

World History Protest & Rights Movements

Document A: Henry Allen (Modified)

This passage is from *The Turkish Transformation* by Henry Elisha Allen. Allen was an American writer who based his account on secondary sources and several visits to Turkey during the time of Atatürk. Allen's book was published in 1935, at a time when Atatürk was still ruling in Turkey. In this passage, Allen provides his own description of the overall results of Atatürk's reforms.

In few spheres of Turkish life have the changed viewpoints had greater effect than on the position and status of women in family and public life. . . . The seclusion and inequality of women, so long considered as characteristic of Islam, have lost their popularity, and one finds women forging to the front most rapidly in the last twenty years. In cities particularly came an abandonment of the veil. Schools for girls became more numerous. During the World War women received their opportunity to enter positions in industry and commerce which had been left vacant by men at the front. The story of woman's emancipation in Turkey would alone furnish material for many books.

Source: Henry Elisha Allen, *The Turkish Transformation: A Study in Social and Religious Development*, 1935.

Vocabulary

- forge: creating a new identity
- emancipation: to set free from legal or social restrictions

1. Allen says the emancipation of women has occurred in Atatürk's Turkey. What specific changes does he see as evidence of their emancipation?
2. According to Allen, did Atatürk's reforms actually improve the status of women in Turkey? Explain.

Document B: Atatürk, Speech 1 (Modified)

In 1923, Atatürk's Turkish forces won Turkey's War of Independence (1919-1923). The excerpts below come from two different speeches that Atatürk delivered in 1923 at a time when his independence movement was just setting up a government to rule a newly unified Turkish state.

The reason for the lack of success of our society lies in the indifference towards our women. . . . [If one part] of a society acts while the other lies idle, then it means that society is paralyzed. A society must accept all the conditions and necessities on which its success in life depends. So, if science and technology are necessary for our society, our men and women must equally master them. As you know, division of labor is necessary in social life as it is in all the other fields. In the general division of labor, women should not only carry out their duties, but they should also take part in efforts for the prosperity and welfare of the society.

1. According to Atatürk, how has Turkish society treated women? What does he see as the possible problems with this type of treatment?
2. What was happening in Turkey in 1923?
3. How might this historical context help explain why Atatürk spoke about science, technology, and the division of labor?
4. According to Atatürk, what status should women have in Turkish society?

Document C: Atatürk, Speech 2 (Modified)

Our great ancestors and their mothers have always had high virtues. The highest and most important one of these virtues is the fact that they've brought up valuable sons and daughters. I would like to stress that, along with their share in general duties, the most important, virtuous and beneficial duty of all for them is to be good mothers. For today's mothers, to bring up sons and daughters that have the necessary virtues as the active members of today's life, depends on having many high attributes in them as mothers. For that reason, our women must be more enlightened, more intellectual and more learned than men if they really want to be the mother of the nation.

Vocabulary

- indifference: lack of interest or concern
 - division of labor: different people are assigned to carry out different types of tasks
 - attribute: a quality or characteristic of someone
1. According to Atatürk, why had being a good mother always been the most important virtue for Turkish women?
 2. Compare Atatürk's views about motherhood here with what he says about women's equality in Document B. Do you think his views in the two documents match? Why or why not?

Document D: Sabiha Sertel

Sabiha Sertel was a prominent Turkish feminist, writer, journalist, activist, and socialist. She wrote an advice column in her journal *Resimli Ay* (The Illustrated Monthly). Under the name Cici Anne, or "sweet mother," she would respond to letters from women asking her views on various subjects. In 1929, one woman wrote to ask why she should ever marry given that, in her view, 80% of all married couples were unhappy. This passage is part of Cici Anne's reply.

The chances of unhappiness for an unmarried woman are one hundred percent. I may agree with you, society will not. I may applaud you, but they will stone you. Do you think you can live single and free like a man? That's a bigger fantasy than your romantic dreams. People at work will always see you as a woman and focus on your sexuality. The minute you walk down the street arm-in-arm with a man you like, the neighborhood kids will stone you, the door of every house will be closed to you, and

everywhere you go, people will judge you. Any man you live with will see you as simply a plaything he has temporarily made his own. Eventually the police will hound you.

Source: Sabiha Sertel, *Resimli Ay*, 1929.

1. According to Sertel, did Atatürk's reforms actually improve the status of women in Turkey? Explain.
2. Why is this a useful piece of evidence for understanding the status of women in Turkey during Atatürk's rule?
3. This is a reply to a single letter to a woman's magazine in Turkey. How might that affect its reliability as evidence about women's status in Turkey during Atatürk's rule?

Document E: Şirin Tekeli (Modified)

Şirin Tekeli is a well-known Turkish author who began her career as a professor in political science at Istanbul University. She later resigned to become a feminist writer and activist. She is quoted here in an article published in 2007.

[According to Atatürk's message, women] should have little ambition in their work, in order to remain one step behind the men. Femininity and altruism were therefore encouraged in women, because it was believed that women put harmony and family happiness before everything else. The woman had to sacrifice herself for her own as well as for the nation. . . . So, women's main role, whatever their social environment, was still limited to the one they had in the family, as mother and wife. Almost all modern institutions, the primary and secondary schools, and particularly technical schools designed for them, aimed to produce modern housewives.

