

# Gender Politics in Turkish Television Adverts

# *Voices Unveiled*

Karaevli, 2010

[http](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JdWIEQmbFmg)

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*Women of Turkey: Between Islam and Secularism*

Nakkas, 2006

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1Tg2wWJ3tU>

# Historical Context

- Turkish culture under Ottoman rule characterised as a 'traditional Islamic culture'
- The Ottoman Empire dissolved after World War I and was replaced by a self-consciously modern and Westernised Turkish Republic in 1923
- A 'feminist state'

# the *ideal* woman

- “The Turkish woman should be the most enlightened, most virtuous, and most reserved woman of the world ... The duty of the Turkish woman is raising generations that are capable of preserving and protecting the Turk with his mentality, strength and determination. The woman who is the source and social foundation of the nation can fulfil her duty if she is virtuous” (Ataturk cited in Arat, 1999, 6-7).

# the new Republican woman

- represented the modern, secular, Westernised state,
- was expected to behave and dress in what the state defined as a modern, secular, Western manner
- Women who felt that their religious beliefs required them to dress modestly and cover their heads, and women who maintained older customs, were excluded from this Republican sisterhood.

# The ideal Republican woman

- was a 'citizen woman': urban and urbane; socially progressive ; Westernised
- It was not until the 1980s feminist movement that Turkey's *state feminism* was challenged by women.
- feminism is still being 'digested' in Turkey

# State feminism

- The emancipation of women became, the barometer of Turkish modernisation
- Turkish women have suffered mostly from being the focal point of intense debate among groups with conflicting political interests
- The seemingly bright picture of Turkey as a modern, democratic, secular state that also secures women's rights, is misleading in many ways. more harmful than outright oppression because it shakes the ground for women's rights movements by suggesting that they are unnecessary.

# The Feminist Movement

- Until the 1980s, there was a consensus in Turkish society that Kemalism had emancipated women, and this *fact* could not be contested.
- In the 1980s, a younger generation of educated women professionals who introduced themselves as feminists, challenged the tradition

# The 1980s

- Feminist movement was the first political movement that emerged in a depoliticized environment
- Feminist movement was not perceived as political

# Campaign for Solidarity against Battering

10 May 1987 - Aksu Bora:

-On Mother's day, we planned to sell flowers and badges on which it said 'Do not beat mothers.' Unluckily it poured rain that day. We could not get organised no matter how much we tried. Only a few of us women gathered in front of Municipality. We gave out badges to those walking past, we waved our placards. The media was there, but we were not happy with our meeting, because we could not reach women.

# Media's response

- 11 May 1987
- *Six* feminist women gave a briefing to *eight* press members, arguing that 'the media, mosques, courts, customs, etc. they all protect men who beat.' ... The feminists of Ankara gave away badges to people while claiming 'we do not want to live with the threat of being beaten', and 'domestic violence turns violence into an ideology.' They said there were quite a number of feminists in Ankara, but they intentionally organised individually rather than founding organisations. Among these women only one of them is married, the others said they did not think of marriage as yet.

**Cumhuriyet**

- In early 2008 the Turkish daily newspaper Cumhuriyet (Republic) (a left wing, staunchly republican, Kemalist and secularist newspaper) started a campaign against the AKP government (regarded by Kemalists as Islamic fundamentalist). Although these adverts were broadcast by a number of TV channels they were not broadcast by the channels known to be sympathetic to AKP. At first there was an attempt to ban these advertisements until eventually, in the channels sympathetic to (or owned by) AKP supporters, an advertisement was broadcast in response. In the original advertisements women were used in order to suggest that the Republican (hence modern and intellectual) woman was being destroyed by the Islamic politics of the government.

- **The Republican Woman is Being Destroyed! Save your republic!**



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# Advert 1

- a sense of false-consciousness
- the woman is parroting what non-Islamic man says
- (under the AKP government) she cannot freely choose to utter the words
- the idea of state-feminism
- “women can only have real women’s rights if they behave in a particular way”?
- the woman becomes the focus (or a puppet) of one side of two conflicting political ideas
- What is missing is any space for autonomous assertion on the part of women which might disagree with both sides

# Advert 1

- Republican woman identified not by activity but by content
  - does it want women who think the right thing or women who think freely? Is it attacking the Islamists on the grounds of the content of what they think they can do?
  - be careful that what you are thinking, feeling and doing is really one that YOU are thinking, feeling or doing



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBD>

# Advert 2

- As the camera pans around the woman she is enveloped in darkness
- The mirror here stands for the moment of recognition.
- The woman looks in the mirror and realizes that she is not the modern woman.
- The darkness creates a veil around her. This unites the notion the veil and the darkness with anti-enlightenment.



<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJk>

# Advert 3

- “It is time to open your eyes now!”
- like an ultimatum by a male authority
- Her eyes are already open and then they re-open.
- a sense of false-consciousness in play
- It suggests: you think you are free but you are not.
- This positions the woman as a puppet saying or doing or thinking what other people say or do and once again leaves no subjectivity and no autonomy to women.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XV>

**(zaman)**