

NEZİHE MUHİDDİN

An Ottoman Turkish Women's Rights Defender

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by

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ABSTRACT

Nezihe Muhiddin

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This thesis has attempted to show through a study of Nezihe Muhiddin and her works that women sought their political rights before they were granted them in 1934. It has long been claimed that women were given their rights by the Kemalists and that they did not have to fight for them. This study aimed to show that through the initiative of Nezihe Muhiddin, women did fight for their rights including political rights and sought full equality. Women's struggle was suppressed, Nezihe Muhiddin was silenced and the founding fathers could claim a tabula rasa -over which they could rewrite women's history as the granters of woman's rights.

KISA ÖZET

Nezihe Muhiddin

Bir Osmanlı Türk Kadın Hakları Savunucusu

Yaprak Zihnioğlu

Bu çalışmada, Nezihe Muhiddin'in düşünceleri ve etkinlikleri incelenerek, ülkemizde 1934'de kadınlara siyasal hakların Kemalistler tarafından verilmesinden önce, kadınların siyasal haklarını almak üzere harekete geçtikleri sergileniyor. Şimdiye değin sosyal bilimler alanında kadınların haklarının Kemalistler tarafından verildiği ve bu hakları için mücadele etmedikleri ileri sürüldü. Bu tez, Nezihe Muhiddin'in başlattığı etkinliklerle kadınların, siyasal haklar da dahil olmak üzere tüm haklar ve tam eşitlik için mücadele ettiklerini göstermeyi amaçlıyor. Ancak kadınların bu mücadeleleri bastırıldı ve Nezihe Muhiddin susturuldu. Bunun sonucu olarak Kemalistler "kadınlara haklarını biz verdik, onlar mücadele etmediler" iddiasını, kadın tarihini yeniden yazarak bugüne değin sürdürebildiler.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to examine the life of an Ottoman Turkish feminist, Nezihe Muhiddin. We aim to study Nezihe Muhiddin not merely to highlight the biography of a neglected feminist but also to attempt to understand the nature of the feminist discourse she could articulate within the political context of early Republican Turkey.

Till now Nezihe Muhiddin has not been studied. There have been studies of the Ottoman women's movement (Toprak 1988¹, 1989², Çakır 1993³, 1994⁴) and others on the political and social status of contemporary women (Abadan-Unat 1982⁵, Doğramacı 1989⁶) and contemporary feminist activism (Tekeli 1986⁷, Sirman 1989⁸, Tekeli 1990⁹, Arat 1996¹⁰, Arat 1997¹¹). Those works on the Ottoman

¹ Zafer Toprak, "Osmanlı Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyeti, Kadın Askerler ve Milli Aile (Ottoman Women's Employment Society)", *Tarih ve Toplum*, March 1988, no. 51.

² Zafer Toprak, "İttihad Terakki ve Teali-i Vatan Osmanlı Hanımlar Cemiyeti (Union and Progress and the Women's Society for Elevation of Homeland)", *Toplum ve Bilim*, Autumn 1989, n. 43-44.

³ Serpil Çakır, "Kadın Tarihinden İki İsim: Ulviye Mevlan, Nezihe Muhittin". 1. Tarih Kongresi: Osmanlı'dan Cumhuriyet'e Problemler, Araştırmalar, Tartışmalar (Two Names in Women's History: Ulviye Mevlan, Nezihe Muhittin" 1. Historical Congress: Problems, Research from the Ottoman to the Republic), Ankara, 24-26 May 1993, unpublished paper. (Henceforth referred to as "Ulviye Mevlan, Nezihe Muhittin")

⁴ Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (The Ottoman Woman's Movement) Istanbul, Metis Yayınları, 1994. (Henceforth referred to as *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*)

⁵ Nermin Abadan-Unat, "Toplumsal Değişme ve Türk Kadını (Societal Change and Turkish Woman)", *Türk Toplumunda Kadın* (Women in Turkish Society), Ankara, Türk Sosyal Bilimler Derneği, 1982.

⁶ Emel Doğramacı, *Türkiye'de Kadının Dünü ve Bugünü* (Turkish Woman: Yesterday and Today), Ankara, T. İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları, 1989.

⁷ Şirin Tekeli, "Emergence of the New feminist Movement in Turkey" in Dahlerup, D. ed. *The New Women's Movement*, Beverly Hills: Sage, 1986, pp. 179-199.

⁸ Nükhet Sirman, "Feminism in Turkey: A Short History", *New Perspectives on Turkey*, vol. 3, no. 1, Fall 1989.

⁹ Şirin Tekeli, "Women in the Changing Political Associations of the 1980s", in Andrew Finkel and Nükhet Sirman, eds., *Turkish State, Turkish Society*, London, Routledge, 1990.

women's movement have brought to light the activities of various women's groups in the pre-Republican era. However, there is much left to be done. Some have collapsed the contextual framework of the 1980s with that of the earlier times (Çakır 1994), at times mistakenly assuming male authors to be female feminists.¹² Others have insisted on the apolitical nature of the early women's activism (Toprak 1988¹³).

In fact much has been discussed concerning the women's movement by contemporary academicians in regard to women's gratitude for the Republican reforms. Republican female academicians have insistently underlined how the Kemalist reformers gave women their rights. While a younger generation of feminist / scholars have analyzed the symbolic role of these reforms (Tekeli, 1977¹⁴, 1983¹⁵, Göle 1991¹⁶) and the instrumental nature of their impact (Arat 1989¹⁷), they have done so without a background in the pre Republican activism of women's activists.

¹⁰ Yeşim Arat, "A Feminist Mirror in Turkey: Portraits of Two Activist in the 1980s" *Princeton Papers*, v. 5, Fall 1996, pp. 113-131.

¹¹ Yeşim Arat, "The Project of Modernity and Women in Turkey", in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, Seattle and London, University of Washington Press, 1997.

¹² See Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, İstanbul Numune Matbaası, 1931. p. 50, 85. (Henceforth referred to as *Türk Kadını*)

¹³ Zafer Toprak, "Kadınlar Halk Fırkası (Women's People's Party)", *Tarih ve Toplum*, no. 51, March 1988, p. 30-31. (Henceforth referred to as "Kadınlar Halk Fırkası")

¹⁴ Şirin Tekeli, "Siyasal İktidar Karşısında Kadın (Women in the Face of Political Power)" *Toplum ve Bilim*, Autumn 1977, no. 3, pp. 69-107.

¹⁵ Şirin Tekeli, *Siyasal Hayat ve Kadınlar*, İstanbul, Birikim Yayınları, 1983.

¹⁶ Nilüfer Göle, *Modern Mahrem*, İstanbul, Metis Yayınları, 1991.

¹⁷ Yeşim Arat, *Patriarchal Paradox, Women Politicians in Turkey*, N. J., Fairleigh Dickinson University Press 1989. (Henceforth referred to as *Patriarchal Paradox*)

A study of Nezihe Muhiddin aims to redress this vacuum. In our thesis, we would like to argue that prior to women's suffrage in 1934, women struggled for their political rights in a bitter fight against the newly founded Republican establishment. Against the prevailing wisdom that women did not seek their political rights before the new Republic recognized them, we would like to argue that women did seek those rights while the Republican administration attempted to impose a hegemony over the newly established public space. As a result of this obstruction, the Republic managed to define women as a-political social actors and construct the public sphere as a male domain, in spite of all the rhetoric to the contrary. As such, our thesis aims to highlight the authoritarian and totalitarian nature of the Republican reforms and the bitter struggle waged against women.

We would like to locate the thesis in the context of nationalist attempts to redefine the nature of society (Jayawerdana 1988¹⁸). Social scientists have drawn attention to the means through which the newly independent nationalist regimes have used women's issues and women's activism to give shape to their regimes (Kandiyoti 1991¹⁹, Chatterjee 1990²⁰). In the Turkish case too, women's political activism paradoxically provided the means to exclude them as legitimate actors in politics. As

¹⁸ K. Jayawerdana, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, London, Zed Press, 1988; cited by Deniz Kandiyoti, "Introduction", in Deniz Kandiyoti, (ed.) *Women, Islam and the State*, Deniz Kandiyoti, (ed.) London, Macmillan, 1991, pp. 3-9.

¹⁹ Deniz Kandiyoti, "Introduction", in Deniz Kandiyoti, (ed.) *Women, Islam and the State*, London, Macmillan, 1991, pp. 1-21. (Henceforth referred to as "Introduction")

²⁰ Partha Chatterjee, "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question", in Ed. K. Sangari, Vaid, *Recasting Women: Essays in Indian Colonial History*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1990, pp. 233-253.

Arat (1984) argue in *Patriarchal Paradox*, thereafter women became political actors merely as daughters of the Republic.

In the last twenty years in Turkey, the answer to the following question has been sought for - especially amongst women social scientists: "What was the role of women in the Ottoman Turkish modernization process?" In this study we will attempt to ask the question from women's side of the coin. In Turkish modernization what sort of role did women assume for themselves? And questions to elaborate on with this issue are: How did women perceive modernization, what is it that they desired in this process? Was the category of "woman" that the modernization discourse generated taken as self-evident or did women wish to take part in the formulation of this category? What does the category "woman" mean to women? Did women passively accept themselves as indexes and symbols of Republican reforms, Westernization and modernization or did they seek as women to initiate and be actors of these reforms? Was it possible for women to fulfill the role that they had delineated for themselves?

After posing these questions this study primarily aims to reveal the phenomena of Nezihe Muhiddin. Secondly this study seeks to answer them within the framework of Nezihe Muhiddin's views and actions thus having the intention of an attempt at elaborating a history of women in our country.

In this study Scott's post-structuralist feminist history approach paves our way. In feminist women historiography the first phase has been to reveal the invisible history of women. At the same time as Scott has put it, it is an attempt "to generate new knowledge about women and sexual difference"²¹ -hence about society itself. In

²¹ Joan Wallace Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1988. p. 10, 16.

Scott's terms gender means knowledge about sexual difference. Such knowledge is not absolute or true but rather relative. Following Michel Foucault, Scott asserts that meanings and using knowledge are "the means by which relationship of power -of domination and subordination- are constructed. Knowledge in this case "is inseparable from social organization". Hence, gender is the social organization of sexual difference. With a motive to point out and change inequalities between women and men Scott attempts to analyse "how gender hierarchies are constructed, legitimated, challenged and maintained".²² In her attempt "to do feminist history" Scott appealed a theoretical perspective for interpreting the world while trying to change it. She critically approach "terms that have been taken as self-evident". Then "the story" of "history" is no longer about the things have happened to women and men and how they reacted to them; instead it is about how the subjective and collective meanings of women and men as categories of identity have been constructed. And to "find gender in history", it is not enough to do the "literal, thematic reading" but a different kind of exegesis is required - that is post-structuralist approach. A relativized concept of gender as historically specific knowledge about sexual difference, allows feminists to forge an analytical tool that offers a way to generate new knowledge about women and sexual difference. "Feminist history then become not just attempt to correct or supplement an incomplete record of the past but a way of critically understanding how history operates as a site of the production of gender knowledge."²³ Scott's approach lead us then a "thinking about history, about the ways in which hierarchies and

²² Joan Wallace Scott, *ibid*, p. 3.

²³ Joan Wallace Scott, *ibid*, p. 10.

difference -inclusions and exclusions- have been constituted and of theorizing feminist politics.

In following Scott's thesis this study is not only concerned with shedding light on the hidden history of women -such as the excavation of "forgotten women". At the same time it seeks to show how women wished to be political and social actors, and attempt to understand how they constructed politics as a category. We will see that the political sphere was neither one that is "self-evident" nor existing in and of "itself". But rather it is one that is defined, constructed and legitimized through knowledge and power. We endeavor to demonstrate in Nezihe Muhiddin case, that in order to engage in politics the political field and the actors must be defined and through this definition the subsequent institutions and various processes indicated. Nezihe Muhiddin was active in women's politics in the years of the formation of the Republic and that sphere was laid open to her by virtue of nationalism. In analyzing the phenomena of Nezihe Muhiddin we bear witness to her attempt to expand the parameters of the existing political field for women's inclusion as active agents in the political process. In contrast to this, Kemalist's sought to exclude women themselves from the category of "woman". Muhiddin's case may help to show in the history of our country the ways of establishing gender hierarchy by Republican government.

Jayawerdana (1988²⁴) has shown that in countries colonized or economically depended on the West feminist movements initiated by women are connected to anti-imperialist and nationalist struggles, secular reforms and the emergence of middle class at the turn of the 20th century. Chatterjee²⁵ asserts that at the turn of the century

²⁴ Cited by Deniz Kandiyoti, "Introduction", pp. 3-9.

²⁵ See Partha Chatterjee, *ibid*, pp. 233-253.

nationalism in the independent struggles allowed for an discourse on “woman’s question”. Thus it is possible to say that nationalism paved the way for the discourse on women’s rights and this has a direct bearing on the Ottoman women’s movement and the case of Nezihe Muhiddin. Upon investigating Nezihe Muhiddin’s ideas initiatives and writing one can see, just as Jayawerdana (1988²⁶) has stated, that the demands for political and social rights for women in Turkey were connected with nationalist policies and discourse. Leaning on the studies of Sankar, Chatterjee asserts that Indian modernizers appropriated Western liberal slogans to their own culture in a selective manner.²⁷ We see this as well among the Ottoman thinkers like Ahmed Midhat who also employed a selective approach in their acceptance of modernization. Deniz Kandiyoti posits that in Moslem countries in the process of modernization all initiatives at changing the situation of women are qualified within the framework of being part of the design of imperialism and neo-imperialism. In these countries feminism is considered “inauthentic”, a branch of imperialism. Thus by the same token, Kandiyoti’s thesis of politics of authenticity has been rather enlightening in regard to this study. As Leila Ahmed says, feminists in Middle Eastern countries are “forced to choose between betrayal and betrayal”²⁸

Drawing upon these theses we examine Nezihe Muhiddin’s activities from two frames of reference: one being feminism (the ideals of womanhood {kadınlik mefkûresi}) and other being nationalism (the Turkish woman). “Womanhood” had

²⁶ Cited by Deniz Kandiyoti, “Introduction”.

²⁷ Partha Chatterjee, *ibid*, p. 236.

²⁸ Deniz Kandiyoti, “Introduction”, p. 7.

social connotations and meaning for Ottoman women and Nezihe Muhiddin. This concept primarily carried the meaning “us” for the Ottoman women. We can assert that the concept of the “ideals of womanhood” encompassed women as a social “class” and “group”, we can also say that this concept entailed the demands and desires of Ottoman women. We will seek to analyze Muhiddin in terms of her thought and initiatives concerning her nationalist approach and her efforts at nation-building in the reform process, as well as her call for the creation of the new middle class of women in the latter phase of her political career.

Our first task was to reveal the thoughts and activities of Nezihe Muhiddin, an important yet forgotten/erased female actor in Ottoman Turkish society, as well as in our women’s history, at the beginning of the 20th century. Nezihe Muhiddin was born towards the end of the 19th century (1889) and her first social initiatives were realized in the II. Constitutional Era. She was in the forefront of the prominent women of that era, well-educated, she exhibited a high intellectual level and an analytical competence that made her a significant political strategist and activist. She was a compelling speaker and writer with her strong and influential personality.²⁹ She entered professional life in 1909 as a teacher. With her fluent pen and literary texts she gained fame after 1912, known thereafter as an “outstanding woman writer”.³⁰ Her literary reputation was based upon her impassioned character, shining intellect and broad knowledge.

²⁹ It is beyond the scope of this study to gain to literary criticism of Nezihe Muhiddin novels, short stories and her other works of fiction.

³⁰ *Kadınlar Dünyası*, “Konferans (Conference)”, no. 3, 6 April 1329 {1913}, pp. 3-4.

We would like to analyze Nezihe Muhiddin's activities and thought in two different eras of Turkish history - 1909-1923 (roughly, the II. Constitutional Era) in the second chapter and 1923-1937 (the early Republican period) in the third chapter. These periods witnessed different regimes, social change, war and upheaval. Nezihe Muhiddin's activities and politics seem to change in accord with the periods' political and social conditions as she sought to keep abreast of the trajectory of social change. Being a significant political strategist, in both periods Nezihe Muhiddin determined the course to take in seeking women's rights in a manner appropriate to the political conditions.

Republican women sought to realize the "ideals of womanhood" and desired to be actors in the formative period of Republic. The end result of the Republican regime's policy of holding the monopoly on the "ideal of modernization" was a conflict between the Republican women and the male-dominated Republican government. This was at the same time a conflict between "ideals" on both sides. The conflict was rooted in the Republican administration's "you women" discourse and the implementation of totalitarian practices as opposed to the women's "we women" discourse and the desire of women to be social participants.

Nationalism offered the opportunity and probability for women to claim equal rights and Nezihe Muhiddin tried to take advantage of this open area and instigated the politics of women into this framework. In the end Nezihe Muhiddin was silenced and suppressed and the explanations for this seem to be as follows: Her politics and discourse concerning women was at odds with the position allotted to women by the nationalist discourse, she demanded that the reforms in favor of women promised by

the political body be put into practice and, to achieve this she organized a group that resembled contemporary "pressure groups" to influence the socio-legal process. She wished to attain women's rights and for them to take their place as social actors in the formation of the nation. The analysis of this phenomena will aid in understanding the limitations of Turkish nationalism, the foundation of gender-hierarchy in the social and political order, the totalitarian and authoritarian nature of the political administration in the founding years of the Republic -as well as women's history in our country. What history shows us is that the Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası (Republican People's Party - RPP) sought to establish a monopoly in the modernization process concerning all aspects of the civil sphere including that involving women's rights. They sought to control, direct and take all the credit for all forms of social reform and change. The Kemalists exerted control over matters concerning women by discounting women's struggles of the past and present. In Recep Peker's words³¹ it is apparent that the government denied that the Woman's Union's (WU) campaign for suffrage (1927) represented women. Another aspect of Muhiddin's conflict revolves around her presumption that, even with the interruption of Absolute rule, the "progressives' movement" went back to the Tanzimat and was the foundation of the Republic in 1923. The Republican's did not view women's history, nor that of the progressives, in the same light - thus denying this continuity. As a defender of women rights and an influential individual, Nezihe Muhiddin sought to achieve those rights at a very critical political juncture and suffered the greatest frustration and disappointment in her personal life as a result.

³¹ Recep Peker refers to WU as "a committee that pretends to represent womanhood and its claims" in his speech at TGNA. See *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, c. 33, p. 385-386, 21.6.1927.

Women's History and Nezihe Muhiddin

Research into women's history in our country began in the 1970s. Nezihe Muhiddin was first introduced in the field of social science through Zafer Toprak's study³², wherein she was identified as the founder of the Kadınlar Halk Fırkası (Woman's People's Party -WPP). Important as his contribution was in recognizing Nezihe Muhiddin and the authoritative denial of her attempt to found the WPP, he also assumes that the WPP was not political in intent. (Toprak 1988) As for Serpil Çakır, she mentioned Nezihe Muhiddin in comparison to Ulviye Mevlan.³³ Ayşegül Baykan attempted to analyze *Türk Kadını*³⁴ in the framework of feminist historiography.³⁵ Social scientists up until the 1980s relied on the research conducted by official historians such as Afetinan. This approach was furthered in a slightly different vein by researchers such as Tezer Taşkiran and Hamide Topçuoğlu. No other female social scientist who worked on women's issues made any mention of Nezihe Muhiddin. Even women social scientists uphold the official discourse that women's rights in Turkey designed and granted by the government and women themselves made no effort on their own to achieve them. Şirin Tekeli and Yeşim Arat's studies on contemporary politics draw on Tezer Taşkiran's work and ignore Nezihe Muhiddin's influential role

³² Zafer Toprak, "Kadınlar Halk Fırkası", p. 30-31.

³³ Serpil Çakır, "Ulviye Mevlan, Nezihe Muhittin".

³⁴ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*.

³⁵ Ayşegül Baykan, "The Turkish Woman: An Adventure in Feminist Historiography", in *Gender and History*, Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1994, pp. 101-116.

in the Ottoman Turkish women's movement and the formative years of the Republic. Yeşim Arat maintains that in the early years of the Republic women were passive, and that Atatürk and the political elite had an important role in giving these rights to them.³⁶ In short official history has prevailed over women's history in social sciences.

Moreover, to read the Ottoman does mean that one is "reading" the text. As Nezihe Muhiddin claimed, and Taha Toros verified,³⁷ a certain group of writers during the II. Constitutional Era who wrote in women's publications, and claimed to be women (by using women's names), were in fact men. This fact is significant enough to change the course of analyses. The first problem that meets the eye with Serpil Çakır's study *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi* (Ottoman Woman's Movement), drawn from Ottoman primary sources, is that she assumes that the editor-in-chief³⁸ and various writers of *Kadınlar Dünyası* (Women's World) were in fact women. This publication appeared in the II. Constitutional Era and her thesis is based on the assumption that the writers whose articles were signed with woman's names and claimed to speak on behalf of women were genuine. By employing a literal reading of the text, Serpil Çakır

³⁶ Yeşim Arat, "The Question of Suffrage in Turkey", *Current Turkish Thought, Perspectives on Women*, no. 57, Winter 1985, pp. 2-15.

³⁷ In my *Interview with Taha Toros*, February 1998. (Henceforth referred to as Interview with Taha Toros)

³⁸ According to Taha Toros this journal's main writer was Ulviye Mevlan's husband Mevlanzade Rifat Nezihe Muhiddin says that Ulviye Mevlan, who was not the actual founder of the Müdafaa-i Hukuku Nisvan Cemiyeti (Society for the Defense of Women's Rights) and the main writer of *Kadınlar Dünyası* for in actual fact it was her husband Rifat Mevlanzade: "Babanzade tarafından tesis edilip müessislik sıfatı okuyup yazması bile olmayan haremine izafe edilen Müdafaa-i Hukuku Nisvan cemiyetinden bahsetmek ihtiyacını duymuyorum. Çünkü bu sözde kadın cemiyetinin arasında okuyup yazan, akıllı eren yalnız iki hanım vardı. Biri şair Nezihe Yaşar, diğeri bir muallim hanımdan ibaretti Müdafaa-i Hukuku Nisvan, Babanzade Rifat Bey (Mevlanzade kastediliyor) tarafından tesis edilerek bir de 'Kadınlar Dünyası' namıyla bir mecmua neşr edilmiştir". (See Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 50, 85). This claim is verified by Taha Toros. In response to this Serpil Çakır says that Nezihe Muhiddin "belittled what other women did" and she had an "elitist" attitude. (See Serpil Çakır, "Ulviye Mevlan, Nezihe Muhittin")

falls into a momentous error that has significant repercussions for women's history.³⁹ In this way those women historians wishing to uncover what women thought and wrote are thrown into confusion. As to why men in that period were writing in the name of women, that is a question that remains to be answered.⁴⁰

Secondly, Serpil Çakır adopts an a-historical approach as she equates the Ottoman women's movement with that of the new feminist movement of the 1980s. While they do share similarities there are differences as well, both in content, source and starting point. Feminism in the Ottoman period, or to use the term applied by contemporaries, "ideals of womanhood", reflected the very social, political and economic conditions from which it arose. The Ottoman women who created the "Hareket-i nisvan (women's movement)" were the wives and children of the ruling class, and hence were close to the nexus of political power. These individuals were exceptional in that period in that they were tutored privately and well-educated, they were intellectual women who often knew several languages and could follow the foreign press. Their demands, even though they trailed a few generations behind the men, were

³⁹ Serpil Çakır, indicates that she was aware of this problem in the paper she submitted. She makes a distinction women's writing by its joyous and sincere manner, as for the falsely attributed articles, they are discernible because of their didactic style. (See "Ulviye Mevlan, Nezihe Muhiddin"). On this point distinction can be made between genuine women writers and male forgers in terms of the style wherein male writing is in the third person while in woman's writing "we as women" is employed. For an example of writing signed under Ulviye Mevlan's name see Aynur Demirdirek, *Osmanlı Kadınlarının Hayat Hakkı Arayışının Bir Hikayesi*, Ankara, İmge Kitabevi, 1993, p. 53-58.

⁴⁰ *Atı* newspaper was published by Celal Nuri İleri and one year after its initial appearance a column known as "Kadınlığın Atisi (Future Of Womanhood)" was inaugurated. This column featured a warning, on 11 January 1335 {1919}, that the articles, contrary to their signatures were actually written by men. The piece promises not to publish any more such articles of false pretense, and a committee of graduates of İnas Darülfünunu analyze these pieces in order to detect in the "nom de plumes" any males writing under the false pretenses. The style of this notice exhibited that there was a strong reaction among women as there was amongst men: "Bu sütunlar münhasıran kadınlarımız tarafından yazılan mündericata {yazılar} aittir. Hiç bir vakit nam-ı müstearla bir erkeğin kadınlık namına bu sütuna yazı yazmasına mücade edilmeyecektir. Kadınlığın Atisi sütununa girecek yazılar İnas Darülfünunundan mezun bir heyet-i mümtaze tetkik ettikten sonra tab edecektir. Gelen mektubların üslubundaki hususiyetler muhafaza edilecektir."

to be “modern women”; they sought to approach the newly emerging notion of being a modern person, like men they desired to participate in public and civil life, sought to change customs and Islamic rules that prevented them from doing so. The feminism of the 80s flourished among middle class intellectual women and the social conditions for this phenomena were quite different from those of the Ottoman period.⁴¹ As Nükhet Sirman has revealed,⁴² the continuity between the two periods consists of the woman’s discourse “we women”, the adoption of women’s politics, and the fact that pioneers of both groups were intellectual. The fundamental differences consist the following: Ottoman women wished to be “modern women” in a society that had not yet modernized, they demanded to be included in the true sense in the category of “liberated individuals” as promised by modernity. As for the feminists of the 80s they lived in a country that had witnessed a century of the modernization process -drawing on the deficiencies of modernization they criticized the process.

Contemporary political scientists such as Şirin Tekeli and Yeşim Arat adopt a functionalist approach in studying the Kemalist reforms regarding women. They show the symbolic and instrumental nature of these reforms and continue to focus on problems of contemporary women in politics. What this study aims to do is to focus back on how a space was created for Kemalist reforms regarding women’s rights to

⁴¹ For different perspective on feminism in the 1980’s see Şirin Tekeli, “80’lerde Türkiye’de Kadınların Kurtuluşu Hareketinin Gelişmesi (The Development of the Woman’s Liberation Movement in Turkey in the 1980s”, *Birikim*, no. 3, Temmuz 1989, pp. 34-41; Nükhet Sirman, “Feminism in Turkey: A Short History”, *New Perspectives on Turkey*, vol. 3, no. 1, Fall 1989; Yeşim Arat, “1980’ler Türkiye’sinde Kadın Hareketi (Woman’s Movement in Turkey in the 1980’s)”, *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 53, Bahar 1991, p. 7-20; Yaprak Zihnioğlu, “Feminizmin İlk Günleri, Öznel Bir Tarihçe Denemesi (1981-1982) {First Days of Feminism, }, A Subjective Historical Essay (1981-1982)} *Pazartesi*, no. 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, Ekim 1996 - Mayıs 1997.

⁴² Nükhet Sirman, Course Notes, Boğaziçi University, Sociology Department, 1997.

play the instrumental role they did play. In this process, women were forcefully subjugated and our study aims to investigate how.

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

Those wishing to do research on Ottoman-Turkish women's history are confronted with two major stumbling blocks in gathering data. Primary sources are often scattered, carelessly preserved and not readily available. Ottoman periodicals are often missing and thus those undertaking such a study confront the first impediment. The indifference commensurate with the elimination of pre-republican documentation by governments prevents one from getting needed data. The second problem is that the Ottoman script prevents us from reaching our history. As a language no longer in use, it is difficult to read and appreciate the usage of Ottoman-Turkish, an endeavor requiring painstaking work and long term study. In this respect, those who are involved with history in Turkey must overcome "translated history".

A researcher today wishing to conduct a study on Nezihe Muhiddin must be aware at the beginning that s/he will be working with insufficient data and the conclusions reached will be circumscribed by the lack of data. Nothing has survived of Muhiddin's hand-written work, note books, diaries and photographs etc.⁴³ - or I haven't been able to come across them. The pressure directed towards her by the

⁴³ In terms of original documents only a handwritten letter by Nezihe Muhiddin in Ottoman Turkish in Taha Toros' archive and an original photograph in Mizyal Karaçam Şengil's possession are extant. Also, according to Toros, there are letters of Nezihe Muhiddin and notes from the family which are in the possession of an individual in Izmir who reluctant to release them as she plans to write a book on the topic. I hope that soon these document will see the light of day.

government tragically affected her closest circles i.e. family and friends; for this reason later generations have not been informed of the significance of this woman's character.

Data Gathering

This study's data has been gathered from the issues pertinent to the period in question of the *Cumhuriyet*, *Milliyet*, *İkdam* and *Tanin* newspapers. For the late Ottoman period I used primary sources such as women's periodicals of that time and memoirs. The *Kadın Yolu* (Woman's Path) magazine, published by Nezihe Muhiddin⁴⁴ and the book; *Türk Kadını* (Turkish Woman)⁴⁵ written by her, were sources for the study. My interviews with Taha Toros who personally knew Nezihe Muhiddin, helped to elaborate my views on Muhiddin. Because I could not reach the Muhiddin family, it was not possible to interview other living informants who knew her.

Methodology

In this study I used a interpretive method and engaged in a close textual reading of Nezihe Muhiddin's writing. While reading Nezihe Muhiddin's and others' texts, I especially sought to discern her views, arguments and ideas within their particular

⁴⁴ *Kadın Yolu* (Woman's Path), (after the forth issue *Türk Kadın Yolu* {Turkish Woman's Path}) was published in Istanbul, between 16th July 1341{1925} 1st August 1927 and consisted of 30 issues. Nezihe Muhiddin was the owner-publisher of this weekly magazine.

⁴⁵ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*.

context; to discern to whom she was addressed and who the audience could have been, to detect the way in which the ideas were expressed; how meaning was established and the tone of voice implicit in the text. As a woman in the political arena, I paid close attention to how Nezihe Muhiddin changed her discourse in line with the political changes, what stance she took, and how she situated herself vis-à-vis her thoughts. I attempted to appraise her remarks in the political struggle within the context of the historical conditions. In comparing the texts with political developments of their particular period my "reading" aided me in inferring knowledge and solving the texts' codes. To whom, the discourses were addressed, for whom and in which fashion they were responded to, provided me with conclusions in regards to Nezihe Muhiddin's actions and ideas.

I attempted to investigate all the available literature pertaining to that period in order to understand the context of the social environment and conditions of the time. As secondary sources I referred to the studies conducted by Zafer Toprak, Hilmi Ziya Ülken, Tarık Zafer Tunaya; and I benefited from the memoirs of such woman writers as Leyla Saz, Sabiha Sertel, Selma Ekrem, Cahit Uçuk. I tried to understand how the social-political milieu of the II. Constitutional and Republican Eras were perceived by contemporaneous people. I tried to analyze Nezihe Muhiddin's discourse in the social-political context and to understand what people were experiencing in that critical juncture leading up to the foundation of the Republic.

I. MUHIDDIN'S BIOGRAPHY

The Milieu in Which She Was Brought Up

The "ideal of womanhood {kadınlık mefkûresi}" that Nezihe Muhiddin elaborated throughout her life, in her words "my own ideal", is a belief concurrent with today's terminology regarding women's emancipation. In Muhiddin's conception of women's emancipation and feminism primary emphasis is placed on the consideration of women as human beings by society; their participation in civil life, taking part in the public domain as members of society; the elevation of their social status; equality with men as equal citizens and the desire to attain the state of being a modern individual who fulfills social roles in a rational, calculated sense. The ideal of womanhood first came to the social fore after 1869 with the Ottoman Woman's literature. Nezihe Muhiddin inherited ideals of womanhood from the Ottoman women she was brought up by. Above all her mother was a cultured woman who gave importance to the abilities of women.⁴⁶ Secondly, Nezihe Muhiddin was brought up in an environment where intellectual, social and political problems and the plight of women were discussed by women who shared common ideals. This environment is found to have aided Muhiddin in being open to novelty and initiative, in being active and enterprising. Nezihe Muhiddin is aware that the continuity of her endeavors and stance stem from the environment of the women from whom she came.

⁴⁶ Nezihe Muhiddin's mother adopted her niece Nakiye Hanım because of her talent. Nakiye Hanım played an important role in raising Nezihe Muhiddin. See Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 17.

Nezihe Muhiddin was born in 1889 in the Kandilli⁴⁷ district of Istanbul. Her mother was Zehra Hanım and her father, Muhyiddin Bey,⁴⁸ was a prosecutor and judge. She was enrolled with her brother Faik Muhiddin (Adam)⁴⁹ in the local primary school and from the very outset⁵⁰ disliked the situation of the school and its educational level. Shortly thereafter Nezihe Muhiddin and her brother were tutored at home.⁵¹ In the beginning she was taught Persian, Arabic and Turkish and along with these languages, literature in general as well as Court or Divan literature. Her tutor was Nebi Efendi, a youthful law school graduate with a penchant for literature. Later on she took lessons from Ziver Bey -another law school graduate - who we learn preferred a modern curriculum to traditional religious education.⁵²

The attainment and love for her literary culture was achieved not only through the tutors, but also through her mother and her cousin Nakiye Hanım, who was fifteen years her senior and an avid literary fan.⁵³

⁴⁷ Ferit Ragıp Tuncor, "Kadın Romancılarımız: Nezihe Muhiddin Tepedelenligil (Our Women Novelists: Nezihe Muhiddin Tepedelenligil), *Yeni Defne*, no. 171, July 1996, p. 30.

⁴⁸ Interview with Taha Toros. Muhyiddin Bey was the chief judge at Musul İstinaf Mahkemesi - the secondary court which was an auxiliary to the Bidayet Mahkemesi the high court and Temyiz the Supreme Court. *Vakit*, 26 June 1339 {1923}, no. 1989, p. 1.

⁴⁹ The neuro-pathologist Dr. Faik Muhiddin Adam settled in Izmir. Today probably due to the fact that no one remains in the family I could not get much more information regarding the family members. Via Taha Toros I only met Mizyal Karaçam Şengil a distant relative of Nezihe Muhiddin who was also conducting research on the same topic.

⁵⁰ Tuncor, *ibid*. See Tuncor's descriptions of Muhiddin's school where she her brother attended. Also see Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 29.

⁵¹ At that time it was widespread for the girls of upper-class families to be taught at home.

⁵² Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 29. Nezihe Muhiddin attended Sörlük School at Kumkapı for a while where she improved her French. (Tuncor, *ibid*.) Muhiddin knew both German and French. According to Taha Toros she studied science with a medical doctor.

⁵³ "Nakiye Hanım bir mefkûreci olduğu kadar da bir edibe idi. Henüz okumak yazmak öğrenmeden evvel kulaktan bütün eski ve yeni ediplerin isimlerini ve meşhur eserlerinin ünvanlarını bellemiştim." ("Nakiye Hanım was as much a writer as she was an idealist. Even before learning how to read or

Her mother Zehra Hanım was the daughter of Ali Şevket Paşa, who was the grandchild of Seraskeri Ağası (Military chief of staff) Hüseyin Paşa,⁵⁴ and, according to the information we have gleaned, was a freedom-loving, intellectual woman. During the repressive regime of Sultan Abdülhamit II. Muhiddin and her cousins would sing Namık Kemal's "Vatan yahud Silistre" (Homeland or Silistre) march, a performance which would elicit tears and applause on behalf of her mother.⁵⁵

The second influential women in Nezihe Muhiddin life was her cousin and adopted sister Nakiye Hanım who she referred to as "my first tutor". Muhiddin's childhood years took place under the reign of II. Abdülhamit, a period which has been described as highly repressive for the intellectuals of that time. Muhiddin depicts the Nakiye Hanım of this epoch as a young woman who was a "lover of freedom and a revolutionary hating cruelty and despotism". Through Nakiye Hanım and her girl friends, who were the grandchildren of Kıbrıslı Mehmet Emin Paşa⁵⁶ -that is Azize, Refika and Feride- Nezihe Muhiddin said that she "learned about the ideals of womanhood"; that is, they would discuss amongst themselves the social and political

write I had memorized the names of authors and titles of famous works of all the old and new literature.) Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 17.

⁵⁴ See Serpil Çakır, "Ulviye Mevlan, Nezihe Muhittin".

⁵⁵ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 26.

⁵⁶ As indicated by Şerif Mardin, Kıbrıslı Mehmet Emin Paşa in the 1860's sought to come up with the policy, to educate state officials in literature and as well as provide them with the knowledge concerning the countries basic laws (see. Şerif Mardin, *Yeni Osmanlı Düşüncesinin Doğuşu* {*The Genesis Of Young Ottoman Thought*}, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 1996, p. 234) "Kıbrıslı hedifeleri" "The Grandchildren of Kıbrıslı" were women from educated Ottoman upper-class family. Kıbrıslı Azize Hanım was the first Turkish woman to attend an International women's conference: "Kıbrıslı Azize Hanım Efendi ilk defa Avrupada Beynelmilel Kadın kongresinde Türk kadınılığını muvaffakiyetle successfully represent temsil etmişti. (Kıbrıslı Zade Azize Hanım Efendi successfully represented Turkish womanhood for the first time at the International Women's Congress in Europe)", Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 21.

issues of the day, the position of women and how this could be changed. In later years Muhiddin would relate that activities directed towards the elevation of womanhood began with those discussions.

Musahabelerinin, münakaşalarının en mühim ana hattı o zamanki kadınlığımızın mahrumiyyeti, aciz ve cehaleti idi. Ben kadınlığın mefkuresini onlardan öğrendim ve bilahare fiil haline getirdiğim kadınlığa ait teşebbüslerin temelini, onların fikir nüveleri takviye etmiştir.⁵⁷

In later years one can find the traces of Nakiye Hanım's⁵⁸ ideas concerning womanhood in Nezihe Muhiddin's own views - Nakiye Hanım's writings appeared in *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* (Newspaper Exclusively for Women) under the name of "Zekiye"- We can list these ideas in the following manner: The protection of impoverished women and children, criticism of women's extreme devotion to fashion, strengthening the national economy through the recommendation to save (money) and only use domestic products. The influence of Fatma Aliye's ideas in these views is apparent. Nezihe Muhiddin did not receive higher education, she was self-thought.⁵⁹ *Ulum-ı İktisadiye ve İctimaiye Mecmuası* (The Journal of Economic and Social Science), which began publication in the second year of the II. Constitutional era,

⁵⁷ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 18.

⁵⁸ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 21.

⁵⁹ In terms of the understanding of that period "ictimaiyat (social issues)" carries a different connotation from today's sociology in that the term encompasses the reflecting on social issues. As Nezihe Muhiddin states concerning herself: "I would much rather reflect on social issues." (Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 32.)

influenced Nezihe Muhiddin's ideas on society. It is possible to trace Muhiddin's attraction to positivism and biological sociology to the *Ulum-ı İktisadiye ve İctimaiye Mecmuası*.⁶⁰ In her book she refers to this journal.⁶¹

Her Career Career

Having been raised in such an environment, upon reaching the age of 20 in 1909, Muhiddin chose to "leave the confines of the home and go out to work like a man"; thus beginning her professional life as a teacher and school mistress. With this aim in mind she passed the Ministry of Education science examination and was appointed as science teacher to a girls' high school. As stated in her C.V. in *Vakit*⁶² newspaper, I assume she herself submitted it⁶³ this was the first science teachers' examination.⁶⁴ Later on Muhiddin also served as a school administrator and educational inspector.

⁶⁰ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Düşünce*, (History of Contemporary Thought in Turkey) Istanbul, Ülken Yayınları, 1998, pp. 161- 179. (Henceforth referred to as *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Düşünce*).

⁶¹ In describing her activities during the II. Constitutional Era she mentions organizing conferences and giving private lessons programs design to raise the cultural level of women teachers and thus invites Sâti Bey, Selim Sırrı (Tarcan) Bey. See Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 55.

⁶² *Vakit*: An Istanbul daily newspaper. First published between 1875 and 1879 by Filip Efendi. It was the first newspaper to include a weekly supplement for women. After the 17th November 1917 it recommenced publication under the direction of Hakkı Tarık Us. With Ahmet Emin Yalman as its main columnist, the newspaper also featured Asım Us, Ahmet Şükrü Esmer, Ali Ekrem Bolayır, Selim Ragıp Emeç, Reşat Nuri Güntekin and Halil Lütfü Dördüncü. From time to time the newspaper also commissioned such writers as Ruşen Eşref Ünaydın, Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, Ziya Gökalp and Halide Edib.

⁶³ "Kadınlar Halk Fırkası Faaliyette", *Vakit*, no. 1989, 26 June 1339 {1923}, p.1.

⁶⁴ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 34.

While she was preparing for Ministry of Education science examination, Nezihe Muhiddin was appointed director of the newly established İttihat ve Terakki Kız Sanayi Mektebi (Union and Progress Industrial Girls School). She both passed her exam and was at the same time appointed science teacher to the Kız İdadisi (Girls Lycée). At Kız İdadisi met Halide Edib and Muallim Nakiye Hanım, who taught there, as well as a school director named Şükûfe Nihal. In later years she was appointed director of Selçuk Hatun Lycée.⁶⁵

With her first marriage in 1912 Nezihe Muhiddin took on the surname Muhlis.⁶⁶ Later on, even after her second marriage, she used her father's name.

Her Literary Works

Nezihe Muhiddin's first novel, *Şebab-ı Tebah* (Misspent Youth), was published in Istanbul 1327 {1911}. According to Tuncor she wrote 20 novels, all of them being published in newspapers and journals. Her body of work consists of stories, stage pieces, operettas and film scenarios. Most of these works were written after 1927 when she was forced to withdraw from public life.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 56.

