalism meant "national self-study and international understanding of the loves of peoples and nations."³⁷ While this supports Basmaz's analysis of Edib as a humanitarian, it does not fully analyze how she conceptualized nationalism. Edib addressed nationalism in her memoirs in

³⁶ Zeynep Basil Saydun, *Construction of Nationalism and Gender in Halide Edib's Autobiographical Writings: Memoirs of Halide Edib and The Turkish Ordeal* (Trier: WVT Wissenschaftlicher Verlag Trier, 2008), 117.

³⁷ *Ibid*, 91.

reaction to how nationalism presented itself in contemporary politics, from the League of Nations to the internationalism of Soviet Russia. By limiting her analysis to Edib's memoirs, Saydun limited her own ability to define and analyze the components comprising Edib's concept of nationalism: Islam, gender-relations, the family, and state.

The existing historiography and scholarship on Halide Edib adeptly portrayed her as a complicated figure deserving of analysis and historical understanding within modern Turkish history. However, their primary use of her memoirs and novels limited their insights on Edib's understanding of the prime issues surrounding the formation of the Turkish Republic, such as nationalism, the "woman question," and Islam. Nowhere are her thoughts on the tenets of nationalism more clearly expressed than in the book, *Conflict of East and West in Turkey*. Adapted from the lectures delivered at the Jamia Milia Islamia in January and February of 1935, Edib contributed to the ideological debate surrounding Turkish nationalism in a novel manner. The aforementioned scholars have typically rendered Halide Edib as a strict adherent to Ziya Gokalp's concept of Turkish nationalism, but as Mushirul Hasan pointed out, she did not allow her ideas to be "heavily colored by Islam, by Ziya Gokalp's anticlericalism, or by Mustafa Kemal's obsessive belief that Islam was one of the main obstacles in the westernization and modernization of Turkey."³⁸ Halide Edib's ideological fluidity made her a visionary of Turkish nationalism in her own right.

³⁸ Mushirul Hasan, *Between Modernity and Nationalism: Halide Edip's Encounter with Gandhi's India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 43.

A Prominent member of the *Turk Ocagi*, Ziya Gokalp is considered the leading ideologue of Turkism. Gokalp's book, *The Principles of Turkism*, created the framework of nationalism in Turkey. He spelled out the pragmatic implications of Turkism in the fields of language, aesthetics, law, morality, religion, economy, and philosophy. He replaced the notion of society with the nation and emphasized national-cultural, rather than Islamic, sources of morality. His views on "moral Turkism" suggested family morality based on ancient Turkish cultural values, endorsed the equality of men and women, and monogamous marriage.³⁹ These particular principles echo Edib's ideas on Turkish nationalism. However, Edib methodologically used examples from contemporary events to define Turkish nationalism instead of ancient Turkic traditions. Edib's new approach resulted from her skepticism toward Gokalp's use of the past stating, "In the recent changes in Turkey, a great many intellectuals believe that there is a tendency to return to our origins. What is more important is that this belief is consciously propagated by a considerable number of intellectuals, partly for the sake of making these changes acceptable to the masses."⁴⁰ Halide Edib's examination of contemporary events and people resulted in a conceptualization of Turkish nationalism which highlighted the role gender relations, family, and Islam played in the formation of the state.

In re-evaluating Halide Edib's legacy, she placed the family at the center of the nation and women at the center of the family. In doing this Edib highlighted the intrinsic part women played in state building, both discursively

³⁹ Ziya Gokalp, *The Principles of Turkism*, trans. Robert Devereux (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1968).

⁴⁰ Halide Edib, *Turkey Faces West* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1930), 213.

and practically. In the case of Turkey, this problematized the seclusion of women from the public sphere. Viewed as a state-sponsored feminism, Kemal Ataturk's reforms led to state control over the private realm, i.e. the social structures of family, home, and morality.⁴¹ However, Halide Edib's *Conflict between East and West in Turkey* presented a different understanding of Turkish women's role in nation-building.

The nationalism she espoused is not simply an extension of Ziya Gokalp's understanding of "Turkishness." Edib's conceptualization of nationalism coalesced Islam, gender relations, and the state. This novel understanding of nationalism makes her a significant contributor to the ideological debates surrounding the topic. Based on the analysis of Edib's *Conflict between East and West in Turkey*, Halide Edib created a discourse that facilitated and recognized Turkish women's access to the public sphere beyond the superficial admission provided by Kemalist reforms. Through her obscuration of the division between the public and private realm Edib stressed women's significance in the creation of the Republic of Turkey and presented her own interpretation of Turkish nationalism. For Edib, women were centrally relevant to the post-independence trajectory of Turkish nationalism and the creation of the state. Halide added a utilitarian perspective to Gokalp's views by stating, "their aim was to build a healthy, strong and lasting society rather than a highly intellectual or artistic one.

