

Women's Memory:
The Problem of Sources

Edited by

D. Fatma Türe and Birsen Talay Keşoğlu

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WOMEN'S NARRATIVES AS SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF ESHRAF FAMILIES

AYŞE DURAKBAŞA, GÜL ÖZSAN
AND MELTEM KARADAĞ

Eshraf as a Social Position

"Eshraf" is a reminiscent of Ottoman Turkey and denotes the local notables of a province or a town and it is assumed that these people equipped with social honour and with the capability of social influence are mainly men, at the first instance. Status, social respectability and prestige together with wealth are the bases of eshraf and therefore, it is thought to be a social sphere constructed and maintained by a male establishment. Hence, the term "eshraf" has a masculine connotation and it is usually associated with the imperial past.

Even though the foundations and symbolic characteristics of the "eshraf" and being from the "eshraf" are rooted in a male structure, (land ownership, state bureaucracy, governing position, religious knowledge or military rank), belonging to the "eshraf" as a social category necessitates social capital, besides accumulated economic wealth. When "eshraf" families are concerned, social capital in its different forms are given primary notice and underlined with attentive interest in various rules of conduct and social etiquette. That is, "eshraf" is a status group defined basically by the social capital or the social networks that it can mobilize. Local elite, as in the case of provincial notable families, require social capital in the formation of a local provincial identity to prove their relation to the locality and to assert their family identity by reference to historical ties with the town. The construction of a local "eshraf" identity is mainly based on women's activities and their active role in the making, accumulation and transmission of social capital. In this article, our argument is that "eshraf" families cannot be studied without looking at the social capital that is basically created by the efforts and labor of womenfolk in "eshraf" families.

Construction of the "narrative of being from the eshraf" in women's narratives

When we talk of the local "eshraf" we assume we are talking about a homogeneous group of elite families. However, our data show that there are differences between these families in relation to their origins, the forms of wealth, the family histories and the historical epoch that they base their identity and wealth, as well as the forms of social capital that they exploit. The families are depicted by the local community and folk accordingly, sometimes as "landowners"; sometimes with their religiosity and religious knowledge, and their relationship to the state dating back to the Ottoman Empire. Such history is significant to differentiate between the "old eshraf", a name to describe both the Ottoman and the Republican "eshraf"-as opposed to the "new wealth" or "nouveau riche families", who emerged as an economically affluent new stratum after the neoliberal sway from the 1980s onward.¹

The interviews that we conducted in the current research² showed that women from the local elite families were responsible for the creation and formation of collective narratives about class-specific sociability as well as acting as the builders of social relations and networks. For example, the distinctions made by the "old wealth" and the "new wealth" families are both in reality and in narration more clearly and bluntly expressed by women rather than men in these families. However, it is also clear that men benefit from the social ground established by these narratives. Therefore, an important focal point in this study is the link between women's narratives and women's history—women's narratives treated as sources for the unrecorded, unwritten history of women and an undertext of the mainstream masculine view of social class. Through the study of these narratives we have been able to interpret how these women locate themselves within their family, among the other members of the family. We have tried to bring out the topics that women have focused upon; those

¹ Gül Özsan, Ayşe Durakbaşı and Meltem Karadağ. "Eşraf Ailelerinde Kadın Anlatıları," in *Kadın Belleğini Oluşturmada Kaynak Sorunu*, ed. D. Fatma Türe and Birsan Talay Keşoğlu. (Istanbul: Kadir Has Üniversitesi ve Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Ortak Yayını, 2009), 190.

² The research carried out by A. Durakbaşı, M. Karadağ and G. Özsan entitled "The Role of the Local Notables in the Making of a Provincial Bourgeoisie and the Middle Classes in Provincial Towns in Turkey" was funded by TÜBİTAK, The Turkish Science and Technical Research Foundation, 2008. A different version of this paper was presented at the 9th European Sociological Association Conference, Lisbon, Portugal, and was funded by BAPKO, Marmara University, İstanbul.

differences in emphasis and narration from the male members of the families.