⁶⁶ It has been said that Nezihe Muhiddin married twice. Taha Toros mentions that she was married for a short time to Muhlis Bey when she was 20. (Interview with Taha Toros) Beyond the fact that she used Muhlis as a surname in her 1912 Hitabe (Address) I couldn't find any other information on this matter. Even after her married for a second time in 1914 she did not take on a new surname and began using her fathers name Muhiddin. Because of this we can surmise that she divorced her first husband at the end of 1924. Later she married with Memduh Bey of Tepedelenligil family and had a son named Malik. Her son Malik Tepedelenligil is no longer alive. Her husband Memduh Tepedelenligil was a commissioner for the Municipal companies. According to Taha Toros Muhiddin did not have a happy and convivial marriage. In this study all information concerning Nezihe Muhiddin's private life is drawn from the Interview with Taha Toros.

⁶⁷ See Appendix 1 for the list of Nezihe Muhiddin's published works.

In literary terms she was influenced by Halide Edib, Süleyman Nazif⁶⁸ and Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar. She mentions her appreciation of Süleyman Nazif's heartening endorsement of one of her stories.⁶⁹ She indicates that Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar landed his support in the process of her writing the *Edebiyat-ı Umumiyye Mecmuası* (Journal of Universal Literature).⁷⁰ When asked by Hoyi who her favorite writers were she mentioned Reşat Nuri, Sadri Ethem, Mahmut Yesari, Selami İzzet, Valâ Nurettin and Peyami Safa.⁷¹

The end result of the assault on Muhiddin's political persona led to her being forgotten as a writer as well. In Neriman Malkoç's "Interviews With Our Women Writers", which was a series featured over a sixteen day period in the newspaper *Yeni İstanbul*, all the women writers of the age were covered yet there was no mention at all of Nezihe Muhiddin. This is an example of how Nezihe Muhiddin seems to have been effaced from the social memory, given the fact that less significant writers than she were featured in the series.

⁶⁸ Şair Nigâr, used to hold tea parties in her home every Tuesday and Süleyman Nazif used to attend. Taha Toros mentioned that Nezihe Muhiddin met him at these meetings. (Interview with Taha Toros)

⁶⁹ Nezihe Muhiddin, "Süleyman Nazif Bey'den Birkaç Hatıra (A Few Memories of Süleyman Nazif Bey)", *Kadın Yolu*, no. 26, 15th January 1927, p. 3.

⁷⁰ İbrahim Hoyi, "Nezihe Muhittin Yeni Eserlerini Neşretmeden Öleceğinden Korkuyor (Nezihe Muhittin Fears That her Work Will Remain Unpublished on her Death)", *Son Posta*, 15th October 1941.

⁷¹ İbrahim Hoyi, *ibid*.

Her Life 1930 Onwards and Her Death

Between 1909 and 1930 Nezihe Muhiddin was ceaselessly engaged in her mission, namely the “ideals of womanhood”. However, in 1930 she was forced to withdraw from her political activities and “consign herself” to her literary endeavors to support herself for the rest of her life. On the first Friday of every month Nezihe Muhiddin held social gatherings at her home. At these gatherings Şükûfe Nihal, Hamiyet Hulusi, Semiha Rauf, Samiye Bilhan, Yaşar Nezihe and Fatma Aliye -who being very old, attended only rarely- were present. Fatma Aliye had an important place in Nezihe Muhiddin’s life. Nezihe Muhiddin always went to visit her. Between the years 1932 to 1937 Taha Toros also attended the gatherings at Nezihe Muhiddin’s home. Toros relates that Muhiddin spoke little and she was discontent. We learn from Taha Toros that her relationship with her husband was never very satisfactory.

Nezihe Muhiddin passed away⁷² on the 10th February 1958, alone and forgotten, in a mental institution in Istanbul.⁷³ The funeral service was held on the 12th February at the Şişli Mosque and she was buried in the Zincirlikuyu Cemetery. Her husband and friends attended the funeral. Immediately after her death Iffet Halim Oruz wrote a piece about Nezihe Muhiddin in the *Kadın Gazetesi* (Woman Newspaper)⁷⁴. She mentioned that the Headquarters of the Turkish Women’s Union

⁷² Muhiddin’s tragic end resembled the demise of Şükûfe Nihal, another famous woman writer of the period.

⁷³ “Romancı Nezihe Muhittin Araz Dün Vefat Etti (The Novelist Nezihe Muhittin Araz is Deceased Away)”, *Cumhuriyet*, 12th February 1958, no. 12052, p. 1. In this news one is shown how the younger generations didn’t even know Muhiddin’s surname as they confused her with Nezihe Araz, another woman writer, mistakenly writing “Araz” as Nezihe Muhiddin’s last name.

⁷⁴ Iffet Halim Oruz, “Nezihe Muhittin”, *Kadın Gazetesi* (Woman Newspaper), no. 493, 15th February 1958, p. 1, 5.

sent a memorial wreath to the funeral but that no one from the association attended. Oruz also spoke of Nezihe Muhiddin on an Ankara Radio program aired on the 25th February 1958.⁷⁵ Besides these few references to her in print and broadcast, nothing concerning Muhiddin had been written, nor studies conducted about her from her death up until the mid 1980s.

II. NEZIHE MUHIDDIN: "OUTSTANDING WOMAN WRITER"

i) Social Background: An Overview of the Ottoman Women's Movement

In this chapter I am going to consider Nezihe Muhiddin's activities and thoughts in the period between the years 1912 to 1923. I will begin with reviewing the Ottoman women's movement that had a great impact on Muhiddin's views. This movement began in 1869 with the appearance of the publication of women's letters and writings and reached its peak between 1895 and 1909 with the women's journal *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*⁷⁶. The most important characteristic of the Ottoman women's movement was the appearance of the concept of "womanhood" among Ottoman woman as a social and analytical category. The questions as to the concept of womanhood were put forth by the thinkers Fatma Aliye and Emine Semiye, who reflected on and made analysis of this concept. Womanhood was exemplified as a group that shared similar problems and social status. In defining the components and

⁷⁵ *Kadın Gazetesi*, no. 495, 1st March 1958, p. 4.

⁷⁶ A detailed, analytical study of *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* has to date not been conducted, an omission that deserves to be rectified.

the very conditions which gave rise to it, womanhood also embraced the problems women confronted in society. In defining problems, analysis and solutions came to the fore. The concept of womanhood appeared as a discourse of "we as women" among those sharing those problems. Hence, among women writers such terms as "women's words" "women of Islam" and "our women's history" gain wide currency. Through understanding the problems faced by women, raising them to the level of consciousness; through women's analysis and solutions to these problems; along with their desires and what they wanted to become and how they wanted to be; the concept of the "ideals of womanhood" was established. Those who adopted the premises of the ideals of womanhood and sought to actualize them, became activists in the Ottoman women's movement.

In the period between 1869 and 1909 the problems most emphasized in the journals and daily press were firstly inequalities experienced in family life which were legitimized by Islamic law: talak (Islamic divorce procedure) and polygamy. Secondly, the customs and traditions that restricted women from life out of the home as well as the codes and restrictions implemented by the ulema (Islamic Jurists) and the Ottoman state concerning dress and being in the streets, the right to education and to work - these were the problems with which women were concerned.

The fundamental desire of Ottoman women in the modernization process in Ottoman society was to be included in the road to progress (terakki) initiated by men - given the fact that women were four to five generations behind man in terms of this said road to progress. They wished to take part in the concept of the "new man", to

have restored unto them their personal freedom (hürriyet-i şahsiye).⁷⁷ In order to succeed in this the “enlightenment” (tenvir) and the “evolution and progress” of womanhood would be necessary. Enlightened women would be able to proclaim their rights and identity. Women dearly wished to “exist” in civil life, in the world of letters, in the nascent public life, in the political and intellectual domain. The impediment to their desire, that is the customs and laws, they qualified as the “repressive social environment” and as “extreme bigotry”; they sought to change these conditions. The Islamic thinker Emine Semiye vehemently expresses these views. According to her it was in vain that men attempted to prevent the regeneration of women by threatening them with a repressive social environment or duping them with compliments. “Women forgetting womanhood” was replaced by a generation which addressed men as “Ey gafil ricalimiz (you our male dolts)”:

Lakin hürriyet-i şahsiyesini istirdad {geri almak} için bütün sükun ve saadetini fedadan çekinmeyen nisvan-ı müemmedine... bazen nevazişkâr {iltifat eden} ninnilerle bizi uyutmağa çalışan ey gafil ricalimiz! {erkeklerimiz}... Aldaniyorsunuz... Belki bugünkü valideler - dest-i tefekkürünüzde {düşüncenizde} böyle uyuşuk ... bihaber kalabilir! Belki bir kısmı da bu nevmi nevşin nevazişine {iltifatların uyuşukluğuna} mağluben kadınlığı unutarak oyalanabilirler!... - Fakat şemai {Kuran’a ait} medeniyet etrafına toplanan hanım kızlar- önlerine açılmış sahaif {sayfalar} - ulum u fûnunla tenevvür {ilim

⁷⁷ The phrase “restoration of personal freedom” was often employed in the writings of Fatma Aliye and Emine Semiye. Both writers in accordance with their Islamic viewpoints asserted that in the early Islamic era women enjoy the much higher status however during the Abbaside caliphate certain customs were changed and the status of women deteriorated.

ve fenle aydınlandıkça} eyledikçe insaniyete masdar {kaynak} olan kadınlığa geçirilmiş bu giran taassubu artık çıkarmak ihtiyacını elbet his edeceklerdir!’ diye bağıyorlar ⁷⁸

In Ottoman woman’s literature women express the desire to abolish the inequalities in family life, to participate in civil life, to change the inequalities in social status and to be useful individuals -that is to be “a human being”. The changing balances of power in periods of reform make it possible for women to demand a place in the structure of power. Ottoman women took great pains to take part in the structure of power by benefiting from the vacuum created by the reforms and the subsequent re-establishment of power in the social structure. Nezihe Muhiddin, in her activist period, having been a witness to this struggle, maintained this very line. In the writing of men the Ottoman women’s movement was denoted as “kadınlık cereyanı (the current of womanhood)”.

“We as women also..”

According to Serpil Çakır, Ottoman women’s demands for the upholding of women’s rights in opposition to unequal status in family and civil life, to exist within society and to participate in civil life, first appeared on the 28th June 1869 in unsigned letters addressed to the newspaper *Terakki* and which were published in its supplement

⁷⁸ Halil Hamid, *İslamiyetde Feminizm Yahut Alem-i Nisvanda Musavat-ı Tamme*, (Feminism in Islam or Full Equality in the Realm of Women) Merkez Tevzii Bab-ı Ali Caddesinde Kitabçı Tahir Efendinin kütüphanesidir, Kiteum Matbaası, undated, p. 6. (Henceforth referred to as *Musavat-ı Tamme*)

Terakki-i Muhaderat {örtülü kadın} (The Progress of Veiled/Virtuous Woman). Later on between 1875 and 1895, in woman's journals, unsigned letters turned into letters baring the first names of women.⁷⁹ Between the years 1895-1908 the most important indicator of the body of thought accrued by Ottoman "intellectual" womanhood was the publication of the *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* and it was here that women expressed themselves through own identity.⁸⁰

It is necessary to state that the first appearance of women on the social stage and in the press occurred right after the very recent development of civil life gains momentum in its diffusion to a broader section of the population via the emergence of printing, newspapers and publications. The current of modern thought initiated by Şinasi and carried on by Namık Kemal and Ahmed Midhat and others, spread without much delay among the Ottoman "intellectual ladies".

The desire to be "modern" amongst the upper classes and hence amongst the women of the Ottoman aristocracy, who being very close to the ruling class and power, and thus being well-educated, transform this desire into a demand. According to Ottoman women, for womanhood to be "modern" it was not enough that just the intellectual women be considered as "human", but that all women in society had to be as well. It was necessary to change some customs preventing them from participating in civil life and the restrictive codes in Islamic Law that defined the woman's role in the family. The most prominent thinker of the Ottoman women's movement, Fatma Aliye, held a debate with Esat Efendi in the *Malumat* newspaper on the

⁷⁹ See Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, pp. 22-42.

⁸⁰ As the Law on surnames was not passed at that time women employed either their fathers or their husbands first name along with their own.

appropriateness of “polygamy” to the Islamic view. Saying “I am not even writing these lines in defense of womanhood. Since, in my opinion, in considering matters of humanity it is of no import whether one is a man or woman. “All are human beings,”⁸¹ she stresses that there is no difference between man and woman in terms of being human and thus she elevates the debate of being a woman-human being to a higher plateau.

It is for this reason that the reflection on equality became the most important theme for women writers of this period. The matter of “full equality”, whether among writing of men of that period, or whether among the writing of such feminist thinkers as Emine Semiye,⁸² was often expounded upon.⁸³ Feminism, in those days terms, the “ideals of womanhood”, was the ideal and preserve of educated and upper-class women. However, being educated and upper-class did not prevent them from an understanding of the “painfully wretched” situation of women outside of their stratum—generally those of the lower classes or uneducated. They were not prevented from trying to find a “solution” in changing the situation of women. Via certain charitable associations established by women during the II. Second Constitutional Era, an attempt was made to put these ideas into practice.⁸⁴ However, these solutions were most of the

⁸¹ Mübeccel Kızıltan, “Öncü Bir Kadın Yazar: Fatma Aliye Hanım”, *Journal of Turkish Studies: Türklük Bilgisi Araştırmaları Fahir İz Armağanı* İ. c. XIV (1990 {bs.1991}) p. 302. (Henceforth referred to as “Öncü Bir Kadın Yazar”).

⁸² In a letter published in *Musavat-ı Tamme* Emine Semiye responded to Halil Hamit’s query “Yes sir, in the state of nature there is no difference between a man or a woman’s intelligence. According to me this statement that “there is no difference between a man and a woman” means the same thing.” See *Musavver Kadın* (Woman Illustrated) no. 5, 9 May 1327 {1911}, p. 10.

⁸³ Zafer Toprak, “80. Yıldönümünde ‘Hürriyetin İlanı’ (1908) ve ‘Rehber-i İttihad’ ” (80. Anniversary of Declaration of Freedom {1908} ‘Guide to Unification’), *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 42, Summer 1988, p. 157.

⁸⁴ There is no record of any women’s associations established before 1908. We have not been able to obtain any detailed research concerning a full list of and pertinent information regarding woman’s

time accomplished according to the policies and the social notion, of that time regarding “man”. For that very reason, in the years when the institution of female slavery (*cariyelik*) and slavery in general had not yet been abolished, Fatma Aliye maintained that female slavery was a just institution. The latest research puts forth that charitable associations played an important role in allowing women to participating in civil life.⁸⁵ Ottoman women with a consciousness of “womanhood”, with their own particular status stance and existence, in demanding change began to say that “we as women”, “our women’s realm”. The efforts regarding charity and solidarity towards lower class women, charity association projects were an important instrument in approaching the newly formed civil society.

The other important vehicle in participating in civil life was to be female members of the press. This notion encompassed the idea of being part of the male-dominated press, which was also an indicator of social acceptance. The publication of women’s journals was important in terms of the “unity” and “enlightenment” of women; in this case what was more important for womanhood was its existence in social life and the newly constituted public domain. After the death of Şair Nigâr (Poet Nigâr) it is possible to “read” this very thought in an article by Fatma Aliye. In her article she expounds on the first “woman poetess” of that era, Makbule Leman. Fatma Aliye narrates that Leman shone like a star in the realm of the womanhood during its

association established after 1908. In terms of the material we have at hand we are informed of the following woman’s charitable associations established after 1908: The Red Crescent Women’s Association (*Hilâl-i Ahmer Kadınlar Cemiyeti*), The National Consumption Association (*İstihlâk-i Milli Cemiyeti*), The Aid Union for Families of Martyrs (*Şehit Ailelerine Yardım Birliği*.) (Source: Aynur Demirdirek, *ibid*, p. 57 and Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, pp. 82-92.)

⁸⁵ Adele Lindenmeyr, “Public Life, Private Virtues: Women in Russian Charity, 1762-1914”, *Signs*, vol. 18, no. 3, Spring 1993, pp. 562-591.

darkest days, “she wrought marvels with a heroic pen” while male circles sought to reject her work:

Devr-i inhitatımız {düşüş} anlarından olarak alem-i nisvanımız bir ataletle düşürülmüş, zulmet-i cehaletle sarılmış iken devri intibahımızdan sonra kadınlık âlemimizin leyal-i muzlimesinde {karanlık gecelerinde} sanki bir yıldız belirdi. Ziyasıyla karanlığı tenvire {aydınlatmaya} çalışıyordu. Bu Makbule Leman idi. Tercüman-ı Hakikat sahifelerinde görülen asariyle {yazdıklarıyla} alem-i matbuatın bedr-i tamı {dolunayı} oldu. Kavaidi {kuralları} sağlam bir tayi tahrir {yazı}, bedii ve fasih {doğru} bir ifade, merdane bir kalem ile bedialar {görülmedik güzellikler} gösteriyordu.⁸⁶

While Makbule Leman is a star illuminating the dark age of the realm of womanhood, Fatma Aliye also celebrates Şair Nigâr’s appearance as “the lovely song of a nightingale who summoned the people to the morning’s glow and to the rays of the sun”. She says: “I admired these two great women of ours before I ever saw their faces”. Further on she also includes herself in the realm of the press; the three women meet and “neither spite, nor competition, nor jealousy” permeates the love they share for each other. Fatma Aliye says, “The greatest pleasure for me in the realm of the press was the praise and the appreciation we shared for each other. Further on she relates: “Nigar... in our poetry was an excellent example of awakening, a monument of progress, a sculpture of might (my emphasis) in the realm of womanhood.” In the

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Fatma Aliye, “Efsus {Alas}”, *Atı*, 6 April 1334 {1918}, p. 2.

wake of Şair Nigâr she says, "I am beyond just crying for a dear one I am also crying for a colleague, a friend in the realm of the press who was senior to me." Then she quotes from "Alas (Efsus)", one of Şair Nigâr's most beautiful poems, which Fatma Aliye used as epilogue for her article in commemoration of Nigar's death.⁸⁷

These three were important in women's history for their presence in a male-dominated environment, the resistance inherent in their stance, for the assertion of their existence, their solidarity in the realm of the press where they established the power of womanhood which led to the establishment of the realm of the womanhood. The sense of solidarity they created had repercussions for inter generations. This first appearance under the guise of poetry continues with essays and articles which reflect the demand by women for power in the social arena and their entrance into the realm of thought to gain social acceptance. In the Şair Nigâr's and Fatma Aliye's generation the notions of "womanhood", the "realm of womanhood" that Emine Semiye wrote about, are strongly apparent. In Emine Semiye's writing we see that womanhood had lost its sense of pride through centuries of oppression and was left in ignorance. For "underestimated" womanhood to reclaim personal freedom, the idea that womanhood had to be enlightened is posited. This line of thought produces three fundamental solutions: To reclaim identity and freedom for women to enter the social and civil sphere; to abolish inequality in family and civil life and to achieve the education of women. The sphere of Ottoman woman's writing gave voice to these three themes concerning their views and demands. Fatma Aliye and Emine Semiye were first of all concerned with reclaiming the lost pride of Ottoman women as well as to liberate them

⁸⁷ Fatma Aliye, *ibid.*

from an “inferior” status. In order to accomplish this aim, in accordance with their views of Islam they investigated and introduced “the great women of our history” to society. Fatma Aliye wrote a book entitled *Namdaran-ı Zenan-ı İslamiyyan*.⁸⁸ about women who played important role in Ottoman-Islamic history Through this work - that is, the first women’s history of the period written by a woman - she brought to light the success of women in Islam. In *Musavat-ı Tamme*, Emine Semiye also states that Ottoman women who created women’s history gave her strength. She says: “In the past, especially in our past (women’s past), on reading about a few famous names, each like a forever shining star, I swelled with pride in the fact that I was a woman and particularly that I belong to the house of Islam.” Later on Halide Edib furthered this stance in her series entitled “Great Women”⁸⁹. Thus she imparted a sense of grandeur to the women of her period, yet, with a slight difference; among the women she introduced from this “great historical family”, the “majority were not Turkish”, and according to Edib this did not create a problem.

In the ideological struggle against the underestimation of women Emine Semiye was more explicit than Fatma Aliye in defining the terms of the ideal of womanhood. Maintaining that as Ottoman women were to be found in the highest ranks of society, and as they possessed a precious trove of humanity, it was her wish to provoke pride in women. Moreover, Emine Semiye seems go beyond the notion equality:

⁸⁸ See Mübeccel Kızıltan, “Öncü Bir Kadın Yazar”, p. 303.

⁸⁹ Halide Edib, “Büyük Kadınlar”, *Bilgi Yurdu Işığı*, no. 6, 15 September 1333 {1917} pp. 81-83.

Cemiyet-i beşeriyenin kısm-ı azamını {en büyük, ulu} teşkil eden kadınların terakki ve tekamülünü düşünen akvamı {kavimleri} bugün milel-i mütemeddinenin {uygar ulusların} en yüksek mevkilerinde bulunmaktadır. Zira ruhu ailenin kadını, mehd-i {doğru yolu tutmuş} insaniyetin kadını, hazine-i feyz-i insaniyet hep kadındır!⁹⁰

From time to time Emine Semiye made fun of men who belittled women. In order to liberate womanhood from being underestimated, Emine Semiye asserts that there is no difference between man and women in terms of intelligence, moreover she states that women's intelligence is much greater, their spiritual nature more refined and shines with a caring luminosity.⁹¹

Secondly, in order to change the situation concerning inequality in the family, to abolish the codes in Islamic Law that restricted women, such as Islamic divorce (talak) and polygamy as well as customs that restricted them from civil life and going out on the streets, Ottoman women struggled. Participation in "Medeni {Urban}"⁹² life, that is urban life, meant for them participation in the press that is sphere of writing and thought of the period of that time, in the life out of the home, life and career in the social realm, even to enter into politics.⁹³ Fatma Aliye sought education for women

⁹⁰ "Musavat-ı Tammemiz İçin (For Our Full Equality) ", *Musavver Kadın* (Woman Illustrated), no. 5, 9 May 1327 {1911}, p. 10.

⁹¹ Halil Hamit, *ibid*, p. 2.

⁹² The word "Medeni" came to Turkish through the Arabic "Medine" which is the name of the famed city as well as carries the meaning urban.

⁹³ The demands of women openly participate in political life became more pronounced after the II Constitutional Era. Emine Semiye encouraged women to participate in politics openly with her article entitled "Hayat-ı İctimaîyede Kadının Mevkii (The Status of Women in Social Life)" which drew on

in the event of their being compelled to work. The possibility being that they could be widowed, impoverished or homeless. At this point I must clarify a dichotomy between tradition and customs in the writing of Fatma Aliye and Emine Semiye. As they both referred to Islam, for them the position of woman in their day did not stem from Islam itself, those societies that had adopted Islam, particularly after the Abbasid period, had regressed and deteriorated and hence, had forgotten previously high worth accorded to women. Both these thinkers believed that Islamic life had been distorted by certain customs, yet when they came to pause on the critique of traditions concerning women they sometimes subscribe to contrary theses. To reject all tradition would be to reject the sum total of Islamic culture. Thus to avoid this they chose to reduce tradition to the status of custom. In this situation it was possible to uphold certain customs that seemed to benefit women while excluding others. Nezihe Muhiddin would later also confront this duality. This duality can be traced in her rejection of the Islamic views concerning women while she did uphold the liberalism inherent in Islam as expounded by Namık Kemal and Ahmed Midhat. It also crops up in her preference for the traditional Islamic family life as opposed to the lifestyle of Beyoğlu.⁹⁴

Thirdly, Ottoman women in order to take their place in society sought to broaden and lift restrictions on education; two conditions which they saw to be necessary in achieving that aim.

historical women figures who exemplifies women in politics. See, *İnci* (Pearl), no. 10, 1 November 1335 {1919}.

⁹⁴ Nezihe Muhiddin, "Istanbul and Beyoğlu: Two Depiction", *Kadın Yolu*, no. 7, 27 August 1341 {1925}, pp. 2-3.

In this way the Ottoman women's "ideal of womanhood" came about. The most important thinkers of Ottoman feminism were Fatma Aliye and her sister Emine Semiye. *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, which published 613 issues without interruption,⁹⁵ was the most important woman's newspaper of that period; a publication which reflected and led the way in women's thinking. *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* fondly referred to Fatma Aliye in the following terms: "Our mentor, protector of the virtuous; our beloved master; her majesty the honorable Lady Fatma Aliye". As for her work, it was described as "masterfully philosophical writing."⁹⁶ Concerning Emine Semiye, who was accorded recognition only late, the *Musavver Kadın* (Woman Illustrated) journal has this to say about her letter which was published in given book by Halil Hamit entitled *Musavat-ı Tamme*:

... muhterem edibemizin.... büyüklüğünü takdir etmeyen bir ferd tasavvur edemem. Yazdıkları yazılarının bir hakikat, boyun eğmez satırları bizim için birer zikıymet {değerli} incidir. Belki inciden de değerlidir. Bu söylediklerime eserleri şahiddir..⁹⁷

After the early period of (1869-1908) Ottoman woman's writing, the 1908 revolution, with its liberal and pluralistic political milieu,⁹⁸ ushered in the proliferation

⁹⁵ 200 issues published twice weekly.

⁹⁶ See *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, no. 204, 11 March 1315 {1899} and following issues.

⁹⁷ "For Our Full Equality", *Musavver Kadın*, no. 5, 9 May 1327 {1911}, p. 10.

⁹⁸ Zafer Toprak, *Milli İktisat-Milli Burjuvazi* (The National Economy - National Bourgeoisie), Istanbul, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995, p. 3.

of women's journals and in terms of the consciousness of woman played an important role in raising the awareness of future generations. One of the main reasons for the publication of the majority of these women's journal, which were initiated by men - even though women were a force to be reckoned with- was that men had access to power and the social medium; another reason being the desire for a new type of woman on the part of men. It is a case in point that Ottoman men, who had been educated in Europe, could not, upon returning to their country, be content in marrying women who had been raised in the traditional manner. This very theme, which was initiated with Şinasi's novel *Şair Evlenmesi* (A Poet's Marrying), was widely expounded upon at the time by other writers as well. Ahmed Midhat draws on this issue in *Peder Olmak Sanatı* (The Art of Fatherhood):

Gençler ağlebiyetle {daha çok} mekâtib-i âliyede tahsil etmişlerdir. İlimlere, lisanlara vâkıf olmuşlardır. Bir zamanın ham halat kızları gibi mahlûklarla yaşıyamazlar. Bâzıları ecnebi kızlarını alıyorlar ki buna gönlümüz rûzı olmamakla beraber mâzuriyetlerini dahi inkâr edemeyiz⁹⁹

“We as Ottomans...”

The Period which defined the character of Ottoman feminism was between the years 1869-1908. In this period Westernization was widely discussed amongst male thinkers and columnists. This era coincided with the selective approach and

⁹⁹ See Orhan Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi, (Ahmed Midhat Efendi in Confrontation with Western Civilization)* Istanbul, MEB Yayınları, 1991, p. 208.

comparison between Islam and Western civilization. These theoretical questions also had reverberations in women's writing. In giving voice to the issues concerning womanhood, it was unavoidable that they would feel that their demands would touch on the critical point of this discussion. Their demands involved liberation from the severe bigotry inherent in the repressive "social environment" and embracing the idea of personal freedom. Although Ottoman women deeply sensed this duality, they did not abstain from voicing their demands and trying to change their situation; they did not relent in the "ideals of womanhood". However, while trying to actualize these ideals they maintained their sense of Ottomanness in opposition to the West; being in accord with the political discourse of the "age of progress". Later on this tradition of thought does not change, and, as Ottoman womanhood evolved directly into Turkish womanhood, this identity was characterized by the women's movement which was embodied in the nationalist discourse of the Republic.

Ottoman women asserted that Islamic civilization had superior qualities to those of the West in regards to its essence. They maintained that in working for "progress and change" a more civilized society than that of the West would be achieved. By taking advantage of Western "technology", progress and change would be realized. The Ottoman women's stance concerning Ottomanness was in harmony with that expressed by Ahmed Midhat: "As Ottomans our sense of civil virtue has not been spoiled by foreign diseases."¹⁰⁰ From this perspective, one of the characteristics of Ottoman feminism was its expression of opposition to the West in terms of the difference and superiority of Islamic culture. Given that Turkish nationalism had not

¹⁰⁰ Cited by Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Türkiye'de Çağdaş Düşünce*, p. 115: Güzin Dino, *Tanzimatttan Sonra Edebiyatta Gerçekçiliğe Doğru*, (Towards Realism in Literature after the Tanzimat) Dil - Tarih - Coğrafya Fakültesi Yayınları, Ankara, 1954, pp. 13-19.

yet in the fullest sense emerged, in the place of nationalism there is this said stress on difference and superiority. Those "İslamlar" were the Ottoman-Turks.

Fatma Aliye, whose father Cevdet Paşa was an Islamic thinker and took great interest in his daughter's education, in response to the selective approach and discussions on Islamic and Western civilization in regards to women, she introduced the thesis of the "Islamic Woman". Fatma Aliye sought a rapprochement between the views of Islamic thinkers on the issues of women and the family, and the demands of Moslem women to exist in the society. She argued with Moslem thinkers over the issues that women gave voice to concerning polygamy, Islamic divorce and other women's issues related to civic life. In her arguments she took the position of women in the said debate, and, maintaining the line of thought developed by her father in Civil Codes (*Mecelle-i Ahkâm-ı Adliye*), asserted that in its essence Islam encompassed the broadest of civil codes, and that the solutions to problems of women were contained in Islam. According to Fatma Aliye the oppression women faced in participation in civil life, as well as the dress codes, stemmed from social customs and traditions - not from Islam itself. On the matter of polygamy Fatma Aliye follows a dualistic approach: In response to the Westerners she defends the idea that polygamy is not a social ill; polygamy depends on the permission of women, and those women who oppose polygamy have recourse to divorce.¹⁰¹ Fatma Aliye's arguments were in accordance with the views of Ahmed Midhat on this matter. On the other hand, Fatma Aliye countered with a sound thesis the arguments of those Moslem thinkers who asserted that polygamy was obligatory and necessary.¹⁰²

¹⁰¹ Mübeccel Kızıltan, "Öncü Bir Kadın Yazar", p. 292.

¹⁰² Mübeccel Kızıltan, "Öncü Bir Kadın Yazar", p. 302.

Fatma Aliye's arguments were the condensed expression of the demands of women of that time concerning civic life; women's participation would be achieved via the development of their identity through education and having a professional life. Besides her championing of these demands, another important contribution she made in the formation of the ideals of womanhood was her struggle against Western traveler's - both male and female- prejudiced and contemptuous attitudes regarding Ottoman women in their writing. While maintaining that they were bereft of consideration and comprehension, Fatma Aliye criticized them in an ironic tone and, defending the stance of Ottoman woman, would not allow their self-esteem and identity to be effaced.¹⁰³

As a woman, Fatma Aliye's standpoint, views and thoughts in the social sphere, along with the writing of Emine Semiye, had a great impact in society and particularly among women. Fatma Aliye entered the arena of Islamic intellectual life, which was totally under the aegis of men, as a pioneer with a profound knowledge of Islam. She was influential due to her defense of women's demands and because of her position as an "insider". It is possible to assert that Fatma Aliye was not able to gather her views into a systematic theory due to political changes and social upheaval¹⁰⁴; she remained

¹⁰³ In response to the writing of the Emil Juliard, who lived in Istanbul for seven years, concerning the ignorance of Turkish women, Fatma Aliye says: "... after living in Istanbul for seven years and not seeing these things (that our little girls .. or older ones as well ... that they attend to the primary and secondary schools) would these days not be able comprehend that women are writing for newspapers!" See Mübeccel Kızıltan, "Öncü Bir Kadın Yazar", p. 294.

¹⁰⁴ Nezihe Muhiddin relates that with the proclamation of the II Constitutional Era women involved in the Ottoman woman's movement remained silenced: " With the intellectual and savant women who I met when I was a child I expected them at the very beginning to be the beneficiaries of this development (Constitutional Era), to hear their voices raised. Yet somehow there was no voice, in preferring to remain silent in their own corners, to withdraw into their private lives, probably the changing politics had an impact on their attitude." (Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 32.)

mute in terms of her writing and speaking from the years of the I. World War on up until her death in 1938.¹⁰⁵ Fatma Aliye's had a prominent place in Ottoman society in regards to women in terms of her thoughts, activities and body of work; much further research and study is necessary concerning this unique individual.

a. Nezihe Muhiddin and the Ottoman Women's movement

Influences of Women - Intellectual Environment

Rather than being a theoretician, the portrayal of Nezihe Muhiddin can be depicted in terms of her being a semi-savant, an activist, an upholder of her beliefs, an influential personality who sought to actualize the "ideals of womanhood", an organizer, an eloquent writer and public-speaker. Even though she did not obtain higher education it would be true to portray her as a self-taught sociologist. Nezihe Muhiddin described herself as one totally dismissive of tradition, the mentality of society and a person who raised a strident voice in demanding rights for women.

¹⁰⁵ On the death of Şair Nigâr in 1934 Fatma Aliye broke her silence and in commemorations of Nigar's memory wrote an epilogue to "Efsus (Alas)" Further research is awaited on reasons why Fatma Aliye withdrew from literary and intellectual life. The answers to this question can not only be found in the difficulties experienced in her private life (the conversion of her youngest daughter Zübeyde İsmet to Christianity) and her poor health. See Mübeccel Kızıltan, *Fatma Aliye Hanım: Yaşamı-Sanatı-Yapıtları ve Nisvan-ı İslam*, (Fatma Aliye Hanım: Her Life, Art, Works and Women of Islam), İstanbul: Mutlu Yayıncılık, 1993, p. 29.

Benim gibi memlekette açık açık kadına hak istemek için ananeleri,
telakkıları, senelerin ördüğü zihniyetleri hiçe sayıp sesini gür çıkaran bir
kadının...¹⁰⁶

Even though Muhiddin's intensive activism was not complimented by a deep intellectual foundation, the ideas and solutions she put forth to save her country and womanhood, in this sense, show her to be a thinking activist.

In her activist period, when one considers that in terms of the situation of women, and also the problems facing the country, there were few women - even today this is so - who produced theoretical explanations and solutions; few women who have propounded an intellectual tradition - in consideration of this fact - in the little time she had away from her activism Nezihe Muhiddin produced an important intellectual framework.

Nezihe Muhiddin was Fatma Aliye's protégé: she praised Fatma Aliye's writing and relates that she was a pioneer of the initial women's movement.¹⁰⁷ Muhiddin was influenced by Fatma Aliye's thoughts on womanhood, however she was not quite in accord with Aliye's concept of the "Islamic woman". Muhiddin's thoughts were influenced by positivist and biological sociology, and did not harmonize in this respect with Fatma Aliye's social views rooted in Islam. In spite of this, Fatma Aliye contributed to her comprehension of the situation of womanhood. Besides Fatma Aliye, Emine Semiye,¹⁰⁸ who she greatly appreciated, was present within her close

¹⁰⁶ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 82.

¹⁰⁸ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, pp. 21-26.

circle. These two women were mentors to Nakiye Hanım, who Muhiddin referred to as her first teacher.

These three Ottoman Turkish women, who lived and were active at the turn of the century, had in common two fundamental attitudes: While they sought to realize their “ideals of womanhood”, at the same time, in confronting the West they took pains to substantiate the superiority of the culture of Islam. With Fatma Aliye, who stood somewhere in the middle between the views of her father, Cevdet Paşa, and Ahmed Mithad; with Emine Semiye who followed a more modernist, more political, more feminist line; and with the intellectual women of Kıbrıslı family, Nakiye Hanım and her educated mother -all of these women having constituted her immediate intellectual environment- it was inevitable that Nezihe Muhiddin would bare the impact of such a cultural milieu.

It is seen that in her first speeches in 1912, the traces of the attempt to substantiate the argument of the superiority of the Moslem Ottoman culture vis-à-vis the Christian West are present. The social milieu in which Nezihe Muhiddin was raised subscribed to a depiction of Islamic civilization as one which serves humanity, in which the true essence of human virtue is encompassed, and thus, is superior to Western civilization. This outlook is apparent in Nakiye Hanım’s writing,¹⁰⁹ as well as with Fatma Aliye, who had a great influence on Nezihe Muhiddin. In the *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, under the pseudonym Zekiye, Nakiye Hanım makes the point that in the “İslamlar”’s attempt to progress in the material and spiritual aspects Islamic society would be preferable: “Isn’t it so, my lady, that such a civilization would of course be

¹⁰⁹ Nakiye Hanım published her writing in *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* under the name Zekiye.

preferable to that of the European?" This question was addressed to Şadiye Hanım,¹¹⁰ who was one of the editors of the paper as well as the wife of its owner, İbnül Hakki Tarık Bey, responded to this question with the following note printed beneath Nakiye's article: " ... As a matter of fact, my lady, the essence of civilization is Islam".¹¹¹ Yet in this discussion women writers did not stray from the idea of "progress". They endeavor to state that in conjunction with the high human values inherent in Islamic civilization, in the "İslamlar"s (Ottomans) endeavor to implement the material and spiritual evolution and progress" notion, Islamic civilization would advance even further. The themes of industry and economics, using domestic goods, and the accumulation of savings are indicated in women's writing of the period as important elements in achieving a high standard of living and civilization.

Another important characteristic of these years was the important role and impact that Halide Edib exerted in Turkish social and political life. While partially critical of Halide Edib, Nezihe Muhiddin admired her as a literary and political figure. It could be said that until the 1920s Muhiddin took Halide Edib as a role model.¹¹² As

¹¹⁰ Aynur Demirdirek, *ibid*, p. 19. Research remains to be done on whether the articles attributed Şadiye Hanım were actually written by her.

¹¹¹ Zekiye, "İsmetli Şadiye Hanımefendiye (To the Virtuous Şadiye Hanımefendi) ", *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, 25 February 1314 {1898}, no. 202, p. 1-2.

¹¹² Muhiddin expresses the admiration she has for Halide Edib in *Türk Kadını*. In response to *Seviye Talib* she wrote *Şebab-ı Tebah* (Misspent Youth) but was not satisfied with it. (See Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 32.) As for her criticism Edib's Society for Elevation of Women, because it only accepted English speaking women as members she found it elitist: "Halide Hanım established a society called 'Elevation of Women Club (Teali-i Nisvan Kulübü)' and invited every one of us. In the life of woman this was a new epic. This woman's society rather than do any work towards attaining a civil life for women... brings together the most chic and fashionable women in a lovely, polite salon where in an American fashion they engage in sultry tea chatter, they organize modestly attended talks and conferences, they engage in a few other activities without taxing themselves too heavily. (Güzel ve kibar bir salonda birleşen zamanın en şık ve monden hanımları Amerikan usulü sindire sindire çay sohbetleri yaparlar, samileri {dinleyicileri} mahdut küçük musahabe {söyleşi} ve konferanslar tertip ederler, daha bazı teşebbüsler etrafında çok fazla yorulmadan çalışırlardı)": (Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 36.)

one of the foremost woman personalities of the II. Constitutional Era, as one of the women who sought to elevate the social status of women, Halide Edib was influential in achieving one of the aims of the Ottoman women's movement -namely that of gaining an identity for women.¹¹³ "The Society for the Elevation of Women" (Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti), which Halide Edib established, attracted a following among the intellectuals of the period. It could be put forth that this association was the first woman's association in Ottoman society to be established with a feminist goal in mind. Ruşen Zeki presents the association as "the first soundly established woman's association". According to Ruşen Zeki: "It was a group centered around Halide Edib. Because the one who organizes every thing is the Lady Halide Edib." The society's aim was to facilitate the enhancement of women's level of knowledge with the provision of preserving national customs. In order to achieve this aim the Society "recognized the need to learn English, and in order to do this organized English courses at its headquarters." It can be understood from an article in the regulations of the Society that in that period Halide Edib had an affinity for English women and culture:

Cemiyet'in İngilizceyi tercih etmesinin sebebi nizamnamesine göre İngiltere'de 'Türk Kadınları Muhibbi {dostu}' ünvanıyla müteşekkil bir cemiyet bulunması, şerait-i ictimaiye ve hususat-ı ahlakiyece İngilizlerin milel-i saireye {öteki milletlere} haiz-i rüçhan {tercih} ve tefevvuk {üstün} olmalarıdır.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Nükhet Sirman, Course Notes, Boğaziçi University, Department of Sociology, 1997.

¹¹⁴ Ruşen Zeki, "Bizde Hareket-i Nisvan (Our Woman's Movement)", *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 140, 25 April 1330 {1914}, pp. 4-6.

The society aimed to fulfill the needs of women through the translation of appropriate historical, literary and social works. Besides that, it sought to further the enlightenment of women by staging conferences and offering courses. We understand that the Society was not directly connected with the women's movement of that period but was rather concerned with its own agenda -that being to raise the level of woman's education and knowledge. According to Ruşen Zeki, the Society did not attract much interest from the "current of womanhood", which was coming to the fore at that period. Nearly all the members "are only of genteel families" and only "those who are capable of writing and reading suitably" and continue with their English lessons can be included in the membership. According to this information the Society, in bringing together women who were literate and could be influential in the press, in aiming to advance intellectual women from their own milieu; can be considered as an elitist organization. Although its aims were limited, it seems to have far greater impact on Ottoman society than the size of its membership would suggest.¹¹⁵ Along with this Society, the policy of the elevation of the social status of women through the notion of "progress and evolution of womanhood" had a place on the agenda of the women's movement.

Muallim Nakiye who, along with Halide Edib, was a member of the Union and Progress' Central Committee, asserted that the problems of women would be solved through education, that with the expansion of education these problems would sort

¹¹⁵ See Ruşen Zeki, *ibid.*

themselves out; and maintained the view that there is no need for a separate activism in achieving women's rights.¹¹⁶

During the II. Constitutional Era Emine Semiye made quiet an impact with her writing on the notion of the "ideals of womanhood" in *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*- as well as in the political arena- yet after the 1920s we understand that she lapses into silence until her death in 1944.