⁴¹ Jenny White, "State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman," *NWSA Journal*, no. 15 (Autumn 2003): 145-159.

Such a society naturally demands an equal share of service and labour from its women."⁴²

For Edib, half of the state's population needed to be utilized in the formation of the state. As a result of the conditions created by the World War I, which realized a desire for the equality of men and women, they were.⁴³ Gokalp's Turkish nationalism was backed by the discourse of populism where Halide's was backed by the family and women. Transitively, Edib placed the family at the center of the state and women at the center of the family:

"It was the mother who started agriculture and industry in their most primitive aspects, in order to feed and to cloth her young. She also created the family as the unit of human society. The rest evolved around that. Since nature appointed mother to create the family, and since aggregations of families have inevitably grown into nations. Nature also endowed woman with two seemingly incompatible characteristics, extreme conservatism and extreme revolutionism [sic], customs, traditions, language. Thought and literature evolve and accumulate around the family or group of families."⁴⁴

In emphasizing the family as the primary unit of the state, Edib blurred the division between the public and the private space. Women entered the "male" public space through the private, domestic realm. Theoretically, this created a disturbance to the patriarchal system of the time, but Edib defined gender relations as a dynamic of difference yet equality: "The woman must have had the time of her life endeavouring[sic] to induce man to settle down and to himself to the family, for man is individualistic, militant, egotistic, which is as it should be, for

⁴² Halide Edib, *Conflict of East and West in Turkey*, 205

⁴³ Mushirul Hasan, *Between Modernity and Nationalism: Halide Edip's Encounter with Gandhi's India*, 72

⁴⁴ Halide Edib, *Conflict of East and West in Turkey*, 236

these characteristics were evidently also essential to bring civilization[sic] into being.”⁴⁵

Halide Edib noted the Second Constitutional Period as the moment when women became agents of nationalism and the creators of the state, “Women got their real chance in 1908... The very atmosphere became freer for women and it was fully realised that a new Turkey could never be created without them.”⁴⁶ According to her, a new outlook on women presented itself. No longer relegated to the private sphere, women innervated Turkish nationalism. According to theories on nationalism, women are involved in the national processes as biological reproducers of ethnic collectivities, reproducers of national groups, participants in the ideological reproduction, signifiers of nationalism, and participants in national economic, political and military struggles. Halide’s observations on women’s role in the nation substantiate these theories. She observed that women broke the barriers of seclusion and entered the public realm not only out of necessity, but as a natural right and national obligation:

“When the Balkan war broke out and tragedy followed tragedy, women fulfilled their full share of duty by organizing[sic] protest meetings, nursing, establishing centres[sic] where the orphans and the widows of the Balkan refugees could learn some craft and thereby earn their bread. I personally believe that the nursing of common soldiers by Turkish women served more than anything else to educate the masses in the new outlook* about women.”⁴⁷

While Halide’s understanding of women’s role in the national process in Turkey resulted from personal bias and experiences, the topic of the obstruction of gendered divisions of space in Halide’s *Conflict Between East and West* was

⁴⁵ Ibid, 194

⁴⁶ Ibid, 215

⁴⁷ Ibid, 216

predicated on historical realities she observed. In the context of the Great War

Edib witnessed the following:

“Turkey's manhood was on the frontiers. The country was nearly blockaded. From er[d] to end the only producers were women. The army had to create women's batallions [sic] to do the work behind the lines. The needs of the army, its food and clothing-, were supplied entirely by women. Further, the governmental departments had to recruit employees [sic] from among women. By 1916 women had really reached a stage in education and experience when they could take considerable part in the work of administration. Perhaps more remarkable than the education of women in principal cities and the labour of the agricultural regions was the activity of the women of smaller towns. The care of the family had fallen entirely on their shoulders. They became the inter*mediaries [sic], travelling all over the country, buying and selling and carrying on the entire small trading for the sake of keeping alive their children. Without the activity and the enormous service of women, Turkey would have collapsed internally during the Great War.”⁴⁸

In addition to obscuring the idea that the home was a woman's rightful place, Islam's role in Turkish nationalism influenced Edib's particular conceptualization of nationalism. Finding recourse in the Quran to argue for women's rights, Halide Edib pointed to Sura IV, verse 32 “Men shall have the benefit of what they earn and women shall have the benefit of what they earn.”⁴⁹ For Edib, this verse contained enduring truths no efficacious society could exist without. This verse recognized woman and man as free human beings responsible for her own actions. This verse went beyond religion and women's rights. It established a foundational principal for society.

