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PARTIARCHAL DISCOURSES, POLIGAMOUS LIVES: THE SYRIANS LIVING IN ANTAKYA

“Al durra, murra velau kenet jarra”

(The co-wife is sour, even if she is a jar... Arabic Proverb)

Aylin ERASLAN*

ABSTRACT

The aim of this article is to understand and analyze the behaviors and attitudes of Syrian women under temporary protection of Turkey towards polygyny. Recent studies in Turkish cities on south-eastern border present the discomfort felt by the local women about Syrians. Local women stated that Syrian women affected their spouses and in relation with this, there was an increase in divorces and polygyny. In order to analyze the situation in these communities, in-depth interviews were held with 20 Syrian women in Antakya and Antakya Red Crescent Center between December 2018 and February 2019. Given that each society has developed different ways of adapting to life within the framework of its unique socio-cultural and economic conditions, women who experience everyday life differently are likely to develop different strategies to cope with the challenges they face. Even though personal care and giving importance to looking beautiful is expressed as cultural identity by Syrian women when analyzed in detail this tendency signalizes an area that is created constantly through patriarchal discourses. The transmitter, controller, judge of this area, which is created constantly through a masculine point of view, is women. In conclusion Syrian women do not tolerate polygyny and develop strategies to cope with this problem. Cultural codes stated by women in the study, such as *giving effort to look well-groomed and beautiful under any circumstances*, *spoiling the husband* determine the position of women in society and also support patriarchy. Because against a threat of a “co-wife” prioritize all the wishes of husbands and continuously work to ‘satisfy’ males under any circumstances.

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STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

This study claims that the effort to *look well-groomed and beautiful all the time*, attitudes of *staying silent, being patient, spoiling husband* are strategies used by Syrian women against polygyny. It is observed that local women created stereotypes and prejudices about these attitudes and behaviors of Syrian women. Thus, study focuses on the reasons why women cooperate with a gender regime that subordinate them and the strategies developed by them against polygyny. Within this respect, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. Although Syrian women do not completely approve polygyny, which variables maintain these marriages?
2. How do these women manipulate such marriages that they call 'tense'?
3. What are the attitudes and behaviors of Syrian women towards second wives?
4. How are the boys and girls raised in this process of socialization?

The study is based on the data obtained between December 2018 and February 2019 via interviews carried out in houses, workplaces and Antakya Red Crescent Center in Hatay, Antakya. In depth interviews were carried out to understand attitudes and behaviors of women towards polygyny; it was aimed to obtain information from within and have a realistic perspective. Structured and semi-structured questions were asked to be able to focus on details and not to miss any important point. There was no need for a guide or translator as the researcher knew Arabic. A total of 20 Syrian women who defined themselves as Syrian, Muslim Sunni were interviewed during this process.

When the data obtained from the interviews are analyzed, it can be seen that all of the interviewees didn't approve of polygyny except from the problem of fertility. The thought that Islam approves polygyny, the fact that Syria gives this right under the law, social expectation of continuing the bloodline of men, personal preferences of men were put forward as some of the basic reasons of polygyny. Women are "defective", "imperfect" and "inadequate" most of the time and they are the ones to be blamed if a couple cannot have children. It was observed that women, who internalized this situation, accept polygyny more easily.

Some interviewees stated that when it is not possible to bear a son, men need to marry other women and in addition to this, they said that they would be willing to find the second wife for their husbands if necessary. This is the case where women have the most positive attitude towards a "co-wife". The belief that men have to continue bloodline is the most determinant factor that cause women accept the existence of another woman. However, it is important to note that although women seem to approve these marriages, they are actually unwilling.

Findings indicate that the pleasure of men is a more important determinant of polygyny than the problem of infertility. It is observed that there are numerous marriages for "protecting widows" whose husbands died during war. These marriages cause tension between Syrian women and local residents and they often create prejudices about one another.

Another significant point of interviews is the desire of Syrian to look beautiful under any circumstances. There are various socio-cultural reasons behind the care that they give for cleaning, tidying their houses and looking beautiful. Religious rules, how they are raised, social gender roles, traditions and customs are some of these reasons. It was understood that the basic reason of this one-sided care and concern is to avoid the possibility of polygyny.

Women take care of themselves, do their makeup in every circumstance (war, financial difficulties etc.), and prioritize these while considering their personal spending. In addition to these women are expected to “Remain silent, not give answer in case of a conflict, be patient, do housework, look after children, wear make-up for husbands, take care of their husbands, be well-groomed, spoil their husbands”. Women believe that man marry twice because they are unhappy and they also think that when they do not complete one of the responsibilities mentioned above, men will want to marry another woman. In other words, the source of men’s happiness is the female behaviors based on the specific “feminine roles” mentioned above.

The evaluators, critics and responsables of this situation is also women. When feminine discourses are analyzed, it can be seen that notions such as sin, shame, fate, and destiny are used to produce social role and secondary position of women in life. Based on this it’s a sin to answer back to their husband and it’s a shame to let men to the housework. Any kind of difficulty experienced by women (physical or psychological violence, poverty, co-wife etc.) is written in her destiny. Aspects such as being patient (sabera) and tolerant (tıhammali) are expected from Syrian women and women appraise and support such behaviors

The interviews showed the thoughts of Syrian women about Turkish women who have bigger rights in many fields of life; economic conditions, marriage and social gender roles of Turkish women are under the protection of Turkish civil code. Syrian interviewees stated that they want to adapt the egalitarian marriage and lifestyle in Turkey and they want their children to marry according to the Turkish laws. On the other hand, they mentioned that Turkish women do not give sufficient importance to personal care, and do not show sufficient interest in their spouses. This egocentric situation complicates the agreement between two women groups and leads to a prejudice between local and Syrian women. However, it is believed that it is possible to overcome this problem in time through mutual interaction.

As a result, Syrian women do not approve of polygyny and are prefer the marriages to be arranged according to Turkish Civil Code. It is believed that polygyny which causes tension among wives will decrease over time as both polygyny and marrying at an early age is illegal in Turkey. It is believed that efforts such as educating the new Syrian generation living in Turkey, increasing the employment opportunities of women, creating environments that will enable interaction with Turkish society will increase the awareness over the fact that polygyny is not a part of modern life and will put woman in a secondary position and in turn will lead to a dramatic decrease in polygyny.

Keywords: Syria, polygyny, Syrian women, migration, patriarchal system.