In spite of the great expectations concerning young women from Darülfunun after the First World War, from among them no theoretician emerged.¹¹⁷ Yet this circle did emerge as a pressure group in consciously defending women in society, thus strengthening the women's movement.

The Conveyance of the Ottoman Women's Movement to the New Era

Nezihe Muhiddin benefited from the experience gained by the Ottoman women's movement. Being active in two different periods, her thoughts were solidified in producing a decisive policy concerning women and in trying to apply it. Her guides in formulating her strategies were the successes and failures of the Ottoman women. Nezihe Muhiddin criticizes those "intellectual and savant ladies" who in the II. Constitutional Era, as a result of the "changing politics", discontinue their

¹¹⁶ Muallim Nakiye's views on achieving women's rights through education are a basic premises of contemporary Kemalist women.

¹¹⁷ The young women of Darülfunun were influential in Istanbul after the Great War. They established İnas Darülfünunu Mezunları Cemiyeti (The Graduate Association of the Woman's University) /Asri Kadın Cemiyeti (Contemporary Woman's Society), they also published a journal named *Genç Kadın* (Young Woman).

participation in the movement via “their withdrawal to the corner”. According to her, “political opinion must not affect the common aims of womanhood”:

Çocukken tanıdığım münevver ve mütefekkir hanımlardan pek çok hayırlı işler beklenebilecek olan bu inkişaf {meşrutiyet} başlangıcında ses ve sedalarını işitmeği çok bekledim. Nedense hiç ses çıkaran olmadı, kendi köşelerinde, kendi hususi hayatlarında sessiz ve sedasız kalmağı tercih etmelerinde herhalde değişen siyasetin mühim bir tesiri vardı. ... siyasi ve hususi kanaatlerin kadınlığın müşterek gayesinde müessir olmamasını ve münevver kadınların lakayt kalmalarını çok temenni ederdim.¹¹⁸

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The traces of what Ottoman women initiated in terms of womanhood mark every aspect the thoughts and activities of Nezihe Muhiddin in the period between 1908-1923. As with the Ottoman women, Nezihe Muhiddin’s intellectual background is embedded with the theses of Ahmed Midhat and Fatma Aliye. Like the Ottoman women, Muhiddin took on and developed these theses, adapting them for the benefit of womanhood. I can briefly state the fundamental views and thoughts of Ottoman feminism as follows: They saw that they could benefit from Western “science and knowledge” in achieving contemporary civilization without distancing themselves from their own identity; they sought to strengthen the economic life of the Ottoman Turkish component, that is the “İslamlar”, through learning about trade and industry - and in relation to this -women were encouraged to buy only domestic goods and avoid waste,

¹¹⁸ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 32.

thus contributing to strengthen the Ottoman State's economy; they recognized the importance of the education of women in gaining access to the social medium and power; they deemed it a necessity for women to participate in civic and public life and the work. They also saw the need for equality in the family, the abolition of polygamy, the transformation to a nuclear family as the foundation of society, and the reformation of civic laws; to be rational, reasoning modern individuals, thus taking their place in society. These were the basic views of feminism of that period. These ideas would lay the foundation for Nezihe Muhiddin's belief in the "ideals of womanhood".

Unity and Solidarity Among Women

In the second edition of *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* Fatma Aliye responded with delight to the proliferation of women's writing and she also hoped that unity and cooperation would be present amongst women taking part in the press¹¹⁹. This initiative would be further developed in Nezihe Muhiddin's idea and policy as "the union of women"¹²⁰.

Meşrutiyet ikinci yaşına girdiği halde biz kadınlar henüz kül (my emphasis) halinde çalışmak fırsatını hazırlayamamıştık.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Mübaccel Kızıltan, "Öncü Bir Kadın Yazar", p. 294.

¹²⁰ This idea would be later expressed in the name she chose for the association she established known as Kadın Birliği (Woman's Union).

¹²¹ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 36.

Esirgeme Derneği... eğer bütün Osmanlı ve Türk hanımlarını aynı merkezde ittihat ve ittifak ettirmeğe muvaffak olursa ...

... muhterem hemşirelerimiz de ittifak ve itilaf ve ittihad (my emphasis), bizden de tükenmez bir azm ve sebat.¹²²

Nezihe Muhiddin saw activities of the previous generations of Ottoman women as the first serious attempt. However, along with her appreciation for this precedent, she indicates that in seeking solutions for a more human and civilized life they did not establish a common body of action. She emphasizes that in that period there wasn't "a coherence and solidarity among woman groups." According to Muhiddin womanhood, as with men, was divided between the high" and "the low".¹²³ In Nezihe Muhiddin's thought the model for overcoming this division and the elitism, the aristocratic bent, of Ottoman women was the notion of the Turkish woman centered on the middle class.

b. From Ottoman Turkish to Turkish Woman

Nezihe Muhiddin was brought up in the influential circle of upper-class Ottoman women who were the wives and daughters of the governmental administrators. In the two periods which she is active, II. Constitutional Era and the

¹²² Nezihe Muhiddin, "Mektub (Letter)", *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 6, 9 April 1329 {1913}, pp. 2-3. (Henceforth referred to as "Mektub")

¹²³ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, pp. 21-22 and 25.

founding of the Republic, she sought to create identities commensurate with the political currents of the times; first in terms of the "Ottoman Turkish woman", then subsequently that of the "Turkish woman". In her imagination these two notions embraced a wide cross-section of women including the middle class. In her predilection for a wider cross section of women -in line with the Young Turks' orientation towards the "Anatolian" people after the Balkan War- she likewise focused on "Anatolian women" in an attempt to actualize her ideals, which though stemming from The Ottoman women were never actually realized. This attitude also bears resemblance to Ahmed Midhat's approach to creating modern individuals capable of rationality, and thus, via reason possessing rights -the key to this being to teach the people.

ii) Nezihe Muhiddin's Activities and Ideas (1912-1923)

In order to understand the milieu in which Nezihe Muhiddin was raised I have set down a brief overview of the Ottoman women's movement; particularly depending on the writing and theses of Fatma Aliye and Emine Semiye.¹²⁴ I will proceed with an investigation of Nezihe Muhiddin's activities and ideas between the years 1909-1923. These activities encompassed the following: the conferences that she gave for women in Istanbul, her work in regard to education for women, her founding and subsequent work with the Association for Protection of Ottoman Turkish Women, her establishment of the Istanbul Women's Branch of the Naval Society and her

¹²⁴ Research is awaited on the details concerning the Ottoman women's movement, Fatma Aliye and Emine Semiye.

participation as a delegate in the National Congress during the Armistice Period. Given the fact that she was an activist who gave weight to the application of her ideas, I will try to exhibit Nezihe Muhiddin's views in relation to her activities.

One witnesses a fundamental change in Nezihe Muhiddin's thoughts and initiatives vis-à-vis the Ottoman women's movement in regard to the newly forming nationalist ideology - a process in which she tried to unify the "ideals of womanhood" with the rising concept of nationalism. Her activist period commenced with her conferences in 1912. She became involved with the nationalist discourse and the process of nation-building and the argument for economic and political independence. Her great contribution was in attempting to include women in this process. She strove to establish among women the notion of the modern "economic woman" - that is the reasoning, rational woman who in possession of these faculties was deserving of human rights. Muhiddin's struggle was to combine her efforts in expanding the nationalist sphere and the process of nation building through the inclusion and participation of women and with the realization of the ideals of womanhood, which she believed in throughout of her life. The conservative powers of the old order, combined the Islamic dogmas with male-domination to accuse the women's movement of forfeiting and betraying "the cultural authenticity and national identity". This stance is designated as the "politics of authenticity". I would argue in response to this "politics of authenticity" Nezihe Muhiddin espoused nationalism, opposed Europe in terms of its cultural and economic implications, and while avoiding the label feminism, adopted Anglo-Saxon feminism on the theoretical and activist platform. She argued for political and economic independence while still pursuing the benefits of

European science and knowledge. In her patriotic nationalism inherited from the Young Ottomans, one notes between the years 1912-1923 elements of imperialistic expressions and a racist response to "anasır-ı saire (other elements)"¹²⁵. Being aware of newly established power relations in the period of Reform, she struggled to position women in that said domain of power. She pursued women's politics within the framework of nationalist discourse and nationalism -wherein a space had been provided for women- and she defended women's rights and the elevation of women's status in the society.

While working to enhance the level and availability of women's education, she did not spurn motherhood in the debate pursued in the male literature concerning the "education of mothers and spouses". Muhiddin saw motherhood not just in terms of "the character that creates the nation", that is a social duty, but also as a vocation in which women achieved a particular satisfaction. She upheld woman's participation in civil life, work and urban/civic life. She desired that women be able to prove their power and ability, whether in the artistic and literary field or in the press. She devoted herself to women's taking part in the working life, not just in terms of manual labor - which in those years was widespread amongst women -but also in white-collar work and engineering, as well as in medicine and other such high-status professions. According to Muhiddin, the important factor in the opening of the workplace to women stemmed from the series of wars which the Ottoman state had entered. The workplace provided alternatives to the widows of fallen soldiers in that in being able to resort to "virtuous" employment they were able to maintain their households and avoid

¹²⁵ This term was used to denote non-Turkish/Moslem minorities.

entering prostitution as a result of poverty. With the aim of providing employment to widows Nezihe Muhiddin worked in aid associations. In describing the essence of what she sought to do in that period she said: “in all matters concerning womanhood try to furnish solutions”. After providing this summary of her views and activities associated with them between the years 1912-1923, I will now attempt to examine these issues more closely.

a. The Nationalist Discourse and the Ideals of Womanhood

After the Balkan War of 1912, as a result of the efforts by ethnic minorities to gain independence, Ottoman nationalism or Ottomanness was replaced with Turkism, and then later with Turkish nationalism.¹²⁶ Nezihe Muhiddin made her appearance in the social area during these years, affected by the “ideals of womanhood” initiated by Ottoman women.

The distinctive feature of Nezihe Muhiddin in terms of the women’s movement of that period lay in her awareness of the process of nation-building. According to Nezihe Muhiddin the participation of women in this period would not only change women’s situation in society in terms of elevating womanhood, but could also make possible the building of the nation. In terms of periods of social change, Muhiddin believed that in order for women to take on an important role in the sphere of power, and in order complete the social reformation, it was necessary for women to actively participate in these changes:

¹²⁶ Zafer Toprak, *Milli İktisat-Milli Burjuvazi*, (The National Economy - National Bourgeoisie), Istanbul, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995, p. 3.

... büyük Osmanlılığın bir unsur-ı mühimmi olan biz kadınlara...¹²⁷

Memletimizin daha mesut yaşaması, büyük inkılabımızın (1923) kuvvetle yürümesinde kadının yükselmesi en mühim şartlardan biridir.¹²⁸

At the same time Nezihe Muhiddin struggled to produce solutions to political problems in the period in which she lived and she called on women to always support these solutions, to be the initiators in change and to be active.

The notion of the Islamic woman was transformed to that of the "Turkish woman" in Nezihe Muhiddin's framework of reference in the years following the Balkan War 1912. According to Muhiddin the woman who exemplified the notion of the Turkish woman was one who, in taking advantage of European science and knowledge, embraced rationality, was aware of her rights. And in demanding these, while preserving the national identity by not contravening national morality, by taking the matters of the country in hand and through this having an affect, she was a woman who took her place on the public stage.

Being brought up among women who were influenced by Namık Kemal's notion of "homeland", Muhiddin's nationalism in the early period carried a "patriotic" tone. Muhiddin's melding of nationalist discourse with the ideals of womanhood was related to the adoption of nationalism by women in non-European societies at the turn of the century in order to gain acceptance of their existence in the society. On the other hand, in the proposition for the elevation of women in society, that is in abolishing the heavy oppressions stemming from severe bigotry and customs asserting male-

¹²⁷ "Konferans (Conference)", *Women's World*, no. 3, 6 April 1329 {1913}, pp. 3-4.

¹²⁸ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 11.

domination, Muhiddin sought to realize the ideal of women's personal freedom and identity. After 1912, when political independence was gravely at risk, Muhiddin unified this ideal with the proposition of the liberation of the "motherland".

From Imperial Ottomanness to Nationalist Turkist Discourse

The attempt to prove the superiority of the Ottoman and Islam vis-à-vis the Christian West is apparent in Nezihe Muhiddin's first speeches. The proclamations of independence by Balkan states after the Balkan War she saw as a stab in the back to the Ottoman Empire. The beginning of her activist period coincided with the fall of the Empire. In calling upon women to support the rescue of the Ottoman state, whose political independence was in jeopardy, she employed an imperial tone in voicing national salvation. The motif of "Turkish shock-troops are before the gates of Vienna" emerges. In saying "we are the children of a 600 year empire" she sought to encourage and motivate women to action:

Leim düşmanlarımız Sırbistan, Yunan, Karadağ, Bulgaristan, Hristiyanlığın temin ettiği revabıt-ı dostane ile, ahud-ı atikadan boyunlarını kurtardılar. Hatta pek yakın zamana kadar yanaşma ücretiyle temin-i iâşe eden Bulgarlar..

Ey altı yüz senelik bir mazi-i muhteşemin, necip bir neslin asıl kızları! Size hitab ediyorum. Her zerre-i türabı o şanlı ecdadınızın asil ve kahraman kanlarıyla yoğurulmuş bu muhterem toprakları metruk bir şurezara döndürmeyin..

Bir zamanlar ihtişam ve kudreti, besalet ve satvetiyle cihani titreten Türklerin, bu necip ve yüksek kavmin....¹²⁹

Ey Viyana önlerinde; Hint denizlerinde, İspanya sahillerinde, Macaristan ovalarında cihana muhatap, dehşet veren büyük Osmanlıların kızları..¹³⁰

Nezihe Muhiddin gained recognition in 1912 through her first Address and subsequent conferences. In her discourse ranging between the years 1912-1922, in which the country's political structure drastically changed, the traces of the imperial Ottomanness disappear and in their place national Turkism comes to the fore.

Here I must point out that Nezihe Muhiddin's nationalism in terms of the ideals of womanhood and interpretation of history, and that of Mustafa Kemal and his colleagues, display significant differences. Nezihe Muhiddin's specific feminist line and that of the Kemalist's discourse on women's rights part ways. In the Kemalist discourse the "question of woman" is subsumed in the modernization process as carrying an instrumental role. In order for the new republic to gain the political support of the male population the ascendancy of men in the family was insured with the Civil Code (Medeni Kanun), and in order to work women required the permission of their husbands'.¹³¹ As for Nezihe Muhiddin, she spoke on behalf of women, trying to insure their rights. Secondly, Nezihe Muhiddin interpreted both the country's history of

¹²⁹ Nezihe Muhiddin, "Hitabe (Address)", in *Darülfunun Konferans Salonunda Kadınlarımızın İctimaları* (The Meeting of our Women at Darülfunun Conference Hall), İstanbul Tanin Matbaası, 1328 {1912} pp. 80-83. (Henceforth referred to as "Hitabe").

¹³⁰ "Konferans (Conference)", *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 3, 6 April 1329 {1913}, pp. 3-4.

¹³¹ See Appendix 2 for these articles in the Turkish Civil Code.

women and the history of “progress and change” differently from the Kemalist. According to her, the foundations of the 1923 Republic lay in the “progressives” movement of enlightenment that had its genesis in the Tanzimat, and in spite of the interruption suffered during the Period of Absolute Rule, was a continuous process. Thus, concerning Ottoman history and the history of women, in this manner she differed from Mustafa Kemal and his colleagues; in that they did not recognize any political and cultural inheritance, nor continuity of the process of reform from the Ottoman period. In *Türk Kadını* Muhiddin appraises “the great characteristic of our reform” (1923) from the “perspective of womanhood. In *Türk Kadını*, Muhiddin praises the Ottoman women who took part in the women’s movement and women’s organizations in chapters entitled in the following manner: “Woman under Absolute Rule”, “Woman in the Constitutional Era” and “The History of a Half Century of the Establishment of Women’s Societies”. Later on she says “Thus, these exceptional individuals paved the way for today’s great and precious reform”.¹³²

In examining the content of her writing one can extract the conclusion that, by not referring to Turkism, Nezihe Muhiddin’s national Turkism did not adhere to the current of Turkism prevalent in 1914. While being influenced by this current she distanced herself from such digressions inherent in the Turkism of that time; i.e. the unification of Turks in Asia (Pan-Turanism) and other such currents of Turanism.

¹³² Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 2.

Liberation and Political Independence

With the beginning of her activist period in her "Address" in 1912 Nezihe Muhiddin traced a genuine development concerning nationalism - that is from the imperial Otomanness towards national Turkism. After this period she interpreted the "ideals of womanhood" in the context of the nationalization period. In order to achieve equality for women Muhiddin saw a need for women to participate in this process. In participating, women would take their place in the power structure. In Nezihe Muhiddin's imagined nation¹³³ women would have the same rights as men; they would be free creative individuals.

In tangent with the 1908 Revolution,¹³⁴ a liberal pluralist political milieu appeared and had the affect of accelerating women's self-expression and process of organizing. Yet the immediate commencement of the Balkan War and the subsequent series of defeats by 1912 transformed this hopeful social environment to one of pessimism. The Empire, in confronting the threat of dissolution, on the one hand suffered from economic dependency while on the other continued to lose territory in the face of nationalist uprisings - a very pessimistic tableau was emerging indeed. In this very environment a series of meetings were held with the support of Princess Nimet¹³⁵ and the Union of Progress entitled "Meetings of Our Women in Darülfünun Conference Hall". At this meeting representatives of woman's organizations of

¹³³ B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, London, Verso, 1983.

¹³⁴ Aykut Kansu, *1908 Devrimi*, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 1995.

¹³⁵ Princess Nimet was the wife of Mahmut Muhtar Paşa.

Moslem Turkish women from Russia and Caucasia also attended, of whom it is said they were quicker to embrace nationalism than the women of Istanbul¹³⁶

At this meeting Nezihe Muhiddin expounded on the themes of economic and political independence. According to her the salvation of the Ottoman state lay in liberating itself from economic dependence, in working, in producing; that it should be possible for the proliferation of industrial and commercial activities among the Ottoman Turkish element of society¹³⁷. The "Motherland is grievously ill". Women should be prepared for the possible sacrifice. The Turkish element was in danger of being eliminated. For that reason women should conceive of the importance of economics. They should only buy from Ottoman traders and craftsman, and even though they may be ugly and poorly wrought, use only domestic goods. Muhiddin exhorts women with "Either Liberation or Death":

Evet, hanımefendiler vatan ana hasta! Bu muazzez ve müşfik anne pek malûl ve melûl! ...

... Fakat şimdi her şeyden evvel fedakâr olalım!

Pek iyi bilirsiniz ki, hanımefendiler, bizler yani Türkler ancak istiklal-i siyasimiz sayesinde beka buluyoruz. Halbuki Osmanlılığın inhilâli ile en evvel mahkum-ı inkıraz olan Türk unsurudur.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Hilmi Ziya Ülken, *Türkiye 'de Çağdaş Düşünce*, pp. 210-212.

¹³⁷ Anâsır-ı Osmaniye (Ottoman Components) referred to the different ethnic groups within the Ottoman nation, the Turks were one of these. Others included Armenians, Greeks, Bulgarians, Albanians, Jews, Kurdish, Circassians and various other religious and ethnic groups.

¹³⁸ Nezihe Muhiddin, "Hitabe".

These views were in accord with those of the Young Turks. As a matter of fact, the Moslem Boycott¹³⁹ and resulting political success had the effect of a large proportion of trade passing into Moslem hands after 1914.¹⁴⁰

Politics of Authenticity

It is mostly accepted by social scientists that in response to colonial domination and dependency, particularly amongst the Islamic countries, a form of resistance was spawned around women and the family towards the West.¹⁴¹ It is known that colonial administrators and Christian missionaries sought to “civilize” Moslem family life. In relation to this any attempt at amending the situation of women was considered as an imperialist and neo-imperialist design and thus, feminism and cultural imperialism were considered to be inextricably linked. Consequently, while feminists in the Middle East sought to defend women’s rights, they were accused of betraying their own cultural values. Given this duality, in Leila Ahmed words, feminists were “forced almost to choose between betrayal and betrayal”.¹⁴²

As Kandiyoti argues in the discourse of cultural authenticity, while the West is represented as the “Other” in anti-imperialist pronouncements, the concept of the other came to include any religiously or ethnically diverse groups. “Discourses on women’s

¹³⁹ Zafer Toprak, “İslam ve İktisat: 1913-1914 Müslüman Boykotajı (Islam and Economics: the Moslem Boycott of 1913-1914)”, *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 29/30 Spring-Summer 1985, pp. 179-199.

¹⁴⁰ Zafer Toprak, *Milli İktisat-Milli Burjuvazi*, (The National Economy - National Bourgeoisie), İstanbul, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ Kandiyoti, “Introduction”, p. 7.

¹⁴² Kandiyoti, “Introduction”, pp. 7-8

authenticity are therefore at the heart of a utopian populism” and the sphere of woman and family in the discourse of cultural authenticity remains the most critical aspect in the discourse. Kandiyoti posits that the Tanzimat reforms, while affecting changes in every aspect of commercial life, did not encompass the fields of personal status, family and inheritance laws. The Civil Codes (*Mecelle-i Ahkam-ı Adliye*) in no way covered matters concerning personal status, the family and women.¹⁴³ Moslem thinkers and the ulema viewed these matters as areas authentic to Islamic culture, as well in the Indian case Chatterjee has indicated,¹⁴⁴ would not compromise with the West on these matters. At this point the changes in Ottoman Turkish History can be seen in the posture of Young Ottomans and Young Turks. Contrary to the Ulema, reformer thinkers did not abstain from writing about, debating, and defending their views vis-à-vis women and the family.

The fact that Nezihe Muhiddin refrained from labeling herself an feminist and a “suffragette” in 1923, even though her activism depended much on the Anglo-Saxon feminist program, can be explained as a result of the politics of cultural authenticity. Muhiddin seems to appreciate the struggle of Western feminists yet does not profess feminism as an idea that she champions, and often states that she is not a “suffragette”:

¹⁴³ See Yaprak Zihnioğlu, “*Mecelle, Hukuk-ı Aile Kararnamesi ve Medeni Kanun (Mecelle, Family Law Decree and Civil Code)*”, unpublished research paper, B. Ü, İİBF, POLS, 1995. (Henceforth referred to as “*Mecelle*”)

¹⁴⁴ Chatterjee, *ibid.*, p. 237-240.

Müteşebbis hanımlar, Türk kadınlığına hass-i vekâr ve sukunet dairesinde yürümek fikrindedirler ve sufretleri tahsin etmemektedirler... {sevmemek} ¹⁴⁵

Maksadımız, manasız ve müfrit bir sufretlik değildir. ¹⁴⁶

The second factor is that as a thinker who sought to posit first an Ottoman Turkish, then a Turkish woman identity, in appraising Western feminism as an instrument she sought to adapt feminism to her own culture.

b. Women in Creating a Nation: Economic Man and Woman (Homo Economicus)

The effects that the 18th century industrial revolution in Western Europe had on neighboring countries (Russia, the Ottoman Empire etc.) were not late in becoming apparent. The relations that Britain and especially France had with the Ottoman Empire deeply effected its political and economic life. The struggle for change and compatibility with the age is stamped on the last two hundred years of the Ottoman Empire's history. The Constitutional movement which was formalized by the Tanzimat-ı Hayriye (1839), in spite of the interruption by the reign of II. Abdülhamit, complemented the 10th July Revolution (23 July) in 1908. The intellectual life of that

¹⁴⁵ "İstanbul Kadınlarında Yeni Hareket: Hukuk-ı Siyasiye İsteyen Kadınlarımız (The New Movement Among Istanbul Women: Our Women Who Demand Political Rights)", *Vakit*, no. 1966, 3 June 1339 {1923}.

¹⁴⁶ Nezihe Muhiddin, "Cumhuriyet'in Türk Kadınlığı Üzerindeki Feyzi (The Enlightenment of the Republic in Regard to Turkish Womanhood)", *Kadın Yolu*, no. 2, 23 July 1341 {1925}, p. 18. (Henceforth referred to as "Cumhuriyetin Feyzi")

period was marked by the struggle between those in favor of change and reform as opposed to the “inward looking” traditional, conservative forces.

The 18th century industrialization model in the West inevitably led to the creation of “economic man” in the social realm. This development also took place in Turkey at the beginning of the 19th century, as reflected in social and economic change. This process followed its own distinct trajectory in Turkey. The development of the notion of economic man was realized among such male thinkers, writers, politicians and individuals who reflected on social matters of the period, as Namık Kemal, Ahmed Midhat, Abdullah Cevdet, Prens Sabahattin. According to Mardin, Ahmed Midhat played a major role in popularizing economic thought.¹⁴⁷

The Tanzimat writers and intellectuals assumed that in order for establishment of a new economic order, the formation of a new middle class was necessary. And they reintroduced the male-dominated discourse on the place of woman in society. According to this, a woman’s most important duty was to be a good mother and wife, to bare and properly raise the members of society (men), to ensure that necessary services were provided in regards to solidly maintaining the family order. Whether one considers Ahmed Mithad or “pro-western” Abdullah Cevdet -who one could posit was in opposition to him in that he argued for equality between man and woman- in describing the “rational - economic man” both portray a man married to a well-

¹⁴⁷ See Şerif Mardin, “Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e İktisadi Düşüncenin Gelişmesi (1838-1918)(The Development of Economic Thought from the Tanzimat to the Republic (1838-1918)”, *Tanzimat’tan Cumhuriyet’e Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, c. 3, pp. 619-634.

educated woman who impeccably fulfills her duties as a mother and wife in a monogamous family unit.¹⁴⁸

In the new economic and social conditions appropriate for the emergence of a middle class, the patriarchal values changed form and were imparted to the new social order. In Eastern societies the process of emancipation from colonialism or dependency accelerated these developments. While establishing the theory of reform in this field, male thinkers determined the “appropriate” roles for women. While on the one hand calling for equality in acquiring education and rights of citizenship, on the other hand they confined women’s social duties to those of motherhood and wifehood. Within the framework of the social reforms begun in the middle of the 19th century, within Ottoman society the nuclear family emerged as an alternative to the “konak family”. The nuclear family consisted of the man who worked outside in order to support the home, while the wife was engaged in looking after the needs of the children and other dependents in the most flawless manner.

¹⁴⁸ It is indicated that Ahmed Midhat argued against the Western family type in defense of the Ottoman family by claiming that there was no warm and sincere interest or exchange in the West (See Orhan Okay, *Batı Medeniyeti Karşısında Ahmed Midhat Efendi*, İstanbul, MEB Yayınları, 1991, pp. 213-221.) In this description of the family, married children and close relatives live together in a large house (i.e. konak), that is in the populous “konak family”. Even though Ahmed Midhat generally was bound to Islamic Sharia, in the Ottoman family he depicted male as monogamous. (See Orhan Okay, *ibid*, pp. 202-207.) As for Abdullah Cevdet, he maintained that the reason why “there were no strong family ties in the family” was due to the taking of more than one wife. (See M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Doktor Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi* (Doctor Abdullah Cevdet and His Period) İstanbul, Üçdal Neşriyat, 1981, pp. 308-309.) Abdullah Cevdet criticized Turkish men who married concubines and said that “Maids give birth to butlers!” and stress the need for men to marry well-educated women who would be able to raise children properly. (See M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *ibid*, p. 174.) According to Abdullah Cevdet, “A woman’s greatest natural duty both in the every spiritual and material sense is to be a mother... To be a good and full mother a woman have independence in every sense, that is in mind, work and family. (Kadının en büyük vazife-i tabiiyesi maddi ve manevi her dürlü ma’nasiyla ana olmaktır.... İyi, tam ana olmak için kadın her nev’i istiklâle, fikri, maişî, ailevi istiklâle malik bulunmalıdır)”. He also add his views on womanhood saying “In this sense I am a true feminist”. (See M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *ibid*, 308-309.)

The transition from the Konak family to that of the nuclear consisted in the drastic reduction of the number of servants and the subsequent burden of housework resting upon the “wife”. These ideas form the basis of this transformation, in which the wife’s being present at home was stressed.¹⁴⁹

With the abolition of slavery at the beginning of the 20th century the institutions of the female servant (cariye) and concubine (odalık), with the exception of the Palace, were drastically reduced. Once the issue of polygamy was settled it would have been possible for the appropriate “economic man” within the new economic order, living in the nuclear family modeled on his Western counterpart, to emerge. In this family, living in a small house or apartment, the role of looking after the children, husband and household would fall to the wife. This expectation on the part of men, in having all housework rest on the shoulders of women, would be criticized by certain male writers.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ In an article entitled “Kadınlarımıza Dair (Concerning Our Women)” by Muhammed Zeki in *Atı* he summarized the debate on “women participating in work” among men. Those in support of women’s working outside the home wanted them women to be more productive whereas he argued that women working in the home were “already productive”. The writer states “Is housework of so little benefit? Moreover someone from outside were to do the work wouldn’t this cut into the family budget? In any case we discussing the middle class. (Ev işini görmek az faide midir? Hele harıçteki birine gördürmeyip de verilecek parayı aile bütçesine masraf yazdırmamak az bir menfaat midir?” “Maksadımız zaten orta halliler içindir”). And the writer goes on to say that in place of harmony and peace at home the women who work outside have households of angst and sorrow. (See, Muhammed Zeki, *ibid*, 8 January 1334 {1918}, p. 2.

¹⁵⁰ As a result of having all the burden of housework rest on their shoulders women had become course and did not have the opportunity to be the intelligent, elegant, understanding wives that men wanted men were not able and some “fair-minded” male writers had pointed this out. In *Kadınlık* (Womanhood) journal an article called “Serbestiyet-i Nisvan (The Freedom of Woman)” by H.C. expresses this view. “Mothers never escape from the kitchen to be able to raise their children properly. They are always washing dishes so how they can be clean, they never see the sun so how can they appear vigorous... in sum, there is no way. Under these conditions what right do we have to criticize women? Then we say my family is dirty an some such nonsense. How can we expect cleanliness from a woman who is always working in grease and filth? How can we expect a woman who is stuck with all the work and responsibility in a home to properly raise a child? (Validelerin mutfaktan kurtulduğu yok ki çocuğunu terbiye edebilsin. Bulaşık yıkamaktan kurtulamaz ki temiz olsun, güneş yüzü gördüğü yok ki hali tendürüst {sağlıklı} bulunsun... elhasıl yok yok... Bu şerait altında kadınlardan ne talebe hakkımız vardır? Sonra da efendim... benim ailem pis, bilmem şu ve bu gibi safsatai perdazlığa kalkışıyoruz. Yağ içinde, pislik içinde bulunan bir kadından ne gibi temizlik beklenir?

In assigning the basic duties of wifehood and motherhood, as well as the burden of maintaining the household, to women, Tanzimat thinkers considered this appropriate not only from the social aspect but also from that of the new economic order as well. In nuclear families it was expected that most of the housework be accomplished by the housewife. This need for reform stemmed from economic conditions. This need for reform also stemmed from the fact that generations of men were educated in the West before women were, and it was felt that those they were to marry should also partake of this education. As a matter of fact this formulation was later on legitimized by the Republican administration in certain codes of the Civil Law,¹⁵¹ and was designed to be applied and diffused throughout the country.

I would assume that in response to this doctrine, while not denying motherhood, Nezihe Muhiddin argued that women should take their place in all public walks of life.¹⁵² With the ideal in mind that both women and men should construct society, Nezihe Muhiddin sought to draw women closer to the notion of homo economicus in those most critical years of the Ottoman state. According to Muhiddin the duty of motherhood was relevant, yet she emphasized the notion of the economic woman and by doing this, she implied that this second notion was of more

Bütün bir hane işini ifa ve tesviyeye memur bulunan bir kadından mütevellit çocukda ne gibi terbiye aranabilir?)” As a solution H.C. proposes that men hire maids and pay them “five or six liras” a month. According to H.C. “women should have access to every right and law yet the steering wheel should be in the hands of the men, because if women are left to their own devices they will fall into immorality (kadınlar her türlü hak ve hukukta serbest olmalı ve fakat dümen erkeğin elinde bulunmalıdır. Çünkü kadınları bila kayd ü şart serbest bırakacak olursak onda da sukutu ahlak {ahlak düşüklüğü} başlar.)” (See H.C. *ibid*, *agd*, no. 8, 26 April 1330 {1914}, pp. 2-3.)

¹⁵¹ Even the “Atatürkist” Afetinan indicates that the main reforms brought to women in the Civil Code were the abolition of Islamic divorce and polygamy. See Afetinan, *Atatürk ve Türk Kadını Haklarının Kazanılması, Tarih Boyunca Türk Kadını Hak ve Görevleri*, MEB, İstanbul, 1970, p. 160.

¹⁵² Nezihe Muhiddin argued for the duties of motherhood in many cases. Yet this was not just a result of her nationalist views, Muhiddin explained that motherhood gave women personal satisfaction.

importance. In stressing that women should produce, work and take care of themselves, she was expressing the desire that women be themselves. In this way women would gain independence, free themselves from a “parasitic” existence, participate effectively in every aspect of society and be able to pursue a political life. According to Muhiddin only when women participated in economic and social life as equals would it be possible to realize the liberation and creation of the nation; thus the reformation would be successfully achieved.

Economic Woman - Homo Economicus and Women

I indicated that in Nezihe Muhiddin’s “Address” of 1912 she proscribed that the way out of the political crises of that period was through the strengthening of economic life, especially concerning the introduction of the Ottoman Turkish element into the commercial and industrial life. In her speech she refers to women as “an important component” of Ottoman society, and in order to fortify the national economy she called on women to use only domestic goods. In the Conference entitled and published under the name “Darülfünun Konferans Salonunda Kadınlarımızın İctimaları”¹⁵³ it is she only who comes up with a concrete program from amongst the speakers at the meeting.

After her address in 1912 she often belabored the same topic at other conferences she held for women. In doing this she aimed to create women who played an active role in the countries economic life. It is those years that the “Moslem

¹⁵³ *Darülfünun Konferans Salonunda Kadınlarımızın İctimaları*, İstanbul, Tanin Matbaası 1328.

Boycott” was initiated. Nezihe Muhiddin was an activist in this movement from the women’s front. She called on women not to buy goods from the shops of minorities, but rather to buy from Moslems and to only buy domestic cloth and such items.

I argue that just as thinkers in the 19th century created the norm of the “economic man”, so Nezihe Muhiddin sought to create the norm of the “economic woman”. The woman that exemplified the qualities of Nezihe Muhiddin’s ideals of womanhood was industrious, worked, was rational, had been educated, had a profession, and as a mother, who in fulfilling her duties would bring up the “characters” of the nation, she would take part in all aspects of political and social life.

As a result of her writing and the conferences to women she gave concerning economics, Nezihe Muhiddin achieved fame and was thereafter known as the “outstanding woman writer”.¹⁵⁴ During this period she continued her literary work.

“First of all our Identity.. the Elevation of our Component!”

Nezihe Muhiddin’s emphasis on the awakening of the Turkish component occurred in the political atmosphere of 1912, which was concurrent with the Ottoman state’s rapid loss of territory and subsequent facing of the threat of elimination.

¹⁵⁴ “İtizar (Apology)”, *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 5, 8 April 1329 {1913}, p.1. “In yesterdays issue the article entitled ‘Unification Initiative’ was responded to in a letter by the outstanding woman writer Nezihe Muhlis Hanımefendi who raised several points on the topic. We regret that because the letter was received late it was not published in today’s issue. Naturally we will pulpit it in tomorrow’s issue... (Edibe-i şehire Nezihe Muhlis Hanımefendi dünkü nüshamızdaki Teşebbüsde İttihad ünvanlı makalemizin bazı nukatına {noktalarına} dair izahatı muhtevi mektuplarını geç vakit aldığımızdan maateessüf bugünkü nüshamıza derc edemedik {ilave etmek}. Yarın intişar edecek nüshamızda neşrolunacağı tabiidir...)”

In striking a chord within society in her call for women to consume only domestic goods and make purchases only from Moslem shops, she was confronted with criticism from writers in *Kadınlar Dünyası*.¹⁵⁵ Referring to her speech as the “nervous address ... of our young fiery lady”, the writer states that Nezihe Muhiddin has strayed from her femininity and that she has been offending non-Moslem minority women. The writer exhorts “We recommend that our dearest Nezihe to be temperate”. Moreover, as she calls upon women to struggle against Europe, “it is a complete mistake that we procure science from there.”¹⁵⁶ In saying in her response “First of all our identity.. the elevation of our component”, with a sharp tongue she

¹⁵⁵ The writer named Emine Seher Ali criticized the tone of Nezihe Muhiddin’s (at that time known as Nezihe Muhlis) speech at the conference she gave at Darülfünun Conference Hall, saying that it was too “extreme” in an article published in the 4. issue of *Kadınlar Dünyası* entitled “İktisad (Economics)”. The text of the conference 6th April 1329 was published in the same journal in the 3. issue): “We found the address of our young lady Nezihe Muhlis to be fiery and nervous. We attribute this vehemence to the enthusiasm of youth... Generally the address is very fine; yet it seems to strayed from femininity, and to have offended non-Moslem women... At the moment let’s forget about the matter of struggling against Europe. This is impossible, absurd, improbable, ignorance is always in the thrall of science. We still have not apprehended science and technology (Nezihe Muhlis Hanım kızımızın nutuklarını da biz pek ateşin, pek asabi bulduk. Bunu şiddeti heyecana gençliğe haml ettik. .. Nutuk heyet-i umumiyesi itibariyle pek güzel; yalnız kadınlıktan uzaklaşmış, anasır-ı gayrimüslimeye de dokunmuş gibidir... Avrupa ile mücadele meselesini şimdilik unutalım. Bu gayrikabildir, müstahildir {saçma}, müstebaddır {uzak ihtimal}, cehalet ilme daima mahkumdur. Biz ise ilimden fenden henüz nasibdar değiliz...” (See Emine Seher Ali, *ibid*, no. 4, 7 April 1329 {1913}, p. 1-2.) Emine Seher Ali was the editor-in-chief and in terms of the style of the text I have my doubts as to whether the writer was a woman or not. The text is in the third person, is condescending and has the tendency to belittle women. (See Emine Seher Ali, “Kadınlığa Bir Nazar (Womanhood: An Outlook)”, *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 1, 31 August 1329 {1913}, p. 1-2.) These articles, which are attributed to Emine Seher Ali may well have been written by Rifat Mevlanzade much like the unsigned editorials seem to have been.

¹⁵⁶ It is well worth remembering that male writers often use the term “nervous” when referring to women engaged in politics. This adjective was most likely borrowed from critics in the West who referred to the suffragettes in the West with the famous term of “nervousness”. Another example of this comes from the Republican period. As we will see in the III. chapter, in Yunus Nadi’s *Cumhuriyet*, when Nezihe Muhiddin was engaged in trying to nominate women to parliament in the 1925 election her statement were misrepresented as “nervous propaganda”: “Bizim bir muharririmiz de merak ederek Nezihe Muhittin Hanımın fikirlerini sormuş. Kadınlar Birliği reisi Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım da muharririmize yaptıkları şeyin asabi bir propaganda hamlesi olduğunu söylemiş. (One of our correspondence asked Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım about her ideas. The president of the WU Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım responded by saying they were conducting an initiative of nervous propaganda).” See *Cumhuriyet*, “Kadınlar ve Mebusluk” 25 February 1341 {1925}, p. 1-2.

defends her thesis against *Kadınlar Dünyası*. According to Muhiddin the way to salvation from the political and economic crisis engulfing the Ottoman state of that time “was to believe to the point of idolatry in our identity rooted in our race and our national character”:

Hristiyan vatandaşlarımız refah ve saadetleri için çalışırlarken biz kendimizde bir hak-ı igbirar {gücenme hakkı}, bir fikr-i itiraz bulduk mu? Çünkü hakka serfüru {baş eğme} etmemek imkânsızdır. Bizim bu haklı teşebbüsümüzü vatandaşlarımızın takdir edeceği şüphesizdir.

...

İşte yine tekrar ediyorum. Evvela; kendi şahsiyetimiz! Kendi unsurumuzun tealisi! Bundan başka bizi halas edecek {kurtaracak} vasıta yoktur.

...

İşte bu kuvvet şahsiyet-i irkiyemize, hüviyet-i milliyemize tapmakla artacaktır.

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In this argument women of the “Turkish component” support Nezihe Muhiddin. We understand this from a letter written by Fehamet Handan which supports Muhiddin and criticizes Emine Seher Ali.

... işte ben Nezihe Muhlis hanım hemşiremin o gür sesine saffet-i kalbim ve nahif sesimle iştirak edip bütün İslam hemşirelerime bir daha: Kaba, saba da

¹⁵⁷ Nezihe Muhlis, “Bir Mütalaa (A Comment)”, *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 14, 17 April 1329 {1913}, p. 2.

olsa zade-i tabimiz olan mahsulat ve mamulatı giyelim, bu da olmazsa alışverişimizi sırf, evet sırf Müslümanlara hasredelim diyor(um) ...¹⁵⁸

In defense of the political independence of the Ottoman state in 1912, Muhiddin used the concept of “liberation” both in terms of the freedom of the Ottoman Turkish component as well as in reference to the freedom of women. According to Muhiddin, the imperative condition for the emancipation of the Ottoman Turkish women during that period was political independence for the homeland -which would not be achieved by only fighting with cannon and gun, but through economic independence as well.

“The Egotistical and Fanatical Europeans..”