Women's emphasis on class position, their view of their own family histories, the significance and value they attribute to intra-family relations, women's education and the impact of modernization in general, are the basic points at which women's narratives differ from men's.

The first thesis of this study is that the study of women's narratives is the main method for the analysis and understanding of the social capital that designates the status of "eshraf" in order to show how social class formations are gendered in the case of "eshraf" women. The study of women's narratives provides awareness of women's subjectivities as well as their objective positioning within the family and social class.

As will be shown in the following examples,³ women's life stories embedded in their narratives convey various connections to the "eshraf" families and the social context of the town or the specific locality, as well as hints in relation to the various forms in which modernization in Turkey has been lived and fabricated in their experiences. These women appear as representatives of modernization with their hair styles, dress up, education and style of life and construct the story of modernization in their narratives; that is, they relate the feminine version of the history of modernization from a relatively advantaged class position of the provincial elite.

Women's Engagement in Family Status and Social Class Distinction

Previous studies by Durakbasa (2005) and Karadağ (2005) have shown that in "eshraf" families, women play a strikingly important role in the social construction of class or class as a "social formation". In Bourdieu's theory of class, social class is not only conceptualized as an "objective position" but also as a "social constitution and formation", as well as a "cultural formation"; therefore, in our study about "eshraf" women, Bourdieu's theoretical insights have been the most inspiring as we have come to the conclusion that women are "engaged actors" in the constitution and reproduction of social class, because they are the primary

³ The interviews that are studied here are limited to 10 interviews with women from eshraf families from the five towns mentioned before. However, Denizli is overrepresented (4 women) in the interview data because we were able to reach more women there.

figures in the regulation of social conduct and the enactment of everyday social practices.⁴

Bourdieu has directed our attention to the domestic activities of women and women's role in the organization of social activities, the maintenance of social relations, including family and kinship relations and the upkeep of a social solidarity network, in general. According to Bourdieu, most of the domestic activities are for the reproduction of the family line. The family rituals, ceremonial meals and meetings are designed for the ritual celebration of kinship ties and the reinforcement of the social bonds and the feeling of social prestige of the family.⁵

However, women's contributions to the accumulation and transmission of cultural capital have usually been downgraded by many social analysts, as well as Bourdieu. For example, in England, the study of cultural capital is usually related to the study of social mobility with a focus on men's professions, the heritage taken over from the father to the son in the male line and the mother's family line or the influence of women in the family line are usually disregarded. Indicating feminist historians' studies⁶ of English middle-class in the second half of 19th century, Gunn has maintained that middle-class women got involved in the schooling and training of their children and various activities to raise the social-cultural status of the family household undertaking a critical role in the transmission of cultural capabilities and the making of future generations. These women reflected cultivation in their personality, and excelled in the "rites of feminine gentility". Middle class women in England were, if not makers of their class, the perfect agents and representatives of this class.⁷ Karadağ, argues that the characteristics that Gunn attributes to middle class women in England also hold true for "eshraf" women in Gaziantep, as they get engaged in organizing meetings and celebrations and act as builders of the cultural space and express themselves in class practices

⁴ Following Delphy (1999) and Davidoff (2002), Durakbasa maintains that social class is a gendered historical formation and exemplifies this theoretical assertion in the various forms of relations involved in the social practices of women from *eshraf* families. Ayşe Durakbaşa, "The Gender of Social Class: Theoretical and Methodological Discussion for a Feminist Sociology" (paper presented at Gendering Transformations, University of Crete, 12-15 May, 2005).

⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination*. Translated by Richard Nice. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 97.

⁶ Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850*. (London: Hutchinson, 1987): 397-415.