ATAERKİL SÖYLEMLER, ÇOKEŞLİ YAŞAMLAR: ANTAKYA'DA YAŞAYAN SURIYELİLER

ÖZ

Bu makale, Türkiye'ye geçici korunma statüsüyle kabul edilen Suriyeli kadınların çok kadınlı evliliğe yönelik tutum ve davranışlarını anlamayı amaçlamıştır. Son yıllarda Türkiye'nin sınır illerinde göçe yönelik yapılan çalışmalar, Suriyeli kadınların yerel kadınlar üzerinde yarattığı tedirginliği ortaya koymaktadır. Yerel kadınlar, Suriyeli kadınların eşlerini etkilediğini buna bağlı olarak da yörede boşanmaların ve çokeşli evliliklerin arttığı yönünde endişelerini ortaya koymuştur. Bu durumu araştırmak amacıyla 2018 Aralık, 2019 Şubat aylarında, Antakya'da ve Antakya Kızılay Merkezinde 20 Suriyeli kadın ile derinlemesine mülakat yapılmıştır. Her toplum kendine özgü soyo-kültürel ve ekonomik koşullar çerçevesinde yaşama dair farklı uyarlanma biçimleri geliştirdikleri göz önünde bulundurulduğunda gündelik hayatı farklı deneyimleyen kadınların, karşılaştıkları güçlüklerle başa çıkabilmek amacıyla farklı stratejiler geliştirmeleri muhtemeldir. Kişisel bakım ve güzel görünmeye gösterdikleri önem her ne kadar Suriyeli kadınlar tarafından kültürel bir kimlik olarak ifade edilse de, derinlere inildikçe bu yönelimin ataerkil söylemlerle sürekli üretilen bir alanı işaret ettiği görülür. Eril bakış açısıyla sürekli inşa edilen bu alanın aktarıcısı, denetleyeni, yargılayanı kadındır. Sonuç olarak, Suriyeli kadınlar çok eşliliği hoş karşılamamakta ve buna yönelik stratejiler geliştirmektedir. Kadın söylemlerinde tespit edilen her koşulda bakımlı ve güzel görünme, eşe cevap vermeme, sabretme, eşi şımartma gibi kültürel kodlar, bir sarmal yapı içerisinde kadının konumunu şekillendirmekte ve aynı zamanda Patriarkiyi beslemektedir. Çünkü kadın, "kuma" tehdidine karşı, eşinin tüm isteklerini öncelemekte, onu her koşulda "hoş" tutma gayreti içerisinde kalmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Suriye, çokeşli evlilik, Suriyeli kadınlar, göç, ataerkil sistem

Introduction

Migration is the process of a person or people travelling to a new place or country because of war, famine, economic problems, unemployment etc. The type of migration that is the focus of this study is the migration of Syrians¹ who had to leave their country because of war. Big groups of Syrians had to leave their homeland because of the civil unrest since 2011. They sought refuge in particularly Turkey and different countries around the world.

As is well-known, various different cultures come together because of international migration. Socio-cultural, economic and social similarities and differences between locals and Syrians are important determinants in adjustment process. Although bonds of "common history", "kinship" and "neighborhood" ease adaptation, there are unavoidable socio-cultural and economic differences between Turkish and Syrian societies. Thus, analyzing the similarities and differences between the social structure of locals and Syrians will be helpful in understanding the subject.

Syrian Arab Republic is a Middle Eastern country. In Syria, which is under the influence of Arab culture and Islam there are many ethnic and religious groups living together. It is possible to see

the traces of patriarchal system in gender relations, gender roles and various other parts of life. Patriarchy is the socially organized superiority of men over women (Giddens, 2016: 655). According to another definition, patriarchy is a type domestic power owned by men depending on criteria such as age and status in a society and patriarchy is a common issue in many societies (Aydin, 2003: 79).

It is seen that social gender roles in Syria are determined by religious rules and daily life is interpreted on the basis of religion. Syria has a male-oriented social structure in terms of polygyny, inheritance and divorce issues. Elements of patriarchal system are dominant in various fields of life such as socio-cultural relations, politics, religion, economy, family and kinship. Decisions of men are always important; they make decisions about votes, working conditions, marriage, number of children, number of wives, divorces and many other significant issues.

Turkish society on the other hand has a much more egalitarian approach in various issues such as the right to vote, custody after divorce and inheritance; women are protected by the Civil Law. Turkish women have become more visible and gained control over their lives through years. After the establishment of Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk brought Civil Law in 1926; Turkey became the first and only country in the Middle East that adapted monogamy and protected women in case of divorce (Bates, 2016:304). Various important steps were taken during the Reform process towards the end of 19th century and the beginning of 20th century; the drawbacks of early marriages were explained in popular magazines and books of that time. Psychological and physiological deficiencies in these marriages were told to the general public through such materials. It was especially mentioned that, professional doctor consultations are important to determine the proper age for marriage.

Arranged marriages and polygyny were also considered as “improper and unhealthy” and harshly criticized by the pioneers of the period (cit. by Kandiyotti from Duben and Behar, 1993:102). Various Western features such as nuclear family and monogamy were placed into the Turkish culture during modernization (Kandiyotti, 2007:96). According to Bates (2016:303), “Turkey is an exception in the Middle East and Muslim World in terms of family law, polygyny, child custody and divorce issues.” Turkey experienced a significant modernizationⁱⁱ through these socio-cultural changes; the country had significantly developed when compared to the neighboring countries and social structure was reshaped. “Turkey became the only Islamic country which was secular, modern and democratic”; Ernest Geller emphasizes that the country is an exception among exceptions (cit. by Gülaip from Gellner, 2003:11). At this point, economic welfare, education, regulation of family life, and new laws in Turkey decreased polygyny and early marriages; rural areas were the places where these customs continued.

Syria is a socio-culturally and economically developing country like the other Middle Eastern countries. Due to the heterogeneous structure of Syria traditional customs such as family law, social roles of women might differ among various ethnic and religious groups. When the social structure in Syria is further analyzed it can be seen that family, marriage and gender roles are shaped based on religious approaches. Polygyny in Syria is based on laws, which are important social contracts. This legal situation makes the lives of Syrians'-who migrate to various other countries including Turkey-difficult and cause them to face contradictions and conflicts (Kaya, 2017: 73-74). At this point, it should be said that not all of the Syrians have the same customs; there are different socio-economic, educational and ethno-religious structures in the society. It was identified that polygamy, which became a current issue after the Syrian migration lead to a tension between local and Syrian women and it was also observed that local women have prejudices as they are concerned that Syrian women might “steal their husbands”. Murat Erdoğan included the report by Turkish Medical Association in his study titled *Syrians in Turkey, Social Acceptance and Adaptation* (2018). According to this report, local women frequently stated that Syrian women's' attitudes towards being well-groomed and beautiful impressed men and this situation of Syrian women increased depression among local women (Turkish Medical Association report cit. by Erdoğan, 2018:121). Similarly in his study titled “Syrians in Turkey, Intertwining and

Encountering” (2017) Mahmut Kaya remarked that Syrian women cause uneasiness among Turkish women. He stated that there is an increase in the number of divorces in Kilis and local women in the area are concerned about “losing their spouse” (Kaya, 2017: 69). In his study, Kaya (2017:98-99) mentioned that lifestyle, personal care and makeup habits of Syrian women which also continued to exist after migration is a factor affecting the remarriage of Turkish men. Another important point of the study is that, Syrian women are more well-groomed when compared to the locals which in turn impress men. In addition to this personal care habits of the new comers have caused separation and tension between local and Syrian women and it is important for Syrian women to look well no matter what the circumstances are. Close relations with Europe, media and serials, French culture during Mandate, interaction with secular life and methods of upbringing are some of the reasons why Syrian women have such an understanding (Kaya, 2017: 98). All these approaches are not sufficient to explain the prioritization of “looking well-groomed and beautiful” by Syrian women despite limited psycho-social, economic and various other conditions. Different from the other researches, this study claims that the effort to *look well-groomed and beautiful all the time*, attitudes of *staying silent*, *being patient*, *spoiling husband* are strategies used by Syrian women against polygyny. It is observed that local women created stereotypes and prejudices about these attitudes and behaviors of Syrian women. Thus, study focuses on the reasons why women cooperate with a gender regime that subordinate them and the strategies developed by them against polygyny. Within this respect, answers to the following questions were sought:

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The study is based on the data obtained between December 2018 and February 2019 via interviews carried out in houses, workplaces and Antakya Red Crescent Centerⁱⁱⁱ in Hatay, Antakya. In depth interviews were carried out to understand attitudes and behaviors of women towards polygyny; it was aimed to obtain information from within and have a realistic perspective. Structured and semi-structured questions were asked to be able to focus on details and not to miss any important point. There was no need for a guide or translator as the researcher knew Arabic. A total of 20 Syrian women who defined themselves as Syrian, Muslim Sunni were interviewed during this process.