In Nezihe Muhiddin’s analysis of the West, while she argued for the need to benefit from the West’s science and knowledge -much like the premises put forward by the Young Ottoman’s and the Ottoman women, who were subsequently influenced by them- she also adopted a critical tone in opposition to it. For Istanbul women Beyoğlu symbolized the West. The minority way of life in Pera and Beyoğlu brought Western ways to the proximity of Ottoman women. The social rights gained by minorities after the Tanzimat resulted in their being able to conduct their lives according to their own customs and concepts of liberty in Pera and Beyoğlu. Especially the dress of minority women, and their spending their leisure time in the same social venues with men,

¹⁵⁸ Fehamet Handan, “Konferans Münasebetiyle (Regarding the Conference)”, *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 9, 12 April 1329 {1913}, p. 2.

served as a model of the Western lifestyle for Ottoman women. In the nationalism that she indicated, and her somewhat implied racism in her opposition to the West, as well as to minorities which could be taken as counterparts ¹⁵⁹ to the West, she sometimes hardened, sometimes softened her position according to the social conditions of the period in which she lived. Yet her generally distant and aloof attitude prevailed.

For Muhiddin Europe was a power which sought to eliminate the Ottoman - that is, the essentially Turkish component. She qualified the "old treaties" granting economic rights (capitulations) to the Europeans by the Ottomans sultans and viziers as "pronouncements of death". The Europeans who pretended to act on the principles of "humanity, civilization, justice", in applying these (capitulation) sought "our execution". The economic disasters of the day which had befallen the Ottomans were due to these capitulations. "We as Ottomans, especially as Moslems" must tear up these pronouncements. Nezihe Muhiddin calls upon women to struggle against the "The Egotistical and Fanatic Europeans.." who did not recognize Ottoman law:

İnsaniyet, medeniyet, hak namına hareket ettiklerini ilan eden Avrupalılar vaktiyle düşünmeden, anlamadan hareket etmeyi itiyad eden padişahlarımızın vükelamızın, ricalimizin {mevki sahipleri} ahud-ı atika namıyla kendilerine verdikleri katl fermanlarıyla idamımıza hükmediyorlar. Bugün çekmekte

¹⁵⁹ In referring to the Ottoman components, Nezihe Muhiddin praises the qualities of Ottoman policies by saying, "As is commensurate with our high national and social life honor is accorded to every nation/people (Her kavme şeref, muhterem bir mevkii verecek derecede yüksek olan milli ve ictimai hayatımızın)" (See "Konferans", *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 3, 6 April 1329 {1913}, p. 3-4.) Yet she was depicting Beyoğlu, she displayed a racist tendency: "From the dirty sweat smell emanating from some coarse Armenian skin...to the mingled breath of the Levantine everything is there... (galiz bir Ermeni cildinden tereşşuh etmiş {yayılan} kirli bir ter kokusundan, mağşuş {karışık} bir Levanten nefesine kadar her şey mevcuttur..." (Nezihe Muhiddin, "İstanbul ve Beyoğlu'ndan İki Levha", *Kadın Yolu*, no. 7, 27 August 1341 {1925}, pp. 2-3.)

olduğumuz iktisadi felaketlerin bar-ı kiram {ağır} ızdırabı altında inlememize sebep olan hep bu fermanlardır.

... Avrupalılarla, evet Hristiyan ve mutaassıb Avrupalılarla mücadele edelim.... mutaassıb ve menfaatperest Avrupalılar bize karşı hiç bir zaman karşılıklı mamele yapmak, hukukumuza, vatanımızın, milletimizin menfaatlerine riayet etmek istemiyorlar.¹⁶⁰

c. Education, Participation in Civil Life and Work: Association for Protection of Women and the Naval Society

Education of Women

Being a teacher herself, the education of women was one of the issues which concerned Nezihe Muhiddin. She always asserted that education was a necessity in the elevation of the status of women. And in addition to this, she struggled to raise the standards of education in girls schools. She herself was an administrator and teacher.

The issue of the education of women came on the agenda during the II. Constitutional Era with the debate on the “education of mothers and wives”. This took place in the press and literature. The Young Ottoman thinkers; namely Şinasi, Namık Kemal and Ahmed Midhat; often raised the issue of the need for women’s education. They meant this explicitly for wives who, along with “educated” males,

¹⁶⁰ “Konferans (Conference)”, ibid.

would be able to form “happy households” -as these very mothers would be bringing up the members of society. The view that in this way a healthy society could be attained was argued amongst the male writers of this period under the headline “training of women”. By the same token, a vast literature developed around the issue of how the “training of women” was to be carried out. The Union and Progress leaders sought to resolve this debate with their emphasis on education for women after coming to power. Consequently, they raised the level of education and its availability through the establishment of new girls schools and the first women’s university (İnas Darülfünunu) in 1914.¹⁶¹ In the “Social Section” in *Womanhood (Kadınlık)* journal, B. Advıye Sıtkı, in her article entitled “Conversation”, congratulates the Education Administration of Istanbul for inaugurating a “serious and comprehensive program” with the opening of an “industrial school for girls”.¹⁶²

Nezihe Muhiddin thought that education -not only just in terms of women- was of the utmost importance for the whole nation. In her address in 1912, during some of the most critical days facing the country, in citing developed countries as an example, she stressed that education had played as great a role in their progress as economics:

¹⁶¹ See Halide Edib, *Mor Salkımlı Ev* Istanbul, Atlas Kitabevi, 1992 (8. Edition), pp. 154-156. İnas Darülfünunu (Woman’s University) was attached to Istanbul Darülfünunu (University) and opened in Istanbul on the 25th January 1329 {1914}.

¹⁶² B. Advıye Sıdkı, “Musahabe (Conversation)”, *Kadınlık*, no. 11, 17 May 1330 {1914}, pp. 3-4. The school mentioned was more than likely the one Nezihe Muhiddin was principle of, namely İttihat ve Terakki Kız Sanayi Mektebi.

Milletleri mesud ve müreffeh yaşatan, medeniyetleri takrir eden “karakter”lerdir. Karakterleri yaşatan ve ıslah ve ikmal eyleyen de ana kucağı, mekteb bucağıdır. İlk terbiye-i milliye ve kavmiye bu yurtlarda telkin edilir.¹⁶³

Without referring at all to the education of wives, while still advocating education for mothers, I could argue that Nezihe Muhiddin preferred to ignore this issue. In keeping with her nationalist views Muhiddin proposed that it was the duty of educated mothers to raise children to further the building of the nation. There was a need for “serious educational institutions” to educate mothers who would be bearing and raising future generations of the Nation’s offspring:

Bizim için, yani kadınlar için bu mesele düşünülürse bu memleket herşeyden evvel nesl-i atiyi ihzar edecek hakiki validelere ve o valideleri yetiştirecek ciddi müessesat-ı irfaniyeye muhtacdır.¹⁶⁴

Association for the Protection of Women (Esirgeme Derneği)

Nezihe Muhiddin’s work concerning woman’s issues in society and the elevation of their status can be traced back to the years (1912-1913) when she founded the Association for the Protection of Women . In a letter in which she defended the Association against the criticism of the chief editor of *Kadınlar Dünyası*, she

¹⁶³ Nezihe Muhiddin, “Hitabe”.

¹⁶⁴ Nezihe Muhiddin, “Hitabe”.

indicated that the Association's aim was not to curry favor with the political parties, but "to take in hand all issues concerning womanhood":

... derneğin maksadı cemiyetlere, siyasi fırkalara yaranmak değil belki kadınlığa ait bütün hususata kardeşçe ve vatandaşcasına el uzatmaktır. ¹⁶⁵

We see that with this association, Muhiddin sought to manifest her thesis on economic independence among women. In *Türk Kadını* she states that one of the aims of the association is the "protection of domestic goods". ¹⁶⁶

According to Nezihe Muhiddin the enlightenment and education of women was extremely important for their elevation in society. She worked, not just for some ordinary lesson curriculum, but for a well-designed and comprehensive program enhanced with conferences and seminars. As the principle of the Union and Progress Industrial Girls School, she raised its educational level and, when the institution was under the threat of closure, she marshaled the support of the Association for the Protection of Women in backing the school to keep it open.

Bu konferanslara (iktisat üzerine y.z.) İstanbul'un muhtelif semtlerinde devam ederken fikrime doğan bir teşebbüs tohumu yavaş yavaş filizlenmeye başlıyordu. Mektebin halası {devamı} için etrafımda toplanan hanımlardan istifade etmek, muntazam bir cemiyet halinde çalışmak... Üzerinde çalışılacak

¹⁶⁵ Nezihe Muhiddin, "Mektub".

¹⁶⁶ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, pp. 45-48.

mevzuu ise...: Yerli malların himayesi, eski kadın san'at işlerini asrileştirip ihya etmek... Artık Esirgeme Derneği meydana gelmişti. ¹⁶⁷

She served for two years as the general secretary of the Association for the Protection of Women. During this period others were active in this organization, including Sitare Ağaoğlu -the wife of Ahmet Ağaoğlu- who was also involved in other charity organizations. Others involved in the association were Hamiyet Hulusi, Naciye Hurşit, Saniye Muhtar and Sabiha Süleyman. ¹⁶⁸

Along with her activities related to the Association for the Protection of Women, she continued in her profession as both school mistress and principle at two schools -the İttihat ve Terakki Kız Sanayi Mektebi and the Kız İdadisi. Her criteria in offering education of a higher level was measured by its being “within the context of a modern institution” and “being able to compete with foreign schools”:

... müdürü olduğum İttihat ve Terakki Kız Sanayi mektebinin inkişafına faaliyetimi temerküz ettirmiştim. Bu mektep o zaman için çok teceddütle {yenilik} ortaya çıkmış bir irfan müessesesi idi. Asri bir teşkilat içinde pek mesudane çalışabiliyordum. ¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁷ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 45.

¹⁶⁸ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 87.

¹⁶⁹ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 37.

Bir taraftan kız idadisi diğer tarafta İttihat ve Terakki Kız Sanayi Mektebi, ecnebi mekteplerine hakkıyla rekabet edecek birer irfan müessesesi idiler.¹⁷⁰

While facing the threat of closure due to political vicissitudes,¹⁷¹ Muhiddin channeled most of the initiatives of the Association for the Protection of Women towards keeping the İttihat ve Terakki Kız Sanayi Mektebi open.¹⁷²

Women and Civil Life: Wifhood and Children's Nurse or "Taking Part in Life Outside the Home?"

Freedom to Step Outside

Nezihe Muhiddin fought for physical expansion and visibility of woman's realm in public space since the beginning of her activist period. Although she spent her young ages in relatively open society¹⁷³ she was well aware of Ottoman women's concern and fight for existing in life outside home.

¹⁷⁰ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 41.

¹⁷¹ With the Alliance Party (İtilaf Fırkası) winning of the elections, the Union and Progress (İttihat Terakki) were for a time removed from power.

¹⁷² Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 42.

¹⁷³ "... With the proclamation of the Constitution our women seemed to have been liberated from darkness, the veils became thinner, they saw a little bit of sunlight, yet the shutters still remained. (Meşrutiyetin ilanı ile beraber kadınlarımız karanlıktan kurtulur gibi oldular, peçeler inceldi, bir az dünya ışığına kavuştular, fakat kafesler baki)". Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 31.

Moslem women considered such issues as participation in public life; being able to step out on to the street and avoiding harassment; being able to accompany men to cinemas, cafes and such places of entertainment; and being able to use public transportation. In the II. Constitutional Era the women struggled against the ideological propaganda formulated by the religious/conservative Islamist circles -which promoted such customs as the segregation of women and strictures forbidding women to leave the house unaccompanied by men. To a certain extent, these women managed to mitigate the affect these said restrictions. The most common complaints of women in those years concerning life outside the home had to do with repressive government policies regarding the veiling of women and thickness of veils etc. Along with this women wanted to be left in peace on the street, not have to bear insults and humiliation while walking, be able to go from place to place, have the right to use such public transport as trolley cars, the subway, ferryboats etc. In an article written by the editorial staff of *Musavver Kadın*, dated 14th April 1911, entitled "Correction", a quotation from a *Sabah* newspaper article entitled "Messier Military Fashion" relates that women in the streets "walking in imitation of soldiers thrust their chests forward and clutch their outer garments with their hands" and described this as a new fashion. The journal "being a woman's magazine" expressed that it would never accept such "mockery" directed towards "our beloved Ottoman women". Obviously as a result of "The Ottoman Parliament being in recess" to fill its columns it had resorted to "fabrications". From this exchange it is apparent that women who "thrust their chest forward" while walking in the street were subject matter for the male writers of that time.

This was not the only example of the pressures placed on women who tried to exist in life out of the home. *Woman (Kadın)* magazine¹⁷⁴ tells of the shabby treatment women received at the hands of the administration of the “rail service, trolleys, subway and ferryboats”. The piece continues in relating that “Throughout the winter women froze out in the open on the Kadıköy ferryboats”, that “a young Moslem woman, walking with virtuous and serious demeanor, was exposed to the shouts of ferryboat personnel who exclaimed ‘They are tearing the outer garments!’ The pressure exerted on women in the street did not only come from conservative men but from women as well. As Nezihe Muhiddin relates in *Türk Kadını*, both she and a friend were threatened by an elderly lady on the Uskudar ferryboat quay; she called on bystanders to spit at them and insult them.”¹⁷⁵

As a result of the efforts of women prior to the II. Constitutional Era, a generation of women emerged who were brought up in the milieu of İnas Darülfununu who were more open, more aggressive in defense of their rights. These young women of Darülfünun sometimes contradicted the older generation of more conservative women concerning the behavior of women out of the home. In *Atı* newspaper, published by Celal Nuri İleri, Afife Fikret, in her column known as “Lady’s Conversation”, writes that “to go up and down Beyoğlu, to stroll around and never leave the cinemas, to promenade, to go the tearooms! Such bad habits are prevalent amongst those young ladies who can not find a husband.” She goes on to say that the

¹⁷⁴ Havadisçi, “News of Woman (Kadın Haberleri)”, *Kadın* (Woman) (Istanbul), no. 6, 7 April 1328 {1912}, p. 19.

¹⁷⁵ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, pp. 33-34.

primary profession of women is that of “wifehood”.¹⁷⁶ In the same vein in *Türk Kadını* journal, Nezihe Rikkat criticizes the behavior of young women in the streets in an article called “Turning Masculine”. Mutie Sabri “as a Turkish girl from Darülfunun” sharply responds to Nezihe Rikkat, saying, “It does not mean that a woman is becoming masculine just because she is somehow obliged to run and catch a tram, that she is more than right to scold some of our police for their illogically rude behavior towards women, that she takes shortcuts through burned-out sections of the streets - especially when one considers that three quarters of the town is in ruins.”

In spite of all these pressures and the efforts by male writers to determine the limits of the “freedom of women”,¹⁷⁷ in the II. Constitutional Era we learn from Nezihe Muhiddin that women did go out in the streets “in apparel appropriate to civilization” and that they went to the same places as men did:

Meşrutiyetin ilk iki senesi kadın; hayatında hayli inkişafı ile ilerledi. Artık kadınlarımız medeniyete yaklaşan kıyafetlerle, bazı koca ninelerin baston tehditlerine rağmen serbestçe dolaşabiliyorlar, erkeklerle beraber umumi bahçelere ve tiyatrolara gidebiliyorlardı.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁶ Afife Fikret, “Hanımefendinin Musahabesi (Lady’s Conversation)”, *Atı*, 16 January 1334 {1918}, pp. 1-2. Afife Fikret, shared the same views with men in finding that “the current of womanhood (kadınlık cereyanı)”, a term commonly used in those days, to be extreme and she drew young women’s reaction. A female acquaintance of Afife Fikret said that concerning her writing in *Atı*: “Many of them accuse you of being too conservative. You seem to have gone backwards (sizi fazla muhafazakârlıkla çokluk itham ediyorlar. Siz biraz gerisin geriye gidiyormuşsunuz).” (Afife Fikret, “Hanımefendinin Musahabeleri”, *Atı*, 1 February 1334 {1918} p. 2.)

¹⁷⁷ See L. Y. “Our Women and Freedom (Kadınlarımız ve Hürriyet)”, *Edebiyat-ı Umumiye Mecmuası*, no. 10, 24 December 1332 {1916}, pp. 177-180.

¹⁷⁸ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 32.

Participation in Civil Life

Aid and charity associations established by women at the turn of this century (20th) were, especially in Eastern societies, an important vehicle for women in participating in civil life - allowing them to emerge from their homes in which they had been confined.¹⁷⁹ Women's associations established after 1908 with the aim of philanthropy, or associations like the Red Crescent -in which women were prevalent, played an important role in freeing them from the confines of the home and allowing them to take part in public and civil life.¹⁸⁰

While accepting that these philanthropic organizations had an important function in the sense stated above, Nezihe Muhiddin felt that they did not provide the necessary platform for achieving women's rights, nor did they ensure solidarity among women. According to Muhiddin the prominent female figures of the period, such as Şair Nigâr, Makbule Leman, Abdülhak Mihrinnisa Hanım, reflected the situation of women; and "Leyla Hanım's (Saz) sorrowful poems, moaning delicate strains" voiced the grief induced by the social environment. Yet, Muhiddin indicates that these "sensitive women" had no other channel of action than to spread joy amongst orphans that is philanthropy.

¹⁷⁹ Adele Lindenmeyr, "Public Life, Private Virtues: Women in Russian Charity, 1762-1914", *Signs*, vol. 18, no. 3, Spring 1993.

¹⁸⁰ There has been no research on this matter.

... (meşrutiyet devrinde) kadınların biraraya, bir fikir etrafına ciddiyetle toplanmamasındaki sebepleri... : evvela hanımlarımız ev hayatının yeknesak akışlarından bıkmışlardı, içlerinde tahsili yüksek, kalpleri hayır işlerinden zevk alanlar zemin ve zamanı müsait görünce ortaya atıldılar, bu perakende ve geliş güzel harekette müşterek kadınlık hedefi gözetilemezdi.¹⁸¹

Nezihe Muhiddin was active in these associations in pursuit of the “ideals of womanhood”, and together with those women who had gained experience in the social sphere through philanthropic endeavors, founded The Association for the Protection of Women.

Work

Besides women who worked in agriculture and in the cities in industrial branches as laborers, in Ottoman society -among middle class families, as indeed amongst society in general- the concept of women working for a wage was proscribed.¹⁸² There are many factors affecting the appearance of wage labor amongst women in the work force in Ottoman society. Zafer Toprak indicates that during the I. World War, Ottoman women were drawn into the work force as a result of the male population being sent to the front. Women's labor began to be employed in many fields

¹⁸¹ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 52.

¹⁸² Since slavery was still allowed the concubines (cariyeler) who worked in private homes and the palaces can not be considered in this group. As for the rural areas during the Republican period women did not work for wages but were rather considered “family workers”. There is no evidence to suggest that this was any different in Ottoman society.

of work; ranging from factories to workshops, and from road construction to street maintenance.¹⁸³ With the end of the I. World War the debate over whether women should return to their homes was aired in the Istanbul press.¹⁸⁴ A second factor was the efforts by Turkish women themselves to enter the work force. In keeping with the ideas of Turkish nationalism, which were gaining credence among women concerning promotion of Moslem's economic life, the establishment of Turkish owned and operated tailors' shops and work places coincided with the Moslem women's entering of the work force. Women's associations set the precedent in opening and developing such workshops.¹⁸⁵ A third factor worth considering concerning the presence of women in the work force, besides the two others already stated above, was the issue of the widows of soldiers fallen in battle. Women's charity associations sought to provide "virtuous" means of employment in order for these war widows to support themselves and their families.¹⁸⁶ Meanwhile the pro-Western writers, such as Ahmet

¹⁸³ See Zafer Toprak, *İttihat-Terakki ve Devletçilik* (Union and Progress and Statism) Istanbul, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995, pp. 131-132.

¹⁸⁴ "... Let the war be over and things return to the way they were, it will be seen that this present current has ceased and perhaps in its place there will be crises and disappointment. At that time our women will not have the inclination to show themselves in the working world and they will not have the means to support themselves (Harp bitsin işler eskisi gibi hal-i tabiisine gelsin görülecektir ki bu şimdiki cereyan duracak ve belkide onun yerine bir buhran ve hüsrân kaim olacaktır. O zaman kadınlarımız iş âleminde kendilerine gösterilen rağbeti göremeyecekler ve bir gün temin ettikleri menfaat-i maddiyyeyi bulamayacaklardır)." Muhammed Zeki, "Kadınlarımızı Dair", *Atı*, 8 January 1334 {1918}, p. 2.

¹⁸⁵ In *Türk Kadını*, Nezihe Muhiddin praises Behire Hakkı Hanım, a member of the Society for Protection of Women, who with this purpose in mind "established a work" called Bıçkı Yurdu (A Seamstress Hostel) and adds: "She has established a very beneficial precedent in the economic life of the Turkish women (Türk kadın hayatında ticaret fikrinin bir mebdai {başlangıç} olarak çok faydeli bir numune teşkil ediyordu)" (p. 49).

¹⁸⁶ The Defense of Ottoman Woman's Law Society (Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-ı Nisvan Cemiyeti) was established with the primary aim of "employing and alleviating the misery of girls; women (kadınları, kızları istihdam ile sefaletlerini tahfif {hafifletme})" (See "Documents: Programs of Woman Societies {Belgeler: Kadın Dernekleri Programları}", Serpil Çakır, pp. 332-333.) The Consumption of Domestic Production Woman's Charity Society (Ma'mûlat-ı Dahiliyye İstihlâkı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi), Islamic Society for Women's Employment (Kadınları Çalıştırma

Emin Yalman, argued that it was necessary for women to work -citing the example of the widespread presence of women in the work force in Europe.

In opening up new places of employment, both in order for war widows to work as well as for women to take their place in every social sphere, Nezihe Muhiddin was also struggling to eliminate the societal notion that women should not work. She argued that the employment of war widows in the difficult period following the war was “both a question of survival and morality”. In her discourse regarding women working the impact of Fatma Aliye’s notion of women working due to “need” can be seen.

In Nezihe Muhiddin’s dream of women entering every aspect of the public sphere, one element was that women should be able to work in every field, including such high status professions as those of medicine and engineering. In Muhiddin’s view this development would be beneficial to both women and to the country. She argued that whatever women succeeded in would be to the benefit to the nation. While she defended the right of women to work she constantly stressed the benefits to be accrued by the nation:

Bizim kuvvetli iddiamız, ihtiyacat ve icabat-ı hazırâ bizi nerelere sevk ediyorsa kadının behemehal orada bir mevkii olmasıdır. Bunun için vaz edeceğimiz düstur da şundan ibarettir; "Kadının muvaffak olabileceği her işte memlekete mufid olmak”.

Cemiyet-i İslamiyyesi) and The Ottoman Woman’s First Labor Battalion (Osmanlı Birinci Kadın İşçi Taburu) were associations established in that period to employ women. (See Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, pp. 330-331 and pp. 335-339.)

Halbuki bütün bu mecburiyetler, zaruretler karşısında kadına açılan saha-i mesai, süprüntücülük, devair hademeliği ile yarısından ziyadesini erkeklerin işgal ettiği inas mekâtibi muallimeliğinden ibaret kalıyor. ... kadının her meslekte yerini almasını zaruri görenlerden biriyim. Kadın doktor, avukat, tüccar, memur, muallim, san'atkar, mebus hatta vekil olmalıdır ki kadın hayatını tanzim eden münevver ve nazım zümre arasında kadın varlığını hissettirebilsin.

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d. The Period of Armistice and Occupation: Delegate to the National Congress and Return to Literary Life

Not Political Parties But the Politics of Women

We witness that throughout her activist period Nezihe Muhiddin seemed to take great pains to distance herself from governments and political parties. In her book (1931) she argued that even when she obtained the support of the organ of the power of the time, the Nur-u Osmaniye Club, in backing her efforts to avoid the closure of the Union and Progress Industrial Girls School, she insisted that she was politically neutral and was only working for her "own ideals":

¹⁸⁷ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 11.

Jön Türk gazetesinde intişar eden makalelerle İttihat ve Terakki merkezinden aldığım takdir ve teşekkürnameler sırf kendi mefkûrem (my emphasis) uğruna yaptığım fedakarlığımın birer kadirşinaslık nişaneleri oldu.¹⁸⁸

In her "Letter to the Editor" she responded sharply to the chief editor of *Kadınlar Dünyası*'s efforts in implying that she was affiliated with Union and Progress, and she said that the Association for the Protection of Women's aim was not to curry favor with other associations or political parties. She stresses that its purpose was to be active in every field of womanhood. The Industrial Girls School should not be assessed according to which party supported it, but rather according to its benefits as a means of ensuring education for women. The important thing was that girls industrial schools should exist and flourish. The support of a political party in power would not change her independent stance nor would it place the school that she administered under the parties' shadow:

Esirgeme Derneğinin memleketi için beslediği amal ve mekasıd - {amaç}... bir çok mektebler açmak ve kardeşlerini tenvir etmektir.

... herhangi bir fırka ve cemiyete mensub olursa olsun dernek muhtac-ı muavenet {desteğe ihtiyacı olan} gördüğü bütün kız mekteblerine.. yardım ve müzaheret edecek, ve icab eden mahallerde yeniden tesisine çalışacaktır.

¹⁸⁸ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 42.

Bununla da anlaşılıyor ki derneğin maksadı cemiyetlere, siyasi fırkalara yaranmak değil belki kadınlığa ait bütün hususata kardeşçe ve vatandaşcasına el uzatmaktır.¹⁸⁹

In later years Nezihe Muhiddin seems not to waver from this independent line. Muhiddin's cooperation with political institutions hinged on the goals concerning women contained in their programs.

Other Fields of Endeavor

We learn from *Türk Kadını* that Nezihe Muhiddin founded the Istanbul Women's Branch of the Naval Society and that she reserved a room for the branch in the Union and Progress Industrial Girls School, of which she was the principle.¹⁹⁰ We know that this project was realized amongst Nezihe Muhiddin's circle of activist women and that she raised donations for the Naval Society.

The Naval Society¹⁹¹ was established with the support of Sultan Reşat, its aim being to strengthen the Ottoman fleet, and within a short period gained support, turning into a civil movement. The precedent set by Nezihe Muhiddin with the Women's Branch elicited wide support among women. As a result of the aid and support the Society received from the wives of the Sultan (Reşat),¹⁹² a letter written by

¹⁸⁹ Nezihe Muhiddin, "Mektub".

¹⁹⁰ Moreover this information is featured in the news in *Vakit*, 26 June 1339 {1923}.

¹⁹¹ The full name was The Ottoman Navy National Resistance Society (Donanma-yı Osmani Muavenet-i Milliye Cemiyeti). Established 1909.

¹⁹² The wives of the Ottoman Sultan.

Nezihe Muhiddin thanking them was published in *Kadınlar Dünyası*.¹⁹³ In bequeathing their jewelry to the Naval Society it is more than likely that it was the first time that the women of the Ottoman dynasty had taken part in a civil movement. Just like the Association for the Protection of Women, the Naval Society played an important role in the participation of Ottoman Turkish women in civil life. It is indicated that one year after establishment the Branch was closed.¹⁹⁴

In a statement released in *Vakit* newspaper, and as she stated in her book *Türk Kadını*, in 1912 Nezihe Muhiddin became the general secretary of the National Defense Society Women's Center, yet as she put forth that it was established under the guidance of men she did not view the association in a positive light.¹⁹⁵

Muhiddin's efforts for the ideals of womanhood would strike a chord. The "National Defense" movement formed immediately after the Armistice supported by the National Congress (Milli Kongre)¹⁹⁶ witnessed the participation in 1918 of many women's organizations, associations, and women delegations with their full representation. One of the delegates to the National Congress was Nezihe Muhiddin.

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¹⁹³ Nezihe Muhiddin, "Kıymetdar bir Teşvik (A Worthy Encouragement)", *Kadınlar Dünyası*, no. 15, 18 April 1329{1913}, pp. 2-3.

¹⁹⁴ "In 1912-1913 the Naval Society's Woman's Branch was established ... The Istanbul Woman's Branch of the Naval Society functioned for a year before ceasing its activities (Efrenci {Milat} 1912-1913 tarihinde Donanma Cemiyetinin Hanımlar şubesi teşekkül etmiş.... Donanma Cemiyetinin İstanbul Hanımlar şubesi ancak bir sene faaliyet gösterdikten sonra mesaisine hitam vermiştir)." Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 37.

¹⁹⁵ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 50. Here the association name could have been printed incorrectly.

¹⁹⁶ See Halide Edib Adivar, *Türkün Ateşle İmtihanı* (The Turkish Ordeal) Istanbul, Atlas Kitabevi, 1994 (11. Baskı), p.39.

¹⁹⁷ The list of associations that participated in the Milli Kongre (National Congress) is found in Tarık Zafer Tunaya's book: *Türkiye'de Siyasal Partiler (1859-1952)*, Arba Yayınları Tıpkı Basım, İstanbul,

Political and Social Milieu and Women During the I. World War, the Armistice and Independence War

As Keyder has indicated, the I. World War ended for Turkey in 1923.¹⁹⁸ During the course of the war and while Istanbul was under occupation, women labored in numerous aid associations and resistance organizations. The women's agenda concerning their demands for rights was subsumed by the immediacy of the country's grave problems. Women worked in the hospitals caring for the wounded and established donate institutions to help the orphans and the poor. Tezer Taşkıran gives a rather accurate list of the aid associations, in which women mostly worked, founded in Istanbul in that period.¹⁹⁹ Women in Istanbul were active either secretly or semi-openly in the resistance organizations during the period of "National Defense" (1918-1923).²⁰⁰ Another characteristic of the Armistice period was a discussion on the issue of "feminism" in male literature. The discussion concerning women began in the newspaper *Atı (Future)*, later renamed *İleri (Beyond)*, published by Celal Nuri (İleri),

1952, s. 420. However the full list of women societies that took part in the congress is unknown. We also do not know the names of woman delegates. Nezihe Muhiddin mentions in a news statement in *Vakit* that she participated as a delegate. (*Vakit*, *ibid*, 26 June 1339 {1923})

¹⁹⁸ Çağlar Keyder, *Türkiye 'de Devlet ve Sınıflar* (The State and Classes in Turkey), Istanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 1995 (4. Edition), p. 101.

¹⁹⁹ See Tezer Taşkıran, *Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında Türk Kadın Hakları* (Turkish Women's Rights in the 50th Year of the Republic) Ankara, Başbakanlık Basımevi, 1973, p. 39.

²⁰⁰ For example Halide Edib Adıvar worked in the Karakol Society (Karakol Cemiyeti) which ran weapons to Anatolia during the National Struggle. The society was established by Adnan Adıvar. See Halide Edib Adıvar, *Türkün Ateşle İmtihanı* (The Turkish Ordeal) Istanbul, Atlas Kitabevi, 1994 (11. Edition), pp. 25-26. For the Karakol Society see Tarık Zafer Tunaya, *ibid*, p. 520-523. In the same work Halide Edib indicates that she was active in the National Congress (Milli Kongre) which was one of the institutions organized by the National Defence (Milli Müdafaa) movement.

and later on a column called "Future of Womanhood" was devoted to the writing of women.

The period between 1918-1923 was one in which important changes took place in Turkey -initially in terms of the structure of the state, followed by those in the social, political and cultural spheres. The reign of the Ottoman dynasty, and the primacy of Union and Progress, which was in power during the II. Constitutional Era, came to an end. This period was marked by upheaval and, concurrent with the above events, the resistance to the occupation in Anatolia became organized. The Turkish Grand National Assembly (TGNA) Administration steadily gained in power, ultimately becoming the only viable political entity. At the same time conflicts and contradictions were experienced, as was a struggle over where the political apparatus would be centered. The struggle took place between the old seat of power, Istanbul, and the newly established Ankara TGNA Government. The allegiances among various political groups and individuals concerning this issue were constantly shifting. Thus this political period was rather unique.

What was occurring in the realm of womanhood in the years 1918-1923? In *Great Journal (Büyük Mecmua)*, Sabiha Sertel argued for feminism.²⁰¹ Young women graduates of Darülfünun established the Contemporary Woman Society and published *Young Woman (Genç Kadın)* journal. Within the country a "current of womanhood", as coined by male writers, came to the agenda of society -gusting at full speed. The question of "What should the Turkish woman be?" was bandied about between female

²⁰¹ Zafer Toprak, "Sabiha (Zekeriya) Sertel ve Türk Feminizmi", (Sabiha {Zekeriya} Sertel and Turkish Feminism)", *Toplumsal Tarih*, c. 9, no. 51, March 1998, p. 7-14.

and male intellectuals.²⁰² The *Türk Kadını* (Turkish Woman) journal was in publication. Newspapers and journals devoted pages to that “news of Womanhood”. Anyone who put pen to paper wrote on the issue of womanhood as it applied to their own point of view. These years, which included the Armistice and National Defense period, can be depicted as being rather grim. Occupation by foreign troops, starting with Istanbul, was experienced; people walked the streets with bowed heads; misery and poverty was widespread. The newspaper columns were full of blank space due to the censorship implemented by the high command of the Occupation Forces.²⁰³

Within this five year period Nezihe Muhiddin persisted in her writing. She concerned herself with social issues encompassing education -these appeared in various newspapers and journals. She also continued with her purely literary endeavors.²⁰⁴ Some short stories and novels appeared. In this period of political tension we observe that Nezihe Muhiddin did not openly express her political preferences.

²⁰² See Yakub Kadri (Karaosmanoğlu), *Kadınlık ve Kadınlarımız* (Womanhood and Our Women) Orhaniye Matbaası, Istanbul, 1339 - 1922.

²⁰³ Halide Edib gives a detailed description of Istanbul in this period in *Türkün Ateşle İmtihanı* (The Turkish Ordeal) Istanbul, Atlas Kitabevi, 1994 (11. Edition).

²⁰⁴ See *Son Posta*, İbrahim Hoyi, “Kadın Romancılarımızla Mülakatlar: Nezihe Muhittin Yeni Eserlerini Neşretmeden Öleceğinden Korkuyor (Interviews with our Women Novelists: Nezihe Muhittin Fears to Die Without Publishing Her Latest Work)”, 15 October 1941. According to her explanation here she published articles in such journals as *Türk Yurdu*, *Edebiyat-ı Umumiye* and the newspapers *Sabah*, *İkdam*, *Peyam-ı Sabah*, *İleri* starting with the second year of the II. Constitutional Era (1909) until 1923.

What Should the Turkish Woman be?

In the years following I. World War, women sought an answer to the question "What should the Turkish woman be?" In the development of the concept of the Turkish Woman one of the indicators as to the extent of their influence was in how much they could participate in the process of constructing the nation. Republican male writers were involved in this effort to develop a concept of the Turkish woman. On closer examination of this concept one can see that they wished to delineate their political, social and moral behavior.²⁰⁵ During the I. World War and the Armistice Period the notion of the Turkish woman was on the intellectual circles' agenda. A discussion on this issue was touched on in an article by Yakup Kadri (Karaosmanoğlu).²⁰⁶ It is possible to argue that Nezihe Muhiddin took part in these discussions. This can be said because after the establishment of the TGNA in April of 1920, and especially during the first years of Republic, Nezihe Muhiddin expounded upon her vision of the concept of the Turkish woman in her articles, the conferences she gave and her statements. It is striking to note that she named her book *Türk Kadını*. In Nezihe Muhiddin's definition of the Turkish woman she pays homage to the path-breaking "exceptional" women of the past, who contributed to women's history. The Turkish woman has the capacity to progress by taking advantage of the "golden opportunity of our reform (Republic)".²⁰⁷ She fully asserts her civil and political rights.

²⁰⁵ Falih Rıfkı (Atay) indicates the initiatives he deems appropriate for women in an article entitled "Türk Kadını (Turkish Woman)". We understand from one of Yunus Nadi's (Abalıoğlu) articles during this period that he too wishes to be influential in this process. (See Yunus Nadi, "Türk Kadını", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1986, 18 November 1929, p. 1.) The character "Selma" in Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's novel *Ankara* exemplifies this concept.

²⁰⁶ In Yakup Kadri (Karaosmanoğlu), *Kadınlık ve Kadınlarımız*, Orhaniye Matbaası, İstanbul, 1339.

²⁰⁷ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 11.

She has a say in the construction of the nation and the Republic. This woman is one who remains above such corrupting influences of the West as alcohol etc.²⁰⁸ It would seem the qualities this woman shares with those of women figures in the past are those of personality. Nezihe Muhiddin seeks to realize those ideals of Ottoman women relating to principles of Enlightenment rather than those concerning Islam. Muhiddin transformed the Ottoman women's "İslamlar" into "Turks", the Ottoman State into the Republic of Turkey -via her sense of nationalism.

III. RESTRICTIONS OF NATIONALIST DISCOURSE: DEFENSE OF WOMEN'S RIGHTS: FEMINISM AND THE POLITICS OF WOMEN (1923-1927) AND BEING SILENCED (1927-1930)

This is the most significant period of Nezihe Muhiddin's activism because In the first few months of 1923 Nezihe Muhiddin would implement an active social and political agenda that encompassed the full approach of Anglo-Saxon feminism. This shift in emphasis occurred as a result of her scrutiny of the TGNA's decisive policy regarding republicanism and secularism. With the aim of implementing "women's rights " in the legal and social sphere of the new political order, Nezihe Muhiddin initiated the Women's People's Party to gain political and social rights of women in May 1923 -this just prior to the establishment of the First Group in the TGNA by Mustafa Kemal and his associates.

²⁰⁸ Nezihe Muhiddin's notion of "character" as described is a societal identity.

In this chapter I will examine Nezihe Muhiddin's period of activism and thought between the years from the beginning of 1923 up until 1927 -that is I will investigate her initial championing of and subsequent reservations concerning the nationalist discourse. This new period was commensurate with new power relations. The power relations in the formative years of the Republic took deeper root than those formulated during the II. Constitutional Era. The first group²⁰⁹ in the TGNA, under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, gained full power with its authoritarian methods. At the same time the focus of power shifted from Istanbul to Ankara. Within this framework Muhiddin initiated the formation of the WPP so that women might have a say in the sphere of power. Briefly after, when it became apparent that this was not going to be possible, she adopted a more feminist line in order to gain and have applied the rights that the new Republican regime seemed to promise. She concentrated on two related issues, one being the demand for political and social rights, the other being that in order for the regime to actualize its "reforms" women should have a place in the process of building nationhood. Muhiddin always maintained that if women did not gain their full rights the reforms would not be successful, and they would remain incomplete.

Nezihe Muhiddin forced the boundaries of the nationalist discourse on the woman's issue; she demanded that reforms concerning women be realized immediately. In falling afoul of the Kemalists, who wished to establish hegemony in this area, and in being silenced by the government, the restrictions of the nationalist discourse and the authoritarian nature of the Republican administration were revealed.

²⁰⁹ See Ahmet Demirel, *Birinci Meclis'te Muhalefet: İkinci Grup* (Opposition in the First TGNA: the Second Group) İletişim Yayınları: İstanbul, 1995 (2. Edition).

The nationalist ideology supported women's rights as a precondition for modernization. Yet in formulating laws²¹⁰ that established the primacy of males in middle class families, it sought to appeal to the male population on which support for power depended. Thus, while she accepted nationalist and republican discourse she called for a feminist and more radical transformation for women. Seeking to prevail over the limitations set by the dominant discourse by immediate implementation of the pledged reforms for women, she organized women into a pressure group and, as a result was silenced by the nationalist government. The Republican government of the foundation period sought to define the sphere of women through authoritarian means and, by not perceiving the gains made in this field as the result of the efforts made by women, tried to attribute these said gains as being the outcome of their own political power. In accusing such a prominent woman as Nezihe Muhiddin with corruption - thus destroying her reputation and exerting constant pressure on her- the Republican administration paved the way to her being silenced. The reason that no prominent woman of the caliber of Muhiddin came to the fore afterwards was due to the fact that the playing field was "swept clean". Such upholders of Kemalist ideology as Afetinan ensured that lines of women's history were redrawn to conform to the Kemalist framework. They manufactured the prototypical attitude, maintained up until the present, that "Women never struggled for their rights in Turkey, we furnished them with women's rights ". This Kemalist attitude is propounded by almost all women social scientists and women politicians to this day.²¹¹

²¹⁰ Y. Zihnioglu, "Mecelle".

²¹¹ This attitude and view, starting with Şirin Tekeli has been abandoned by the new generation of the women social scientists. After 1980 in Turkey, parallel to the development of academic feminism the new expansions and analyses in this field have become a rooted strand. In Şirin Tekeli's 1977 article "Siyasal İktidar Karşısında Kadın (Women in the Face of Political Power)" (*Toplum ve Bilim*, Güz

In this chapter I would argue for my thesis by examining the activities of Nezihe Muhiddin between the years 1923 to 1927. With the confirmation of the Republican administration, from 1923 onwards Nezihe Muhiddin began to argue for women's rights within the framework of the Anglo-Saxon feminist point of view. Foremost among the conditions for total equality of women was political rights, followed by the demand for the implementation of social, civil and citizenship rights. From 1923 onwards Nezihe Muhiddin successfully implemented this program concerning the politics of women and appropriate strategies, and brought them to the social agenda. A specific feature of Nezihe Muhiddin's feminism was her efforts in applying the thesis of Western feminism to the particularities of Turkish society. A source of this particularity lay in the trials and intellectual framework of the Ottoman women's movement in which Nezihe Muhiddin was nurtured. Without calling herself a feminist, she chose to defend feminism. In defending this attitude she helped to spread the feminist thesis in society and found supporters among women.