Source: Quoted in Katharina Knaus, "Turkish Women, A Century of Change," 2007.

Vocabulary

- altruism: unselfish concern for others.
1. Why might this be a useful piece of evidence for understanding the status of women in Turkey under Atatürk's rule?
 2. Why might this be a less useful piece of evidence for understanding the status of women in Turkey under Atatürk's rule?
 3. According to Tekeli, did Atatürk's reforms actually improve the status of women in Turkey? Explain.
 4. In what ways do Şirin Tekeli and Sabiha Sertel seem to agree about the status of women in Turkey under Atatürk?
 5. Are there differences between Tekeli's and Sertel's points of view?

Using evidence from these documents, write a paragraph that addresses the question: Did Atatürk's reforms actually improve the status of women in Turkey?

Document A: Margery Perham (Modified)

Margery Perham was a British historian who studied African history. She travelled to Nigeria (though not during the Women's War) and wrote a book about Colonial Nigeria in 1937.

In Owerri province . . . there is a place called Oloko. Here a warrant chief, Okugo, under instructions from the district officer, was making a reassessment of the taxable wealth of the people. Okugo . . . sent a messenger [named Emeruwa] to count some of his people. This man entered a compound and told one of the married women, Nwanyeruwa, who was pressing oil, to count her goats and sheep. She replied angrily, "Was your mother counted?" at which they closed, seizing each other by the throat. A meeting of women was called and Nwanyeruwa's excited story was told as confirmation of the rumor [that women would be taxed]. From the whole countryside women poured into Oloko and proceeded according to custom to "sit" upon the man who had tried to assess Nwanyeruwa. All night they danced round his house singing a song quickly invented to meet the situation. Growing hourly more excited, they went on to Okugo's compound where his own people tried to defend him with sticks and bird arrows. The crowd mobbed him, damaged his house, demanded his cap of office, and charged him with assault before the district officer at Bende. "The women," said this officer, "numbering over ten thousand, were shouting and yelling round the office in a frenzy. They demanded his cap of office, which I threw to them and it met the same fate as a fox's carcass thrown to a pack of hounds." The women continued to camp in thousands round the District Office until Okugo was tried and sentenced to two years' imprisonment for assault. But this was not the end.

Source: Perham, M. (1937). *Native Administration in Nigeria*. London: Oxford University Press.

Vocabulary

- to count: a process of counting people to decide who would be taxed.
 - sit (or sitting): traditional protest used by Igbo women against actions of men.
1. Based on the language that Perham uses, how do you think she viewed the protesters? Use evidence from the document to support your answer.
 2. Based on Perham's description of events, who do you think she felt was responsible for the events that occurred at the start of the Women's War? Use evidence from the documents to support your answer.
 3. Do you think this is a trustworthy source? Explain why or why not.

Document B: Interview with Nwanyoji (Modified)

In 1930, the British government assembled the Commission of Inquiry to investigate what happened during the Women's War. The commission interviewed 485 participants and witnesses. This is an excerpt from the transcript of an interview with Nwanyoji, a participant in the rebellion.

Witness: We were at a Church meeting when Nwanyeruwa raised an alarm, asking us to come and hear what Emeruwa had said to her. She said, "Emeruwa has said that I should count my goats and fowls [for taxes]. I told him, I am only a woman; what have I to count in the way of goats and fowls? Emeruwa then held me by the throat. With oil in my hands—I was preparing oil then—I held his hands and his clothes were soiled with oil. He ran and reported this to his father, and Okugo sent for me. Okugo questioned me. He asked me my reason for daubing his messenger with oil, and said that the matter would be reported to the District Officer." We sang and danced for Emeruwa and shouted upon him.

Chairman: What did you shout?

Witness: We shouted, "Tell us why we should be counted [for taxes]." He replied that it was Okugo who sent him, and said that women should pay tax. We said, "We do not wish to hear this from you alone. Take us to Okugo in order that we may hear it from himself." He took us to Okugo, and we sat outside his house. While we were there other women who had heard about the matter came. We asked them to remain, and said that we would prepare food for them. Food having been prepared, we brought it to them. Okugo did not beg the women to go away, as some of them had been injured. A woman was wounded with an arrow.

Chairman: Where?

Witness: On her cheek. We said to Okugo, "We have come to ask you why women should be counted and taxed, and now you have fought with us. We are annoyed with you because women are to be taxed."

Source: The Testimony of Nwanyoji, March 14, 1930. In *The Women's War of 1929* by Toyin Falola and Adam Paddock. Durham, NC: Carolina Academic Press, 2011.

Vocabulary

- Daubing: spreading on or over something
1. According to Nwanyoji, what happened between Nwanyeruwa and Emeruwa?
 2. According to Nwanyoji, which side used violence first? Use evidence from the document to support your answer.
 3. Do you think this is a trustworthy source? Explain why or why not.
 4. What are two ways that Nwanyoji's account is similar to Margery Perham's?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 5. What are two ways that Nwanyoji's account is different from Margery Perham's?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 6. Is one account more trustworthy than the other as evidence of what happened at the beginning of the Women's War? Why? Use the documents to support your claim.