Polygyny (zawajal’dır)

Marriage is a cultural phenomenon particular to humans. Ethnographic researches indicate that there is no single type of marriage in world societies. Types, reasons, purposes of marriage vary from one society to another and this is why, it is difficult to make a single, global definition about it. Bates (2013:209) defines marriage as a legal agreement for sharing properties, economic responsibilities, sexual relations and responsibilities regarding children. Aydın (2003:293) on the other hand, emphasizes that marriage is a sexual and economic association between two opposite sexes to build family and continuing bloodline. According to him, marriage mediate social organization, exchange between groups and alliances. He mentions that marriages function for satisfying sexual needs, protecting sexual competition, for continuing and adapting the race, regulating gender based division of labor and mutual benefits, establishing alliances between societies. As stated by Lavenda (2018:177), marriage not only ensures legitimacy of children, but also forms the basis of relationships between the relatives of husband and wife. In addition to that, marriage is a ceremony symbolizing the transition from celibacy to matrimony. Roles and responsibilities brought by this change in statue vary from one culture to another.

Researches about the earliest examples of polygyny indicate that they are designed to increase the productivity of paternal organization. Increasing the number of households with single man would increase and support necessary for labor force. This custom shows that the goal of polygyny at that time was to find a way to reach resources instead of male-dominance (Coontz, 2016: 57).

In Muslim societies, men are allowed to marry up to four women as long as they can set equal financial and emotional conditions. In societies that does not limit the number of marriages demographic problems might arise, some man will not have a chance to get married or wait until they get old, or women will be forced to marry at early ages (Layenda, 2018:181). Polygyny is surely quite painful for women and it causes various problems between husband-wife and between wives (Abu-Lughod, 2004: 42). Women have to share one man with others which is the most difficult part of these marriages. When a man is interested in the second wife, the inequality in socio-economic conditions lead to jealousy among women and discomfort in the family arises.

In Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya, Jordan, Morocco, Lebanon and Egypt, polygamy is officially implemented, however it is conditional in Syria and Cezair. In 1953, the decision was taken in Syria with the approval of the polygamy judge (Barakat, 1993:114). Syria is a country that combines Arabic culture and the religion of Islam; socio-cultural life and viewpoint of this Middle East country are based on this synthesis and men are allowed to marry up to four women. There is a specific part in family record book prepared for four wives. Islamic researches indicate that, contrary to the general understanding, Islam supports monogamy rather than polygyny. It is emphasized by Islamic researchers that Surah An-Nisa, presents the viewpoint of Qur'an, the holy book of Islam (Güran, 2005: 309):

“And if you fear that you will not deal justly with the orphan girls, then marry two or three or four women that please you. But if you fear that you will not be just, then [marry only] one or continue living with your concubines. This is the most appropriate way to secure justice” (Nisa, 3).

According to Güran (2005:310), Qur'an doesn't support or demand polygyny; on the contrary, it sets the condition of equality among wives. In the following part of Surah An-Nisa, it is emphasized that such equality is impossible no matter how much you try. While polygyny seems permissible according to the religion of Islam in case of war or other some extraordinary cases^{iv}, the ideal marriage type according to the Islam religion is monogamy. In other words, the religion doesn't demand polygyny, but it gives permission under some specific conditions. The consent of wife and ensuring equality between wives are emphasized. Researches mention that this type of marriage is presented in Islam as a solution to the problems such as widowing after a war^v, or the necessity to look after children when a mother has a disease. Similarly, Barakat (1993:112) says that polygamy, which is similarly restricted to four wives of an Arab marriage tradition, is justified and rationalized by conservative Muslims. While some say that by polygamy adultery could prevents, Barakat argues that, under all this, the idea that women are created for the comfort of men is dominant. According to Barakat, men do not want to compromise on their comfort for the reason they insist on polygamy. Moreover, he says “The Qur'an Marry women of your choice, two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly (with them), then only one” clearly suggests monogamy, some of these verses claim that the marriage is unlimited in Islam.

Taking into account the interviews during field research it can be seen that apart from the exceptional situations stated above there are various examples of polygyny in Syrian society, which are legitimized by the religious references. Polygyny only gives men the right to divorce and child custody is given to father and his family after separation. All these facts shape the gender relations in Syrian families and assert the asymmetric gender order in society (Tucker, 1993: 9).

When the interviews are generally analyzed, it can be concluded that polygyny is more common in rural areas than urban spaces although there is no legal limitation in this respect. Official statistics on

polygamous marriages in the Middle East reveal that there is a decrease in polygamous marriages^{vi}. It is limited only in tribes, husbands who are without children and peasants who need labor (Barakat, 1993: 112). As stated by R. G., educated men, which are described as ‘urban individuals’ (ehlil medina) in Syria, don’t prefer polygyny in general; he states that polygyny is a solution that is used when a woman cannot bear child.

“Men in Syria can marry up to four women. But I don’t want that. That is enough. It is over. One woman is enough. Only one woman can be in one’s heart. Sharia law approves that. Why four women? One can do this if his wife is infertile. But if everything is fine, then why another woman?” (R.G., male, college graduate, married, unemployed, in Turkey for 4 years, Aleppo center, 02.15. 2019, Antakya).

This example indicates that variables such as socio-cultural level, education, economic situation affect choices of men. Marrying a second woman is approved by society and religious norms approve polygyny when it is impossible to have a child with the first wife. But women aren’t allowed to marry more than one man if a man is incapable of having a child. It is observed that factors such as “modernization” and economic development don’t cause important difference in the situation of Syrian women; their education, socio-economic and cultural conditions haven’t changed yet although they have been living under different conditions for a time. Although Syrian women seem to be out of their houses and more social when compared to the past, they still have a patriarchal way of living in general. Meriwether carried out a study in Aleppo, Syria; according to the study titled “Women and Economic Change in Nineteenth Century Syria: The Case of Aleppo” (1993) economic development did not change the status of Middle Eastern women. Workload and responsibilities of women increased as they now have to work for a fee in addition to working in the house. On the other hand, although the number of polygyny decreased in line with the increase in education level, it is ultimately used as a solution to the problem of bearing child. The laws are in favor of men in case of divorce; they get the custody of children, they have the biggest share during the division of assets. The mechanism of state, laws, family law, divorce, inheritance, custody are all shaped according to the norms of patriarchal values (Connell, 2017: 268).

“Inheritance is shared according to the rules of Qur’an. The man takes two third while woman takes one third of the total assets. This is the wish of Allah in Qur’an. A woman benefits from her husband’s share when she gets married. But a man doesn’t benefit from hers. The man stays with his family when he gets married. The woman leaves her father’s home” (D.E., female, age73, illiterate, husband dead, in Turkey for 7 years. Aleppo Rural, 07.12.2018, Antakya).