1977, no. 3, pp. 69-107) and in her book *Kadınlar ve Siyasal Toplumsal Hayat* (İstanbul: Birikim Yayınları, 1982) she played a pioneering role in establishing a woman's perspective in the social sciences. The research by female social scientists that she edited in the book *Woman of Turkey in the 1980's from a perspective of women (Kadın Bakış Açısından 1980'ler Türkiye'sinde Kadın*, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, 1990) is an important source on the generation of women's identity and thought.

i) Struggle for the Political and Civil Rights of Women: Attempt at Establishing the

Kadınlar Halk Fırkası (Women's People's Party) and the Hukuk-ı Aile
İctimai (Family Law Conference)

Inquiry by *Vakit*: "Should Women Participate in the Elections?" (April 1923)

Vakit newspaper, published by Hakkı Tarık Us and Asım Us, began an inquiry on the 18th April 1923 concerning whether women should run for the post of deputy of parliament and whether they should have the right to vote. This inquiry was conducted between the 18-21st April and was widely responded to -a portion of these responses being published.²¹² The ideas -both pro and con- concerning the recognition of political rights for women were featured. The majority of the responses supported woman's suffrage. Immediately after this inquiry in the month of May, through the initiative of Nezihe Muhiddin, a group of twelve women convoked a council to establish the WPP. The Council took place at Darülfünun conference hall and the decision was reached to establish the Party.

In a statement that Nezihe Muhiddin gave to *Vakit* newspaper²¹³ concerning the foundation of WPP in May, she said that woman's political rights had become an absolute necessity. She also indicated that the inquiry in *Vakit* had had an impact in the genesis of this movement. According to Nezihe Muhiddin the WPP would work to

²¹² See "Vakit'in Anketi: Kadınları İntihab (Vakit Inquiry: Elections of Women)", *Vakit*, 18-21 April 1339 {1923}.

²¹³ "İstanbul Kadınlarında Yeni Hareket: Hukuk-ı Siyasiye İsteyen Kadınlarımız (The New Movement Among Istanbul Women: Our Women Who Demand Political Rights)", *Vakit*, no. 1966, 3 June 1339 {1923}.

achieve women's political and social rights, and to work for the elevation of womanhood -it would pursue these rights under the aegis of the regime of the Republic. In this sense the WPP was a political society designed to execute women's politics.

The Notorious Article No. 2

The Party was refused the right to form. I argue that the refusal was based on Article No. 2 of the Party's regulations concerning political and social rights. Thus in the regulations contained in the platform of the Woman's Union (WU), the article was altered to contain the following statement: "In raising womanhood in the intellectual and societal fields, an elevated position commensurate with contemporary and progressive status will be achieved"²¹⁴. Later on when she published *Türk Kadını* in 1931, Nezihe Muhiddin wrote that by watering down certain articles of the WPP regulations, and by removing others, they were able to get the government to accept the formation of the WU. The watered-down article was none other than the notorious article no. 2 concerning political and social rights. Here it is apparent that the most objectionable part of the article of the WPP program was the "achievement of our political rights", hence the rejection of the Party's application for permission to form. Besides being concerned with political rights, Article no. 2 pointed out the need for the recognition of the existence of Turkish women in the country's political, social and economic life. This means that the government of the Republic deemed it inappropriate

²¹⁴ See "Belgeler: Kadın Dernekleri Programları", Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, pp. 340-341.

that Turkish women should prove their merit in the most important areas of Turkish society and thus achieve full rights. The notorious Article no. 2 goes as follows:

2- Hukuk-ı siyasiyyemizin istihsali ancak istihkak {hak etme} ve liyakata münevvit bulunduğu cihetle, Türk kadını memleketin siyasi, ictimai, iktisadi en mühim mesail-i hayatiyyesinde mütebariz bir şahsiyyet, kabiliyet ve failiyyet isbatına muvaffak olunca bütün bu safhat-i tekamüliyyenin muhassalası olan hakk-ı siyasisini temin edecek bir umde ilavesine hak kazanacaktır.²¹⁵

Nezihe Muhiddin did not totally give up on her aim of achieving political rights, but in order to form the WU she had to change her strategy as a result of the conditions imposed. Her most important goal in the period (1923-1927) in which she was allowed to operate on the political front consisted primarily in achieving political rights -as well as social and economic ones. As a matter of fact she expounds the main theme of political rights in her leading article in the very first issue of the *Kadın Yolu* (*Kadın Yolu*) journal, which began publication after the foundation of the WU. As we will see further on, Nezihe Muhiddin fell out of favor with the government when she tried to reintroduce article no. 2 in its original spirit.

²¹⁵ See “Şehrimizdeki Kadın Hareketi İlerliyor: Kadınlar Halk Fırkası Bugün Resmen Teşekkül Edecektir (The Woman’s Movement in Our City Advances: The Women’s People Party will Today be Officially Established)”, *Vakit*, no. 1979, 16 June 1339 {1923}, p. 1. See Appendix 3 for complete Party’s Program and Regulations.

In Preparation for the Women's Council (Kadınlar Şurası)

When the decision to hold new elections was made by the TGNA on the 1st April 1923²¹⁶, among those who responded to the said inquiry of the *Vakit* newspaper were İsmail Hakkı Bey (Muallim), Latife Bekir (Çeyrek başı), Nesime İbrahim, Mefharet. The debate inspired by *Vakit* reinvigorated the issue on the demands for women's rights.

Immediately after the inquiry in Istanbul, very likely with the participation of Nezihe Muhiddin, some women "related to the most enlightened strata of Turkish womanhood"... "an initial committee consisting of three ladies" to set up "a congress only for women"²¹⁷ went into action. In the 31st May 1339 {1923} issue of *Vakit* newspaper much space was devoted to news that the initial committee "being newly formed and thus not having decided upon a name and title, it had not yet gone into action". An important point is that the initial committee characterized itself as "müdefaa-i hukukçu". With this expression the committee implied that it supported the resistance in Anatolia during the National Defense period and that it was bound to the principles to which the newly forming Republic adhered to.

Its aim was go into action employing the "political rights of women" to take part in the parliamentary elections which were to be held in two years. It expressed that

²¹⁶ See Utkan Kocatürk, *Atatürk ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Tarihi Kronolojisi 1918-1938* (The Historical Chronology of Atatürk and the Republic of Turkey 1918-1938) Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1988 (2. Edition), p. 385. (Henceforth referred to as *Kronoloji*)

²¹⁷ "İstanbul'da Yeni Bir Hareket: Kadınlarımız Hukuk-ı Siyasiye İstiyorlar (A New Movement in Istanbul: Our Women Demand Their Political Rights)", *Vakit*, no. 1963, 31 May 1339 {1923}, p. 1.

“They were resolute in achieving the political rights of Turkish womanhood, they entertained no doubts at all that this would be achieved”.

The piece continues, in tone of expression and style very reminiscent of Nezihe Muhiddin's, by stating that this movement was attempting to answer “a genuine need” in proceeding with this struggle for political rights -rather than slavishly trying “to harmonize with the currents of the age or to say we must keep up with the other nations”. According to the statement, the soon to be convened “council” would specifically proceed towards the goal of achieving the right to vote and hold elected office by women.²¹⁸

The statement further added that “the seeds of this movement were sown long ago”. These words show that this new activism was part of the legacy of the women's movement of the II. Constitutional Era. The task that fell to womanhood was to nurture the sprouts that came from those seeds. “Everyone is afraid of womanhood's movement for political rights”, the piece further states, and there was no way that “bigoted opinion”, as the conservative segments of society was referred to, could possibly obstruct the movement's progress.²¹⁹

Shortly after the press statement made on the 30th May, things proceeded in such a way that by Friday the 15th June all preparations for the council to meet in the conference hall in Darülfünun had been completed. On the 3rd June 1339 {1923} - three days after the initial statement- *Vakit* newspaper devoted wide coverage on the council with the headlines “A New Movement Among Women of Istanbul, Our

²¹⁸ *Vakit*, *ibid.*

²¹⁹ *Vakit*, *ibid.*

Women Who Demand Political Rights”²²⁰. This article revealed the names of women who were establishing this “woman’s political association” and also included statements made by Nezihe. As in the previous statements, she reiterates that “the attainment of political rights for Turkish women ... had become a basic need”. The main goal was to achieve political rights. However this in itself would not be enough, they would work towards “achieving every position in which they were qualified”.

Nezihe Muhiddin stated that the women who had responded to *Vakit*’s inquiry on “Woman’s Suffrage” was a group firm in its resolution. She also relates that in the soon to be convened “council”, the program and the regulations of the new political association of women would be announced.

Muhiddin, in conveying her strategy for attaining political rights, explains that: “In the initial stages political rights would be demanded ‘only for intellectual women’”. The idea that prior to gaining the right to vote women should have the right to be elected was seen as a stage that would ultimately lead to full political rights. Yet the main aim for women to work towards was the attainment of the right to vote.

A day later, on the 4th June 1339 {1923}, *Vakit* newspaper printed an important article by Muhiddin concerning political rights entitled “The Rights of the Turkish Woman”. Here she exhibits her evolutionary views as they apply to the “woman’s question”. She states that “in order for ideas to reach fruition they must go through appropriate stages”. That is, from the current perspective concerning political rights -given the previously prepared foundation of “reform” in Turkey- this movement’s time had come. The status of woman was “determined by the times and

²²⁰ *Vakit*, no. 1966, 3 June 1339 {1923}.

the need.” Even to ask the question of whether women were capable of assuming these social positions was, in Muhiddin’s words, a “disgrace to our women”. There simply was no need for a debate on “has its time come.” Muhiddin did not feel it necessary for women to gain the permission of Islam and other such social determinants in attaining this status. For her the only determinants were the exigencies of modern life: “The particularities of our country and the requirements of the age are the perfect guide in this matter.”

What was to be the leit motif of the women’s movement for political rights? Muhiddin’s answer was that “in whichever work women could succeed, the ultimate beneficiary would be the nation”. In comparing men to women in terms of rights, Muhiddin makes plain that this is useless. “Once it has been accepted that women have a position in every field in the country”, “where ever the present need and conditions take us, there women would take their place in society.” Muhiddin is emphatic on “genuine need”. Yet what would happen if the government and the political culture do not recognize this movement and the rights of women? In this case Muhiddin makes a sharp and uncompromising retort:

Onları bize vermeseler bile biz onları alacağız. Hiç şüphesiz hak, azmin, filin ve liyakatındır. Kadınlarımızın, şu on beş seneden beri ibraz ettiği fikr-i teşebbüs ve faaliyyet o mevkilere oturmak için bize bir hak bahş etmiştir. Memleketin ihtiyacat-ı hakikiyyesi de o mevkilere bizim sahip olmaklığımızı emrediyor.²²¹

²²¹ Nezihe Muhiddin, “Türk Kadınının Hakkı (The Rights of the Turkish Woman)”, *Vakit*, no. 1967, 4 June 1339 {1923}.

From this it is apparent that in an era where the political authority has not been completely established, where the limitations on the notion of womanhood has not yet been determined, that in order for women to take their place in the spheres of power and authority, Muhiddin speaks for the recognition of unconditional rights for women -and her audience consists of women themselves. This article is one of the first examples of her strategy in regards to achieving political and social rights and the emancipation of women. She will continue to defend this strategy in the years to come. Muhiddin understands social rights as consisting of equality in terms of citizenship and recognition of civil law; the barriers to education, professional and working life must be removed. Moreover, Muhiddin felt that support for the women and girls left destitute by the war should be furnished; widows should be given the opportunity to work. One will see that the traces of her initiatives with charity associations before the Republic will be apparent in her work.

In the article mentioned above, while Muhiddin defends the need for political rights for women, in order to back up her argument, she reminds the reader of two aspects pertaining to the previous struggles by women. Firstly, Muhiddin maintains that in the previous fifteen years the ideas and actions women have championed have assured them of their rights to this status. Here Muhiddin emphasizes the continuity between the present and the II. Constitutional Era in terms of women's organizing, their writing and defense of women's history. Secondly, she asserts that Anatolian women's participation in the resistance during the National Defense period ensured women of their political rights. "The noble woman of Anatolia took spade and pick in hand, she ensured that her children were fed; not stopping there, on seeing that the

sacred homeland was in danger, she raised her rifle to her shoulder.” Women themselves participated in the defense of the homeland: she “proved herself to be a loyal and true child of the homeland”. Within every strata of our social life women played an “apparent and effective role” and they “deserve to benefit from our political rights.” In short, women proved their competence, that they were hardworking, patriotic, rational individuals, who as equal members of the nation with men, had the right to claim their civil rights.

On the 6th June 1339 {1923} *Vakit* newspaper published another news item under the headlines “The Council of Turkish Women: Intellectual Turkish Women Proceed in Preparing for Council”. The newspaper announces that the Council to be held on the 15th June has completed its preparations. An important point in this piece of news is that the association that is to be established will be formed by the “women’s branch of the Müdafaa-i Hukuk Society. This approach is in accordance with the later desire to establish a “women’s arm” in the People’s Party. It is apparent that Muhiddin and her circle sought to ally themselves with the powerful parties of that period in order to gain political and social rights for women.

Furthermore, in the same news item it is reiterated that the final composition of the organization will be firmly established at the woman’s council; it explains how it will proceed in gaining “the political rights of the Turkish woman” and that the political association seeks to organize in a participatory manner.²²²

²²² “Türk Kadınlar Şurası: Münevver Türk Kadınlarının Şura Hazırlığı İlerliyor (The Turkish Women’s Meeting: The Preparations for the Meeting of Turkish Intellectual Women Proceed)”, *Vakit*, 6 June 1339 {1923}.

The Women's Council, held on 15th June, made an important decision towards the founding of the WPP. At the end of 1922 Mustafa Kemal revealed that he wish to establish the People Party.²²³ As much as six months after this announcement the women in Istanbul attempted to establish the WPP.

On the 16th June 1923 *Vakit* newspaper featured an important news item on its front page. The headlines read: "The Women's movement Proceeds in Our City; Today the WPP is to be officially established". Underneath the headlines the WPP program was introduced as being a guide to further the social, political and economic progress of women. According to the news the women would that very day submit the Party's declaration to the regional governor. In the text of the declaration the women indicated that their disparate activities would be united under the program of the Party and, in conjunction with this, its aim was for the movement to take on a grassroots character. Women were going to fulfill their sacred and commonly held duties (with men) and consequently within a short period of time they would achieve their political rights:

Memleketimizin her noktasında siyasi, iktisadi ve ictimai bütün bu meselede kadının doğrudan doğruya veya dolayısıyla dahl ve tesirinden azade kalmış bir keyfiyet bulunmasına rağmen bu mesai gözle görünür derecede bariz değildir. ... kadınlarımızı ictimai, siyasi ve iktisadi safhat-ı tekamuliyeden geçirerek

²²³ On 6 December 1922, Mustafa Kemal announced to the journalist of *Hakimiyet-i Milliye*, *Yenigün* and *Öğüt* newspapers in Ankara that he intended to form a political party to be called "the People's Party". (Later on called the Republican People's Party {Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası/Partisi}). See Utkan Kocatürk, *Kronoloji*, p. 371.

bunların muhassılası olan hakk-ı siyasisine en ve kısa ve dürüst yoldan isal eyleyecektir.²²⁴

Vakit newspaper mentions that the preparations for the formation of the Party were accomplished in a private home - quite possibly in Nezihe Muhiddin's own house:²²⁵

... bir kaç haftadan beri Türk kadınlığının hakk-ı siyasisini kazanmak emeliyle faaliyete geçen İstanbul'un on iki hanımı, şehrin mütevazi bir mahallesinin yine mütevazi bir evinde teşebbüsleri ve nihai içtimalarını akd etmişlerdir. Dünkü feyzli ictimâ sonunda hanımlar heyet-i müteşebbisesi hareketlerinin kuvveden fiile çıkması için bir teazi teşkiline lüzum görerek (Kadınlar Halk Fırkası) namı altında siyasi cemiyyetlerini teşkil edip beyanname ve nizamnamelerini tesbit etmişlerdir. Beyannameleriyle nizamnamenin suretini bugün vilayete tevdi ederek faaliyete geçeceklerdir.²²⁶

The date for the application to the governor and the founding of the WPP is given by both *Vakit* newspaper and *Süs* magazine as the 16th June 1339 {1923}. As for Nezihe Muhiddin, the party's founder and president, she states in *Türk Kadını* that she went into action in forming the Party on the very night of the declaration of the

²²⁴ *Vakit*, ibid, 16 June 1339 {1923}.

²²⁵ See *Türk Kadını*, pp. 92-93.

²²⁶ *Vakit*, ibid, 16 June 1339 {1923}.

establishment of the Republic -the 29th October 1923.²²⁷ However, *Vakit* newspaper and *Süs* magazine document that the application to the governor for permission to found the WPP was submitted on the 15th June 1339 {1923}. We know that preparations for the formation of the party were first announced on the 31st May 1923.²²⁸ I could explain Muhiddin's shift in dates, which is illustrated in her book published in 1931, as the result of her efforts to establish a bridge between the WPP and the People Party.

The Women's People's Party's Program and Regulations

The Party's program and regulations were published in the same news item. In the *Vakit* piece one encounters the names of the members of the Administrative Council in the Declaration submitted to the Governor.²²⁹ Contained in the WPP program and nine articles of the regulations is a comprehensive platform for women's rights. Once again mention is made of a program to support the victims of the war, that is, widows of fallen soldiers and women refugees. The first three articles deal with the issue of political rights. According to the first article of the program for woman that the WPP seeks to enact, it will organize "not only in theoretical terms but in implementation" as well. The first goal is political rights, but in order to achieve these a

²²⁷ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 64 and p. 92.

²²⁸ In 1931 the year when her book *Türk Kadını* was published, was the date wherein Nezihe Muhiddin was forced to leave politics. In this light the book is intended as a response to and defence against Mustafa Kemal and his colleagues who remove Nezihe Muhiddin from the political scene. In the succeeding section entitled Defence: *Türk Kadını* the style, tone and the misrepresentation of information will be analyzed.

²²⁹ *Vakit*, *ibid.* 16 June 1339 {1923}.

gradual process has been envisioned: According to the wording of the 2. article "In clearly manifesting herself in terms of her identity, capability and initiative, the Turkish woman will prove herself vis-à-vis the most grave matters facing the country regarding its social, political and economic realities." By succeeding in this, the Turkish woman will "gain the rights to contribute an article for political rights" in the Party's program. Article no. 3 states that the WPP will endeavor to have women participate in the forthcoming municipal elections.

Article no. 4 outlines the creation of the "economic woman". This article is a continuation of Nezihe Muhiddin's earlier efforts begun during the Union Progress Era. Article no. 4 can be appraised as a modest attempt for women to put into practice the notion of national economy. The Party will strive to achieve "economic reconciliation": They will try to accumulate the savings accrued from the work they have expended in the home and, in life outside of the home, will endeavor to be producers. Women will work to produce goods from the raw materials present in our country; to use only domestic products; to convert valuables outside of circulation, such as jewelry and gold, into capital; to establish factories and companies and, in so doing, benefit from the labor potential of women.

4- Kadınlar Halk Fırkası "sulh-i iktisadımızın teminininde" muhim bir amil olacaktır. Fırka gayesine vasl için: Kadınlarımızın hayat-ı dahiliyye ve beytiyyede {eve ait} semerat-ı mesaiyi tasarruf ve tüzüğüne nazım, hayat-ı hariciyye ve umumiycede müstahsil olmasına say olacaktır. Dahili ma'mulatin istihlakine... mevad-ı ibtidaiyyesi {hammaddesi} memleketimizde bulunan

mamulat ve masmuat vücuda getirmeğe... mevcut mensucat fabrikalarının mamulatını yirminci asrın zevkiyle te'lif etmeğe... mensucatin harc-ı alem bir şekle efrağına... Gayr-i mutedavil {dolaşıma girmeyen} ziynet-i altunu ve mücevherat gibi servetin sermaye haline gelmesine... Şahsi sermayenin umumileştirilmesine bunlarla tezyinat-ı libasiyye (aksesuar malzemesi) ve melbusat {giyim} fabrikaları ve şirketler tesisine, ihracına ve'l-hasıl atıl kadın ellerinden ameli istifadeler teminine çalışacaktır.

Article no. 5 deals with the education of women. Here an important point was to shorten the period of mothers' raising of children, no doubt this was an attempt to introduce some form of day care. The program sought to provide education for girls appropriate to the new social conditions -that is to attempt to modernize. This article demands that the Ministry of Education appoint women civil servants qualified in these matters. Article no. 6 deals with the issue of support for "widows and poor women" as well as that of families of dead soldiers. Article no. 7 states that in times of war women may be called to military service. Article no. 8 aims to reform "family and marriage laws" in the best possible manner vis-à-vis women's interests:

7- Harb vukuunda ale'l-umum kadınların hizmette muavenet etmeleri hususu nazar-ı itibara alınarak icab eden tedabire tevassul olunacaktır.

8- Aile ve izdivac kanunlarının bir şekl-i mükemmele efrağına,²³⁰

²³⁰ *Vakit*, ibid, 16 June 1339 {1923}.

Article no. 9 states that in order for these goals to be achieved, the Party will strive for the enlightenment of women.

Aims

As can be seen from the regulations of the WPP, this organization was formed with the primary aims of gaining political rights for women and elevating their social and the economic status. According to the 1. article the aims contained within the party regulations were designed for the de facto organization of women. The second article states that after women, through the auspices of this organization, have demonstrated their existence in the political, social and economic fields, they will have gained the right to obtain their political rights.

Here, it is difficult to sustain Zafer Toprak's argument. In his article Toprak maintains that the primary goal of the WPP was not political.²³¹ The comment in *Süs* magazine is not borne out by the WPP regulations and program. The Party's general secretary, the writer/poet Şükûfe Nihal writes in an article entitled "Our Party's Ideals" in the following issue of the same magazine that, the Party's program is to ensure "women's social, economic and, subsequently, political rights".²³²

²³¹ "Even though the word party is included in the WPP's name, its main goal was not "political". Sooner or later political rights would be achieved. The important thing for women initially was socialization and education. (Her ne kadar fırka adını taşıyorsa da Kadınlar Halk Fırkası'nın ana hedefi "siyasi" nitelikte değildir. Siyasal haklar ergeç kazanılacaktır; ancak kadınlar için öncelikle toplumsallaşma ve eğitim önemlidir)." Zafer Toprak, "Kadınlar Halk Fırkası".

²³² Şukûfe Nihal, "The Ideals of Our Party (Fırkamızın Mefkuresi)", *Süs*, no. 3, 30 June 1339{1923}, pp. 3-4.

In Şükûfe Nihal's article, she points out the problems women have in relation to the family and social situation, and indicates that the Party will attempt to solve these problems. One of the most discussed issues of the day was the argument that when women had gained their political and social rights they would neglect their family duties as mothers and wives. This argument was put forth by male writers ever since women had first demanded their rights. The press had been covering the issue since 1868. That is, this argument had been around ever since the women's movement had gained momentum and the woman's press had become more influential in the II. Constitutional Era. This argument persisted even into the years of the National Struggle.²³³ This question, which was raised on the agenda by male writers and certain women, could not be avoided by activist elements in the women's movement; and women journalists participated in this debate from various viewpoints. In her article, Şükûfe Nihal expresses the WPP's stance vis-à-vis this issue by saying that it is not the purpose of the movement to separate women from the family, but rather to ensure the opportunity of women to work when "in the state of need".²³⁴

²³³ These writers and politicians were: Mahmut Sadık Bey, Mahmut Esat Efendi, Şemsettin Sami, Celal Nuri (İleri), Ferit Vecdi, Sedat Simavi, Yunus Nadi, Hakkı Tanık Us, Şükrü Kaya, Peyami Safa, Necip Ali (Küçük), Cahit Caka, Faliş Rıfkı (Atay), Yakup Kadri (Karaosmanoğlu), Recep Peker, Ahmet Ağaoğlu, Celal Sahir, Enver Behnan (Şapolyo), Ruşen Eşref (Ünaydın), Reşat Nuri (Güntekin), Yaşar Nabi (Nayır), Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, Ömer Seyfettin, Mustafa Runyun, Refet Rodoplu, Mustafa Şekip (Tunç), İsmayıl Hakkı (Baltacıoğlu), Hüseyin Rahmi (Gürpınar), Nazım İçsel, Ademoğlu, Ahmed Asım Onur, Sabri Şakir Ansay, Ahmet Cevat, Besim Ömer, Nafî Atıf (Kansu), Salahaddin Asım, Ferit Vecdi, Aka Gündüz (Akay), Behiy el-Huliy, Emin Kasım, Mustafa Sibai, Zekeriya Sertel, Mazhar Osman.

²³⁴ Şükûfe Nihal, *ibid.*

Women Do Exist!

On the 19th of June 1339 {1923} in an article published by *Tanin* newspaper entitled "Statement by Vice-president Nimet Rumejde on the Women's People's Party, its Aims, Operational Methods, its Goals", Nimet Rumejde responded to the criticisms and claims made against the Party. In a forthright manner Rumejde stated that contrary to those who thought the Party had a "hidden" aim, this just was not so. In fact, women were working alongside men for the elevation and progress of the country. Women sought to work in an organized and scheduled fashion "in all fields". While the men were actively engaged in this process, of course no one could expect women to remain immobile and as spectators. Turkish women's hearts quivered to be of service to their homeland and felt the need to be active. A group of thinking and intellectual women gathered together and made the decision to establish an organization. After confirmation by the government, the Party would strive with firm belief and will, allowing nothing to stand in its way, to attain women's rights. Rather than for "political aspirations", Nimet Rumejde emphasizes that the Party will work for women's rights. She found the claim that Turkish women were behind their counterparts in the West hasty. It is impossible to avoid the "existence" of woman:

Daha ilk günden beri birçok münevver hanımlar bize müracaat ederek gayelerimizin tahakkuku için çalışmağa hazır olduklarını beyan etmişlerdir. Şimdiden iddia edebilirim ki, mevcudiyetimiz kabil-i ihmal değildir.

....

Türk kadınının, garb kadınlarından çok geri olduğunu iddia edecek kadar garabet gösterecek yazılar ise bizim azim ve imanımızı daha ziyade takviye edecektir.

....

Biz ne mebus olmak istiyoruz, ne de siyasi cereyanlar peşinde koşmak niyetindeyiz. Bizim en birinci emelimiz ictimai ve iktisadi gayelerin tahakkukunu görmektir. Çalışacağız ve isbat edeceğiz ki kadın bir memleket için na-kabil-i ihmal bir kemiyettir. Bunu isbat ettikten sonra da hakkımızı isteyeceğiz. Daha doğrusu: "Veriniz!" demeyeceğiz. Alıncaya kadar çalışacağız, memleket için fedakarane bir surette çalışıp muvaffak olduktan sonra, erkekler de bizim hakkımızı tasdik etmeyecekler mi ?... Elbette evet. Zaten bunu da biz hiç hatırıma bile getirmedik.²³⁵

As these statements make quite clear, with the expression "as women we also..." the struggle to exist that began in the 1860s in Ottoman society carried over to 1923 in expressing firmly and resolutely that under the administration of the Republic "it is not possible to deny our existence".

²³⁵ "Kadınlar Halk Fırkası Faaliyette (The WPP in Action)", *Vakit*, no. 1989, 26 June 1339 {1923}, p.1.

Its Initiatives

As soon as the institution had submitted its regulations to the governor, the women gathered around the Party began to act. The first goal they set for themselves was to arrange a congress on Vocational Training and Education. On the 26th June 1339 {1923} *Vakit* newspaper covered the Party's activities in its news.²³⁶

The newspaper first described in detail the Party's founders and provided information on their previous activities. Further on the Party's founder, Nezihe Muhiddin, delivers a long statement. In this statement Muhiddin says that in this period one is striving for "the complete healing and welfare of the country" and she stresses that if womanhood is neglected this healing process will be inconclusive. In such a period as this education should be based on positivism and science; the latest teaching methods should be applied. At the same time the goal of education should be to inculcate the students with the "national ideal", to instill "patriotism, will power, national resolve and resistance". Thus for these reasons the WPP decided to organize an education congress. At this congress the goals and methods of national education were to be determined. The Ministry of Education should consider the discussions and the suggestions covered by the congress.²³⁷

The active members of the Party finished the preparations for the congress and, just as the members were gathering together, the Ministry of Education established a "Training and Education" facility and all the members and invitees were called to

²³⁶ *Vakit*, *ibid.*

²³⁷ *Vakit*, *ibid.*

Ankara.²³⁸ In this round about way, Nezihe Muhiddin's suggestion that the Ministry of Education consider the Congress resolutions, was accepted. But with a glaring difference: The Congress was not held, the members were soon invited to the Training and Education facility, and in this manner the benefit of their thoughts were taken into consideration.²³⁹

Meanwhile, months had passed and yet a response to the WPP's application for permission to form had not come from Ankara. On the 8th August 1339 {1923} a short item in *Vakit* newspaper stated that the "Ministry of Interior has postponed its response to the WPP's application to be established." Autumn passed with no response from the government. While the Party's founders prepared to go into action they continued to await a response from the government.

Family Law Conference (Hukuk-ı Aile İctimai)

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1923, the WPP waited for approval from the Interior Ministry in Ankara. With the new year an important development in Ankara for women was ushered in. The government took an initial step in hammering out a new civil code and the TGNA tentatively began its review of the 1917 Hukuk-ı Aile Kararnamesi²⁴⁰ (Family Law Decree), with the aim of making alterations.²⁴¹ It

²³⁸ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, pp. 100-101.

²³⁹ I was not able to find out whether Nezihe Muhiddin attended these meetings or not.

²⁴⁰ Hukuk-u Aile Kararnamesi: a provisional decree issued by the Ottoman Parliament in 1908, which placed restrictions on Talak (Islamic Law of Divorce) and Taaddüd-ü Zevcat (polygamy). See, Mehmet Ö. Alkan, *Tanzimat'tan Sonra Kadının Hukuksal Statüsü ve Devletin Evlilik Sürecine Müdahalesi Üzerine* (On the Legal Status of Woman and State Interference in Marriage Procedure After the Tanzimat), *Toplum ve Bilim*, Yaz 1990, p. 50.

could be that outcome of these efforts was that the Minister of Justice Seyyit Bey proposed to enact the Family Law in the TGNA by the end of 1923. Mustafa Kemal rejected this proposal on the grounds that the same issues would be dealt with in enacting a civil code. Accordingly, as the history book compiled by the Society for Turkish Historical Research (Türk Tarih Tetkik Cemiyeti) pointed out, a committee of 26 jurists was formed and started the preparatory work on the Turkish Civil Code on September 11, 1924.²⁴²

Meanwhile in January 1924, on hearing that the Family Law Decree was to be discussed, Muhiddin, along with her activist colleagues, went into action in Istanbul. Nezihe Muhiddin called for a conference of women to hold a debate on the Family Law Decree. After a speech by Nezihe Muhiddin, “concerning a matter of the gravest importance to all womanhood there will be a discussion.”²⁴³ The conference was for women only. On the 17th January 1340 {1924} the meeting was held in Türk Ocağı (Turkish Heart). Many women attended, including Halide Edib, and a fiery discussion took place concerning what they envisioned family law to cover. They spoke out in favor of an egalitarian family law saying “In our family structure we face two disasters: 1- Polygamy, 2- Islamic Divorce.” Subsequently a commission composed of women was elected to be assigned the task of following up on this issue.²⁴⁴ The Commission

²⁴¹ In this matter one can assert that there were two tendencies in the TGNA. The first was to accept the amendment to the Decree on Family Law, the second was to translate and pass the Civil Code of Switzerland or France. There was no open debate on this issue in the TGNA.

²⁴² *Tarih IV* (History IV), T.T.T. Cemiyeti. Milli Eğitim Vekaleti, Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1934, p. 230.

²⁴³ “İstanbul Hanımlarına Bir Davet (An Invitation to the Ladies of Istanbul)”, from Taha Toros’ Archive, undated, location unknown. The date of this notice is presumably 16 January 1340 {1924}.

²⁴⁴ This committee consisted of such names as Halide Edib, Sabiha Zekeriya (Sertel), Muallim Nakiye and Nezihe Muhiddin, Ahmet Emin (Yalman) was an assistant. Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, pp. 106-119.

submitted a “covering memorandum” to the TGNA.²⁴⁵ After this meeting the Istanbul press held wide coverage on the issue. *Süs* magazine brought out a special issue entitled “Special Issue on Family Law”.²⁴⁶ *Tanin* newspaper devoted three consecutive days to articles written by women on the subject. And in this way the debate on the Civil Code had an impact on public opinion.

The Government Thwarts the WPP’s Formation

Why did the government not grant the WPP permission to form? The clearest explanation comes from Nezihe Muhiddin herself. According to Muhiddin the WPP was thwarted because of the “extreme” items in its regulations and the argument on the part of the government that it should not allow women to form a party who had not yet had their political rights recognized:

Tetkik ettik henüz siyasi haklarını almamış olan kadınların fırka teşkiline kanunen müsaade edilemeyeceği cevabını aldık. Aramızda bazı hanımlar nizamnamenin çok taşkın olduğunu ileri sürdüler. Çünkü bu nizamnamede ‘Kadınlarımızın vazifei askeriyelerini ifa edeceklerine’ dair bir madde bile

²⁴⁵ This memorandum was not registered in the TGNA’s minutes. See Yaprak Zihnioğlu, “How the Male Deputies Dealt With the Issue of Women’s Rights in Turkish Grand National Assembly During the Period of 1920-1934”, June 1995, unpublished research paper, BÜ, İİBF, POLS. (Henceforth referred to as “Male Deputies”).

²⁴⁶ *Süs*, no, 33, 26 January 1340 {1924}. In this issue the full text of Nezihe Muhiddin’s opening speech and the views of other writers on the subject such as Abdullah Cevdet, Ahmed Haşim were featured.

mevcuttu.... Nizamnameyi mümkün olduğu kadar tadil ettik. Ve cemiyetin ismine de “Türk Kadın Birliği” ünvanını vererek tekrar vilayete takdim eyledik.

...Bu sefer bir hafta sonra vilayet mevcudiyetimizi tastik ve nizamnameyi kabul etti.²⁴⁷

This subject was only accorded minimal space in the news -on the 16th February 1340 {1924} *Tanin* only mentioned in one line that the Party's program was not approved by the government in an article entitled “The Ladies' Union Attempts to Launch a New Program”.²⁴⁸

Zafer Toprak offers two explanations as to why the government did not grant permission to the Party. He asserts the possibility that the PP, being an organization designed to “encompass the whole nation”, appraised the WPP as being “separatist”. The other possibility was that the similarity in the two party's names was considered suspect and a possible source for confusion:

Ancak, Kadınlar Halk Fırkası bir erkek müşavirlik ihdas eder ve başına Fethi Bey'i getirirse de Ankara'nın onayını almayı başaramaz. Ankara tüm ulusu kapsayacak Halk Fırkası hazırlıkları içersindedir. “Bölücü” nitelikte bir fırka günün koşullarına uygun düşmez. Hem “halk fırkası” kuruluş aşamasındaki partinin adıdır. Her ne kadar başına “kadın” sözcüğü eklense de bu adı kullanması doğru olmayacaktır.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁷ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 101.

²⁴⁸ *Vakit*, ibid.

²⁴⁹ Zafer Toprak, “Kadınlar Halk Fırkası”.

However, in her book Nezihe Muhiddin defends the WPP by claiming that they did not want to distance themselves from the PP, on the contrary, they sought to act as a “network of women’s activities centered around” the PP. She stresses that this desire was “sincere”.²⁵⁰ The positive attitude that the founders of the WPP had towards the government in Ankara did not have an affect on the government’s stance. While the organization awaited official recognition, the 1. Group in the TGNA (advocating a one-party system) under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal gained the upperhand and won the election. I would here argue that government’s opposition to the WPP was a result of the Party’s most comprehensive program concerning women’s rights, and that the said rights were being championed by a highly organized and determined group of women. This organization and program was not coherent with Mustafa Kemal’s and his colleges’ policies. An important part of the government’s own program regarding modernization concerned the issue of women’s rights , and in giving weight to the instrumental aspect of the issue, saw the inclusion of these as an indicator of the contemporary nature of the Republic. Furthermore it sought to realize women’s rights within the limits it itself would set. In terms of the Party’s organization and program, as well as in its timing, the WPP seemed to interfere with the government’s own women’s rights policy. It was apparent that in the WPP’s program, and in its founder’s statements and writing in the press, the organization would go beyond the limits prescribed by the government and would become an authority -even become a pressure group. The attitude of the Kemalists could be summed up with the slogan “We gave women their rights” and they certainly would not countenance anyone else

²⁵⁰ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 95.

taking the credit for having championed women's rights. The WPP emerged from a group of activist and intellectual women who, in both the field of women and the related field of constructing a nation, demanded a share in the political and social power structure. This preceding statement contradicts Zafer Toprak's position as to why the Party was rejected. If this position were so then the articles of the regulations in the Woman's Union could have remained the same -as the Woman's Union was not a political party but merely an association. Yet the nine articles of the WPP were significantly "watered-down" in preparing the Woman's Union regulations. This signifies that it was not merely a question of the similarity of the party names and typology of the organization, the problem rested in the contents of the WPP's declaration.

As Nezihe Muhiddin subsequently relates, the founding committee significantly changed the Party's regulations and began efforts to establish the Woman's Union "association".

ii) The Establishment of the Woman's Union (15th February 1924)

The founding committee learned that the government had rejected their application to form the WPP through verbal channels (apparently there was no written response). They proceeded to completely change the second article in their regulations concerning political rights. In its place they altered the article by saying the purpose was "To elevate womanhood in the intellectual and social fields and to achieve for it a modern and superior position". Here one of the striking changes made regarding the

achievement of this goal was the inclusion into the program of the view that the association's first aim was to train young girls to be proper mothers. The second and third articles concerning "the election of women to municipal office" were completely removed and in their place the statement that "the society has no connection with politics" was inserted.²⁵¹ Besides merely one sentence concerning economics, all goals related to social rights, economic development, military service and the family and marriage are completely removed. After the first six of the 27 articles documented, the items merely cover details concerning the operational methods of the association.²⁵² The lion had lost its roar! It is obvious that the program had been prepared within the parameters acceptable to the government. The first five of the articles of the society's program were as follows:

Madde 1: 5 Şubat 1340 {1924} tarihinde İstanbul'da "Kadın Birliği" namıyla bir cemiyet teşkil edilmiştir.

Madde 2 : Birliğin maksadı: Kadınlığı fikri ve ictimai sahalarda yükselterek asrı ve mütekâmil bir mevkiye erdirmektir. Birlik bu gayeye vâsul için: Genç kızları hakiki valide yetiştirmek, kadınlık âlemindeki feci ictimai yaraları tasfiye etmek, dul, bîkes ailelere ve tahsil-i iptidaiyedeki çocuklarına yardım etmek, kadınlığı harici hayat-ı mesaiyeye teşvik ve müstahsil bir hale getirmek, sanayi ve mamulat-ı dahiliyeye karşı rağbete teşvik etmek için sarf-ı mesai ederek

²⁵¹ Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, pp. 340-1.

²⁵² These details were probably requested by the government.

konferanslar tertip, müsamereler ihzar, serbest halk dersleri küşad ve eserler neşr edecektir.

Madde 3: Birliğin siyasetle alakası yoktur.

Madde 4: Birliğin aza-yı tabiyesi kadınlardan müteşekkildir.

Madde 5: Kadınlığın teâlisini arzu eden her Türk ve Müslüman hanım cemiyete aza olabilir. ²⁵³

Vakit newspaper provided detailed information, including CV's on the founding members of the WPP.²⁵⁴ *Tanin* newspaper reported on the founders of the WU:

Reise: Nezihe Muhyiddin, katib-i umumi: Muzaffer, murahhas mesul: Nimet Hanımlar. Azalar: Sabiha Zekerriyya, Halet Şükrü, Latife Bekir, Saziye Afif, İffet İhsan, Aliyye Esad ve Güzide Osman Hanımlar ile musavir doktor Fethi Bey. ²⁵⁵

It is striking that among the founding members one encounters Sabiha Zekeriya (Sertel). Even though Sabiha Sertel was a founding member of the Union there is no mention of her in the press. The activist women who made up the Union represent quite diverse views and thoughts concerning womanhood -ranging from those based on philanthropy to those demanding political rights. Nezihe Muhiddin, Nimet

²⁵³ See "Belgeler: Kadın Dernekleri Programları", Serpil Çakır, *Osmanlı Kadın Hareketi*, pp. 340-342.

²⁵⁴ *Vakit*, 26 June 1339 {1923}, no. 1989, p. 1.

²⁵⁵ "Hanımlar Birliği Yeni Bir Program ile Saha-i Faaliyete Atılıyor (WU Initiates with a New Program) *Tanin*, no. 485, 16 February 1340 {1924}, p. 3.

Rumeyde and Şükûfe Nihal championed political rights. As a conflict emerged amongst administrative committee in 1927 one can surmise that differences of opinion regarding the aims of the society existed. As a matter of fact when the society split into two factions, Muhiddin was described by some society members as an "extremist". According to the standards of the day Nezihe Muhiddin was not only just an "extremist" in her defense of women's rights, she was also a charismatic individual. She was ambitious, full of initiative, a good writer and public speaker. She upheld the "ideals of womanhood" that she had inherited and she sacrificed herself for those ideals. Her private life was subsumed by her ideals. In the years in which she was president of the Turkish Women's Union (TWU) her charismatic personality was influential in creating the public image of the society.

Nezihe Muhiddin was not the only active member of the society. Her circle, the ones with whom she shared the same ideas, consisted of "a group of fifty people belonging to the central committee", and this team came up with the TWU's main line. Among these women were writers, poets and individuals who had done previous work in other women's associations. "Eleven ladies who established and administered the Party" served as members of the operational committee. It is indicated that the society "represents four hundred ladies in Istanbul". In the 7. article of the WU program (1924) it states that men "may participate in the society as auxiliary members but "they can not attend meetings and may not vote".

iii) The Initiatives and Activities of the Turkish Women's Union Between 1924-1927

When the WU received permission to exist from the Regional Governor, it began to initiate the previously mentioned program under the leadership of Nezihe Muhiddin. In 1925 the association changed its name to the Turkish Women's Union.²⁵⁶

In that era the Woman's Union was the most important association in regards to the assertion of women's rights. Its president Nezihe Muhiddin's statements were featured prominently in the newspapers between the years spanning the foundation of the association in February 1924 and Nezihe Muhiddin's resignation in September 1927. The society managed to elicit the public's interest, became a presence on the daily agenda, and was covered thoroughly in the news and statements of the press. The society also published a weekly journal known as *Kadın Yolu (Kadın Yolu)*, releasing 30 issues between 1925-1927. The owner and the editor-in-chief of *Kadın Yolu* was Nezihe Muhiddin.²⁵⁷ The journal ceased publication after Nezihe Muhiddin was forced to resign from her position as president of the society in September 1927.