Some scholars, like Deniz Kadiyoti, have pointed out that there is at present a growing recognition that the subordination of Muslim women can neither be read solely from the universalistic premises of feminist theory, nor be entirely derived from global processes of socio-economic transformation, nor for

⁴⁸ Ibid, 217

⁴⁹ Mushirul Hasan, *Between Modernity and Nationalism: Halide Edip's Encounter with Gandhi's India*, 60-61

that matter from Islamic ideology and practice. None the less, current scholarship continues to reflect a genuine difficulty in conceptualizing the role and specificity of Islam in relation to the position of women.⁵⁰ In an effort to quell some of the difficulties they face, scholars would benefit from examining how women throughout history understood the role of Islam in their lives and in what ways religion intersected with other facets of their lives. For Halide Edib, Islam's role in the context of her private life had direct associations to state building through nationalism and gender relations.

The process of secularization went furthest in Turkey. The shift from a multi-ethnic empire to a Turkish-based nation state involved a liberal distancing between Islam and cultural nationalism. The culmination of this distance could be found in the context of the early years of the Republic, under the auspices of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. As Turkey's first president he dismantled the central institutions of Ottoman Islam. Ataturk abolished the caliphate and emphasized the secularization of every sphere of life, while at the expense of a wider Islamic identification he took extended measures to heighten Turkey's "Turkish" national consciousness. For Ataturk, the Romanization of the alphabet, the new dress code, and a new manifesto of the cultural mobilization in service of the new state, would increase Turkish national consciousness. Therefore, the secularization of the family code and the enfranchisement of women were used to liquidate the religious institutions of the Ottoman Empire, while simultaneously legitimizing a new state ideology.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Deniz Kandiyoti, *Women, Islam, and the State*, 2

⁵¹ Erik Zürcher, *Turkey: a Modern History*, 186-194

Halide Edib nationalism established a relationship between religion and culture. Not confined to the world of worship and belief, religion extended into the practices of daily life. For Edib, religion was heavily embedded into the world of customs, and vice versa:

“The supreme aim of Islam being social justice, it could not leave half of society out of consideration...Islam instituted marriage, limited the number of wives and in case of divorce bound the husband to pay alimony. It inculcated a chivalrous attitude towards women in general and meted out equal punishment in cases of immorality. But its greatest significance for the modern world is that it is the first system which accords property and economic rights to women and makes them independent of the guardianship of their men.”⁵²

For her the institution of marriage, property and economic rights, and issues of morality were customs intrinsically tied to Islam and at the foundation of the nation. Another example of this is in Halide Edib’s thoughts on veiling:

“The Koran (Sura 24 , verse 31) commands women to pay due regard to their dress, enjoining them to wear veils that will cover the sides of their head, their bosom and their ornaments ; there is no order to cover their faces, still less are they expected to shut themselves up and abstain from social activities. The Prophet's own wife was one of the most remarkable women, with a great social reputation. In this commandment we see two things, first, that women should be decently dressed, even if they desire to make themselves beautiful, and secondly, what is more significant, they are asked not to use their beauty and sex to exploit their fellow-creatures. This is just what a modern feminist or any healthy society aims at.”⁵³

A defender of the *charshaf* (Islamic veil), Halide viewed the veil as a symbol of social integration. She also suggested that wearing a veil expressed simultaneously, the Islamic faith of the people and nationalist sentiments.

The power dynamics within the family and society at large are nuanced by Halide Edib’s understanding of Turkish women’s part in the national process

⁵² Halide Edib, *Conflict of East and West in Turkey*(Delhi : Maktaba Jamia Millia Islamia, 1929), 199

⁵³ Ibid, 201

during the formative years of the Turkish Republic. She depicted women as agents of nationalism and creators of the state. In doing this, she challenged both the ideological and applied position of women in the private realm, through her own discursive understanding of nationalism. Edib's definition of nationalism included the tenets of gender relations, family, and Islam and described each as a necessary component of a successful state.

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