Children are important for continuing the bloodline in Syria just like in various other Middle Eastern societies. Anthropologist Erika Friel’s (2003:70) study on Iranian women show that according to Iranian society, not having children is the most terrible thing that can happen. In Iran a person with no child is ‘nothing’, considered unimportant by society, has no one to defend him/her and has no one to protect his/her rights. Similarly, Syrians believe that child issue justifies marrying more than one women. Women give consent to a second or third marriage and sometimes they even choose the second wife (Turkish: kuma^{vii} Arabic: dirra) and attend the ceremony of taking the consent of second wife’s family. But this doesn’t mean that the first wife is happy about the situation; relationships between the wife and second wife (dirra) is always tense. It is observed that the wife with no children feel “imperfect” and “insufficient” in such marriages and she endures such situations to compensate for her imperfection. Another reason why women accept such marriages is ‘religion’. It is believed that it is a commandment of Allah; but in reality, there is no such order, this situation is manipulated by the society and formed as a cultural code in time. In other words, the man has the right to marry more than one woman as he has to ‘continue the bloodline’ and the society approves this.

“A man needs to marry another woman if the first wife is incapable of bearing child. My husband has two wives. His first wife was from Syria, she could not bear a child. He married me in Turkey. He married me for a child” (K.B., female, age 33, primary school graduate, married, in Turkey for 5 years, Idlip rural, 02.19.2019, Antakya).

As mentioned above the desire to have a child is one of the most important reasons of polygyny. It was also seen that women believed having many children could prevent polygyny. This belief was explained in two ways. Women think that many children mean high financial responsibility, which makes it difficult to marry another woman. Thus, women in the study stated that they want to have as much children as possible to prevent second or third marriages. In addition to this, women believe that they continue the bloodline of their husband by having many children; they increase the status of their husband in society and decrease the odds of marrying more than once.

“I would divorce my husband if he takes a second wife. Why is the second marriage, for pleasure? I do everything for him. If I did not have children, then it was okay. But I have 6 children. Then, why? If I did not have children, then I would accept it as it is the commandment of God (‘amr Allah)” (S.K., female, 45, primary school graduate, in Turkey for 6 years Idlip, rural, 02.17.2019, Antakya).

When polygyny examples encountered during the field research are analyzed, it is seen that there are similarities and differences. The number of children, demand for having son, the wish to continue bloodline, taking care of “widows” (ermele) and their children, personal attraction are some of the reasons why men marry more than one woman. Some of the statements of Syrian women about reasons of polygyny are as follows:

“A man marries again if he is not happy with his wife or if he doesn’t have children or many children to work in a farm, if a woman isn’t interested in her husband, doesn’t take proper care of her house or if she is not clean (D.E., female, age 73, illiterate, widow, in Turkey for 7 years, Aleppo, rural, 12.07.2018, Antakya).

“Some men aren’t happy with their wives. Some women do not want children. Some men love women. Some men prefer to be with one mature women” (T.D., female, age 41, employed, high-school graduate, in Turkey for 3 years, Idlip center 02.23.2019, Antakya).

It was determined that almost all of the women included in the research believe that happiness or unhappiness of men depend on the behaviors of women. If a man decides to marry, mostly his wife is responsible for that. The belief that “*Woman must have done something if a man wants to take a second wife*” is very common among women. T.D. describes the perception of ideal woman and shows how the secondary position of women is internalized:

“Syrian men like well-groomed women. A woman should wear beautiful clothes and put on makeup. Her house should be clean, she should cook well. But some women don’t clean their house. They dress well or put on makeup. This is why, their husbands take a second wife. If you take care of your husband, your children and your house, if you don’t criticize your husband, if you make him happy why would he want to marry another women. If my husband would want to marry again, I’d ask him why; I would think that I had done something wrong. I would ask him to show me a reason. He would tell me my faults. He would give me a few chances to make things better. If I change, then he wouldn’t marry. If I don’t change, he would surely marry again. A woman can seduce a man. This is another reason why men want to marry. Women are afraid of that. There are many widow Syrians today” (T.D., female, age 41, employed, high-school graduate, in Turkey for 3 years, Idlip center, 02.23.2019, Antakya).

The story of T.D. helps us understand social roles of women in Syria. She draws a relationship between feminine roles of women and happiness of men; she states that husbands warn wives when they do not carry out their responsibilities in a marriage. Another significant point of the story is that women

are always anxious about another woman who can “seduce” their husbands. The statement of “seducing woman” indicates that women blame other women in most of the situations regarding polygyny. Women are responsible; they are the ones to be blamed in polygyny. “Seductive women” (*aimra’attak hudheaqalak*) are portrayed as “attractive, well-presented, clean, responsible” women who are desired by most men.

When the research data are analyzed in general, it can be said that variables such as economy, education and employment affect marriage preferences. It is seen that the number of polygyny is higher in the groups that come from mostly rural parts of Syria who generally earn their living by agriculture or stockbreeding and who have lower level of education. Almost all of the interviewees mentioned that this type of marriage increased in Turkey because of the war in Syria. There are now many women who have lost their spouses and because of this, it is now more acceptable to be the second or third wife of a man in order to be protected. On the other hand, there is an increase in the number of early marriages as families of little girls get them married to older men to protect their ‘chastity’. Men turned this crisis into an opportunity and this in turn set forth the issue of women abuse. It is determined that men in families get women married to older men because of economic insufficiency or because of the concern that girls can run away from home. These facts indicate that war has negatively affected women and children the most.

“There are many Syrian men marrying two-three women. There are many widows (ermele) because of the war; this is why, men marry two or three women. Numerous husbands died in Syria during war. The number of widows increased. They came to Turkey. Men in here started to marry two-three women. Some of them marry without money and some marry for insignificant amount of money. There are also some people who marry Turkish woman” (G.K., female, age 34, married, primary school graduate, in Turkey for 5 years, Idlip Center, 02.26.2019, Antakya).

Interviewees stated that polygyny in Syria is based on some specific rules. Income of men should be high enough to take care of the women he marries. Men are expected to show equal amount interest and give a house to each one of his wives. Interviewees stated that these significant rules applied in Syria have changed in Turkey and no one gives importance to these customs in polygyny today.

“We apply polygyny. A man can marry four women according to sharia law (Al-Shrye). If a man has sufficient income, if he can support two families, then it is ok. But if a man is happy with his wife, then he would not consider marrying another woman. If he decides to marry, he would not ask his wife. They tell the wife after the decision. Nobody gives importance to these rules in Turkey. Men marry women even though they are poor. These women live in the same house (E.R., female, age 30, working at Health Care Center in İstanbul, husband dead, in Turkey for 4 years, Damascus, 01.19.2019, Antakya).

Having multiple wives is an indication of high status especially in tribal communities. It is seen that men marry more than one woman in order to be able to get higher respect and status in such societies. Factors such as using the labor of wives in the household, having sons that support the father in his political struggle and daughters that can be given in exchange of bride-price, increase the status of men in such societies. Having more than one wife can be the source of wealth, power and high social status (Bates, 2013: 303). According to the interviews carried out with local residents, many Syrian men living in rural areas with low education level marry up to four women in order to earn prestige, but life standards of these women and their children are extremely low. Polygamy is illegal according to the Turkish civil code and Syrian women are in favor of this situation. Thoughts of Syrian women who have been experiencing legal provisions about marriage and polygamy in Turkey are presented below:

“Equal division of property in Turkey is beneficial. In Syria, women don’t get anything after divorce. Turkish citizens have rights. Women are protected by the state. Men cannot marry a second woman in here. It is forbidden by the law. Women have rights in case

of divorce. We don't have rights in Syria; women are oppressed. If a woman marries a good man, she is lucky, if not, she has a very difficult life" (S.K., female, 30, unemployed, high-school graduate, husband dead, in Turkey for three years, Idlip center, 01.22.2019).