The activities of the TWU had two main emphases. On the one hand there was an emphasis on philanthropic initiatives directed towards unemployed, destitute women in finding them work and educating their children. The other emphasis primarily concerned the achievement of political rights and all that that entailed. With the government's rejection of the WPP the "issue of the state of the homeland", in regards

²⁵⁶ I was not able to find any information on why this change was made. The press would continue to use the name "Woman's Union" for some time to come.

²⁵⁷ Even though Nezihe Muhiddin was not mentioned as the main writer of the journal, the lead articles were Nezihe Muhiddin's in *Kadın Yolu*.

to producing solutions and the participation of women in the nation-building process, was insinuated into the seemingly less threatening initiatives embraced by the Society - thus an attempt was made to circumvent the government's prohibition.

Three months after the formation of the WU it applied to the regional governor to be recognized as a "public interest association". The governor requested that the Society submit an "activities report". We see from this activity report the "watered-down", lowered "aims" have reappeared. It is apparent from the language in the activities report that the WU had not totally given up on the aims contained in the WPP program. This report above all emphasizes that the government of the Republic has opened up "fruitful and progressive" horizons for women. The Society points out that in a period of upheaval, which is synonymous with periods of "reformation and progress" it would be a powerful "regulator" in the world of women. It would strive to serve to "furnish the needs starting from the most obvious ones to the least apparent." The interesting thing here is that in its activities report it states that it has been pursuing its initiatives for a year. We understand from this that the activity report encompasses the initiatives of both the WU, which had only been established three months previously, and those of the defunct WPP. The report narrates the two emphases mentioned above. In referring to duties of motherhood it also reiterates that it is the "essential and noble duty of women in society". Women must also fulfill the duties that are their lot in terms of the needs of a modern age according to the demands of society.²⁵⁸

²⁵⁸ "Kadın Birliği Hakkında Etraflı Malumat (Detailed Information Concerning WU)", *İkdam*, no. 9755, 30 May 1340 {1924}, p. 2.

The WU states that it aims to “gather together our enlightened women, who from the bottom of their hearts, wish to work for the benefit and felicity of the country, and will be organized in various areas.” The report also mentions that the WU consists of four hundred women members and “twenty of the most precious male honorary members.”

a. The Woman’s Union’s Philanthropic Initiatives

We witnessed that the Union sought to support the poverty-stricken women of a country that had just emerged from war and sought to supply them with work. This information is mentioned in the report.²⁵⁹ The WU’s project to open a workshop for orphans also received the support of Latife Hanım:

... Birliğin bugünkü vusât-ı maliyesi eytamhane için muktazî {gerekli} bina bedelini temine müsait olmadığı cihetle millete devredilen saray ve köşklardan münasibinin verilmesine tavassut {aracılık} edilmesi ricasıyla Latife Gazi Mustafa Kemal Hanımefendiye müracaat olunmuştur. Müşarünileyh {adı geçen} bu müracaata cevap vermiş Maarif Vekili Vasıf Bey’in keyfiyetten haberdar edildiğini bildirmiştir.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁹ *İkdam*, *ibid.*

²⁶⁰ “Kadın Birliği Yakında Bir Eytamhane Açıyor (The WU Will Soon Open an Orphanage)”, *Cumhuriyet*, no. 2, 8 May 1340 {1924}, p. 3.

It is also important to note that Nezihe Muhiddin, in her statements concerning the Union's philanthropic goals and initiatives, stressed that for her the Union was not merely a philanthropic association. In debates in the WU's Congress Nezihe Muhiddin said "Our aim is not merely to establish philanthropic organizations" and she goes on to express that the Union's aid work had been merged with the initiatives to achieve women's rights.²⁶¹ Union's aid work was bound to the initiatives for women's rights and these two different endeavors were continuously intertwined.

b. Initiatives by the Woman's Union for Achieving Social Rights for Women

Rights of Citizenship

Nezihe Muhiddin converted the notions of elevating the status of woman and attaining full rights of citizenship for women into a concrete plan of action at the beginning of the 1920s. She sought to link her strategy for the liberation of woman to that of the new political reforms taking place in society. In an article published in *Vakit* newspaper during the period when Nezihe Muhiddin was trying to form the Women's People's Party, she asserted that the country's situation and the conditions of the age rendered the elevation of the status of womanhood absolutely necessary. She reviewed the initiatives carried out by women over the preceding fifteen years (1908-1923) in the intellectual and activist spheres, and she asserted that women deserved a higher status:

²⁶¹ See "Türk Kadın Birliği Kongresi (TWU's Congress)", *Kadın Yolu*, no. 29, 1 June 1927, pp. 1-6.

Kadınlarımızın, şu on beş seneden beri ibraz ettiği fikr-i teşebbüs ve faaliyet o mevkilere oturmak için bize bir hak bahş etmiştir. Memleketin ihtiyacı hakikiyesi de o mevkilere bizim sahip olmaklığımızı emr ediyor. Onları bize vermeseler bile biz onları alacağız. Hiç şüphesiz hak, azmin, fiilin ve liyakatındır.²⁶²

In the second issue of *Kadın Yolu*, Nezihe Muhiddin writes that under the Republican administration of Turkey, Turkish women -just like every Turkish man - should benefit from the rights of citizenship and perform the duties inherent with them. In principle the Republic recognized no difference between men and women in terms of citizenship and thus, on this issue the foundation had been laid. She indicated that even though there were shortcomings in the application of equality in terms of citizenship, she believed that within a short period of time these shortcomings would be overcome. The goal for the Turkish woman was to move forward and progress.²⁶³

As a tactic, Nezihe Muhiddin maintained that even though the administration did not have an explicit policy on this issue, the Republican administration represented the principle of equality between men and women and that this principle would sooner or later be manifest. When she wrote this article in July 1925 the process for hammering out the legislation for the Civil Code had been going on for a year and, even though the government seemed to support rights for women, no explicit policy was articulated. In 1927 at the Turkish Woman's Union's Congress Nezihe Muhiddin

²⁶² Nezihe Muhiddin, "Türk Kadınının Hakkı (Rights of Turkish Woman)", *Vakit*, no. 1967, 4 June 1339 {1923}.

²⁶³ See Nezihe Muhiddin, "Cumhuriyet'in Feyzi".

restated that women's possession of political rights was synonymous with citizenship.²⁶⁴

Being Able to Work

One of the areas in which Nezihe Muhiddin was involved was that of women entering the work force under equal conditions. Women should be able to engage in such high status professions as medicine and engineering etc. And this was a demand that the Ottoman women's movement had also championed.

In 1925 the International Woman's Union invited the Turkish Woman's Union to join its body. This invitation consisted of "establishing various commissions for appropriate issues, in a comprehensive program, these commissions would consist of one or two Turkish women members, and their names and addresses were requested." The woman's Union decided to set up commissions in which those who wished to accept this invitation, and looked favorably on the strategy, would participate. Thus, seven commission were formed.²⁶⁵ One of these commissions was to work for the "realization of equal pay for men and women." Nezihe Muhiddin and Iffet Hanım were chosen for this commission.²⁶⁶ Nezihe Muhiddin made it known that the commission

²⁶⁴ See page 160 and onwards.

²⁶⁵ These commissions included: Training Commission (Terbiye Encümeni), Press Investigation Commission (Tedkik-i Matbuat {Basın İnceleme} Encümeni), Health Commission (Sıhhiye Encümeni), Social and Legal Commission (İctimai ve Hukuki Encümen), Commission for Relations with the International Woman's Association (Beynelmilel Kadın Cemiyeti ile İrtibat Encümeni), The Children's Literature Commission (Çocuk Edebiyatı Encümeni), Charities Commission (Umur-ı Hayriye Encümeni). See "Beynelmilel Kadın Birliği'nin Daveti (Invitation from the International Woman's Union)", *Milliyet*, 20 March 1927, p. 2.

²⁶⁶ "Erkek mi Kadına, Kadın mı Erkeğe Tabi?... (Is man Dependent on Woman or is Woman Dependent on Man?)", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1029, 19 March 1927, p. 1.

would strive to achieve “equality in terms of salary and employment opportunity as well as fair promotional practices within professions”:

İkinci komisyon, kadınla erkeğin mesaide ve kazançta müsavi telakki edilmesine çalışacaktır. Bugün, mesela bizde kadın, nihayet daktilo olabilir, dairede müstahdem ise katip kalıyor, müdür olamıyor. Meziyetli bir kadın neden icabında bir daire müdüriyeti ifa edemesin? Ahlakta, sa’y ve kazançta, diğer işlerde erkekle kadınının müsavatını görmek ne zaman nasip olacak? ²⁶⁷

Upon hearing that these commissions for equality had been established, a debate over equality began in the press. An inquiry by the newspapers concerning opinions on the issue of equality between men and women elicited responses from individuals like the professor of Darülfünun and Sivas MP Feridun Bey, professor at the Faculty of Law Ebu’l-ulâ Bey (Mardin) and Police Commissioner Ekrem Bey.

Nezihe Muhiddin sought to placate the anxieties of the men of that period who argued that if women worked “the balance of life in general” would be upset. She did this by sometimes mentioning that women’s working should be based on “need”:

Bu mütalaatım umumi hayatımızın muvazenesi için düşünülen fikirlerin muhassalasıdır... her kadının gayesi yalnız ve yalnız doktor, mühendis,

²⁶⁷ “Beynelmîlel Kadın Birliği’nin Daveti (Invitation from the International Woman’s Union)”, *Milliyet*, 20 March 1927, p. 2.

avukat, tüccar, san'atkar, mebus, vekil, rekorcu olmak olursa maşeri
 {topluluğa ait} ahenkten eser kalmaz. ²⁶⁸

According to Taha Toros, women were able to enter such professions as court judge and medicine after the Woman's Union made a special request to Parliament in 1926.

Debate on Merit

In the early years of the Republic intellectuals, who argued that it was too early to accord social and political rights to women, initiated the debate on "merit first!" In the early years of the Republic this debate on merit appeared as an obstacle at critical points in the struggle for women to achieve their rights. Nezihe Muhiddin did not back down in this crisis over merit. In response to those who said "merit first" Nezihe Muhiddin cited women's initiatives and intellectual contributions over the preceding fifteen years and, stated that the fulfillment of the requirements of equal status had been met. Nezihe Muhiddin did not recognize limitations based on merit, instead she took as her measure the benefits to the country accrued by the "success of woman". She brooked no compromise on this point and, in expressing that "if these rights are not accorded we will take them ourselves", she condemned the doubt that women were not worthy of equal status. In war and in intellectual struggle the Turkish woman had proven her capability.

²⁶⁸ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 11

Bizim kuvvetli iddiamız, ihtiyacat ve icabat-ı hazırı bizi nerelere sevk ediyorsa kadının behemehal orada bir mevkii olmasıdır. Bunun için vaz edeceğimiz düstur da şundan ibarettir; "Kadının muvaffak olabileceği her işte memlekete mufid olmak"... Acaba o mevkilere oturabilmek kabil olabilecek mi sualinin hatıra gelmesini bile kadınlarımız için şeyn add ederim.²⁶⁹

Filhakika büyük milli harekette rüşdünü isbat eden Türk kadını harpta ve zaferde erkekten bir an ayrı kalmadı ve hissesine isabet edeni yaptı.

Taassup ve hürafeden kurtulmak, teceddüd hareketlerine uymakta kadın erkekten geri kalmıyordu. Harp cephelerinden ayrılmadığı gibi fikir mücadelesinde de beraber yürümek kabiliyetini gösteriyordu.

Milli hareketin başlangıcından Cumhuriyetin ilanına kadar, Türk kadını, ancak müşterek millet işlerinde erkeğine yardımcı olmak basiret ve kabiliyetini göstermekle liyakatını izhar etmiş oldu.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁹ Nezihe Muhiddin, "Türk Kadınının Hakkı", *Vakit*, no. 1967, 4 June 1339 {1923}.

²⁷⁰ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 59-62.

c. Ideological Struggle: The *Kadın Yolu*²⁷¹ (1925-1927): Feminism, and the
Politics of Women

Nezihe Muhiddin was the owner, editor-in-chief and main writer²⁷² of the weekly *Kadın Yolu* -the most sophisticated woman's journal of that period. It was a publication rich in intellectual content that hosted the most prominent literary figures and thinkers of that era. *Kadın Yolu* featured the work of such famous woman writers as Şükûfe Nihal, Efzaiş Yusuf and Yaşar Nezihe, as well as those of younger writers like Hatice Refik, Pakize Ahmed, Saadet Esad, Esmâ Zafir, Muhsine Salih. Prominent male writers also contributed to the publication: i.e. Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar, Abdullah Cevdet, Kemalettin Şükrü, M. Şevki, Yaşar Nabi (Nayır), Enver Behnan (Şapolyo) and Fahrettin Kerim (Gökay). The journal is a valuable source in coming to grips with the views on sociological and woman's issues of that time. The journal consistently supplied information on various topics under sections entitled "Turkish Woman's Union News" and "News About Women Around the World/Woman's World Post".

The journal's name, *Kadın Yolu*, seemed to symbolize Nezihe Muhiddin's philosophy on womanhood. It is possible to say that the journal's name was chosen as a statement to delineate "unique path of woman" from the world of men which it did

²⁷¹ In the first issues of *Kadın Yolu* the line underneath the title read "The Great Path of the Modern Turkish Woman (Asri Türk Kadınının Şehrahdır {büyük yolu})", After the 4th issue (6 August 1341 {1925}) the line read "The Press Organ of the Turkish Woman's Union (Türk Kadın Birliğinin naşir-i efkândır {yayın organı})" and the name of the journal changed to the Turkish Woman's Path (*Türk Kadın Yolu*). Between the 16 July 1341 {1925} and 1 August 1927 30 issues were published. 11 issues are missing in the collections in Turkey, the first issues were published weekly, later on becoming a monthly. The missing issues are 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17. The dimensions of *Kadın Yolu* were 25X36 cm. Each issue was usually 16 pages.

²⁷² Nezihe Muhiddin did not use these titles in *Kadın Yolu*.

not resemble, it implied that womanhood was different from manhood and thus it featured the particular aspects inherent in womanhood.

The Debate on Equality and Difference

The significant debate that has taken place in our day, whether in feminist theory or in gender studies is the one concerning equality/difference. In Nezihe Muhiddin's era this controversy was also on women's agenda. We see that in this matter Nezihe Muhiddin appears not to have been seeking total equality with men but rather chose to uphold the concept of difference. Yet while she posited difference, she sometimes referred to the "inborn" characteristics. Thus in equating nature-female she was adopting the structure of the prevalence social constructs. Muhiddin would assert that the natural attributes of women were that they are "productive, nest-builders, tender". As a defender of women's rights Nezihe Muhiddin was an activist in the cause of the "ideals of womanhood". In the male-dominated discourse a woman's nature possess the qualities of passivity, a nurturing and nursing tendency, fragility, weakness, childishness, and inadequacy²⁷³. Muhiddin did not accepted that such qualities denoted woman's nature and ascribed them as the result of repression that had been applied throughout the ages.

²⁷³ C. A. MacKinnon, "Feminism, Marxism, Method, and the State: An Agenda for Theory", in N.O. Keohane, M. Z. Rosaldo, B. C. Gelpi, *Feminist Theory, A Critique of Ideology*, The Harvester Press, Sussex, 1982, pp. 15-16.

In comparing the rights and duties of women and men, Nezihe Muhiddin indicated that the needs of the age and the conditions of the time themselves were determinants of how women should gain their rights.²⁷⁴

The measure of the status of women in society was not so much the measure of equality with men as it was women's own. While on the one hand Nezihe Muhiddin emphasized difference, on the other hand she stresses social rights; she never gave in on the question of equality in terms of citizenship:

Memlekette biz de vatandaşız ve biz de hak sahibiyiz. Biz de erkeklerimize verilmiş olan hukuk-ı siyasiyyeden istifade etmek isteriz. Bize harp sahasında kanını akıtanlar ancak bu hakkı isteyebilir, diyorlar. Halbuki o kanı veren kimdir? Hem hakk-ı intihaba iştirak günün siyasi meselesidir? Değildir. Faaliyetimizin neticesi ve hedefi vatandaşlık hakkını almamıza matuftur.²⁷⁵

Eğer siyasi, ictimai hayata kadın karışmazsa ve bunda iştirak temin edilmezse kadının erkekle mudavâtı biraz dar manada demektir. Binaenaleyh bunun temini behemehal elzemdir.²⁷⁶

In any case, on perceiving the situation and manner of existence of men in that age, Nezihe Muhiddin had no desire to be like them. In giving examples from the II.

²⁷⁴ Nezihe Muhiddin, "Türk Kadınının Hakkı", *Vakit*, no. 1967, 4 June 1339 {1923}.

²⁷⁵ "Türk Kadın Birliği Kongresi", *Kadın Yolu*, no. 29, 1 June 1927, p. 1-6.

²⁷⁶ "Erkek mi Kadına, Kadın mı Erkeğe Tabi?..", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1029, 19 March 1927, p. 1.

Constitutional Era Nezihe Muhiddin differentiate between “the high and the low” and cites that there is no point in equality with men when they themselves are striving to crush each other. Above all, men are generally egotistical, even ruinous creatures. From time to time in Nezihe Muhiddin’s attitude vis-à-vis men one sees the influence of Emine Semiye’s expression “our doltish fellows”:

Müsavatın hiç bir manası yoktu. Kiminle ve ne ile müsavat?! Nisbi olarak münevver olan türk erkekliği avam, havas zümrelerine ayrılmış biri diğerini ezmekle meşgul...

Rütbe ve nişan şaşılarıyla pırıldayan göğüslerin üstünde taşınan kafalar bayır turpundan, kelek karpuzdan daha kıymetsiz... Fakat bu kıymetsiz kafaların tosları nice zeka menbalarını tuzla buz ediyor. Münevver erkek zümresi kara bir kuvvetin esiri, kadın ise esirin esiri.²⁷⁷

Erkek haddi zatında hodbin, etrafında zaif, şefkat ve ihtiyaç görmeyince yuva kurmaktan müstağni (çekinen) ve hatta yıkıcı bir mahluktur.²⁷⁸

In the days when the question “What is the difference between us?” was widely asked, Nezihe Muhiddin asserted that men and women did not resemble each other, and there lack of resemblance ensured social balance.

²⁷⁷ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 24.

²⁷⁸ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 10.

İki cinsin - erkekle kadının birbirine benzemesi bizim istediğimiz neticeyi vermez. Asıl benzememektir ki içtimai muvazene ve kudretin tecellisine esas teşkil eder.²⁷⁹

Those who defended the notion of the “new woman”, an idea that began in the II. Constitutional Era yet gained great credence in the first ten years of the Republic, were in Nezihe Muhiddin’s view merely speaking of superficial equality. She founded useless to try to prove that women were physically were equal to men. Rather than this she felt that as for centuries society had not recognized equality of opportunity women had become inert and atrophied, it was necessary that they reassert and exercise their “natural disposition and characteristics”. Woman’s “productive, nest-builders, tender” qualities, the tendency of her “nature” to be involved with surroundings, transferred to her an important societal-constructive role.

As has been seen, Nezihe Muhiddin characterized men as ruinous and women as constructive. In this sense she held that it would be damaging to women and hence society if they were to be same as or equal to men. After defining the situation of men she asks: “Are we to be equal to be same with them?” For Muhiddin women would not pretend to be equal to men, rather through their own identity they would find themselves and, in developing their own existing characteristics, it was important that they would take their place in every facet of society. Women had wiped away the “superstition and dregs of moldy fables” heaped upon them through the ages, as builders of society more successful than men.

²⁷⁹ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 7.

According to Nezihe Muhiddin for the country to live happily, for the reforms to succeed, the most important condition to be met was the elevation of women. But this elevation did not depend on their being similar to men, it did not mean that the differences between them ceased to exist, rather these differences needed to be reconciled and ameliorated.

Yeni kadın erkek gibi giyinmek, erkek gibi düşünmek, erkek gibi yaşamak temayülünü göstermeğe başladı. Ben bu cereyanı muzir görüyorum. Hatta bizim içtimai ihtiyaçlarımızın hususiyetini düşünerek endişeye kapılıyorum.²⁸⁰

Yeni kadın içtimai bir ihtiyaç olsun olmasın erkeğin harici meslekinde omuz ölçmek azminde bulunuyor. Çünkü erkek gibi müstakil yaşamak, onun gibi hür, serbest gezip eğlenmek istiyor.

... Medeni kadın binicilikte, yüzgeçlikte, otomobil rekorlarında erkekle müsavi olduğunu isbat etmek için çırpınıp duruyor.. Faydası? Kadın vücudunun bir pehlivan adalesile sarılması, memleket namına hiç bir fayda temin etmez. Pehlivan kadın çocuk yetiştirmekten müteneffirdir (nefret eder). Kadın bünyesinin ancak çelik bazulu çocuklar yetiştirecek kadar sağlam ve sıhhatli olması kafidir.²⁸¹

Yeni kadın bucağından büsbütün uzaklaşmak, kelebekleşmek hevesini gösteriyor.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 7.

²⁸¹ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 10.

²⁸² Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 11.

Motherhood and Wifehood

The period when Muhiddin was active, one of the most important debates revolved around the question of motherhood and the duties of a wife. As a result of this her views concerning social reconstruction in period of social change were apparent. The “innovator” thinkers in Ottoman society that were created by the newly formed middle-class in the late 19th and 20th centuries, argued that the primary social duties of women were “wifehood and motherhood”.

Nezihe Muhiddin was never totally opposed to this discourse, yet within this dichotomy she indicated that motherhood was the only important duty of womanhood. While on the other hand she ceaselessly defended women’s civil and political rights she determined her stance through action rather than verbal criticism. In her vision of the nation the duty of motherhood had an important place. Like other male writers she thought that it was necessary to educate mothers to fulfill the needs of the country. In the emergence of the “characters” which would elevate the nation, the importance of the “mother’s lap and school’s embrace” and the education of mothers who would raise the future generations was emphasized.²⁸³

In the “Letter” she defends girls industrial school as being of the most vital national interest in educating mothers and in *Türk Kadını* she states that the most sacred and primary duty of the Turkish woman in the twentieth century is that of motherhood:

²⁸³ Nezihe Muhiddin, “Hitabe”.

Yirminci asr-ı medeniyette de Türk Kadınının en akdes {kutsal} ve birinci vazifesi şüphesiz valide olmaktır.²⁸⁴

In this debate male writers affirm that “society’s (male) members will be raised by mothers” and therefore sought to define the parameters of the duties of motherhood. As for Nezihe Muhiddin the social speculation on the education of mothers, that involved both men and women, as a form of social engineering and social science was bringing the nation closure to compromise to progress and civilization. Without limiting women to the duties of motherhood and wifedom she spoke of the importance of mothering for women. For Muhiddin mothering is not only important from the point of view of the social structure but also had importance in women’s personal experience. In deeming motherhood to be an experience she parted ways with the majority of Western feminists in that period. As for the issue of wifedom on this subject she alluded to specific no duties on the part of women. She wished for the correction in the situation of women in the family in terms of the civil law, she sought to ban Islamic divorce and polygamy. Moreover she criticized the attitude of man in marriage and woman’s experience in marriage in a story that she wrote.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁴ See Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 109. The text of Nezihe Muhiddin’s speech at the Family Law Conference (Hukuk-ı Aile İctimai) featured in *Süs, Hukuk-ı Aile Nüsha-i Mahsusası* (The Special Edition on Family Law), no. 33, 26 January, 1340 {1924}, pp. 3-5.

²⁸⁵ The “Karanlık Yollar (Dark Path)” story could be the standard biography of any intellectual woman of that period, like Nezihe Muhiddin. This new woman did not see marriage as her most important activity, she was educated and had a profession. She felt herself equal to her husband, even feeling that she had done him a favor in marrying him. In spite of this, her destiny was the same as most other women: husbands who did not return home at night but were enjoying themselves elsewhere with other women. In spite of all these obstacles in achieving education and training, expecting different behavior from men they found themselves in the same boat with uneducated women. Yet the last chapter of Muhiddin’s story is interesting. While awaiting her husband the

In the nationalist discourse where the duties and roles of motherhood and wifehood are allotted to women,²⁸⁶ Muhiddin displace a dualistic approach. While on the one hand she wants women to take part in society and on the other hand she mentions nothing about woman's duties as a wife in marriage, she emphasis the importance of mothering.

Woman and Morality

With the advance of II. Constitutional Era, a large body of women took to the streets began to study in institutions of higher learning, took to various professions and gradually began to participate in working life:

Meşrutiyet, istibdat devrinde ancak kocalarının ve babalarının ismile tanınan, sırf erkeklerin lütfüyle yaşayan esir kadın zümresine, şahsiyetleri öz isimlerinden tanınan içtimai simaları ve mahdut meslek kadınları zümresine ilave etti.²⁸⁷

One of the results of the Tanzimat reforms was the recognition of minority rights. The life in the social sphere changed considerably for minority women in that

heroine gives voice to her thoughts. When mid night passes the waiting woman goes to her window and opens the shutters. Light is again seen from the window of the white house opposite. "That shadow which for over a month had been feared and avoided like a danger was there again. This time she did not run away (Bir aydan beri hep korkarak, bir tehlike gibi görmek istemediği gölge yine orada idi. Bu sefer kaçmadı.)" See Nezihe Muhiddin, "Karanlık Yollar", *Edebiyat-ı Umumiyye Mecmuası*, no. 87, 28 September 1918, p. 1032-33.

²⁸⁶ See Yaprak Zihnioğlu, "Male Deputies".

²⁸⁷ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 57.

they began to mingle freely with men in such public places as the cafes, cinemas, and bars of Beyoğlu and this bred a reaction amongst the newly educated Ottoman women - a reaction against the segregated life style prevalent in the community of Islam. Young Turkish women wanted behave and dress as freely as minority women. The Tanzimat ushered in changes in values and life style which eventually resulted in the mingling of men and women in such private venues as homes, apartment salons, and konak gardens. The spread of "salon culture" amongst were men and women freely mingled was reflected in the literature of the period.²⁸⁸ The rules of etiquette were often featured in the press of the time concerning the behavior of women in such social situations. However the streets and public space was still dominated by the conservative community of Islam which viewed women stepping out of the streets a matter of moral degeneracy and reacted severely against this change.

In Jale Parla's study entitled *Babalar ve Oğullar* (Fathers and Sons) she notes that Ahmed Mithad viewed Islamic education and culture as a guide achieving progress. He asserted that the most important characteristic of a socially progressive person was that of having a strong moral sense.²⁸⁹ According to Ahmed Mithad the ideal education included selectively chosen elements of Western culture in concord with Islamic principles.

²⁸⁸ Ahmet Emin Yalman describes the first introduction of "social life (sosyete hayatı)" in Ottoman society that is the institution of "salon" with the first literary example Safveti Ziya's *Salon Köşelerinde* (In the Corners of the Salon) Yalman defines this book as "the Bible of the new life style". See Ahmet Emin Yalman, *Yakın Tarihte Gördüklerim ve Geçirdiklerim*, (What I Lived Through and Saw in Recent History) Yenilik Basımevi, İstanbul, 1970, p. 87. In that period what was meant by "social life (sosyete hayatı)" was women and men in the same place sharing social interaction See Afife Fikret, "Hanımefendinin Musahabeleri" *Atı*, 8 August 1334 {1918}, p. 2.

²⁸⁹ Jale Parla, *Babalar ve Oğullar* (Fathers and Sons) İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 1993 (2. Baskı), p. 29.

The issue of superfluous Westernization was warned against by Tanzimat writers. In their novels they portrayed a certain male typology who was alienated from his own culture, degenerate, fallen into debauchery and distanced from the sacred family environment. The men to whom this description was applied were educated in the West or had been trained in foreign schools in Istanbul. Even though there is a female counterpart to this literature's debauched male heroes, that is the character "Ceylan", yet she is an exception as the majority of those who received Western education in that period were of course young men rather than women.

With the II. Constitutional Era the issue of dispatching women to Europe came to the fore. It is said that Nezihe Muhiddin's first appearance in the press was through an article she wrote entitled "Dispatching Students to Europe".²⁹⁰ In the 1911-1912 the debate over whether women should be sent to Europe to study was featured widely in the press. Just as the same issue concerning their male counterparts took place a century before, views both pro and con were prevalent in the columns. Even though no serious has been done on this subject, it is possible to assert that the number of women sent abroad to study was no where near that of men.

As women became more apparent on the public stage after the II. Constitutional Era, we see that a similar attitude on the part of woman writers towards female students occurs. This attitude was parallel to that of the male writers of the Tanzimat who sought to warn, admonish, and provide moral instruction to the young men of the day. We learn though, that rather from Europe, the attitudes of Turkish

²⁹⁰ This document could not be found due to the missing issues in the newspaper archives.

See *Türk Kadını*, p. 32.

girls was influenced by a source much closer to home, namely the life style of the minority women of Pera.

Nezihe Muhiddin remained aloof from these developments even though she did not sharply criticize them like certain other women writers. She did seek to guide Turkish girls in an admonitory fashion regarding the appropriate life style to be followed in their own social culture, and she called on them to refrain from alcohol and going to bars. The source of this influence was obvious: Beyoğlu. In an article entitled "Two pictures from Istanbul ve Beyoğlu" Nezihe Muhiddin depicted Istanbul/Üsküdar as Islamic Turkish quarter and Beyoğlu as that of the minorities. Nezihe Muhiddin describes an out of the way and humble neighborhood in Istanbul which is surrounded by ruined walls wherein the tranquillity, internal purity, restive order and genuine of traditional home life prevails. As evening descends the peace and quiet of Istanbul contrast with the opposite side of the Bosphoros which is "wrapped in a filthy and dusty fog..." from which a "baleful light shines." After coming to Tünel's stifling atmosphere our lungs fill with the "foreign and lying air" of Beyoğlu. "With the dirty sweat smell emanating from some coarse Armenian skin, the dressed up and shining shop windows, sale of flesh..." Thus we see according to Nezihe Muhiddin Beyoğlu is nothing but a dark page.²⁹¹

In an article she wrote in 1927 entitled "Women should be disgusted with alcohol she continues in the same vain. In *Kadın Yolu* journal Pakize Ahmed also asserts that a from a moral and health perspective it is meet that women refrain from using alcohol - she elaborated on this theme in a four part article entitled "Alcohol and

²⁹¹ Nezihe Muhiddin, "İstanbul ve Beyoğlu'ndan İki Levha", *Kadın Yolu*, no. 7, 27 August 1341 {1925}, p. 2-3.

Civilization".²⁹² In commenting on such practices as drinking bouts at the table Muhiddin sarcastically asks "What has this Europe to do with us?" *Türk Kadını* maintains that women were not given their freedom and liberation to be equal at the drinking table with men:

Türk kadınına, hürriyet ve serbesti , kabarelerde ve işret masalarının önünde erkekle müsavat temin etmek için verilmemiştir. ... biz ancak medeni ve siyasi haklarda erkekle müsavat temenni edenlerdeniz.

...bu noktada (alkol) Avrupayı taklit veya erkekle müsavat davasına kalkışmak değil, bizzat erkeği bu sakim ve muzır itiyat ve iptilalardan kurtarmak başlıca kadının vazifesi değil midir?²⁹³

Nezihe Muhiddin in terms of women and morality and the morals of society in general, draws the line where the innovative thinking leads to moral turpitude. On the one hand I can assert that she struggle against the traditional cultural strictures imposed on women, while on the other she championed the local elements of traditional culture to buffer a sense of identity distinct from the West. While Nezihe Muhiddin opposed tradition as a conservative restrained upon women, she perceived the danger of superfluous Westernization leading to degeneracy.

²⁹² Pakize Ahmed, "Alkol ve Medeniyet (Alcohol and Civilization)", *Kadın Yolu*, no. 21, 22, 23, 24, 1926.

²⁹³ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 80, 79.

The Extent Philanthropy

Various studies have pointed out that at the beginning of twentieth century the world suffragette movement was connected with philanthropy. According to this, those organizations not established purely for philanthropy, among them those designed to struggle for women's political and social rights - yet even these had support groups and branches whose aim was to provide aid.

We see that this observation holds true for Turkey as well. While Hilal-i Ahmer's function was fully philanthropic, the Society for the Protection of Woman, which was established during the same years by Nezihe Muhiddin tended to imply some of the demands for change in the status of women that would later be explicitly stated in the regulations of the future TWU. Contained within these regulations of the TWU were the demands for political and social rights for women as well as such the call to fulfill such philanthropic functions as aid for women in distress -that is for the widows of fallen soldiers, finding employment for widows, education for their children and other such provisions of a philanthropic nature.

Nezihe Muhiddin wanted to find lasting solutions to these problems, thus rather than simply stressing aid she also aimed to provide work opportunities and entrepreneurial ventures. This attitude shows that the extent of philanthropy present in Nezihe Muhiddin's efforts was from a early time different in aim from that of others.

The critical period the TWU went through in which its efforts toward political rights were on the verge of being stopped and the association was being forced to be a purely philanthropic organization was a result of pressure exerted by the government

which seemed to insist that like oil and water, politics and philanthropy did not mixed. At this juncture Nezihe Muhiddin made it very clear what her relation was philanthropy and refused to budge on her position vis-à-vis social and political rights by saying "We did not just established an organization geared towards philanthropy.

In *Türk Kadını* she mentions the efforts to participate in life outside the home on the part of Ottoman women during II. Constitutional Era says that as these women had become fed up with the monotony of life in the home and as they were "well-educated and took pleasure from charity work" they broke out of their confines. In this manner she distinguishes herself from those who devoted themselves to charity and philanthropy.²⁹⁴

Relations with the International Women's movement

In *Türk Kadını* Nezihe Muhiddin mentions her astonishment on reading news about world womanhood during the period of Absolute Rule. During the II. Constitutional Era she tells that women began to apply what they had learned from these astonishing events. It is a fact that during this Era the "ideals of womanhood" became more widespread, women's writing and many woman's journal were published and woman's organizations emerged. It is this period that the relationship between Turkish women and the international women's movement began. And as time went on this contacts became more frequent. During the years when the Republic was established these relations were furthered through writing, correspondence and

²⁹⁴ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 51-52.

participation in international conferences and began to take on the form of some kind of solidarity. In *Kadın Yolu*, which Nezihe Muhiddin published, a column was devoted to "News from World Womanhood". The international women's organization²⁹⁵ sought the TWU's membership and participation. The international women's congress which took place in 1935 Istanbul, known in the press as Ars-ı Ulusal Kadın Kongresi was initiated by Nezihe Muhiddin herself back in 1926. However, the events that unfolded after the 1927 TWU congress and Nezihe Muhiddin's subsequent removal its prescience, forced the postponement of this initiative. In April 1935 Nezihe Muhiddin's proposal was realized with the staging of international women's union's congress²⁹⁶ in Istanbul. Nezihe Muhiddin was however no longer president of the TWU and she did not even participate in the congress as an observer.

One of most important aspects of literature on womanhood during the II. Constitutional Era was that women's history and world womanhood came into being. A much covered issue in the literature was the approach to women manifested by such civilizations as the Assyrian, Egyptian, Greek and Roman.²⁹⁷ In Nezihe Muhiddin's journal *Kadın Yolu*'s column "News From World Womanhood" news featuring women in Russia, India, Egypt and Japan was offered, not just that of women in the West. Furthermore it can be seen that as a result of the close cultural ties with women of the East, more emphasis was placed on news concerning them. Items covered not only included the organizational activities of women, their demands for rights, the

²⁹⁵ This organization's full name was not given in the sources, yet I would assume that it is the one of these two international women's organisations either International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship or International Woman Suffrage Alliance.

²⁹⁶ I can not found the full name of the congress.

²⁹⁷ See Havadisçi, "Kadın Haberleri", *Kadın* (Istanbul), no. 6, 7 April 1328 {1912}, p. 13-19.

status they have achieved, their entrance into public life and administrative work, news was also given concerning the struggles of women in other countries. In her writing Nezihe Muhiddin sought to strengthen her thesis by citing examples of the situation of women throughout the world:

Bu asri ve muazzam temayül gittikçe şişip genişleyen bir dalga gibi bütün dünyaya tevessü ediyor, Hindistanda Madrada, Bombayda, Kuşinde kadınlar, erkeklerin tabi olduğu şerait dahilinde hak-ı intihaba maliktirler.²⁹⁸

To what extent had the Ottoman Turkish women's struggle for rights be influenced by the suffragette movement and its initiatives in the West? Did they accept the suffragette movement in the West as a model or even though they were influenced in the general sense, did they try to come up with a strategy appropriate to their own country? If an answer to these questions was sought via Nezihe Muhiddin and the TWU than the truth could be maintained that rather than taking the Western suffragette as a model, they developed their methods in terms of their own particular struggle. From the start of her early activist years Nezihe Muhiddin looked upon the Western feminist movement through the prism of her own particular conditions as something to learn from, as something to draw on in her own experience. She cited the successes of world womanhood, use them as elements of encouragement, yet always maintained that "we are not of those extremist feminist, ... we are not like the suffragettes". She did not see feminism unchanging rigid model, but rather as a

²⁹⁸ Nezihe Muhiddin, "Kadın Yolu'nun Şiari", *Kadın Yolu*, no. 1, 16 July 1341 {1925}, p. 2.

philosophy that women gave their own meaning to and as an accumulation of experience. She said "I understand true feminism to be like this".

In consideration of the reasons why she distanced herself from the label feminist the first one that comes to mind is the connotation "feminist" had in that age (first in the II. Constitutional Era than later in the Republic) among the intellectuals was extremely - just as it is today- contorted. The qualification feminist had rather negative connotations. In order to unite women Nezihe Muhiddin acted very cautiously on this point and avoided these kinds of labels.

Secondly, by not delineating herself as a feminist she could point out that she did not give more weight to the issue of feminism than that of the nation's. According to Muhiddin the woman's issue was part and parcel of the nation's issues as a whole. She equated the liberation and elevation of women with that of the nation's, and tended to think in terms of the problem of sovereignty, along with economic issues. On the other hand for Nezihe Muhiddin the preliminary condition for a progressive and civilized country revolved around women attaining their status in society as well as their freedom and the removal of the societal limitations from their path.

d. The Woman's Union's Initiatives for Attaining Political Rights for Women

In terms of "life outside home", in order to realize its ideal in achieving the elevation of the womanhood, the Union promoted education for women; the need to have a profession -including those of high status; thus with its ideal of life outside of the home it sought the participation of women in the work force. In terms of

“domestic life”, it made efforts to change the Family Law in favor of women and to pass some form of civil code. We see that the WU and Nezihe Muhiddin came up with the ideas concerning issues such as overcoming difficulties in working life, the status of women in society, their very “existence” -various issues ranging from the use of alcohol, their stance vis-à-vis social life, motherhood and other such related topics concerning women.

Between the years 1923-1927 the WU, mostly through Nezihe Muhiddin’s initiative, sought to actualize progress, whenever the political situation was amenable, on the issues mentioned above. The WU had influence in the press through the statements made and articles written by its prominent members; they sought to be effective with the public through their conferences and initiatives in legal reform.²⁹⁹

In February 1925, even though women had not yet gained their political rights, the Union tried to place women on the ballot representing Istanbul in the election. This attempt had propaganda value. The aim was to put the issue on the agenda during the election and to nudge the TGNA and public opinion to favor suffrage for women. This initiative coincided with one of the most significant political events of the day -namely the beginning of the Şeyh Sait rebellion on the 13th February 1925 in the town of Piran attached to the prefecture of Genç.³⁰⁰ On the 25th February 1925

²⁹⁹ One of the Union’s active members Efzaiş Yusuf attended a women’s conference in the US and described her impressions of it at a conference held in the new center in Şehzadebaşı, Fevziye Caddesi. (See *Asar-ı Nisvan* {Works of Women} no. 6, 16 April 1341 {1925}). Moreover, the publication of *Kadın Yolu* was effective in communicating and broadening the discussion on the issues of womanhood in society. Şükûfe Nihal’s writing concerning womanhood was featured in the press and played a part in this field. In this period the press gave much space in the news to WU.

³⁰⁰ See Utkan Kocatürk, *Kronoloji*, p. 429.

*Cumhuriyet*³⁰¹ newspaper contained two news items and a caricature on the WU. On the front page it was reported that the WU had submitted the names of Halide Edib and Nezihe Muhiddin as candidates for the parliamentary elections. The article was anonymous and began in a pseudo-gallant and mocking tone with the words, "in these columns we owe these daughters of Eve the highest courtesy and good grace" and goes on to criticize their candidacy. The article toes the republican line in terms of the official policy on woman's issues and comes to the conclusion that "in extending political rights to the class of the fair-sex in Turkey, Anatolian women should take precedence over the ladies of Istanbul". It is very likely that this article was written by Yunus Nadi. On the same page there is a caricature concerning the same issue with the main caption reading "If women are elected to parliament", and there is a figure that resembles Nezihe Muhiddin addressing a session " Ladies, sisters, if you vote for me, on coming to parliament my first task would be to abolish the customs duties on cosmetics."³⁰² *Cumhuriyet* newspaper (and Yunus Nadi) would continue to ridicule the champions of women's rights in this mocking, mordant, demeaning manner. In this period this newspaper and its editor-in-chief, whilst not openly taking a stand against women's rights -much like the Kemalist government- were very influential in delineating the limits of women's rights .