⁷ Simon Gunn, "Translating Bourdieu: The English Middle Class in Historical Perspective," *British Journal of Sociology* 56/1 (2005), 55.

with their personality, dress up and comportment.⁸ Not only in Gaziantep but in the other towns in our sample, *eshraf* women have expressed their pride in their mothers' public appearance, in the way they dressed up and took part in various public festivities. Wearing hats was a symbol of Westernization both for women and men during the early phase of the Republic and our interviewees boasted about the earlier generations showing the photographs as evidence of the modernization and Westernization of the family.⁹ As Karadağ has characterized these women were the "guardians and makers of the space of taste"¹⁰. In the interviews, women asserted that being modern was related to subjectivities; that is, just as Göle, argued being civilized meant acquiring Westernized codes of social etiquette and individualization.¹¹

According to Kandiyoti, modernization was based on the internalization of various material cultural items, habits and tastes selectively by different social strata and the different forms and styles of modernization also became markers and symbols of different social status. This meant that the interpretations about what is modern also became disguised codes of social class and status. Kandiyoti argued that gender was one of the key mediums by which social class distinctions could be expressed.¹² Likewise "*eshraf*" women constructed their elite status by giving reference to modernized tastes and habits embedded in their subjectivities. Women's narratives were engaged in telling the story of modernization and how it had somehow touched their daily lives, and how they reacted to the reforms and innovations in social life with enthusiasm. Being modern did not certainly have the same meaning for the disadvantaged social classes and status groups; however, for "*eshraf*" women the Republican reforms

⁸ Meltem Karadağ, "On Cultural Capital and Taste: Cultural Field in a Turkish City in Historical Perspective." *European Societies* 11/4 (2009): 543-544.

⁹ An "*eshraf*" woman from Gaziantep described her grandmother as follows:

"My grandmother was open-minded; they hadn't been covered up when that law was passed anyway. They weren't covered even in the Ottoman period, there was no such thing as covering up in our family. And thereafter the reform act of headgear (or hat), they wore very chic women's suits, they were extremely chic..." (Karadağ, 2009)

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 534.

¹¹ Nilüfer Göle, "The quest for the Islamic self within the context of modernity," in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. S. Bozdoğan and R. Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 72.

¹² Deniz Kandiyoti, "Gendering the modern": On missing dimensions in the study of Turkish modernity," in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, ed. S. Bozdoğan and R. Kasaba (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 119.

brought new possibilities to enhance their privileged class positions and accommodate their traditional respectable position with the practices of modernization while they acted as "agents of modernization" at the local context. Their education and family training equipped them with "modern but modest" comportment and social mores in accordance both with tradition and modernity.

The biographies of women from "eshraf" families are marked with significant facts about the making of modern subjectivities in Turkey such as special schooling for "proper womanhood" in the Institutes for Girls established in 1930s and 1940s.¹³

Manners, Moral Codes and Symbolic Capital

Women from historically earlier families, that is the so-called old "eshraf" families, emphasized their distinct social status indicators in manners, and codes of etiquette and social respectability in relation to how they regard their wealth and advantaged social position and very clearly differentiated themselves from the new families who have more recently appeared as economically powerful at the local setting.

Following Bourdieu¹⁴, who indicated women's role in the reproduction of the lineage and familial ties, Karadağ¹⁵ concluded that women more than men invested in marking the social distinction of the "eshraf" from other strata, from her data on Gaziantep "eshraf." Karadağ argued that it was mostly women who played a very important role in the maintenance of class boundaries by converting economic capital of the family into symbolic capital in their way of social conduct, manners and tastes as distinct from the lower strata¹⁶.

Eshraf women invested in the family rituals and activities for the reproduction of the lineage, and recently worked more for the public prestige of their families by getting involved in philanthropic activities to

¹³ The Institutes for Girls (Kız Enstitüleri) fulfilled important functions in the modernization of Turkey by training "modern housewives" to be recruited into the modernist elites of the Republic, usually as proper wives for the bureaucrats, the military or the civil servants and the growing number of professionals. The first Institute was opened in 1928 in Ankara. See Elif Ekin Akşit, *Kızların Sessizliği: Kız Enstitülerinin Uzun Tarihi*, (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2005), 143-170.

¹⁴ Pierre Bourdieu, *Masculine Domination* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2001), 97.

