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Korkut, U. & Eslen-Ziya, H. *Politics and Gender Identity in Turkey: Centralised Islam for Socio-Economic Control*. New York: Routledge, 2018.

Korkut and Eslen-Ziya present in *Politics and Gender Identity in Turkey: Centralised Islam for Socio-Economic Control* an empirical study that examines the ways in which the relationship between politics and religion impacts gender roles in Turkey. While the study focuses on how political-religious relations impact gender roles in Turkish society, it also sheds light on several important contexts for the analysis, like democracy and secularism in Turkey and the relationship between political authority and the highest institution that conducts religious affairs, the “Diyanet.” The study had a clear hypothesis supported via empirical research, namely that “the political authority in Turkey uses [the] Diyanet as a tool to identify the socio-economic gender roles in the society.” Both of the scholars were keen to present in the introduction a brief history of the relationship between Turkish political authority and the Directorate of Religious Affairs over the course of the last century in Turkey. The brief historical summary shows that the political authority in Turkey has generally controlled religion and used it as a tool to control society and organize it according to the interests of the state; (the summary also states that this has been the case not only since the Justice and Development Party (AKP) reached the power in 2002 but also well before that). The second important context Korkut and Ziya focus on is the decline of freedom and democratic practices under the AKP government. The study shows several indicators on the current case of democracy in Turkey, and how this context impacts political-religious relations and gender roles in Turkish society.

The scholars chose 320 mosques in ten Turkish provinces to study over 23 weeks from 2011 to 2013. They collected data from religious sermons—called *hutbes*—given during Friday evening prayer services, delivered by Imams of the *müftülük* – the provincial offices of Diyanet. The authors identified 97 sermons out of the 320 that contained messages about the family and gender roles, like the definition of family, its components; women’s roles, rights, their responsibilities as women, as wives, as mothers; men’s roles, rights, and their responsibilities as men, as husbands, and as fathers; the importance of having children; the roles, rights, and responsibilities of children; domestic violence; marriage and divorce; caregiving; sex; and the concept of community, collectivities, and one’s roles and responsibilities within. They had to do considerable fieldwork to interview the imams who delivered the *hutbes*, along with 967 persons from the congregations to testify on the impact of the messages provided by imams.

The book starts by setting the theoretical framework of the research on two levels. The first pertains to the understanding of the making of moral politics and the role of religion in creating human capital and “market citizenship”; the second involves the theoretical framework for the reading of *hutbes*. The scholars started by making sure that all *hutbes* were sent by the Diyanet (and on to the *müftülük*) and that all *hutbes* were delivered by the Imams without any changes or alterations. Where such changes did exist, the authors reached out to the Imams to learn about the reason behind those changes or variations. The analysis of the *hutbes* focused on several questions about the major messages that were sent about the roles of men and women. The authors’ analysis attempts to illustrate the extent to which the congregations believed in the messages they received. The scholars proposed two research questions. These were how did the religious institutions convey public narratives on gender roles and identities among the believers? And how did the subjects of these narratives deliberate on what they heard at sermons and what they believe? In this way, the study indicates the main findings of the research. These

two main research questions led the scholars to many sub-analyses, like how the Imams think of the role of the Diyanet and the müftülük.

Based their empirical research, the authors reached several conclusions about the messages that were conveyed via religious sermons on gender roles. These conclusions focused mainly on the following: ensuring the continuation of one's family/kin, providing benefits to one's family/kin, protecting one's child, being gentle towards one's wife and children, providing trust and confidence in others, avoiding haram, reducing mistakes, being accountable for one's behavior, bearing the responsibility of women, raising proper female children, respecting one's spouse, protecting one's honor, protecting the family honor, providing financial support/contribution to one's family and kin, and fulfilling family and collective responsibilities. The research submits contributions to the empirical studies about the communications and messages that are being directed from Turkey's religious institutions. It also represents a contribution to study of gender theory. Although the study made a great effort to investigate the whole process of the messaging from the central religious institution to the congregation, it focused only on religious sermons, thus ignoring others tools of communication that may have had an influence on forming the congregations' attitudes, like radio, television programs, and religious education. It is not clear according to the study, which channel of communication was the most influential tool in forming the attitudes of the congregation. In a country like Egypt, some empirical studies have showed that the religious attitudes of most Muslim Egyptians are impacted by radio religious programs. I think there are several questions the study undertaken by Korkut and Eslen-Ziya must still answer to make sure that it is indeed the central religious institution, the Diyanet, that directs the all religious messages to Turkish society via different tools of communication and whether religious sermons are the most influential tool of communication.

In the Turkish experience, the state controls the Diyanet, via different tools, and uses it to direct specific religious messages to shape gender roles, according to the study. However, it would seem that the Diyanet alone is not the only source of religious messaging in Turkey. In 2016, the Turkish government blamed the Hizmet movement—an Islamic social movement inspired by Fattah Gullen, which advocates universal access to education, civil society, and peace—of planning to overthrow the government via military coup. According to the government's claims, the Hizmet movement has many followers across governmental and non-governmental institutions, including educational institutions. The government fired scores of the Hizmet followers based on allegations about their roles in the attempted coup. This incident reveals that the country's central religious institution is not the only source of religious messages in the society and that the Hizmet constitutes another significant source of religious messaging in Turkey. Irrespective the controversial debate about Hizmet's role in the coup, additional study is needed in order to shed light on the fact that despite its official charge as the country's central religious institution, the Diyanet is not the only source of messaging or influence on religious discourse in Turkish society. Future research also needs to examine the influence of the Hizmet movement and determine whether it shares the Diyanet's discourse regarding gender roles and assess the movement's relationship with the Diyanet, both before and after the coup.

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