The WU's initiative in placing parliamentary candidates on the ballot had quite an impact with the press and on the 28th February 1925 *Cumhuriyet*³ - ran another

³⁰¹ *Cumhuriyet*: the first issue was published on 7th February 1923, in Istanbul under the direction of Yunus Nadi (Abalıoğlu). It was a publication that supported the Republican regime and the RPP. It was described as "the official publication organ of the Republican regime".

³⁰² "Kadınlar ve Mebusluk (Women and Deputyhood)", *Cumhuriyet*, no, 290, 25 February 1341 {1925}, pp. 1-2. A second news item published on the same day on 3. page read: "Kadın Birliği Önümüzdeki Haziran'da Avrupa ve Amerika'ya Bir Seyahat Tertip Ediyor (The WU is Organizing a Journey in June to Europe and America)."

piece under the headline, “Ladies Take Action! Women will not Just Enter Parliament, They will also Participate in the Municipal Elections”, and a woman from the Union’s administrative committee was quoted:

“Kaç rey mi alacağız? Belki de hiç... Kadınların intihab hakkı tanınmadığı bir sırada, intihaba rey almak için namzed vaz ettiğimizi zannetmek biraz safdillik olur. Azizim, biz hakkımızı böyle böyle teslim ettireceğiz. Bugün namzed gösteririz, yarın rey alırız, öbür gün intihab oluruz! Esasen Kadınlar Birliği bu hususta her sahada teşebbüste bulunmağa karar vermiştir. Nitekim yakında belediye intihabatı icra olunacakmış, belediye intihabatı esnasında da namzed göstereceğiz.”³⁰³

“While Such Grave Issues are at Stake Is it Really the Moment to Take up Women’s Politics?”

At the same time the *Cumhuriyet* newspaper writer responded to a statement made two days previously in *İkdam* newspaper by certain women from the WU. Most probably referring to the Şeyh Sait rebellion, the response is as follows: “At a time when Turkey is embroiled in the gravest of issues, for our ladies to be involved in parliamentary campaigning or promotion is totally lacking in seriousness”, and goes on criticizing in a harsh manner:

³⁰³ “Hanımlar Faaliyette! (Ladies in Action!)”, *Cumhuriyet*, no. 293, 28 February 1341 {1925}, p. 2.

Cemiyet için faideli işler gören hanımlarımız da vardır {burada kastedilen, daha sonraki açıklamalarından anlaşılacağı gibi, Muallim Nakiye'dir}, fakat onlar o kadar meşguldürler ki İstanbul intihabatı vesilesiyle propaganda veya reklam yapmayı düşünmeye bile vakitleri olmaz... Onlar için hayat ciddi, ötekiler için de eğlencedir.... hanımlar da Türk milletinin işlerini reklam veya propaganda oyunlarına alet olamayacak derecede yüksek görmek mecburiyetinde bulunduklarını unutmamalıdır!

Their first attempt at achieving political rights ended in failure. In the first issue of *Kadın Yolu*, published that same year, in July 1925, Nezihe Muhiddin continues to push for political rights in the main article entitled "The Traits of *Kadın Yolu*". Here we see Nezihe Muhiddin was applying her strategy for women to take their place in the power structure opened up by the establishment of the Republic. In this article she asserts that women must have a place in regime saying "this status within the national body must definitely be determined and clarified". Nezihe Muhiddin poses this question: Why is it that the Turkish woman is equal in the eyes of the law and like every other citizen must pay taxes, yet does not have the right to vote and be elected to office? Citing examples from other countries, Nezihe Muhiddin stresses that the issue of the political rights of woman is a contemporary trend. Women have intelligence and conscience and should be able to possess their rights. Muhiddin hopes that in the long term women in the young Republic will not be perceived as illegitimate children not covered by civil law; not seen as imbeciles; but that all rights will be recognized vis-à-vis the Turkish woman:

Bu asri ve muazzam temayül gittikçe şişip genişleyen bir dalga gibi bütün dünyaya tevessü {genişleme} ediyor, Hindistan'da Madra'da, Bombay'da, Kuşin'de kadınlar erkeklerin tabi olduğu şerait dahilinde hakk-ı intihaba maliktirler.

Çünkü intihab meselesi bir vazife-i medeniyedir. Şuur ve vicdan hasailine malik olan kadınlar bu vatani vazifelerine mefluc {inmeli} ve gayr-i müdrik bir vücud gibi lakayd kalamazlar, intihab hakkından mahrum kalan kadınların mesai ve hüsn ü emelleri fikir halinden fiil haline geçmesi için müşkilat karşısındadır.

... ali ve aziz cumhuriyetimizin kanunları da, herhalde uzun müddet kadınlarını, gayr-i meşru bir çocuk, bir mecnun, veyahut hukuk-ı medeniyeden mahrum bir mücrim vaziyetinde, memleketin mukadderatından uzak görmeğe tahammül edemeyecektir... İşte o zaman Türk kadının bütün hukukunu tanımak için arada hiç bir hail kalmayacaktır.³⁰⁴

In the same issue an interview with the Minister of Justice was published. The minister was asked “Are you in favor of political rights for women”, and he responded “Conditionally yes.” The interviewer of *Kadın Yolu* asked the minister whether the declaration that the Family Law Conference sent to parliament would be considered or not. The minister responded positively.³⁰⁵ The main headline in the 4.

³⁰⁴ Nezihe Muhiddin, “*Kadın Yolu*’nun Şiari (The Traits of *Kadın Yolu*)”, *Kadın Yolu*, no. 1, 16 July 1341 {1925}, p. 2.

³⁰⁵ “Muhterem Adliye Vekilimizle Mülakat (An Interview with our Dear Minister of Justice)”, *Kadın Yolu*, no. 1, 16 July 1341 {1925}, p. 4.

issue of *Kadın Yolu* was “The Turkish Woman’s Program After Participating in the Elections”, and the article mentioned that the WU was holding an extraordinary session that week to decide on the implementation of the program.³⁰⁶

Nezihe Muhiddin and the Authoritarian Political Atmosphere in 1925

The first issue of *Kadın Yolu* which I have mentioned above, was launched while the following events were taking place: The Şeyh Sait rebellion was being completely suppressed,³⁰⁷ the Progressive Republican Party was shut down -its leaders were put on trial and convicted; in Istanbul *Tanin*, *Vatan*, *Tevhid-i Efkâr*, *Son Telgraf*, *Toksöz*, *İstiklâl*, *İleri* newspapers were closed down, the journalists were arrested - all in response to the claim that these institutions and individuals had supported the Şeyh Sait rebellion and were involved in the plot to assassinate Mustafa Kemal Paşa in İzmir. Their trials commenced in the Court of Independence (İstiklal Mahkemesi). Among the journalist arrested were Ahmet Emin (Yalman), Suphi Nuri (İleri) who previously had worked with Nezihe Muhiddin. From this date onwards we witness that as a result of the repression on the part of the government’s authoritarian leadership towards opposition, Nezihe Muhiddin’s tone slowly begins to change in her writing featured in *Kadın Yolu*. Perhaps in order to avoid the possible suppression of the WU, Nezihe Muhiddin defends the Union by claiming that they are standing by the Republic. In these pieces she does not refrain from asserting full citizenship, civil and political rights

³⁰⁶ “İntihabata İştiraki Müteakkip Türk Kadınının Programı (The Program of Turkish Woman after Participation in the Elections)”, *Kadın Yolu*, no. 4, 6 August 1341 {1925}, pp. 8-9.

³⁰⁷ See Utkan Kocatürk, *Kronoloji*, 429-447.

for women.³⁰⁸ On the 15th August 1925 the detained journalists on trial at the Eastern Court of Independence; among whom were Suphi Nuri, İsmail Müştak, Ahmet Emin and Ahmet Şükrü; sent a telegraph from Adana to Mustafa Kemal Paşa.³⁰⁹ That same week in *Kadın Yolu* Nezihe Muhiddin wrote an article entitled “The Greatest Person is the One who Forgives”. She indirectly supports the telegram and amnesty for the journalists.

The striking thing about this article is its exaltation of Mustafa Kemal Paşa with its exaggerated expressions and flamboyant praise.³¹⁰ I will attempt to explain the purpose and source of her exaggerated phraseology, which even went to such extremes as “prostrating oneself in humble reverence”. The purpose of this flattery was no doubt to avoid arrest in the climate of political terror that prevailed and to prove that she was not affiliated with “enemies of the regime” -thus being able to pursue her initiatives on women’s issues. In terms of the source of this attitude, it is possible to note that the political culture of the day still bore the influence of Ottoman political culture. As is apparent in the article, that period was one wherein Gazi Mustafa Kemal was accorded “great titles” and a personality cult was created around

³⁰⁸ See Muhiddin, “Cumhuriyetin Feyzi” and also “Memleket İşlerinde Vahded (United in the Matters of the Country)”, *Kadın Yolu*, no. 5, 13 August 1341 {1925}, p. 2

³⁰⁹ “Biz yüksek dehanızın tesis ettiği rejimin tabii ve samimi adamları ve hâdimleriyiz. ‘Mürtecilerin suikastini kolaylaştırma’ gibi bir zan altından kurtarılmanızı en derin tazimlerimize ekleyerek istirham ederiz. (Naturally and sincerely we are the people and assistants of the regime that your great genius has established. We reverentially request that the accusation of being the ‘facilitators of the reactionaries assassination attempt’ be withdrawn)”. See Utkan Kocatürk, *Kronoloji*, pp. 438-439.

³¹⁰ Nezihe Muhiddin, “Afv Eden En Büyük İnsandır (The Greatest Person is the One who Forgives)”, *Kadın Yolu*, no. 6, 20 August 1341 {1925}, p. 2.

his person.³¹¹ This tendency is closely related to patrimonialism inherent in the patriarchal sultanate of Ottoman Empire. According to Weber “in a patrimonial state the sovereign’s political power is accepted by the subjects without his having to resort to physical force. This state is not based on any social contract, but is rather based on the loyalty and devotion upon which patriarchal authority rests... The patrimonial state is sustained by the ancestral respect accorded to the person of the sovereign and is strengthened by custom and various religious teachings.”³¹² This personality cult centered on Gazi Mustafa Kemal seems to represent an adaptation of the Ottoman political culture wherein the titles of the head of state, the sultan, and the political elite were transferred to the new regime’s most powerful leader -Gazi Mustafa Kemal. This continuity of patrimonial tradition is especially seen in the newly proffered titles employed by the intellectuals in depicting Gazi Mustafa Kemal. Secondly, “The creation of the legend of Mustafa Kemal and his subsequent idolization with the title of ‘eternal chief’ is indicative of the fascist currents prevalent in the first quarter of the 20. century and these currents’ notion of leadership.”³¹³ This notion of the fascist leader, as is shown in the Daldal study, is directly influenced by Carlyle’s views on idealism and hero-worship. The personality cult that sprang up around Mustafa Kemal was nourished by these two sources. Nezihe Muhiddin’s leader worship is seen in the forward of her book *Türk Kadını* and the succeeding chapters.³¹⁴

³¹¹ For research on this matter see Aslı Daldal, “Mustafa Kemal Üzerine Kurulu Kişi Kültünün Toplumsal, Ruhbilimsel ve Siyasal Temelleri (The Social, Psychological and Political Foundations of the Personality Cult Established Around Mustafa Kemal)”, BÜ, İİBF, POLS, Research Paper, 1995.

³¹² Aslı Daldal, *ibid.*

³¹³ Aslı Daldal, *ibid.*

³¹⁴ Nezihe Muhiddin, *Türk Kadını*, p. 2, 58.

The TWU Congress: The Last Effort for Political Rights

The last effort for political rights promulgated by Nezihe Muhiddin and the TWU which she directed, took place on Friday the 25th March 1927 with the holding of the TWU's congress assembled in the Union's headquarters. Nezihe Muhiddin and her friends submitted an alteration for the notorious article no. 2 which concerned the achievement of political rights and how it was to be accomplished. It had been a year since the Civil Code had been passed by the TGNA. At the opening speech of the congress Muhiddin defended the Union's activities over the past three years by saying, "The WU emerged the pages of the press in our country and Europe began to comment both positively and negatively on a long beleaguered ideal." She stated that the Union's administrative committee was up until now not elected. She goes on to speak of the past three years: "But when I and my friends sought to convert this ideal into a vibrant and operative movement, we strengthened the enlightened and sincere proximity, the general and all encompassing, incentive and willingness of those around us." After the opening speech she read the WU's activity report covering the past three years. Later on she was elected as chairwoman of the congress.

Immediately after the activity report the most important issue on the agenda was the airing of views on the "alteration of the article no. 2 in the WU regulations." After reading the second article Muhiddin says "in altered form, 'in order to gain for the Turkish woman social and political rights we as the TWU'..." And after this, debate began on the alteration. Şaziye Hanım made the recommendation that a commission be formed to deal with this alteration. Possibly in expectation that the alteration might not

be realized if the issue was prolonged, Nezihe Muhiddin indicated that the congress would have to come to an end that very day. Would the commission to be elected be able to fulfill its duty on time? After this short discussion the session proceeded to debate on the second article. Şaziye Hanım asked the question "In what manner will these political rights be achieved. This must be very clear". In her response to this question Nezihe Muhiddin indicated that the alteration was called for with the long term in mind; she stated that the members participated in the association with the goal of defending women's rights. The Union's purpose was not merely to confine woman to philanthropic work, but to procure for them the full duties and rights appropriate for a citizen:

İctimai hayatta Türk kadınının mühim bir uzuv olması kadının siyasi hakkını almasından amildir. Siyasi hak kazanmak için bir liyakat lazımdır. Bu da cemiyet azalarının ve cemiyetin faaliyetiyle ancak mümkündür. Biz Türk kadınını bugün için siyasi haklarını kazanmak için liyakat ibraz etmiştir demiyoruz. Biz bunu istikbale atfen talep ettik ve nizamnameye koyduk.

.... Buraya iştirak eden aza hukukunu müdafaa etmek fikriyle iştirak etmiştir.

Maksad yalnız hayırkâr cemiyetler tesisi değildir.

... maksadımız kadını yalnız hayırkâr bir kadın bırakmak değildir. Ona bir vatandaşa ait bütün vazife ve hakları da vermektir.³¹⁵

³¹⁵ "Türk Kadın Birliği Kongresi (The TWU's Congress)", *Kadın Yolu*, no. 29, 1 June 1927, pp. 1-6.

With these words Nezihe Muhiddin once again shows that she had envisioned the WU as being primarily concerned with women's political rights, and upon achieving these, assuming the necessary duties commensurate with them. After the debates the second article was passed and Nezihe Muhiddin was again elected as the president of the Union.

Opposition in the Congress

When the TWU convened at 14. 30 on the 25th March 1927 in the Union's headquarters (Şehzadebaşı, Fevziye Caddesi), it became apparent that disagreement - either of a political or personal nature- was rife among the members of the TWU. Nezihe Muhiddin was considered to be an "extremist" in women's politics by the press and public opinion. Within the membership of the Union and among the press and general public there was support for the view that the issues concerning women's rights should not be rushed into. The records of the Congress were published in *Kadın Yolu*, yet do not reflect this opposition.³¹⁶ There seems to have been a group which did not agree with the alteration of the second article. There are hints that they found this alteration "untimely". It is quite likely that this opposition made its presence felt in the election for the administrative committee.

Immediately after the congress the governor's office was informed that there were "irregularities in the election of the administrative committee." It is very likely that this complaint was made by Saime Eraslan on behalf of the opposition group

³¹⁶ "Türk Kadın Birliği Kongresi", *Kadın Yolu*, no. 29, 1 June 1927, pp. 1-6.

within the TWU. In the letter that Saime Eraslan wrote to Taha Toros in the 1950s, one encounters her “curriculum vitae”, in which she indicates that she had informed the president of the Republican People’s Party, the governor and the Head of Security of, “Nezihe Muhiddin’s corruption”:

... Çocuklarım büyüdükten sonra Kadın Birliği’ne intisab ettim. Heyet-i idareye dahil olduğumdan Nezihe Muhiddin’in yaptığı yolsuz ahvale imza edemeyeceğimi söyleyerek cemiyetten çekildim. Bunları Fırka Reisi İbrahim Tali (Öngören) Bey’e, İstanbul Valisi Süleyman Sırrı Bey’e anlattım. Şimdiki Malatya Mebusu Hasan Reşit Bey’e (Tankut) - o vakit polis müdüriyetinde idi. Hepsinden yardım görerek Türk Ocağında bir kongre yaptık.³¹⁷

The outcome of this letter seems to be that some of the members from the TWU believed that Nezihe Muhiddin had committed irregularities. Another possibility is that the government was disturbed by Nezihe Muhiddin’s presidency and, working in conjunction with the opposition within the Union, constructed a scenario to remove her.³¹⁸ Immediately after the congress, based on the news featured in another newspaper on the previous day,³¹⁹ *Milliyet* reported that the congress was illegitimate and that it would be annulled. Nezihe Muhiddin responded immediately after the

³¹⁷ Saime Eraslan, *Tercüme-i Hal* (Curriculum Vitae), A handwritten letter to Taha Toros in Ottoman Turkish, undated (assumed to be from the 1950s). Taha Toros’ Archive. The congress that she mentions in her letter appears to be the one held after Nezihe Muhiddin was forced to resign. It was held on 26 September 1927 at the Türk Ocağı hall. See “Kadınlar Gürültülü Bir Kongre Akdettiler (Women Held a Noisy Congress)” *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1216, 27 September 1927, p. 2.

³¹⁸ See footnote 359.

³¹⁹ This news item was not found.

Congress in a statement in which she maintained that from start to finish the Congress had been open to the press and that such an event had never occurred and was simply "rumor-mongering". She immediately offered to submit the accounts to the Congress' scrutiny, but the members of the session saw no need for this. "In having the accounts examined I desire that there not even be the slightest suspicion cast. Those outside of the organization, as well as members themselves, are welcome to come any time and examine them." In this manner she countered the allegations made against her. According to Muhiddin the only thing that transpired at the Congress was a sincere and informed debate on the alteration of the second article. If there is any problem to be mentioned at all it could only concern the fact that one woman member queued four times to vote while electing the administrative committee, and on having this fact drawn to her attention, she fainted. She finished her statement by saying "If they are referring to this little scene I would not consider this as an irregularity, but rather, an indication of honesty."³²⁰ On the 29th March, *Milliyet* covered the WU's new administrative committee's first meeting and we learn that there was heated argument concerning the alteration of article no. 2. This information seems to purport that the issue of the second article had not been sufficiently discussed at the congress -the likely cause being that Nezihe Muhiddin had prevented it- and that there was opposition to this alteration among members. Furthermore a decision was reached in the meeting to immediately form an "account investigation committee". The commission would consist of members who attended the Congress; there being for each member of the

³²⁰ "Kadınlarla Erkekler Arasında Nasılsa Bir Kara Kedi Geçti, Toplanan Kongre Gayr-i Kanuni midir? (Somehow a Black Cat Has Passed Between Women and Men, was the Congress Held Illegal)", *Milliyet*, no. 405, 28 March 1927, pp. 1-4.

administrative committee one member of the opposition group, and a request would be made for the governor's office to send a civil servant to be in attendance at the inquiry. On the 1st April 1927 the commission convened and the accounts were examined for the three year period of Nezihe Muhiddin's term of office. All documents concerning expenses and incoming cash were meticulously compared and no imbalances found.³²¹

The first meeting of the administrative committee was revealing in terms of exposing the conflicts within the WU. The opposition was pivoted on the issues of the second article and the investigation into the accounts. It is striking that the defense of political rights and the accusations of corruption were so closely tied together. There were two aspects to the corruption charges. Firstly, there were the allegations that irregularities occurred in the election of the administrative committee. Secondly there were accusations directed at Muhidin's administration, claiming that it was corrupt. The governors office was called in to investigate the charges of election fraud, but found no evidence of irregularities and gave its approval to the new administrative committee.³²² Moreover we also learn that the governor's office had no objection to the changes to the second article.³²³

³²¹ "Kadınlar Birliğinde Hesaplara Bakıldı, Yeni Komisyonlar Yapıldı (The WU's Accounts Have Been Scrutinized, New Commissions Established)", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1043, 2 April 1927, p. 2. According to this news item the commission members were Doctor Safiye Ali, İffet İhsan, Nedime Esad, Sıdika Behçet, Dürriye Faik and Süreyya Cemal. According to this investigation the Union had accrued 8500 Lira income from its establishment up until 1927. Expenses had amounted to 7635 Lira and there was a balance of 865 Lira in the safe.

³²² "Kadın Birliği, İntihabatta Yolsuzluk Olmadığı Anlaşıldığından Heyet-i İdare Tasdik Edildi (WU, When No Irregularities were Discovered in the Election, the Administrative Committee was Approved)", *Milliyet*, no. 451, 15 May 1927, p. 3.

³²³ "Kadınlarda Hukuk-ı Siyasiye, Vilayet Nizamnameyi Tasdik Etti (Political Rights for Women, the Governor Has Approved the Regulations)", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1084, 15 May 1927, p. 2.

The 1927 Campaign: To Enter Parliament in Defense of the Cause of Womanhood

In Nezihe Muhiddin's design, importance was given to having candidates enter parliament to defend the "cause of womanhood". In the debate over "Which right first? To vote or to be elected?" Nezihe Muhiddin gave precedence to the right to hold elected office. She thought that women representing the Union in parliament would be much more committed to defending legislation in favor of women's rights -and would speed the process up considerably.

Based on the acceptance of the second article at the Congress, Nezihe Muhiddin sought to reinsert the issue of women's political rights in the agenda of the 1927 elections. On the 5th June 1927 the central committee of the WU met under Nezihe Muhiddin's presidency and debated on how women should participate in the upcoming election and, "the majority reached the decision that such an attempt would be beneficial to women"³²⁴ At first this attempt consisted in the nomination of candidates for parliament. Upon recalling similar previously unsuccessful initiatives, they decided this time to promote a feminist male candidate to champion women's rights in Parliament. After this the press devoted much coverage to the debate of having a feminist male candidate representing the Union. When Nezihe Muhiddin revealed this tactic it was noted that the Union members such as Esma Zafir, Efzayiş Yusuf and Muhsine Salih supported the idea.³²⁵

³²⁴ "Kadınlar Birliği ve Mebusluk (WU and Deputyhood)", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1106, 6 June 1927, p. 2.

³²⁵ "Kadınlar ve İntihabat: Kadın Birliği, Kadın Namzed Gösteremezse Müfrit Bir Feministi Namzed Gösterecek (Women and Elections: If the WU Does not Nominate a Candidate, It Will Nominate an Extreme Feminist)", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1110, 10 June 1927, p. 3.

When the president of the TGNA, Kazım Paşa (Karabekir), was asked by a journalist about his views concerning women parliamentarians, he replied that he supported women's efforts however, according to the constitution it was not possible for them to be deputies. He indicated that it seemed more appropriate to strive for women's right to vote before the right to hold office:

Hiç şüphe yoktur ki kadınların teceddüd ve terakki yolunda erkeklerden geri kalmalarını arzu etmiyoruz. Onlar da çalışırlar ve bu mesaide devam edeceklerdir. Kadınlık âleminde vukua gelen her teceddüdü şükür ile karşılamaktayız. Kadınların hayatın her sahasında muvaffak olmaları esastır. Fakat kadınların mebus olmaları Teşkilat-ı Esasiye Kanununun ruhuna muhaliftir... Kadınlar henüz intihab edilmek değil, intihab etmek hakkına bile malik değildirler. Binaenaleyh mebus olmadan evvel müntehib olabilmek için çalışmaları lazım gelmez mi? ³²⁶

The Union greeted this statement by Kazım Karabekir Paşa with appreciation. In a statement Nezihe Muhiddin gave to the press, employing positive propaganda, she said that they were sure all members of parliament would defend rights for women. In this statement she said that as womanhood represented half the population of the country, it would not remain static, and progress and reforms could not be achieved without women.

³²⁶ "Kadınların Mebusluğu (Deputyhood of Women)", *Milliyet*, no 478, 14 June 1927, p. 1-4.

Memleketin yarı nüfusunu teşkil eden kadınlık atıl kalamaz. Salahiyaddar ricalimiz {erkeklerimiz} müdriklerdir ki kadınsız teceddüd ve inkılab imkansızdır. Zaten Kanun-ı Medeni bunun en büyük ve belîğ misalidir. Binaenaleyh intihabatta kadınlara da mevkii vermek için Teşkilat-ı Esasiye Kanunu tadil edilebilir.³²⁷

When the members of the Union thought that Kenan Bey was the closest candidate to their platform, speculative views and comments covered the pages of newspapers. Meanwhile an interesting development occurred when Muallim Nakiye revealed that she was against the Union's efforts to secure political rights. According to Nakiye Hanım, the government had already secured the rights appropriate for women. The Turkish woman possessed all the rights that men did, except for political ones. Nakiye Hanım did support the idea of political rights for women but felt that when the time was right the government would furnish them. This campaign regarding political rights was merely initiated by five or ten women seeking to become famous. They could not be taken seriously. Instead of doing this, if women were to "take on fifteen miserable orphans, or if they were to insure that five or ten widows had a roof over their heads" they would be doing something of much more use to the country.³²⁸

³²⁷ "Mebus Kim? Kadınlar: Herkes Bizim Müdafimizdir Diyorlar (Who is the Deputy? Women Say: Everyone is Our Defender)", *Milliyet*, no 479, 15 June 1927, p. 1-4. See this text in Appendix 4 concerning Nezihe Muhiddin's speech, which belies her rhetoric, intellectual level and the manner in which she asserted rights for women. I would like to point out here that the word "rical (men)" meant both men and persons of high status in Ottoman. And it is a good example of gender difference in Ottoman language.

³²⁸ "Galiba En Doğru Söz Bu... Nakiye Hanım Birlik'teki Fikirlerin Aleyhinde (Perhaps This is the Most Appropriate Word... Nakiye Hanım is in Opposition to the Union's Ideas)", *Milliyet*, no. 481, 17 June 1927, p. 1-4.

The next day Muhiddin responded to Nakiye Hanım by saying that her statement was received by the association with sorrow. "As Nakiye Hanım is a principle of a school and president of Türk Ocağı, I am of the opinion the things she has said concerning womanhood can only be seen as an another example of {sic.} suicide." She goes on to say that the WU has close to six hundred members and she asserts that achieving political rights for women would be of benefit to the country -"national welfare and contentment" would be increased. The claim of "wanting fame" was simply unfounded. The journalists were closely following their positive efforts.³²⁹ The response to Nezihe Muhiddin that Nakiye Hanım released to the press on the following day was more temperate. She accepted the fact that Nezihe Hanım was correct on certain points. She revealed that she supported the ideas of the WU. Women had the right to achieve political rights to the extent that they worked. Her statement in the press had been misinterpreted.³³⁰

That same day *Cumhuriyet* stated that the Union was convening the administrative committee to choose a candidate. At the end of this news item was a letter sent to the newspaper by Hatice Ahmet Hanım from the WU's Legal Commission. Hatice Ahmet posed the following question to the male-dominated press and public at large: "Why do you still wish to see the Turkish woman as merely your slave?" It is a matter of fact that every initiative undertaken by women is both a focus of press coverage and is presented according to the male point of view. With methods

³²⁹ "Kadın Birliği'nin Tasavvuru Tebessümle Karşılandı (The WU's Idea is Received with Sarcasm)", *Milliyet*, no. 482, 18 June 1927, p. 1-4.

³³⁰ "Nakiye Hanım Cevaba Cevap Veriyor (Nakiye Hanım Responds to the Response)", *Milliyet*, no. 483, 19 June 1927, p. 2.

sometimes mocking, with demeaning expressions, caricatures and shifts of focus they present women's initiatives to the reader in a biased manner.³³¹

The WU's initiative drew the gaze of the foreign press. It is known that Nezihe Muhiddin was interviewed by a *New York Times* correspondent.³³² The WU selected a committee to pay their respects to Gazi Mustafa Kemal Paşa.³³³ At this visit they would explain their initiatives for political rights to Gazi Mustafa Kemal and request his support. Furthermore, in line with this the WU prepared a statement and in it defended the recognition of political rights for women.³³⁴ That same day Nezihe Muhiddin related to a *Cumhuriyet* correspondent that their aim was to steer "public opinion" and that the public seemed to be interested in the feminist current. She was hopeful that in the two phase election, upon coming to the second phase the issue of political rights for women would be presented and these rights would be recognized in parliament. A short while later the WU changed its strategy and refrained from fielding an independent candidate. They decided to field their candidates via the PP during the nomination period.³³⁵

³³¹ "Kadınlar Bugün Namzedlerini Tesbit Ediyorlar (Today Women Choose Their Nominee)", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1116, 19 June 1927, p. 1-2. Those wishing to investigate gender bias in the press will find news items concerning the WU a very rich source indeed.

³³² "Kadınlar Birliği Arz-ı Tazimat Heyetini İntihab Etti (The WU has Selected a Committee to Pay Their Respects)", *Milliyet*, no. 484, 20 June 1927, p. 1-4. Nezihe Muhiddin was part of the committee but did not participate. As for the "paying of respect", this was an example of the Ottoman patrimonial tradition in regards political behavior showing that the political culture had not changed much at all.

³³³ "Kadınlar Birliği Arz-ı Tazimat Heyetini İntihab Etti (The WU has Selected a Committee to Pay Their Respects)", *Milliyet*, no. 484, 20 June 1927, p. 1-4.

³³⁴ "Kadınlar Birliği Arz-ı Tazimat Heyetini İntihab Etti (The WU has Selected a Committee to Pay Their Respects)", *Milliyet*, no. 484, 20 June 1927, p. 1-4.

³³⁵ "Kadın Namzed Göstermekten Vazgeçtiler! (They Have Given Up on Fielding a Woman Candidate)", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1117, 20 June 1927, p. 3.

Debate in Parliament: To be a Soldier or an MP?

The WU's initiative for political rights garnered much attention from the public. This interest was reflected in Parliament. In a session on 21st June 1927 concerning the law on Military Service, while the first article was being discussed, Hakkı Tarık Bey (Us) made mention of the women's "current" in regards to their participation in the election. Hakkı Tarık Bey supported them in being allowed to hold office. To be in parliament was a patriotic matter just as it was to participate in the country's defense -given that women should partake in military service. In response to Hakkı Tarık Bey's speech the Minister of National Defense, Recep Bey (Peker), took to the floor. According to Recep Bey, "Among their fellow citizens, Turkish women are considered to be in accord with the men of their homeland". Mothers, by raising Turkish children to serve in the defense of the nation, in this way fulfill their duties to the homeland. In his speech, without mentioning the WU, Recep Bey refers to "a committee that pretends to represent womanhood and its claims". In response to the WU's initiative to promote political rights Recep Bey pontificates: "Since you wished to actively concern yourselves with the Turkish homeland and its destiny, then I invite you to consider another honorable aspect of active concern," and calls on the women of the WU to enlist in the army. In rebuttal, Yunus Nadi Bey (Abalıoğlu) claims that the women's demand to be members of parliament has no logical connection with their performing military service. Yunus Nadi Bey indicates that one day (but not now)

women most certainly will take part in elections and that on witnessing this, he will be gratified.³³⁶

With the added attention of the press these debates in parliament kept the WU's initiative on the agenda. Upon being asked about her ideas concerning the said debate in parliament, Nezihe Muhiddin replied to Recep Peker's statements: "Every citizen who has come of age essentially has a right to exercise these said rights":

Çok garip olarak biz, siyasi hak bahşına Türk hanımlarının mebusluk hakkındaki tasavvurlarını Büyük Millet Meclisi'nde de mevzu-ı bahs ettirmiş olan Giresun Milletvekili Hakkı Tarık Bey temas eder etmez; karşımıza bir askerlik meselesini çıkardılar. Bununla güya bizi tedhiş {yıldırımak} edecekler.³³⁷

"In terms of the Government There is no Such Thing as a Woman's Issue"

Falih Rıfki (Atay) took part in this debate by indicating that he did not take the WU's initiatives seriously. In an article he wrote for *Milliyet* newspaper entitled "The Turkish Woman", he implied that those who were "besieging" the Istanbul press on the issue of womanhood were not concerned with the really "positive and beneficial" initiatives undertaken by certain women and he did not take "their claims seriously". Falih Rıfki asserted that the Turkish reformers had accomplished major reforms for womanhood, yet these had not extended to all womanhood. "Before they begin

³³⁶ *TBMM Zabıt Ceridesi*, c. 33, p. 385-386, 21.6.1927. (These meetings were published in *Milliyet*. See *Milliyet*, no. 486, 22 June 1927, p. 1-4.)

³³⁷ "Hanımların Gazi Paşa Hazretlerine Arz-ı Tazimatı (Ladies pay their respects to the Majestic Gazi Paşa)", *Milliyet*, no. 487, 23 June 1927, p. 1-4.

striving against men", Turkish woman's associations should work towards gaining the acceptance of these reforms amongst the majority of womanhood. According to Falih Rıfki, there was no such thing as a woman's issue vis-à-vis the government.³³⁸ Esma Zafir, who was a member of the Union, in response to those who found that suffrage for women was "untimely", asserted in *Cumhuriyet* that "even if these rights were only accorded to those of the intellectual set of women", an important step would be made.³³⁹ That same week the press reported that Gazi Mustafa Kemal would be visiting Istanbul (July 1927) - an event that had, as a matter of fact, last occurred in 1919.³⁴⁰ The city was in full preparation to welcome the Gazi. The Woman's Union announced that its membership would be attending his reception in full force. In the same news item it indicated that the Union had not given up on applying to field its parliamentary candidates under the umbrella of the PP.³⁴¹ On the 3rd July a commission from the Union sent to apply for permission to officially pay their respects, was received in an unexpected fashion by the Gazi in that they were immediately invited by him to his quarters in Dolmabahçe Palace.³⁴² On the 9th July the Union's tentative male candidate, Kenan Bey, announced that he had resigned from the Union

³³⁸ Falih Rıfki, "Türk Kadını (Turkish Woman)", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1117, 20 June 1927, p. 3. Falih Rıfki's view was later adopted and defended by Kemalist women.

³³⁹ Esma Zafir, "Kadınlık, Kadınlar ve İntihabat (Womanhood, Women and Elections)", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1122, 25 June 1927, p. 2.

³⁴⁰ See Utkan Kocatürk, *Kronoloji*, p. 466-467. Gazi Mustafa Kemal, boarded the train in Ankara and came to Istanbul on 1st July.

³⁴¹ "Kadın Birliği Mebusluk İçin Namzed İraesinden Hâlâ Vazgeçmedi (The WU has Still not Given up on Fielding a Candidate the Deputy)", *Milliyet*, no. 487, 23 June 1927, p. 1-4.

³⁴² "Kadın Birliği Dün Gazi Hazretlerini Arz-ı Tazimat Etti (Yesterday the WU Paid Their Respects to the Majestic Gazi Paşa)", *Milliyet*, no. 498, 4 July 1927, p. 1.

and had withdrawn his candidacy from their ticket.³⁴³ After Kenan Bey's resignation, the Woman's Union announced that it would not field any other candidate in the election. In that statement Nezihe Muhiddin remarked that there were as many as three hundred male members in the Union. She added that the "the very dear and very feminist member, the prominent writer Mahmut Sadık Bey," had recently joined the Union. In that news item it was mentioned that certain "ladies" from the Union's administrative committee had not laid aside their ideals regarding "rights to suffrage":

Hakk-ı intihabdan vazgeçtiğimiz gün bu cemiyetin kıymeti ve manası kalmaz.

Bu cemiyet bunun için çalışıyor. Biz ölünceye kadar bu hak uğrunda çalışacağız ve ömrümüz kifayet etmez, bu hakkı alamazsak ahfadımız mutlaka alacaktır!³⁴⁴

With these words the Woman's Union's campaign for "rights to suffrage" came to an end. The seven commissions formed by decision of the Congress began to implement their initiatives in earnest.³⁴⁵ The opposition towards Nezihe Muhiddin that began at the Union's March 1927 Congress came to a head at the end of August of that same year with the issuing of a search order of the association's headquarters on the part of the regional governor's office. This accusation on the part of the Governor, combined with the support for these allegations by the opposition members within the

³⁴³ "Birliğin Namzedi (The Union's Candidate)", *Milliyet*, no. 503, 9 July 1927, p. 1.

³⁴⁴ "Kadın Birliği'nde: Artık Namzed Göstermeyecekler! Nezihe Hanım, Biz Efkâr-ı Umumiye'nin Nâbzını Yokladık, İyi Netice Aldık, Diyor (The WU: Won't Field a Candidate! Nezihe Hanım Says, We Have Taken Stock of Public Opinion, The Response is Positive)", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1147, 20 July 1927, p. 2.

³⁴⁵ "Kadınlar Birliğinde Hesaplara Bakıldı, Yeni Komisyonlar Yapıldı (The WU's Accounts Have Been Scrutinized, New Commissions Established)", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1043, 2 April 1927, p. 2.

Union, seem to be personally directed towards Muhiddin. The end result of these accusations of corruption was to remove her from the stage of women's politics .

iv) Being Silenced (1927-1930), Forgotten and Erased From History

As a result of the accusations concerning irregularities in finance and election procedure at the Turkish Women's Union's 1927 Congress the governor -at the instigation of complaints made by the opposition- along with the Chief of Security, launched an investigation at the Union towards the end of August. The Istanbul Governor revoked the WU's permission to operate a girls camp on Büyükada (The Prince's Island) and proceeded to close the camp as well as to cancel a boat trip. After this the opposition group claimed that "the judgment and stance of the Governor towards the Union stemmed from the fact that Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım was in charge of the Union". "For the future development of the Union" the opposition demanded that Nezihe Muhiddin withdraw from the presidency, which at first she apparently refused to do, however later she seems to have tendered her resignation.³⁴⁶ Immediately afterwards an investigation of the Union was held. According to *Milliyet* newspaper after the conclusion of the investigation by the Chief of Police the Governor announced that Muhiddin improperly used Union funds for her own personal purposes and that she also use the Union's headquarters as her own residence. Certain members of the WU claimed that Nezihe Muhiddin "acted arbitrarily, that operated without consulting the administrative committee" and also made a complaint to the governor. Nezihe Muhiddin maintained that while the first police raid was

³⁴⁶ "Yerinde Bir Karar, Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım İstifa Ediyor (An Appropriate Decision, Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım Resigns)", *Milliyet*, 2 September 1927.

carried out she was not at the Union, that there was no written warrant the responsible parties were not present thus the investigation itself was illegal.³⁴⁷ Two days after the raid Doctor Safiye Ali Hanım from the Administrative Committee resigned. The news added that other resignations were expected. Nezihe Muhiddin called all Union members to attend an extraordinary Congress.³⁴⁸ On the 19th September all WU's activities were temporarily suspended and "all records, financial and another documents" were placed under court order:

Polis M d riyetince yapılan tetkikat neticesinde Nezihe Muhiddin Hanımın Birlik b t cesinden 500 lira ile, kiraladığı binayı ik met ittihaz eyleyerek bilabedel {bedelsiz olarak} istifade eylediğı, bu kısımda yapılan tenvirat-ı umuru {aydınlatma işleri} Birliğe mal ettirdiğı, Birliğin hizmet ilerine şahsi işlerini g rd rtt ğ , b t n bunlardan ba ka heyet-i idare azalarından ho una gitmeyenleri vilayete ve polise ihbara l zum g rmeden ikidebirde değıştirdiğı anla ılmıştır.³⁴⁹

³⁴⁷ "Kadın Birliğı Ni in Tefti  Ediliyor? (Why is the WU Being Investigated)", *Milliyet*, 12 September 1927. "Aldığımız habere g re Birlik Reisesi Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım Birliğe ait kasadan heyet-i idare kararı olmadan 500 Lira almı  ve umum-ı zatiyesine sarf eylemi tir. Mamafih Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım bu parayı bir hafta sonra hemen iade etmi tir. Lakin Cemiyetler Kanunu mucibince cemiyet kasasından hususat-ı zatiye i in hi bir meblağ alınamayacağından bu husus nazar-ı dikkate alınmı tır."

³⁴⁸ "Kadınlar Birliğı, T rk Kadınlığı Bihakkın Temsil Edilemiyor (The WU, Turkish Womanhood is not Being Represented Well)", *Milliyet*, 13 September 1927.

³⁴⁹ "Kadın Birliğı Faaliyetten Men Edildi ve Defterler M h rlendi (The WU's Activities Have Been Curtailed and its Records Confiscated)", *Milliyet*, 20 September 1927.

As soon as Nezihe Muhiddin called the Union's members to an extraordinary congress the police commissioner suspended this congress and hauled Nezihe Muhiddin to court along with the documentation concerning the administrative committee.³⁵⁰ On being refused permission to hold the meeting at the Union's headquarters, the administrative committee met instead at Nezihe Muhiddin's Cihangir home. Kıbrıslı Azize Hanım told a reporter from *Milliyet* that there may have been some small errors in judgment, and added that they would not allow personally motivated attacks towards the Union to destroy it and be used as an excuse to close it down. Another member stated that certain members wished to sabotage the WU and that while at the beginning these very people had supported the administrative committee they have later gone over to the opposition. This member also indicated that these people sought the sabotage the administrative committee by employing insignificant matters as a pretext, and that in a new congress it would be apparent which side was stronger, adding: "The Union's administrative committee is ready to be held accountable for all its initiatives. There is even receipts of five hundred Liras taken by Nezihe Hanım are available."³⁵¹

On the other hand *Cumhuriyet* announced that the opposition group was organizing a new congress with the aim of selecting a new administrative committee; this news was imparted in the following manner:

³⁵⁰ "Kadınlar Birliği, Nezihe Hanım Hakkındaki Evrak Mahkemeye Verildi (WU, Documents Concerning Nezihe Muhiddin have been Submitted to the Court)", *Milliyet*, 23 September 1927.