"Some Turkish men marry Syrian women. But they do not officially get married because they have other wives. Women have no legal rights. The second wife does not have rights. Syria and Turkey are different. Polygyny is forbidden in Turkey. It is forbidden by the law. It is stated in the Qur'an, a man can marry up to four women; I don't want that" (K.G., female, age 30, unemployed, primary school graduate, married, in Turkey for 3 years, Latakia, 02.11.2019, Antakya).

Grants given by the Red Crescent Center have positively changed the situation of women in family. It is observed that these women have voice in the household as they have more economic power.

"I cannot live with my husband if he marries another woman. I cannot. I do not want to live with another woman. I have Red Crescent Card. I can find a place and live with my children. The card is mine. I can go back to Syria. My husband would not marry because of these. We withdraw money from the card at the beginning of the month. We pay the rent, electricity and water bills; but it is not enough. We have six children. Our family is big. We are in debt. Life is difficult in here, he cannot marry" (T.D., female, age 41, employed, high-school graduate, in Turkey for three years, Idlip center, 20.12.2018, Antakya).

"Red Crescent card is under my name. I have to pay the rent with the money in it. My husband does not have any money. My daughter wants blouse, pants, but I cannot buy. I wasn't thinking about such problems in Syria. My husband used to earn money and give me some. Life is difficult in here. I am responsible for everything. I can live however I want. I can spend the money, drink, eat and get dressed. But I will not do that. But it is nice to know that" (H.S., female, age 45, primary school graduate, in Turkey for 5 years, Idlip center, 01.23.2019, Antakya).

Feminine Strategies against Polygyny

All of the communities around the world raise children according to the rules and customs designed for having proper attitudes and behaviors expected by the society. Raising a child is the process of showing her how to adapt to a society. Being accepted by the society is possible if a person's behaviors are in line with the norms of that society. An individual acquires knowledge about what should and should not be done. He/she is either rewarded or punished because of his/her attitudes and behaviors. He/she seeks for the approval of the society, avoids improper attitudes and behaviors and gives effort to behave according to the norms. Social gender roles are cultural structures established to make people follow certain patterns; they vary from one country to another. Children acquire feminine and masculine roles in this process. A girl, who is in close relationship with her mother observes and imitates her behaviors while a boy imitates those of his father. During the socialization process children first learn the roles based on their genders from their mothers and respectively other women of the society. Each society has an original acculturation process. During the socialization process in Syria, both boys and girls are raised as appropriate people for the society. Story of T.D. gives some information about how girls learn their social roles in Syrian society:

"You have to tell your daughter to take care of her husband and not to say anything back no matter what he says, be ready by the time he gets home, wear beautiful clothes and put on makeup, be clean and cook for your husband. This is how I talk to my daughter. I do the same to my husband. My mother taught these to me. She used to tell me to be silent, take care of my husband, don't say anything; if you see that he is bored, anxious or unhappy, let him talk, don't say anything back, make a cup of coffee, he will drink and then go. Don't argue with him. *If you do these, your husband won't betray you.* This is what I learnt from life" (T.D., female, age 41, employed, high-school graduate, in Turkey for 3 years, Idlip center, 12.20.2018, Antakya).

This story shows that girls in Syrian communities Syrian girls socialize through traditional and patriarchal methods raising children. Syrian women give importance to “fanciness and personal care, using cosmetics, putting on makeup, wearing fancy clothes, showing interest to husband, remaining silent in case of conflicts with husband (during discussions, verbal and physical violence etc.) and being patient under any circumstances”. Mothers teach these basic features to daughters. Social codes have shaped the features of “ideal Syrian women” (benat Suriyyin) and become determinant factors that distinguish them from “the others”.

“Girls are obliged to respect the rules of Islam, they cannot wear improper clothes, cannot speak ill, cannot be together with other women, and cannot chat with other women. A woman should not hear inappropriate words, she should be respectful to grandmother-grandfather, elder brother and father, and she should serve her family. She should serve her husband after getting married. She should be patient no matter what the circumstances are. She should endure hunger, poverty, misery. She should accept everything, should take the bitter with the sweet in a marriage” (K.G., female, married, age 55, unemployed, in Turkey for 5 years, Aleppo rural, 01.25.2019, Antakya).

F.L.'s narrative provides information regarding how girls are raised during the socialization process.

“Syrian girls behave according to the traditions. There is no need to mention that. My daughter observes me; she sees how I get along with her father. ‘My love (habibi), I shall die before you do (touburni), my life (ya omri), my soul (ya ruwhi)’ this is how I talk to my husband. My daughter sees how I welcome her father. A woman should welcome her husband when he comes home from work. ‘May God give you strength (Alla yuetik afiye), May God give you power (Allah yuetikelqua), May God protect you (Allah yihalili enta fukrasna), May God grant you a long life (Allah yitavel omrak). A woman should tell these to her husband. A man will try to make peace with his wife if he has a mistake. When a husband beats his wife and she leaves the house, he goes mad. In Syria, men expect women remain silent when they beat them. Sometimes the woman’s family members tell her to go back to her house and protect her marriage. Sometimes they tell her to leave her children behind and come back to their house” (F.L., female, 45, married, primary school graduate, in Turkey for 3 years, Aleppo rural, 02.20.2019, Antakya).

D.G.'s narrative demonstrates the opinions of Syrian women towards Turkish women.

“Syrian woman are very patient about men. They tolerate their husbands (tuhamali). We have love, mercy. Turkish women are not patient in their marriages. They do not show mercy. According to Turkish women, men have to work and bring money. But we are different, we stand by our husband whether they have a job or not” (D.G. female, age 44, married, primary school graduate, in Turkey for 5 years, Latakia, 01.14.2018, Antakya).

Syrian women praise themselves and they believe that these aspects of their culture are superior to those of Turkish women. In the interviews Syrian women stated that Turkish men prefer to marry them because of these aspects. They stated that Turkish women do not show interest in their spouses.

“We always give importance to our appearance. We were also like this back in Syria. We take care of our house, husband. A Syrian woman sends her husband to work in the morning, cooks for him, and starts preparing herself five hours before her husband comes back home from work; this is how we do. The house should be clean when husband comes. His clothes should be clean and ironed. His wife should be fancy, clean, well dressed and she should wear makeup. She should prepare both herself and her house for the man. ***This is the custom for Syrian women.*** I see that women in Turkey don’t give importance to appearance. They are working at jobs in here. Women don’t work in Syria. Turkish women do not have time for personal-care. Syrian women are housewives. They get married and have children.

They take care of their children and home, they don't have time" (T.D., female, age 41, unemployed, high-school graduate, in Turkey for 3 years, Idlip center, 20.12.2018, Antakya).

"I believe that if I don't take care of my husband, I commit sin (haram/khatiya). He works very hard under the sun. We take care of husbands when they come home from work, we feed them, give them drinks. One night I was very tired but I washed my husband in the bathroom at night as he was sweaty. I washed his feet. I put him to bed. Turkish women do not do these like us. They do not give value to men. Men work hard, earn money and give it to their wives. We are not like this. We love our husbands even when they do not have money, we respect them. Turkish people put money in the bank, husbands give gold jewelry. We have few clothes. If they give us money, we buy clothes, if they cannot give, we do not complain. It is a **sin**. Husbands are not important in Turkey. Women are sultans in Turkey. Police defends women in Turkey. You are sultans, but do not think that you are superior. I only talk about marriage. It is a **sin**" (A.D., female, age 53, unemployed, in Turkey for 5 years, Aleppo rural, 02.21.2019, Antakya).