¹⁵ M. Karadağ, "Türkiye Toplumunda Bir Tabakalaşma Unsuru olarak Eşraf: Antep'te Eşraf Aileleri" s(M.A thesis, Mimar Sinan Üniversitesi, 1998), 6.

¹⁶ M. Karadağ, "Class, Gender and Reproduction: Exploration of Change in a Turkish City" (PhD diss., University of Essex, 2005), 199.

prove their generosity towards the needy both as a religious and social duty, as well as an obligation to act as equals among the informal network of locally prominent families as part of the local "high society" in alliance with the formal representatives of the governing elite.

"Var olanı yok gösterirdik"

"We were supposed to show our wealth as if it did not exist"

For a family from the local "eshraf" with an Ottoman history behind, it is a very important sign of respectability not to show off their wealth to the other families of either equal or lower status in the same town; because the way wealth is reflected in everyday family life and social practices is a very important indicator of social respectability and reliability. Being from an "eshraf" family necessitates a set of social mores related to modesty in life style and in spending, that is, a specific way of showing the wealth besides having a considerable amount of wealth itself. Our interviewees expressed this as an ethic of humbleness without being thrifty as opposed to showing off by spending extravagantly.

These social mores also defined the boundaries of the "old eshraf" as a social status group which marked their distinction from the "new wealthy" families.¹⁷ In our interviews, this was a repeated theme especially emphasized by women from the "old-eshraf" families, as in the case of Zümrüt Hanım who criticized the spending habits of the "new wealthy" families:

"For us it is still important to be tight about spending, not so in the new families, perhaps this is how I see it, perhaps it is because of inflation that people think what is the point in saving, the value of the money is gone after a few days anyway, if I have it today, it is better to spend it today for my comfort, live well today and leave the tomorrow to the God's will..."¹⁸

This was also part of social mores and manners in the training of children reminded by parents to their children in their every day social conduct:

"When I say we lived in comfort, I don't mean it...our family never said: Here is our wealth, everything is yours, they did not say such a thing at

¹⁷ Gül Özsan, "Eşraf Ailelerinin Statü Mücadelelerinde Kadınların Rolü," *Toplum ve Bilim* 118 (2010): 62.

¹⁸ Gül Özsan, Ayşe Durakbaşı and Meltem Karadağ, "Eşraf Ailelerinde Kadın Anlatıları," in *Kadın Belleğini Oluşturmada Kaynak Sorunu*, ed. D. Fatma Türe and Birsan Talay Keşoğlu. (Istanbul: Kadir Has Üniversitesi ve Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Ortak Yayını, 2009), 193.

all... it was different at our times. We would show what we had as if we did not have it; now people show off even what they don't really have!"¹⁹

Women's roles in building social relations and strong women figures in eshraf families

The positioning of "eshraf" families is mainly based on social relations or "relating to others"; that is, "eshraf" families are keen, watchful and elaborate in sustaining various relationships with different qualities. Therefore, being from the "eshraf" also necessitates *social knowledge*, a specific knowledge of social relations and a keep up of relations with a high detectiveness and awareness of minute details of everyday social life, both in the spheres of domestic and extra-domestic affairs. Being from the "eshraf" also requires the building of relations at the local and national levels with the representatives of government besides the maintenance of relationships of recognition with the families of equivalent status and relationships of patronage with the families of lower status in their service. Hence, "eshraf" family status is based primarily on social capital, that is, in the words of Feride Hanım, from Denizli, "...social network of relations of various kinds, with the natives of Denizli, with the relatives, without any specific restriction..."

We have also noticed that "eshraf" women felt themselves as the housekeepers, the original matrons of the province and therefore, felt responsible to host the newcoming governors and educational elite to the provincial town and tried to keep a respectable relationship with the representatives of upper class civil bureaucrats, teachers, and professionals such as lawyers, judges and doctors. Women were engaged in building relationships with the local governing elite, the newcomers to the town, and their families. They functioned as representatives of family status as well as carriers of local provincial culture. For example, they talked about various local products and cultural items such as textiles, garments, crafts, local food and dishes, traditions and customs always in connection with the local identity of being from the specific location or town. Generalizations were frequently made about the feminine characteristics of women and the masculine characteristics of men from that specific location, as well.