³⁵¹ Hususi İctima (Special Meeting)", *Milliyet*, 24 September 1927.

Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım'ın Kadın Birliğini feci bir vaziyete düşürmesinden (my emphasis) son derecede müteessir olan bazı hanımlar kendi aralarında bir kongre akdine lüzum gördüler.³⁵²

While these events were taking place a WU congress held at the Türk Ocağı on the 26th September 1927 took place amid heated arguments concerning Nezihe Muhiddin. The chairperson of the Congress was Latife Bekir Hanım (Çeyrek başı), who later became President of the WU. Saime Hanım (Eraslan) was one of the secretaries of the congress. Saime Hanım -as was apparent in her letter to Taha Toros- spoke very harshly about Nezihe Muhiddin and accused her of corruption.³⁵³ The result of this congress was that a new administrative committee and central committee

³⁵² "Türk Kadınları Bugün Türk Ocağı'nda Toplanarak Yeni Reis ve Heyet-i İdareyi İntihab Edecekler (Today Turkish Women Gather Together in the Turkish Heart to Select a New President and Administrative Committee)", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1215, 26 September 1927, p. 3.

³⁵³ According to *Cumhuriyet* Saime Eraslan said in opposition to those who said that the selection of a new administrative committee was out of line, that in fact the old administrative committee had not yet been dissolved at this congress. What she said in her speech was borne out by her letter: "Bu sırada azadan Saime Hanım asabiyet ile reisin sözünü kesmiş ve çantasından mufassal bir rapor çıkardıktan sonra: 'Rica ederim efendim, müsaade buyurunuz da Nezihe Muhiddin'in yapmış olduğu icraatı size bu kağıttan okuyarak anlatayım!' diye söze başlamıştır.... Saime Hanım Evvela Birlik reisi Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım'ın Birliğe ait paradan (500) lira derecesinde bir meblağ kendi hususi işlerine sarf ettiği anlaşıldığını söylemiş ve: 'Nezihe Hanım Birlik binasını kendine ikametgah itti haz etmiş, Birliğe ait bulunan eşyayı da kendi eşyası gibi istimalde tereddüd eylememiştir. Bundan maada Nezihe Muhiddin Hanımın Birliğe ait hesabat işlerinde bazı yanlış hareketleri görüldüğü de söylenmektedir. Birliğin umur-ı hayriyeye sarf edilmek üzere toplanan paralarının mahal-i sarfı çok defa meçhul ve müphem kalmıştır. Nezihe Hanımın Birlik aidatından olan mebaliği şahsi ve keyfi olarak sarf etmek istediği tahakkuk etmektedir' demiştir." (See "Kadınlar Gürültülü Bir Kongre Akdettiler", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1216, 27 September 1927, p. 2.) The same news in *Milliyet* stated that Saime Eraslan said much the same thing as above: "Efendim burada kongre aleyhinde söz söyleyenler, Nezihe Hanım'ın Birlik riyasetini müdafî etmeye gelenlerdir. Biz artık Nezihe Muhiddin'i aramızda görmek istemiyoruz. Nezihe Hanım Birlik heyet-i idaresini malumatı haricinde hizmeti hususi işlerinde kullanmıştır. Birliğe ait oda takımlarını yine kendisi istimal {kullanma} etmiştir. Vapurlarda Birlik namına tevzi edilen rozet hasılatından (300) Lirayı "Biz dulları ve fakirleri himaye ediyoruz" diye kendi gazetesine sarf etmiştir. Son tenezzüh bahri {deniz gezisi} için satılan bilet bedellerinin nereye gittiği de malum değildir. Bundan Başka Nezihe Hanım Esirgeme Derneği'ne ait kırk lira kıymetindeki çay takımını da iade etmemiştir. (See "Kadınlar Nihayet Nezihe Hanım'dan Ayrıldılar {The Women Have Finally Parted Ways With Nezihe Hanım}", *Milliyet*, 27 September 1927).

were selected, even though the number of members attending was insufficient for reaching a quorum.³⁵⁴ This congress was a turning point in the history of the WU. After this there was no turning back for the WU in regard to its policies, it would distant itself from its politics of women's rights. After this event a group of women along with Nezihe Muhiddin resigned from the Union.³⁵⁵

Meanwhile as a result of the Governor's intervention, Nezihe Muhiddin launched a court case against the Governor's office on the grounds that the said intervention was in violation of the Law of Associations.³⁵⁶ At the very first meeting of the WU's new administrative committee the decision was reached to expel Nezihe Muhiddin.³⁵⁷ Those same days witness the commencement of a court case instigated by the Istanbul Governor Office in which Nezihe Muhiddin was to stand trial for "violating Law of Associations". In this trial, according to *Cumhuriyet*, Nezihe Muhiddin responded to the judge's queries by stating that "in my private life I am not very organized". She added that even after paying off her personal debts she often did not collect the receipts, saying, "I do not remember to whom this five hundred lira

³⁵⁴ "Kadınlar Gürültülü Bir Kongre Akdettiler", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1216, 27 September 1927, p. 2.

³⁵⁵ Turkish Woman's Union dissolved itself in 1935. Soon after Nezihe Muhiddin's resignation Latife Bekir (Çeyrek başı) took over the presidency up until 1935. She later entered parliament as a RPP deputy of İzmir. In 1946 TWU was reestablished and has existed and is the most widespread woman's association to this day - with the exception of its closure during the military interventions over the years. In a investigation I conducted in 1995 in TWU's Istanbul branch, the president of the branch indicated that no documents, note books, records or files from the past were remained. The president explained that during military rule all documents concerning the association were stuffed in sacks and taken to the security headquarters. In spite of the efforts on the part of the Union to retrieve them, they were never returned.

³⁵⁶ "Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım'ın Vilayet Aleyhine Açtığı Dava (Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım's Court Case Against the Governors Office)", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1221, 2 October 1927, p. 1.

³⁵⁷ "Kadınlar Birliğinde; Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım'ın Birlikten İhracına Karar Verildi (WU, The Decision has Been Made to Expel Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım from the Union)", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1223, 4 October 1927, p. 3.

expenditure was made". She accepted that she had taken the said five hundred liras and given a receipt for it.³⁵⁸ This court case totally changed her political life and destroyed her public reputation. As a matter of fact this truth was expressed in a journalist's article in *Yeni Kitap*, which came out in October when the court case opened. In the article it states that in the last two months Nezihe Muhiddin had provided enough material on issues of import "to fill 85 columns of newsprint" yet now she had come down in the world. It was going to be very difficult for the new administrative committee to fill the void left by Nezihe Muhiddin: "They will not be able to come up with any issues to entice our readership nor statements to excite the journalists."³⁵⁹ Indeed news concerning Nezihe Muhiddin from that day onwards with only be featured in the "Courts"³⁶⁰ columns wherein short items would appear

³⁵⁸ "Evrak-ı davaya nazaran Nezihe Hanımı mahkeme huzuruna çıkaran sebep şundan ibarettir: Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım Birlik tarafından verilen bir müsamerenin '500' Liradan ibaret olan hasılatını heyet-i umumiyyeden karar almadan zimmetine geçirmiş ve intifa {yararlanma} kastıyla hususat-ı zatiyesine istimal eylemiş ve buna mukabil Birlik kasasına bir senet bırakmış ve cemiyete mahsus binayı ikametgâh itti haz eylemiş, cemiyetin heyet-i idare azalığına tayin edilen Lamia Refik, Hayrün-nisa, Zahide Emrah Hanımların Cemiyetler Kanununa tevfi ken haklarında tahkikat icra edilmeksizin ve merci-i kanunisine haber vermeksizin intihab-ı vakii kabul ve heyet-i idareye müsad eylemiştir." See "Nezihe Hanım Davası (The Court Case of Nezihe Hanım)", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1226, 7 October 1927, p. 3. Nezihe Muhiddin was the owner of *Kadın Yolu* and after the 4. issue it became the publication of the WU. It seems to me that, it is very likely she withdrew and then replaced the money to cover publishing expense. Muhiddin must have had a financial transactions with the Union concerning the publication of *Kadın Yolu*. It could very well be that Saime Eraslan used this situation. In Saime Eraslan's "famous" speech, in referring to *Kadın Yolu* she said "she expended money on her own newspaper. (See *Milliyet*, 27 September 1927). Moreover in her handwritten and signed letter Saime Eraslan states that the RPP's İstanbul Chairman, the Governor and the Head of security were involved bringing charges against Nezihe Muhiddin and she herself cooperated with them: "Nezihe Muhiddin'in yaptığı yolsuz ahvale imza edemeyeceğimi söyleyerek cemiyetten çekildim. Bunları Fırka Reisi İbrahim Tali (Öngören) Bey'e, İstanbul Valisi Süleyman Sırrı Bey'e anlattım. Şimdiki Malatya Mebusu Hasan Reşit Bey'e (Tankut) - o vakit polis müdüriyetinde idi- Hepsinden yardım görerek Türk Ocağı'nda bir kongre yaptık" These statements strongly indicate that the government was behind the Nezihe Muhiddin affair. Throughout the rest of her life Nezihe Muhiddin, never publicly referred to these events nor did she ever cast blame on any individual.

³⁵⁹ "Biraz da Mizah; Nezihe Muhiddin Hanımefendiye Mektub (Time for a Little Humor, A Letter to Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım)", *Yeni Kitap*, no. 6, October 1927.

³⁶⁰ The WU opened a court case against Nezihe Muhiddin in 1927 accusing her of "misrepresentation and breach of security (sahtekârlık ve emniyeti suistimal)". She was acquitted in 1929 as the result of a general amnesty. See "Adliyyede: Nezihe Muhittin H. Aleyhindeki Dava (In

concerning trials -her existence would be forgotten by the press. As for the WU, afterwards it too would be largely ignored.

Convergence and Divergence on Women's Politics Vis-à-vis Kemalists

The period wherein Nezihe Muhiddin was active on the stage of women's politics (1923-1927) coincided with the years in which Turkey's one-party regime was established and thrived.³⁶¹ This newly established Republican regime, by its nature, used authoritarian means to gain the acceptance of society in implementing its social and political program. It was stated that the family was the bases of social life in the RPP's program, which was written by Chairman Gazi Mustafa Kemal and announced at the RPP's 1927 annual congress. This program refereed to social reform and was released under the heading of "The Politics of Social and Public Health". Social life was bound by the family and children produced by the nation's population. This policy was also most apparent in the RPP's 1931 program:

İctimai hayatımızda ailenin mahfuziyet ve resaneti istinat ettiğimiz esastır. Hürriyet ve halkçılık prensiplerinin menettiği her türlü müdahalattan azade olan sağlam aile hayatı ictimai sahada başlıca dikkat edeceğimiz mevzudur. Çocuk hayatı ile suret-i mahsusada alakadarız. Çocukların muhafazası ile müstahsil ve

Court: The Case Against Nezihe Muhiddin", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1794, 6 May 1929, p. 3 and "Adliyyede: Nezihe Muhittin Davası", *Cumhuriyet*, no. 1815, 30 May 1929, p. 2.

³⁶¹ Mete Tuncay, *T.C. 'nde Tek-Parti Yönetimi 'nin Kurulması (1923-1931)*, (The Establishment of the One-Party Regime in the Turkish Republic 1923-1931) Cem Yayınevi, Istanbul, 1992 (3. Edition), p. 405.

aileye faideli olabilmesini mütemadiyen taharri ve takip etmek kararındayız. Bu suretle teveddülâtı memleketin başlıca servet ve mesnedi addediyoruz.³⁶²

İctimai Hayat ve Umumi Sıhhat: 1 - Türk ictimai hayatında ailenin mahfuziyeti esastır. 2 - Müfusumuzu arttıracak tedbirleri ehemmiyetle takip edeceğiz. 3 - Fırka çocuk hayatıyla suret-i mahsusada alakadardır...³⁶³

In browsing through Nezihe Muhiddin's articles we can also assume that she favored the Republics child/population policy.³⁶⁴ yet the main difference between Kemalists and Nezihe Muhiddin was that for her social life was not bound by the family and children. According to Muhiddin womanhood “ consisted of half the population of the country”, and was the pillar of the social sphere.

Secondly, the solution to the problems concerning womanhood was not just for the sake of “the elevation of the nation” in terms its progressivism and modernization but rather for the sake of the elevation of womanhood itself. Given that one of the foundation of the Kemalist view on equality between men and women consisted of male-dominated framework, it is impossible to conclude that Kemalism actually embraced the very reforms that Nezihe Muhiddin envisioned.

³⁶² See Mete Tuncay, *ibid*, p. 396.

³⁶³ See Mete Tuncay, *ibid*, p. 452-453.

³⁶⁴ See Nezihe Muhiddin, “Analık Vazifeleri: Çocuklarımızı Nasıl Büyütmeliyiz? (Duties of Mothering : How Should We Raise Our Children?)”, *Kadın Yolu*, no. 1, 16 July 1341 {1925}, p. 7-8 ve “Çocuklarımız Bakımsızdır (Our Children are Neglected)”, *Kadın Yolu*, no. 2, 23 July 1341 {1925}, p. 20-22.

Republican Woman

In accordance with the line of thought pursued in the previous section I would like to posit the following: The RPP was a men's club. The RPP's "new woman" was a "child-woman". Neither as a concept nor as a person could the "New woman" encompass those strong, upper-class, intellectual women of Istanbul who had in the past fifty years been active in supporting the ideals of womanhood. They supported an abstract image of the "Anatolian" woman and with a design meant to stamp the future generations, that is the "woman's hand held" by the Ata,³⁶⁵ presented the republican woman to society. When Afetinan returned from her education in Europe, provided by the new government, she was one of the first of these new "republican women" that Ankara presented as an alternatives to the Istanbul women. When she was selected as the chairperson of the Turkish Historical Society she was 22 years old. The Republican woman engineered by the Kemalists did not stray from Atatürk's social project, was totally obedient to political authority, she was a woman who gratefully appreciated the rights that the "great saver" had bestowed. It would not be a mistake to assert that Nezihe Muhiddin was not one of those to fit in with this model.

³⁶⁵ In this period photographs portraying Mustafa Kemal Atatürk with his foster child Ülkü received wide coverage in the press. Here are the ones who would create the "New Woman", those who Atatürk held by the hand, those children and young girls raised under the reforms of the Republic.

Farewell to Politics: The 1930 Candidacy for the Free Republican Party

We do not have much data in hand concerning Nezihe Muhiddin's candidacy for the Free Republican Party (FRP). Since the FRP program contained an article regarding women's rights she supported it. And in the Municipal elections of October 1930 we know that she was a council candidate for the region of Beyoğlu. The Party program's eleventh article concerned a one-phase election and women's rights: "Article 11 - The party will advocate the principle of one-phase elections and political rights for Turkish womanhood"³⁶⁶ As Mete Tuncay has documented Nezihe Muhiddin was listed second after Makbule Hanım (Atadan) in the Beyoğlu region candidacy list.³⁶⁷

Defense: *Türk Kadını*

As Ayşegül Baykan has indicated, Nezihe Muhiddin's book *Türk Kadını*, which she wrote after her candidacy for the FRP is an important source for the historiography of women. In terms of my study it has the characteristic of being Muhiddin's defense. It contains the narration of Muhiddin's struggle which spans many years and climaxing on a tragic note, *Türk Kadını* goes into the Ottoman women's movement in which she was raised, it defends our women's history, her thoughts and initiatives against society and the Kemalists in particular. *Türk Kadını* is the expression and culmination of her

³⁶⁶ Mete Tuncay, *ibid.* p. 405.

³⁶⁷ See Mete Tuncay, *ibid.* p. 513.

political literary career. After this book was published in 1931 she wrote no more on politics. After the 1935 election in Istanbul in which she ran as an independent there were no more political initiatives in her life.³⁶⁸

It is difficult to listen to Nezihe Muhiddin's "strident voice" in *Türk Kadını*. That self-confident, loud voice that carried over for twenty years in her literary and social life was no longer heard in *Türk Kadını*. Nezihe Muhiddin dedicated this "woman's petite work" (*Türk Kadını*) "so like a modest flower" to "The Great guide, the Great savior, the Grand Inspirer, peerless genius, hero, to the Great Gazi Mustafa Kemal Paşa, to the traces of his majesty's radiance".

The contents and language of *Türk Kadını* is well below Nezihe Muhiddin's intellectual level. In *Türk Kadını* there is no systematic presentation of Muhiddin's ideas and experiences concerning social and political rights, economics and social issues -one could even say they are barely mentioned at all. The book appears in a manner totally foreign to Nezihe Muhiddin's written and spoken style, it is devoid of her characteristic systematic approach. The expressions and statements lacking in proper style.

The table of contents offered to the reader do not contain two chapters entitled "Where I Came Across the First Serious Woman's Initiative?" and "Why I Formed the Woman's Union". The first mentioned the Ottoman women's movement and the second the Turkish Woman's Union - that is she was mentioning herself and thus by not including them in the table of contents she sought, so to speak, to slip them in between the lines. In a way while defending herself against an authoritarian regime she

³⁶⁸ See Serpil Çakır, "Ulviye Mevlan, Nezihe Muhittin".

was also performing some fashion of auto-censorship. The net result was that *Türk Kadını* was a most inept defense. Her defensive purpose constricted the text, which was deficient and incoherent. However in spite of all these deficiencies the information and comment on the Ottoman Women's movement is quite extensive.

Forgotten, Erased from History

Nezihe Muhiddin did not fit in with the Kemalist design of a "new woman". She did not adhere to the Kemalist project concerning women's rights and moreover sought to be an independent force outside of the states in regards to women's rights outside of the state's authoritarian political culture. A path was followed wherein she was erased from Turkey's history, dragged through the courts, forgotten and rejected. The charges leveled against her in consecutive court cases were for "corruption, falsification, embezzlement" and she was finally able to escape their onus in 1929, not through acquittal, but rather through a general amnesty that was proclaimed that year. These court cases seem to damage her reputation vis-à-vis the public that she could no longer carry on with her ideals of securing women's rights. Subsequently she entered a period of silence. No one wanted to remember her, or approach her.³⁶⁹ In this period only a few close friends met in her home, the monthly open-house tea parties continued, and she made her living through novel writing and teaching.

³⁶⁹ When women were enfranchised a correspondent remembered her. See Naci Sadullah, "Nezihe Muhittin Hanım Ne Alemde?... (How is Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım Now?...)", *Yedigün*, no. 92, 12 Aralık 1934, p. 3-5. While the International Woman's Union Congress (Arş-ı Ulusal Kadınlar Birliği Kongresi) was being held in Istanbul in April 1935 Suat Derviş interviewed Nezihe Muhiddin: See Suad Derviş, "Nelere Sinirlenirsiniz? (What Bothers You?)", *Cumhuriyet*, 2 May 1935, p. 1, 11. The last interview with Nezihe Muhiddin that I found was conducted by İbrahim Hoya (ibid.) in 1941.

As for her erase from Turkey's history, that was accomplished by the Kemalist historiography which crafted for future generations. In Afetinan's *Atatürk ve Türk Kadın Haklarının Kazanılması* (Atatürk and the Attainment of Women's rights), *Türk Kadını* is listed in the Source list, but there is no mention of Nezihe Muhiddin anywhere in the book.³⁷⁰ In Tezer Taşkiran's reference book she mentions Esmâ Zafir, a member of the WU, but not a word about Nezihe Muhiddin. Interestingly enough Tezer Taşkiran reports on the Hukuk-ı Aile İctimai (Family Law Conference),³⁷¹ which was organized by Nezihe Muhiddin and where she delivered the opening speech, in referring to the conference she only draws on quotations from her father Ahmet Ağaoğlu's articles.³⁷² The same holds true for Enver Behnan (Şapolyo), whose first arguably important articles were published in *Kadın Yolu* yet in his history books written in later years, there is no mention of his first editor-in-chief. As for the TWU in no subsequent publications is Nezihe Muhiddin refereed to. The generations that knew Muhiddin they gradually have passed away taking the image of that bright woman with them.

³⁷⁰ See Afetinan, *Atatürk ve Türk Kadın Haklarının Kazanılması, Tarih Boyunca Türk Kadınının Hak ve Görevleri*, MEB, İstanbul, 1970 (3. Edition)

³⁷¹ See p. 101.

³⁷² See Tezer Taşkiran, *Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında Türk Kadın Hakları*, Başbakanlık Basımevi, Ankara, 1973, p. 125, 104-115.

IV. CONCLUSION

The reason why Nezihe Muhiddin is the subject of this study is that at the turn of this century she appeared to be an important woman thinker-activist who was influential in the society in transition. Nezihe Muhiddin passed on to younger generations the ideals of womanhood which the generation before had struggled to formulate and pursue in their initiatives to insure the participation of women in the civil sphere. Muhiddin strove to ensure women's participation in the building of the nation process, which was appropriate to that period's political climate. She sought in periods of social change that open new avenues of power to gain a share and access and position for women to participate in the power structure. In her struggle for women to gain access to the sphere of political and social power she exemplified a unique character. In conceptualizing womanhood as a "group" living in inequality within a male dominated society in her seeing "the specificity" of the situation of womanhood, led her to a struggle for liberation from that effacement in which found itself. She came to exist as a woman in the male sphere in society and as a woman who had proved her power Nezihe Muhiddin believed that in demonstrating their "existence and power" women in society, being "united", would succeed. She defended woman's identity and sought for the assertion of that identity. In being able to see that the situation of womanhood was not bound by biological particulars but rather by social constructions, it is fair to say that within our society, at the turn of this century, she was among the most outstanding woman thinkers and activists.

On the political stage Nezihe Muhiddin looked on from the “point of view of womanhood” and sought to embrace women’s rights using the nationalist reforms “which provided this great opportunity”. She sought for women to take their place in the design and imagination of the nation as equal citizens. She fervently wished for women to be rational, reasoning, industrious citizens in society who fulfilled their social duties. She insisted that if women did not participate in the new social project the reforms of the Republic would never be complete -this insight seems to borne out by the subsequent social developments over the preceding seventy five years. This great social project, in other words, her desire to have an equal role with men in the Republic, clashed with Kemalist government. This thesis has attempted to show through a study of Nezihe Muhiddin and her works that women sought their political rights before they were granted them in 1934. It has long been claimed that women were given their rights by the Kemalist founding fathers and that they did not have to fight for them. This study aimed to show that through the initiative of Nezihe Muhiddin, women did fight for their rights including political rights and sought full equality. In analyzing the phenomena of Nezihe Muhiddin we bear witness to her attempt to expand the parameters of the existing political field for women’s inclusion as active agents in the political process. In contrast to this, Kemalist’s sought to exclude women themselves from the category of “woman”. Muhiddin’s case may help to show in the history of our country the ways of establishing gender hierarchy by Republican government.

Consequently, as an advocate of nationalist republicanism, she was paradoxically repressed, silenced and excluded by the Republican authoritarian

leadership. Women's struggle was suppressed, Nezihe Muhiddin was silenced and the founding fathers could claim a tabula rasa -over which they could rewrite women's history as the granters of women's rights . While she struggled throughout her life to liberate womanhood from effacement, she was not able to prevent Nezihe Muhiddin's "effacement". Hence this "unique personality" of womanhood has been forgotten and erased from history.

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Kadın Birliği Hakkında Etraflı Malumat. İkdam, no. 9755, 30 Mayıs 1340 {1924}, p. 2.

Kadın Birliği Önümüzdeki Haziran'da Avrupa ve Amerika'ya Bir Seyehat Tertip Ediyor. Cumhuriyet, no. 290, 25 February 1341 {1925}, p. 3.

Kadınlar ve Mebusluk. Cumhuriyet, no. 290, 25 February 1341 {1925}, p. 1-2.

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Erkek mi Kadına, kadın mı Erkeğe Tabi? Cumhuriyet, no. 1029, 19 March 1927, p. 1.

Beynelmilel Kadın Birliği'nin Daveti. Milliyet, 20 March 1927, p. 2.

Kadınlarla Erkekler Arasında Nasılsa Bir Kara Kedi Geçti, Toplanan Kongre Gayr-i Kanuni midir? Milliyet, no. 405, 28 March 1927, p. 1-4.

Kadınlar Birliğinde Hesaplara Bakıldı, Yeni Komisyonlar Yapıldı. Cumhuriyet, no. 1043, 2 April 1927, p. 2.

Kadın Birliği, İntihabatta Yolsuzluk Olmadığı Anlaşıldığından Heyet-i İdare Tasdik Edildi. Milliyet, no. 451, 15 Mayıs 1927, p. 3.

Kadınlarda Hukuk-ı Siyasiye, Vilayet Nizamnameyi Tasdik Etti. Cumhuriyet, no. 1084, 15 Mayıs 1927, p. 2.

Türk Kadın Birliği Kongresi. Kadın Yolu, no. 29, 1 June 1927, p. 1-6.

Kadınlar Birliği ve Mebusluk. Cumhuriyet, no. 1106, 6 June 1927, p. 2.

Kadınlar ve İntihabat: Kadın Birliği, Kadın Namzed Gösteremezse Müfrit Bir Feministi Namzed Gösterecek. Cumhuriyet, no. 1110, 10 June 1927, p. 3.

Kadınların Mebusluğu. Milliyet, no 478, 14 June 1927, p. 1-4.

Mebus Kim? Kadınlar: Herkes Bizim Müdafimizdir Diyorlar. Milliyet, no 479, 15 June 1927, p. 1-4.

Galiba En Doğru Söz Bu... Nakiye Hanım Birlik'teki Fikirlerin Aleyhinde. Milliyet, no. 481, 17 June 1927, p. 1-4.

Kadın Birliği'nin Tasavvuru Tebessümle Karşılandı, Milliyet, no. 482, 18 June 1927, p. 1-4.

Nakiye Hanım Cevaba Cevap Veriyor. Milliyet, no. 483, 19 June 1927, p. 2.

Kadınlar Bugün Namzedlerini Tesbit Ediyorlar. Cumhuriyet, no. 1116, 19 June 1927, p. 1-2.

Kadınlar Birliği Arz-ı Tazimat Heyetini İntihab Etti. Milliyet, no. 484, 20 June 1927, p. 1-4.

Kadın Namzed Göstermekten Vazgeçtiler! Cumhuriyet, no. 1117, 20 June 1927, p. 3.

Millet Meclisinde Kadınların İntihabata İştirak Edip Etmeyecekleri Etrafında Hararetli Münakaşalar. Milliyet, no. 486, 22 June 1927, p. 1-4.

Hanımların Gazi Paşa Hazretlerine Arz-ı Tazimatı. Milliyet, no. 487, 23 June 1927, p. 1-4.

Kadın Birliği Mebusluk İçin Namzed İraesinden Hâlâ Vazgeçmedi. Milliyet, no. 487, 23 June 1927, p. 1-4.

Kadın Birliği Dün Gazi Hazretlerini Arz-ı Tazimat Etti. Milliyet, no. 498, 4 July 1927, p. 1.

Birliğin Namzedi. Milliyet, no. 503, 9 July 1927, p. 1.

Kadın Birliği'nde: Artık Namzed Göstermeyecekler! Nezihe Hanım, Biz Efkâr-ı Umumiye'nin Nabzını Yokladık, İyi Netice Aldık Diyor. Cumhuriyet, no. 1147, 20 July 1927, p. 2.

Yerinde Bir Karar, Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım İstifa Ediyor. Milliyet, 2 September 1927.

Kadın Birliği Niçin Teftiş Ediliyor? Milliyet, 12 September 1927.

Kadınlar Birliği, Türk Kadınlığı Bihakkın Temsil Edilemiyor. Milliyet, 13 September 1927.

Kadın Birliği Faaliyetten Men Edildi ve Defterler Mühürlendi. Milliyet,

20 September 1927.

Kadınlar Birliği, Nezihe Hanım Hakkındaki Evrak Mahkemeye Verildi. Milliyet,
23 September 1927.

Hususi İctima. Milliyet, 24 September 1927.

Türk Kadınları Bugün Türk Ocağı'nda Toplanarak Yeni Reis ve Heyet-i İdareyi
İntihab Edecekler. Cumhuriyet, no. 1215, 26 September 1927, p. 3.

Kadınlar Gürültülü Bir Kongre Akdettiler. Cumhuriyet, no. 1216,
27 September 1927, p. 2.

Kadınlar Nihayet Nezihe Hanım'dan Ayrıldılar. Milliyet, 27 September 1927.)

Nezihe Muhiddin Hanım'ın Vilayet Aleyhine Açtığı Dava. Cumhuriyet, no. 1221, 2
October 1927, p. 1.

Kadınlar Birliğinde; Nezihe Muhiddin Hanımın Birlikten İhracına Karar Verildi.
Cumhuriyet, no. 1223, 4 October 1927, p. 3.

Nezihe Hanım Davası. Cumhuriyet, no. 1226, 7 October 1927, p. 3.

Biraz da Mizah; Nezihe Muhiddin Hanımefendiye Mektub. Yeni Kitab, no. 6,
October 1927.

Adliyede: Nezihe Muhittin H. Aleyhindeki Dava. Cumhuriyet, no. 1794,
6 Mayıs 1929, p. 3.

Adliyede: Nezihe Muhittin Davası. Cumhuriyet, no. 1815, 30 Mayıs 1929, p. 2.

Romancı Nezihe Muhittin Araz Dün Vefat Etti. Cumhuriyet, 12 February 1958, no.
12052, p.1.

APPENDIX 1

Nezihe Muhiddin's Works

Şebab-ı Tebah, Muhtar Halid Kitabhanesi, İstanbul, 1327 {1911}, 84 s.

Benliğim Benimdir, Sudi Kitabhanesi, İstanbul, 1929, 71 s.

Periler Mağazası (1932).

Güzellik Kraliçesi (1933).

Haydudum Sonu (1934).

İstanbul'da Bir Londra (1934).

Kevser Nine (1934).

Bozkurt, Sebat Basımevi, İstanbul 1934, 126 s.

Küçük Mehmet'in Romanı (1934).

Ateş Böcekleri, Hilmi Kitabevi, İstanbul, 1936, 124 s.

Bir Aşk Böyle Söndü, Sertel Basımevi, İstanbul, 1939, 120 s.

Avare Kadın, Arif Bolat Kitabevi, İstanbul, (1943) ts. 129 s.

*Bir Yaz Gecesi*ydi, Tan Basımevi, İstanbul, ts. (1943), 110 s.

Çıngıraklı Yılan, Arif Bolat Kitabevi, İstanbul, ts. (1943), 107 s.

Çıplak Model (1943).

İzmir Çocuğu, Hilmi Kitabevi, İstanbul, 1943, 72 s.

Kalbim Senindir, Yeni Sabah Basımevi, İstanbul, ts. (1943), 136 s.

Gene Geleceksin (1944).

Sabah Oluyor, Arif Bolat Kitabevi, İstanbul, ts. (1944), 96. s.

Sus Kalbim Sus (1944).

According to Taha Toros Nezihe Muhiddin's other works are as such:

Feryatlarım, undated (ud).

Perili Evin Esrarı (ud).

Zamane Kızları (play, ud).

Florya (ud)(operet, it was performed in Istanbul in 1936 at Tepebaşı Tiyatrosu.

Its music was composed by Sezai Asa).

APPENDIX 2

“Medeni Kanun’da Aile Hukuku bölümü üç kısımdan oluşur: I. Karı koca, II. Hısımlar, III. Vesayet. Birinci kısmı hukukçular evlilik hukuku olarak adlandırırlar. Evlilik hukuku, 1. Evliliğin Meydana Gelmesi, 2. Evlenmenin Umumi Hükümleri, 3. Evliliğin Sona Ermesi alt bölümlerinden oluşur. Evlenmenin Umumi Hükümleri de iki alt bölümden oluşur: A. Evliliğin Şahsi Münasebetleri, B. Evliliğin Mali Münasebetleri.¹⁷ Bu yazının ilgilendiği alan, Evliliğin Şahsi Münasebetleri bölümüdür. Bu bölüm altında bulunan MK’nun 151-160 ıncı maddeleri eşlerin evlilik birliği içindeki hukuki durumunu düzenleyen maddeler yer alır. Bu maddeleri Saymen ve Elbir üç grupta toplarlar:

I. Eşlerin müşterek vazifeleri, II. Kocanın hak ve vazifeleri, III. Karının hak ve vazifeleri. Bu yazıyı ilgilendiren maddeler sırasıyla şunlardır:

151. Madde - Evlenme merasiminin icrası ile evlilik birliği vücut bulur.

Karı koca yekdiğerine karşı bu birliğin saadetini müttehiden (birlikte) temin ve çocukların iâşe ve terbiyesine beraberce ihtimam etmek husularını iltizam etmiş olurlar.

Karı koca bir birine sadakat ve müzaheretle (yardım) mükelleftir.

152. Madde: Koca birliğin reisidir. Evin intihabı, karı ve çocukların münasip veçhile iâşesi, ona aittir.

153. Madde - Karı, kocasının aile ismini taşır.

Kadın, müşterek saadeti temin hususunda gücü yettiği kadar kocasının muavin ve müşaviridir. Eve, kadın bakar.

154. Madde - Birliđi, koca temsil eder. Mallarını idare hususunda karı koca hangi usulu kabul etmiş olursa olsun, koca tasarruflarından şahsen mesul olur.

159. Madde - Karı koca mallarını idare için hangi usulu kabul etmiş olursa olsun karı, kocanın sarahaten (açıkça) ve zımnen müsadesi ile bir iş veya sanat ile iştigal edebilir.

(See Ferit H. Saymen, Halid K. Elbir, *Türk Medeni Hukuku* (The Turkish Civil Law), vol. 3, Istanbul, İsmail Akgün Matbaası, 1960.)

Yaprak Zihniođlu, “Mecelle, Hukuk-ı Aile Kararnamesi ve Medeni Kanun (Mecelle, Family Law Decree and the Civil Code)”, unpublished research paper, B.Ü. 1995.

APPENDIX 3

Kadınlar Halk Fırkası Beyanname, Program ve Nizamnamesi

“Şehrimizdeki Kadın Hareketi İlerliyor: Kadınlar Halk Fırkası Bugün Resmen Teşekkül Edecektir”. Vakit, no. 1979, 16 June 1339 {1923}.

“

Fırkanın Beyannamesi

.....

Memleketimizin her noktasında siyasi, iktisadi ve ictimai bütün bu mesailde kadının doğrudan doğruya veya dolayısıyla duhl ve tesirinden azade kalmış bir keyfiyet bulunmasına rağmen bu mesai gözle görünür derecede bariz değildir. Yer yer tecelli eden kadın mevcudiyet ve şahsiyetinin metin bir çerçeve dahilinde muntazam bir programla kütleli bir şekle ifrağı asgari sa'y ile azami bir kazanç teminini mucib olacağından memleketimizin hakiki saadet ve necatini kafil bulunduğundan müttefik olduğumuz umdeler etrafında bil-fil toplanmakla, kadın âleminde muhim bir muvakkız ve mürebbi olurken memleketimizin en mukaddes ve müşterek vezâifinde hissemizin ifasını, umdelerin tesri-i tatbikini ve kadınlarımızı ictimai, siyasi ve iktisadi safahat-ı tekamüliyeden geçirerek bunların muhassalası olan hakk-ı siyasisine en ve kısa ve dürüst yoldan isal eyleyecektir. Bu emellerle teessüs eden Kadınlar Halk Fırkası'nın nizamname ve heyet-i idare samisini (isimler) takdim ediyoruz.

.....

Beyannameye firkanın program ve nizamnamesi leff edilmiştir.

Nizamname 27 maddeden mürekkep olup 15 Haziran 1339 tarihinde Kadınlar Halk Fırkası namıyla merkezi İstanbul'da, şubası (şubeleri) Anadolu'da olmak üzere bir fırka tesis edildiğini yazmakta ve firkanın gayelerini (bir) fıkralar ile ifade etmektedir:

1- Kadınlar Halk Fırkası, kadınlarımızı memlekete nafi olan (dokuz umde) etrafında yalnız hasben, fikren değil bi'l-fiil toplayarak onları, kadınlığa temas eden noktalarında müşarık (ortak), dolayısıyla alakadar eden aksamında bi'l-vasıta müesser, muavin ve mütemmim (tamamlayan) olarak tatbik edecektir.

2- Hukuk-i siyasiyemizin istihsali ancak istihkak ve liyakata münevvit bulunduğu cihetle, Türk kadını memleketin siyasi, ictimai, iktisadi en mühim mesail-i hayatiyyesinde mütebariz bir şahsiyyet, kabiliyet ve failiyyet isbatına muvaffak olunca bütün bu safhat-i tekamuliyenin muhassalası olan hakk-ı siyasisini temin edecek bir umde ilavesine hak kazanacaktır.

3- Memleketin sinesinden olan kadınların da belediye intihabatına iştirak etmeleri,

4- Kadınlar Halk Fırkası "sulh-i iktisadımızın temininde" mühim bir amil olacaktır. Fırka gayesine vasıl için: Kadınlarımızın hayat-ı dahiliyye ve beytiyyede semerat-ı mesaiyi tasarruf ve tüzüğüne nazım, hayat-ı hariciyye ve umumiyyyede müstahsil olmasına say olacaktır. Dahili ma'mulatin istihlakine... mevad-ı ibtidaiyyesi memleketimizde bulunan mamulat ve masmuat vücuda getirmeğe... mevcut mensucat fabrikalarının mamulatinı yirminci asrın zevkiyle te'lif etmeğe... mensucatin harc-ı alem bir şekle efrağına... Gayr-i mutedavil zinet-i altunu ve mücevherat gibi servetin sermaye haline gelmesine... Şahsi sermayenin umumileştirilmesine bunlarla tezyinat-ı libasiyye

ve melbusat fabrikaları ve şirketler tesisine, ihracına ve'l-hasıl atıl kadın ellerinden ameli istifadeler teminine çalışacaktır.

5- Maarif hususunda: Tedrisat ve terbiyye-i ibtidaiyyede analıkla mürebbilik devreleri arasındaki hatt-ı faslı yaklaştırmağa mekatib-i ibtidaiyyenin mümkün mertebe kadın muallimelere tevdiine, şerait-i ictimaiyyemizin icabatını nazar-ı ehemmiyete alarak kızlarımızın tahsil ve terbiyesinin sevk-i idaresinde nazım olmak üzere maarif vekaletinde bir kadın maarif müşaviri bulunmasına,

6- Dul ve bi-kes kadınların ahlak ve maişetini temin ve iş bulumunu teshil ve her işte mütehasşis yetiştirmek için taksim-i amal kaidesine muvafık müesseseler vücuda getirmek,

7- Harb vukuunda ale'l-umum kadınların hizmette muavenet etmeleri hususu nazar-ı itibara alınarak icab eden tedabire tevassul olunacaktır.

8-Aile ve izdivac kanunlarının bir şekl-i mükemmele efrağına,

9-Türk kadınlarının bu mesailde tenviri için halkın seviyesiyle mütenasib tedris-i hitabeleri, risalecikler ve asar-ı müfide vücuda getirmeğe.

Fırka, teşkilatını süratle tevsi için taşrada süratle tesisat yapacaktır. Nizamnamesinin madde-i mahsusalarına nazaran taşra teşkilatı manevi bir vahdet tesisi sıfatında merkezi umur hakkında merkezle müşavere ve muhabereye mecbur, umur-u hassayide adem-i merkeziyyete mezundur.

Anadolu teşkilatı sevgili kız kardeşlerinin tenvirine ahenk-i vezâifin memleketin nef'ine hadim bir tarzda tevzinine çiftçi ve amele kadınların yardımına, Anadolu'da muhitin feyz-i istidadına ve şeraitine muvafık evlad yetiştirilmesine, Türk kadını sermayesi vücuda getirmeğe çalışacaktır.

Fırka bütün bu teşkilat-ı umumiyyenin riyaset-i fahriyyesine Türkiye'nin en münevver ve mübeccel bir kadınıni intihab etmek suretiyle onun da manevi mazaharetinden istifade edecektir.”

APPENDIX 4

Nezihe Muhiddin's Statement

“Mebus Kim? Kadınlar: Herkes Bizim Müdafimizdir Diyorlar”, Milliyet, no 479, 15 Haziran 1927, p. 1-4.

“

Büyük Millet Meclisi reisi Kazım Paşa Hazretlerinin beyanatı birliğimiz tarafından büyük bir memnuniyetle karşılanmıştır. Çünkü bu bizim için çok kıymetli bir teşvik mahiyetindedir. Kanunların ihtiyaca göre tadili zaruri olduğu kadar imkansız bir şey de değildir. Kazım Paşa Hazretleri de kadınların mebus olmalarına imkan-ı kanuni olmadığından bahs ederken “henüz” kaydını ilave etmek suretiyle ileride kadından mebus olabileceğini işaret etmek istemişlerdir. Esasen mebuslarımız arasında kadını müdafaa etmeyecek hiçbir fert olduğunu zannetmiyoruz. Binaenaleyh intihabata iştirak hususundaki nokta-i nazarımızı şayan-ı kabul göreceklere ümidindeyiz. Memleketin yarı nüfusunu teşkil eden kadınlık atıl kalamaz. Salahiyaddar ricalimiz {erkeklerimiz} müdriklerdir ki kadınsız teceddüd ve inkılab imkansızdır. Zaten Kanun-ı Medeni bunun en büyük ve belîğ misalidir. Binaenaleyh intihabatta kadınlara da mevkii vermek için Teşkilat-ı Esasiye Kanunu tadil edilebilir.

Biz diyoruz ki namzed göstermek şahısların bile hakkıdır. Ve bittabi buna bir mani-i kanuni yoktur. Biz de davamızı müdafaa edecek erkekleri namzed gösterebiliriz. Bizim namzedlerimiz erkek de olsa, intihab edildikleri takdirde hiç şüphe yok ki kadınlık için faydalı olacaktır.