A.D.'s narrative is significant as it reflects how Syrians perceive "other" (Turkish women). A.D. expressed that she believes that Turkish women are committing "sin" as they do not fulfill their "duties" towards their husbands as they have a great number of rights and freedoms compared to Syrian women. According to A.D., a woman is obliged to fulfill her "duties" towards her husband (gender roles). Otherwise, she would be regarded to commit a "sin". It is observed that "sin" is one of the cultural codes that constantly reproduces the behaviors, opinions, and worldviews of women.

"We treat our husbands better than Turkish women. Syrian women give importance to men. We see that Turkish men wash carpets for their wives. We would not allow that. Men help women in Turkey. They look after children, change their diapers. We are not used to that. It is embarrassing (*eayb*), forbidden. **These are the responsibilities of women. Men have nothing to do with these**" (E.T., age 30, husband dead, unemployed, primary education, in Turkey for 5 years, Aleppo rural, 12.19.2019, Antakya).

In parallel with A.D. narrative, E.T. evaluated the attitudes and behaviors of Turkish women and Syrian women towards their husbands. For E.T., the involvement of Turkish men in baby care is a "shame". She expressed that these works are "women's work". Accordingly, it was observed that these women internalized the gender roles and regard these roles as if they were biological. According to them, the failure to fulfill their duties towards their spouse is a "sin" and a "shame".

"Turkish men marry Syrian women as they spoil their men a lot. Syrian women like spoiling their men. They wear beautiful clothes, put on makeup, and go to a hairdresser. Syrian women like personal care" (S.D., female, age 35, married, high-school graduate, in Turkey for 6 years, Latakia rural, 12.26. 2018, Antakya).

S.D. expressed that Turkish men prefer Syrian women because of the attitudes and behaviors of Turkish women towards their spouses. According to S.D. conditions such as being well-groomed and wearing make-up are necessities and requirements.

"Women in here wear the same dress while sleeping and during the midday. Women in Syria give importance to how they look. Women in here are not well-groomed. They look angrily at us. They think that we came out of nowhere and took their husbands from them. They should make some self-criticism; only after that they can criticize us. For instance my husband is Turkish, he is very pleased. After we got married, four of his friends got married with Syrian women. They saw how I behave and decided to marry Syrians. Women don't give importance to appearance in here. I wear different clothes every day, I put on makeup. I cook what my husband likes; I never cook what he doesn't like. I looked after my mother-in-law. I washed her when I was nine months pregnant. Turkish women don't do that" (S.K., female, age 22, housewife, college graduate, in Turkey for 5 years, Damascus, 01.22.2019, Antakya).

In S.K.'s narrative, she explains why Turkish men prefer Syrian women for marriage in recent years. S.M. narrates a day of Syrian women:

“A Syrian woman drinks her coffee when she wakes up in the morning. She listens to Feyruz. She chats with her neighbors, does housework even though there is a cleaner in the house. I had cleaner back in Syria. A woman completes all of the housework. She cooks before her husband arrives. He comes for lunch. She has to get prepared. She takes shower; wear beautiful clothes, put on makeup. This is a must. Her husband comes home from work in the afternoon. He eats his lunch. He rests and goes back to his job. It is not the same in here. He has to work from morning until evening. Men rest at home from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. in Syria. Then they work from 4 p.m. until 10-11 p.m. Women take care of children at home. There is no life in Turkey. Just work. A Turkish woman is not comfortable if her husband is not rich. **Women are like men at home. It is a sin.** Men want interest, they want to feel valuable. It **is a sin** not to show them interest” (S.M., female, age 30, unemployed, high-school graduate, husband dead, in Turkey for 3 years, Idlip center, 01.24.2018, Antakya).

Analyzing the data obtained from interviews in their contexts puts an entirely different complexion on the matter. Behaviors and attitudes such as *personal Care (jahazhalak)*, *spoiling (dellili)*, *being silence (askat)*, *patience (sabar)*, *tolerant*, *not saying a word in a conflict (mariddiylu alwajhu)*, *looking beautiful under any circumstances* are developed as feminine strategies to prevent polygyny. These attitudes have shaped the image of “Syrian woman” in time, and become a basic part of Syrian culture. These cultural codes are transmitted to girls by women during the socialization process and their behaviors are controlled through statements such as shame (eayp), sin (haram), and forbidden (memnuğ). These codes not only ensure the reproduction of feminine roles expected from Syrian women, but also support sustainability of patriarchal system. This situation explains why Syrian women desire to look nice under any circumstances even though they live in difficult economic situations and went through difficult times both morally and financially.

“Syrian women believe that they should spoil men, they should make them happy to prevent them from looking at other women or from marrying a second woman. Syrian women show high interest in their husbands because of these; they always take care of their husbands and do whatever they want. Turkish women are not anxious about second marriages any more, but Syrian women are. I liked Turkish customs in this respect. Other Syrian women liked them too. They now want to marry according to Turkish regulations in Turkey” (R.T., female, age 20, university student, in Turkey for 3 years, Latakia center, 12.03.2018, Antakya).

“We show interest in our husbands to prevent them from looking at other women. I love my husband, I show respect, I cook whatever he wants and I do not go to the places he does not want me to. I wash him, clean him, rub his body, I dress him up” (T.R., female, age 40, primary school graduate, unemployed, in Turkey for 5 years, Aleppo rural, 12.03.2018, Antakya).

Research results indicate that women are the ones who generally control the social gender roles of other females. In order to understand this situation, it is necessary to firstly understand the relationship between mother-in-law (hama), son (abn) and bride (arus). This situation creates problems in establishing healthy relationship and communication; both men and women in such societies experience these problems. Because of customs, tension between mother, son and wife is high.

The wish to *continue bloodline* is one of the most important reasons why people marry in Syrian societies. Although almost all of the interviewees stated that they are opposed to polygyny, they give consent to a second wife in case of infertility. The belief that boys continue bloodline makes sons more valuable than daughters. Woman with a son has a high position in the society and prevents the threat of second wife. When a woman becomes mother-in-law (hama), she gains the control of her son's wife;

because of the wish to have control, they usually have tense relationships. According to the story of R.T., mother-in-laws use polygyny as a threat used against brides.

“Old women give more importance to men. Men are more valuable as they continue the name of a family. Girls marry and go away. Women don’t give importance to girls because of that. If a mother-in-law (hama) doesn’t like her bride and the situation at home, she says that: “I will tell my son to marry another woman. I will make him marry if necessary. I will find a girl and make her marry my son”. For instance, if a mother-in-law doesn’t like her son’s wife, she says that:” I will find a beautiful woman to my son who will welcome him when he comes home. They will be happy” (R.T., female, age 20, university student, in Turkey for 3 years, Latakia center, 12.03.2018, Antakya).

According to this story, women have to please their mothers-in-law besides their husbands. It is understood that if a woman cannot satisfy her mother-in-law, she will encourage her son to bring a second woman to house, marry again. There is a common belief that if a woman does not serve her husband well and a mother-in-law witnesses such an incident, she may personally choose a second bride and influence her son.