Şadan Hanım expressed the social significance of such contacts:

"Actually, I like to socialize with the teachers, the families of the civil servants... The governors, those who were appointed to Denizli, they were all good people, I exchanged visits with the wives of all...now I don't have

¹⁹ Ibid., p.194

such contact. But the ones who came earlier, they were very good. Also I have a special fondness of teachers,(...)I used to have relations with all”²⁰

Hadiye Hanım, widowed at a very young age, from Özbek family in Muğla, was known as “gelin-billa,” that is, a bride who has acquired the status of an elderly matron and therefore, respected by all members of the family. She had a room in the house where she would receive visitors and she would be very concerned about the manners, the generous hospitality, offers and gifts to the visitors during these visiting rituals; especially, on the religious days when all the members of the big family would come together in her house. Hadiye Hanım’s house in the countryside was a place where no one would pass by without a short visit of respect to her.

When we asked about marriages, we realized that some men from the notable families did transfer a significant amount of wealth, that is, land as property, from their wives. For example, the house of Füsün Hanım, granddaughter of Hadiye Hanım, in the family just mentioned, was situated on the land inherited from Füsün Hanım’s mother who was originally from an Ottoman notable family called Hacikadılar. Füsün Hanım’s husband was considered as a bridegroom to the household. The house which is more than one hundred fifty years old, kept in good order by Hadiye Hanım until her death, was recently renovated by Muğla Municipality and opened as the Özbek House, a local museum-café to the public, to sustain the family name. This also shows how cultural heritage can be transformed into cultural capital in the name of respectable women members of such notable families.

Another authoritarian woman figure is Ayser Hanım, who has inherited quite a fortune both from her maternal family, Topallar as well as her husband’s family, known with the surname Eren, name given to a number of residential sites in the center of Muğla. Ayser Hanım has attained this authority position due to her widowhood and undertaking the responsibility of being the head of household at an early age (38). We noticed that she is very conscious about her property holdings and keeps elaborate notes in a notebook about the sales, the rents etc. A few years ago, she performed her pilgrimage to Mecca and this has strengthened her status as the “Billa” in the family. Ayser Hanım is the one who plans the social aid and grants

²⁰ Gül Özsan, Ayşe Durakbaşı and Meltem Karadağ, “Eşraf Ailelerinde Kadın Anlatıları,” in *Kadın Belleğini Oluşturmada Kaynak Sorunu*, ed. D. Fatma Türe and Birsan Talay Keşoğlu (İstanbul: Kadir Has Üniversitesi ve Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Ortak Yayını, 2009), 197.

made in the name of the family as acts of benevolence and charity, Islamic and otherwise.

Rüksen Hanım from Aydin, she worked in the farm with her husband, she was very active, especially, at the start; she would distribute the pay of the workers, keep the records and go to İzmir for various operations at the banks; she continued to keep the control and management of the family business for a while after her husband's death when she handed it to her son who is the head of Chamber of Agriculture in Aydin. Sabiha Hanım from Atay family, in Gaziantep, on the other hand, complained that women's structured activities such as visiting, meals, feasts and meetings have lost its significance and that she is unhappy about this.

Arrangement of marriages, inter-marriage as social capital

"Eshraf" women were also active in the formation and development of the social capital and building of appropriate marriage ties by the maintenance of social equivalence in the marriages by watching the equivalence of social status in family origins and the match of social as well as economic capital of the couples. They stressed the importance of rituals such as weddings, how and where they are conducted and what kind of a recreation is preferred. Especially, mothers, with the help of elderly women in the family, tried to achieve a good match for their daughters and sons; because marriage ties were important in the perpetuation of class position of the "eshraf" and its local influence, in the least. Women from these families, aware of their family status, underlined this asset as a marriage strategy to attain a "good marriage"; that is, a "good match" in the marriage market and also used it as a power position to upgrade the position of the family they married into. Remembering Kandiyoti, who argued that women engage into "patriarchal bargaining"²¹ within marriage against their husbands to gain more power and space, we can conclude that "eshraf" women use their family origin as a power asset within this contestation. Being a daughter of an "eshraf" family is an asset itself; because it implies a remarkable social and symbolic capital, well-bred and conserved by the family in the name of family honor and respectability. To marry into an "eshraf" family, heightens the social status of such a bride even more. Besides their pride in their family origins, these women are also proud of their other qualities such as coming from an