One of the other reasons that have increased polygyny in Syrian societies is that there is an increase in the number of “widows”. It is observed that polygyny with widows (ermele) is especially preferred by Syrians who came to Turkey from rural parts of Syria. “Widowhood” is a social problem for Syrian society. When the interviews are generally analyzed, it can be seen that there is a very strong belief that a woman is not capable of “taking care of herself and her children”; this belief is one of the most determinant factors that make women dependent on men. The prevailing understanding in Syrian societies is that a woman can continue her life only under the protection of a man and while men are capable of doing anything they want, women are dependent. Men defend and protect women. The expression “Dili kaser” commonly used in Syrian society means “a woman who cannot defend herself”, “a woman who cannot do anything without a man”. This expression is an indication of the strong belief among Syrians: Women are inherently incapable of protection. These presuppositions lay a reliable groundwork for men to marry more than once. At that point, Syrian women ask this question: “Why do men need to marry in order to help the widows and children in need? Why do they have to be married to help?” Syrian women do not object to helping widows or children, they object to the belief that men should marry women in order to help them. According to Syrian women, men use these excuses in order to marry more than one woman. Women who try to cope with such difficult problems give effort to be “ideal women”, to carry out social roles that are given. This structure not only reinforces the secondary position of women, but also reproduces patriarchal order.

Levirate is a type of marriage in which the brother of a deceased man is obliged to marry his brother’s widow. It is one of the most common types of marriage in the Middle Eastern societies and it has increased especially after the war in Syria. The main purpose of this marriage type is to make children of the deceased stay in the household. Widows are not allowed to go back to their father’s house or marry another person and grow their children with that “stranger husband”. Families want their grandchildren grow together with the people from the same blood, with the other family members. When a “widow” decides to leave the house, either she has to leave her children behind to her husband or to her husband’s family if he is deceased. Women have to “endure” living together with another woman under the same roof as it is believed that co-wives mistreat the children of the other. This is another reason why women tolerate (thammali) co-wives. An interviewee, who had to come to Turkey and left her husband behind, states that she has just got divorced and taken the custody of her children. According to her, she would never be able to take her children after the divorce if she was in Syria. A woman cannot take the custody of her children after divorce according to the Syrian law. Thus as the interviewee does not want to lose her children, she is unwilling to go back to Syria.

“Educated and working women cherish their husbands in our society. Both men and women cherish each other in Syria. When a woman wakes up in the morning, she makes coffee for her husband, always says May God succeed you (Allah yırzıkak) and sends him to work. I wake up and make coffee, we drink coffee together before work, I call him my love (habibi), my life (ya omri), my heart (ya qualbi). I bring him clean clothes. I always say “May God ease your work” (Allah yesser aleyk), “May God succeed you” (Allah yırzıkak). Men expect such words from women. They want sweet words. If you talk to your husband in this manner, he will buy you new clothes. This is how our men are. You say a few beautiful words, you break the ice. Men become happy and go to work. When they come back from work, you should say “May God give you health” (Allah yağtık afi); the house should be clean, you should be prepared and well dressed. This is the way we do in Syria. You speak with your husband kindly, beautifully, you change his attitudes. Some women don’t send their husbands to work in the morning; they don’t even get out of the bed. Men get tired of them. Men say that I got married to wake up in the morning together” (T.D., female, age 41, employed, high-school graduate, in Turkey for 3 years, Idlip center, 12.20.2019, Antakya).

The story of T.D. is important as it shows the strategies developed by women to achieve what they want. According to T.D. the language used by women, their submissive behaviors and perfection in their service gives them the opportunity to make men do what they want. It is believed that educated and uneducated women all need these strategies. Using a proper language, carrying out the responsibilities at home, looking after children, spoiling husband, having proper behaviors, welcoming a husband and the number of children (*especially sons to continue bloodline*) are some of the strategies developed by women. It is commonly believed it is their responsibilities to adapt these behaviors.

Although Syrian society tolerates marrying up to four women as long as there is equality, almost all of the Syrian women in this study stated that they don’t like this custom. Similarly, Abu-Lughod (2004:244) emphasizes this discomfort of Bedouin women through these sentences: “Death, blindness, poverty is better than marrying an already married man”. Syrian R.T. told her ideas about co-wife and she mentions that women do not want a co-wife under any circumstance:

“An infertile woman asks her husband to marry another woman to help him achieve his dreams. However, her husband refuses as he doesn’t want to be caught between the two. The issue of children makes her uncomfortable. She is decided to make her husband marry. Finally, the husband agrees due to his wife’s insistence. The man buys a pottery jar and brings it home. He dresses it in women clothes, covers it and puts it in one of the rooms. The man goes out for work the following day. He comes back home and his wife starts complaining. She says that the co-wife insulted and humiliated her while he was gone. The man gets surprised. He grabs a stick and starts beating the pottery until it crashes. The woman says that “Al dirra mirra velau kan et jarra”, which means “the co-wife is sour, even if she is a jar” (R.T. female, age 20, married, university student, Latakia, 12.22.2019, Antakya).

“*Al dirra, mirra velau kenet jarra*”. “*Dirra*”, means “*co-wife*”, “*mirra*” means “*sour, bitter*” and “*jarra*” means “*pottery jar*”. Within this context “*jarra*” means something desirable. A second woman causes pain even if she is made of pottery. Women believe that having a co-wife will always cause problems, unhappiness and uneasiness for the rest of one’s life. Co-wife, in a sense “destroys marriage and happiness”.

“I don’t want two-three co-wives (dirra). No woman wants that. Co-wife means pain (Dirra mirra)” (G.K., female, age 34, married, primary school, in Turkey for 5 years, Idlip center, 18.12.2019, Antakya).

“Although it is written in Sharia law, women don’t accept polygyny. A woman gets angry and shouts at her husband or leaves home and goes back to her families’ house. She may demand divorce. Why are there four wives in Sharia law? If a woman cannot bear children, if she wants only one child, some men like women very much. They want two-

three" (T.D., female, age 41, employed, high-school graduate, in Turkey for 3 years, Idlip center, 12.20.2018, Antakya).

Narrative of T.D. and a great number of interviewees indicates that "co-wife" is something not wanted by women. On the other hand, D.E.'s following narrative indicates the helplessness of women against the practice of co-wife. Due to the possibility of co-wife marriage supported by religious and social rules, the women attempts to perform the roles identified according to her gender towards her spouse as much as she can. And for the same reason, girls learn the gender roles assigned to women at an early age. Knowledge of "how to become a woman" is transferred to girls during the socialization process. This transfer is accompanied by a great number of codes such as "sin", "keep silent", "don't talk against", "be well-groomed", "wear make-up", "be patient", etc. Social roles are transferred from one generation to the other through these codes.

"Women don't speak when they are beaten or a second or third woman marries her husband. If the woman's family is very rich, they take their daughter and demand divorce. There are a few families like that. But if the family is poor, they tell their daughter to stay with her husband and be patient" (D.E., female, age 73, illiterate, husband dead, in Turkey for 7 years, Aleppo rural, 12.07.2018, Antakya).

According to the stories presented above, women do not want their husbands marry a second woman under any circumstances. During the interviews, it was observed that the money given to women with Red Crescent card increased the voice of them in marriage and women believe that that money given to them is a kind of insurance in case of polygyny. Some women interviewees stated that their husbands could not marry another woman no matter how much they wanted, as they do not have Red Crescent card. They cannot take the risk of losing the financial aid. Another impact of Red Crescent card is that Syrian women can make more personal decisions now when compared to the past. Many interviewees stated that they will demand divorce in case of a 'co-wife' and they will be able to continue their life with the money they get through the Card. Increasing the economic level and education of women, applying the rules set by the Turkish Civil Code will not only decrease the number of early marriages, but also make women more visible and increase their voice in the society.