²¹ Deniz Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler Bacılar Yurttaşlar: Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Dönüşümler* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 1997), 114.

urban center like Istanbul or İzmir, having civilized manners of being brought up within urban culture, having attained good education and training, modern in appearance and deportment, dressing up according to fashion, etc.²²

Matchmaking favorably, between related if not, unrelated but equal status families is one of the basic engagements of women and almost perceived and treated as a form of "knowledge pertaining to womanhood". A "good marriage" is one in which both capital, in material means, that is land ownership, wealth etc. is swollen and perhaps transformed and social influence is reinforced. In our sample, we noticed that men transferred land from their wives and increased their wealth; however, there were also cases when men with some credit of profession, military, administrative status etc. were taken as son-in-laws into the wealthy family. Şadan Hanım, gives such an example from her family:

"My paternal grandma was a wealthy woman. After she died, my mother married my sister, who is 10 years older than me, to an engineer, we made his appointment as the administrator to the State Management of the Waterworks in Manisa. He was accepted as a bridegroom into the family!"²³

Another informant, Feride Hanım, related the economic fall of Tavaslioglu family in Denizli, to the failure of making appropriate marriage matches with reliable relations. Feride Hanım evaluated the marriages of the daughters of the family as wrong because they had preferred to marry to professionals from elsewhere rather than wealthy and respectable families from Denizli. To remember Bourdieu once more and his theory about the distribution of economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital in the total capital to determine the social class position, we have observed that the social capital is much more significant in the class formation of the provincial bourgeoisie when compared to the bourgeoisie based in the metropolitan centers.

²² Gül Özsan, Ayşe Durakbaşı and Meltem Karadağ, "Eşraf Ailelerinde Kadın Anlatıları," in *Kadın Belleğini Oluşturmada Kaynak Sorunu*, ed. D. Fatma Türe and Birsan Talay Keşoğlu. (Istanbul: Kadir Has Üniversitesi ve Kadın Eserleri Kütüphanesi ve Bilgi Merkezi Ortak Yayını, 2009), 195.

²³ Ibid., p.195.

Modernization in provincial Turkey

The biographical stories related by these women, from the rich and notable families of the provincial towns, suggest significant keys in relation to the construction and realization of modernization and nationhood at the local level as well as the specific context about the particular town and province. Besides, the narratives also illustrate how the provincial "eshraf" perceive themselves in comparison to the bourgeoisie of the metropolis such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir which informs the exemplary life styles about clothing, leisure time and recreation activities, home design and decoration, family rituals followed by these women and their families²⁴.

One of our informants, wife of a politician, Şadan Hanım told us the days in which both her husband and herself were well dressed up according to the fashion of the times: "*Aaaa, I was very smart and stylish in dress-up! I would order my clothes to the tailor in Ankara; I would buy almost nothing from Denizli... Well, everyone said, I was really chic, I shouldn't boast about myself*"²⁵. Şadan Hanım had shopping trips to Ankara where she had a special tailoress who had women clients from the top business families such as Koç family. Şadan Hanım's husband Ferit Bey had a Greek tailor in Istanbul. He bought his shoes from Istanbul, too, from a special shop. Other informants like Feride Hanım from Denizli and Rüksen Hanım from Aydın also gave a detailed account of how they had shopping trips to Izmir. Rüksen Hanım told about the hotel called Ankara Palas in İzmir where she would stay with her children while her husband went on business trips to Ankara:

"It was not only us, the families like us went to İzmir for shopping or to Ankara Palas... Our relatives, too... That is to say, it was a life style, trips to İzmir, this was not peculiar to us. Holiday meant going to İzmir, and staying at Ankara Palas. That was a remarkable hotel, then, that was where to stay. Thus, the wealthy families with landed property, they had one of their feet at İzmir".