Conclusion

Syrians had to leave their houses, their dead and their homeland behind because of the domestic disturbances in Syria since 2011. This mass migration to various countries has been continuing in waves since that time and one of these countries is Turkey. Syrians settled in different cities according to their socio-economic situation. In the field study carried out in Hatay, Antakya, it is determined that the interviewees came from rural parts of Syria and very few of them are college graduates. Most of them married at the age of thirteen and had minimum five children. According to the data obtained through the study, Syrians prefer patrilocal residence. They have traditional patriarchal social structure, and they continue living huddled together in some neighborhoods in Antakya. It was observed that issues such as the type of marriage, inheritance, divorce, custody of children in these communities are organized according to patriarchal rules. Men can marry up to four women, divorce their wives and take the custody of their children when they think that it is necessary. The fates of women who live in this traditional patriarchal society for thousands of years are mostly determined by the attitudes and decisions of their families. Families warn their daughters of the situation that they will have to face if they want to leave their husband; according to their understanding, a woman should never leave her house under any circumstances and stay silent. Very few of the families give women the support about going back to her "father's house" however, as women do not want to leave children behind and as they worry about their children, they continue their marriage and remain silent. This study focused on feminine experiences, which is the output of strategies developed over centuries due to the concerns over co-wife, divorce, leaving children behind, became a cultural phenomenon over time and represented through the expression of "Syrian woman". This study also put forward the position of strategies about polygyny in

feminine discourses, how the language, which promote hegemony of man, is rationalized by women, learned helplessness which reminds the glass ceiling syndrome, the foundations of feminine upbringing internalized during the socialization process. It was observed that women experience anxiety caught in between the family law shaped by the religious norms and their inner worlds and are not in favor of polygyny.

When the data obtained from the interviews are analyzed, it can be seen that all of the interviewees didn't approve of polygyny except from the problem of fertility. The thought that Islam approves polygyny, the fact that Syria gives this right under the law, social expectation of continuing the bloodline of men, personal preferences of men were put forward as some of the basic reasons of polygyny. Women are "defective", "imperfect" and "inadequate" most of the time and they are the ones to be blamed if a couple cannot have children. It was observed that women, who internalized this situation, accept polygyny more easily.

Some interviewees stated that when it is not possible to bear a son, men need to marry other women and in addition to this, they said that they would be willing to find the second wife for their husbands if necessary. This is the case where women have the most positive attitude towards a "co-wife". The belief that men have to continue bloodline is the most determinant factor that cause women accept the existence of another woman. However, it is important to note that although women seem to approve these marriages, they are actually unwilling.

Findings indicate that the pleasure of men is a more important determinant of polygyny than the problem of infertility. It is observed that there are numerous marriages for "protecting widows" whose husbands died during war. These marriages cause tension between Syrian women and local residents and they often create prejudices about one another.

Another significant point of interviews is the desire of Syrian to look beautiful under any circumstances. There are various socio-cultural reasons behind the care that they give for cleaning, tidying their houses and looking beautiful. Religious rules, how they are raised, social gender roles, traditions and customs are some of these reasons. It was understood that the basic reason of this one-sided care and concern is to avoid the possibility of polygyny.

Women take care of themselves, do their makeup in every circumstance (war, financial difficulties etc.), and prioritize these while considering their personal spending. In addition to these women are expected to "Remain silent, not give answer in case of a conflict, be patient, do housework, look after children, wear make-up for husbands, take care of their husbands, be well-groomed, spoil their husbands". Women believe that man marry twice because they are unhappy and they also think that when they do not complete one of the responsibilities mentioned above, men will want to marry another woman. In other words, the source of men's happiness is the female behaviors based on the specific "feminine roles" mentioned above.

The evaluators, critics and responsables of this situation is also women. When feminine discourses are analyzed, it can be seen that notions such as sin, shame, fate, and destiny are used to produce social role and secondary position of women in life. Based on this it's a sin to answer back to their husband and it's a shame to let men to the housework. Any kind of difficulty experienced by women (physical or psychological violence, poverty, co-wife etc.) is written in her destiny. Aspects such as being patient (sabera) and tolerant (tıhammali) are expected from Syrian women and women appraise and support such behaviors

The interviews showed the thoughts of Syrian women about Turkish women who have bigger rights in many fields of life; economic conditions, marriage and social gender roles of Turkish women are under the protection of Turkish civil code. Syrian interviewees stated that they want to adapt the egalitarian marriage and lifestyle in Turkey and they want their children to marry according to the

Turkish laws. On the other hand, they mentioned that Turkish women do not give sufficient importance to personal care, and do not show sufficient interest in their spouses. This egocentric situation complicates the agreement between two women groups and leads to a prejudice between local and Syrian women. However, it is believed that it is possible to overcome this problem in time through mutual interaction.

As a result, Syrian women do not approve of polygyny and are prefer the marriages to be arranged according to Turkish Civil Code. It is believed that polygyny which causes tension among wives will decrease over time as both polygyny and marrying at an early age is illegal in Turkey. It is believed that efforts such as educating the new Syrian generation living in Turkey, increasing the employment opportunities of women, creating environments that will enable interaction with Turkish society will increase the awareness over the fact that polygyny is not a part of modern life and will put woman in a secondary position and in turn will lead to a dramatic decrease in polygyny.

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ⁱTurkish law separates “refugee” and “Asylum seekers”; while refugee is used for defining people coming from Europe, asylum seekers are the ones who come out of Europe. This is why, asylum seekers aren’t the ones waiting for completing the process of immigration application process; they are the ones coming from a country out of Europe with the permission of temporary residence permit until they find a safe third country (Erdoğan 2018:47). In this case, the state of asylum seekers is in scope of “temporary protection”. During field research, Syrians under temporary protection in Turkey are asked about how they would want to be called. They stated that they don’t want to be asylum seekers, refugees, immigrants or guests; they want to be called “Syrians”; this is why, we preferred to call the interviewees, who are under temporary protection, as “Syrians”.

ⁱⁱBerkes explains modernization as a concept that is wider than the case of religion-state separation. He believes that the word *Secularism* is closer to the word of “modernization” in terms of meaning and origin; moreover, he states that it is the exact equivalent of *modernization* (Berkes 2002:16).

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^{iv}Permissible (caiz) is used for deed that aren't restricted by the law, religion or customs (<https://www.google.com/search?q=caiz+ne+demek&oq=caiz>)

^vThe social identity that show the social statue of a woman in the case of divorce or death of husband.

^{vi} “Official statistics show that in the 1960s it was practiced by fewer than 2 percent of married Muslim men in Lebanon, 4 percent in Syria, 8 percent in Jordan, 8 percent in Egypt (1951), and 2 percent in Algeria (1955). Research conducted in the 1930s showed that 5 percent of married Muslim men in Syria had more than one wife and that this phenomenon was more widespread in rural than urban areas. In the 1970s, a field study conducted by Safouh al-Akhras showed that only 2 percent of married men in Damascus had more than one wife. Similarly, studies of the family in Baghdad showed that of married men, 8 percent had more than one wife in the 1940s. This percentage was reduced to 2 percent in the 1970s” (Bereket 1993:113).

^{vii}Co-wife (kuma) is a cultural identity used by women married to the same men at the same time; the word is used by these women to define each other.