The modernist ethic about the significance of education in general and the value given to the education of daughters was very widely internalized

²⁴ Because the provincial bourgeoisie, in a sense, talks to the big bourgeoisie of the metropolitan centres, that is, they take them as exemplary models in shaping their life styles. See *ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.196.

by our informants, and some related their frustration why they hadn't aimed at attaining a profession. Zümrüt Hanım, for example, said:

"Times change, my elders are happy that they graduated from the Women's Institute, while I am not; I could have gone to a University!" "I understand the target was good, it was the time of poverty and it was required that women raise their children, run their domestic tasks and activities in a practical way, sew the clothes of family members, cook their meal, etc. that is, be a good housewife, in the end. Now, this is not a requirement"²⁶.

Our women informants, they were all very conscious about the significance of education in building a tie with the modernist Republic and nationhood.²⁷ Even Müjgan Hanım, from the Müftüler Family, a family whose social and symbolic capital was mainly based on Islamic knowledge, boasted about the women in the family who got an education within the modernist secular curriculum set by the Republic, and who entered the teaching profession- Müjgan Hanım herself became a pharmacist. Our informants also narrated stories about various recreation activities such as balls and dance parties, for example, the so-called Republican balls which used to be held in every province of Turkey for the celebration of the anniversary of the Republic on the 29th of October.

Lütfiye Hanım, from an *eshraf* family in Maraş, emphasized her loyalty to Atatürk and the Republican reforms, while she gave an account of the changes in the political affiliations within the family towards the Islamicist party since 1980. From the narratives by Şadan Hanım, Müjgan Hanım, and Lütfiye Hanım, and their positioning, we could see how women of "*eshraf*" family of the same generation had related to the new Republic and modernization on the local level and how they were active in constructing and maintaining the new modern way of life and thought. Considering the transformation of their families immediately after the proclamation of the Republic in 1923, we could argue that these women were pivotal in keeping their families in line with the new Republican regime and ideology, actively displaying the changing lifestyle with their education and clothing on the local scene. Their narratives about their fathers and husbands clearly reinforce this foundational role. These men also appear to fulfill the same role with their attitude toward their daughters' education, their interest in the metropolitan life and sophistication in their style of clothing. Therefore, it was natural for them to have similar expectations about their wives and daughters.

²⁶ Ibid.,p.193.

²⁷ Ibid.,p.191.

We observed that members of these families are really cautious and painstaking while they are positioning themselves in terms of politics and religion—a consequence of current heated debates in Turkey in relation to the laicism of the Republican regime. Two informants, a man and a woman, from the Müftüler family, whose origins date back to the Ottoman times, underscored the religious capital of the family. They pointed how they had acted in accordance with the new conditions of the Republican era and had embraced modern values while at the same time maintaining a respectable status of religiosity due to the family tradition of learned men in religious knowledge and sciences.

Conclusion

In this paper, we tried to underline some of the main themes we want to develop to defend our main thesis that women are active agents in the formation and reproduction of social classes. We have tried to illustrate this idea by studying the transcribed interviews and trying to interpret the layers of meaning in the narratives taking into consideration the context of the interview and the narratives of our informants. One of our research findings is that gender is embedded in the social relationships and social processes rather than being outwardly asserted. Hence, women's role in the accumulation of wealth and property is downgraded, especially in the narratives by men, while their role as core figures in the family and the formation of family business is emphasized.

The critical position of the women in "eshraf" families is determined by the role women assume in the constitution of the social capital, the transformation of different forms of capital to each other by women's domestic and extra-domestic activities. The social web of relations that "eshraf" families and their women are engaged in enable us to rethink the boundaries as well as the social and symbolic extensions of the household and the house itself.

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