

The Symbolic Restoration of Women’s Place in Turkey’s *Resurrection*

Resurrection Ertuğrul (in Turkish: *Diriliş Ertuğrul*; henceforth, *Resurrection*) is a Turkish television series based on the life of Ertuğrul, an Oghuz Turk and a hereditary leader of the *Kayı Obası* (Kayi Tribe) in the thirteenth century. Ertuğrul was the father of Osman I (Ottoman), who unified the Turkish tribes remaining from the collapsing Seljuks Empire to found the Ottoman State in 1299 (officially, 1302)—which became the Ottoman Empire with Sultan Mehmet II’s conquest of Istanbul in 1453. Thus, *Resurrection* provides a glimpse into what Turkish society was like on the verge of the Ottoman State’s establishment. Since its first episode aired on Turkey’s Public Radio and Television (TRT) in December 2014, *Resurrection* has topped viewer ratings, emerging as the best breakthrough Turkish TV series of its premiere year (“Turkish series”). As of the date of writing this article, all episodes of *Resurrection* in the Turkish language are also made available online at the show’s official website (dirilisdizisi.com); two seasons’ worth of episodes as well as additional ones with English subtitles (under the title, “*Resurrection Ertuğrul*”) can be found on Netflix and at various fan channels on YouTube.

“The inspiration for the stories and characters in this series is our history,” reads the Turkish translation of the screen caption in white, capitalized letters on a black background, appearing right after the opening music and credits of each *Resurrection* episode. Following this premise, Turkish viewers frequently praised the show on social media for its accurate representation of Turkish history (with some viewers comparing it—and finding it superior—to another TV series, *The Magnificent Century*, depicting Sultan Suleyman’s rule during the golden years of the Ottoman Empire in the 16th century). To others, the show seemed to feed off of the idea of a “glorious history” – embodied in the premise of a Turkish tribe capable of establishing a great empire that lasted for six centuries (1299-1922) – an imperial past that Turkey was

supposed to break away from with M. Kemal Atatürk's establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923 but the currently governing Justice and Development Party, known with its conservative views, might be trying to revive. Along these lines, scholars like Josh Carney studying media in Turkey interpreted the show as a promotion of neo-Ottomanism within the framework of Turkey's trajectory towards conservatism under the current government. With abundant scenes featuring heavy action – often glorifying the Kayi men's and, sometimes, women's heroism in violent conflict – as well as Islamic religious characters and their rituals, the show indeed appeared to cater to a relatively conservative Turkish audience.

In this framework, another intriguing but perhaps unexpected and less-mentioned aspect of *Resurrection*, however, is its portrayal of Turkish women as “equal partners” in society—contrary to the typical media representations of historical Turkish/Ottoman women as inferior matrons of the harem, a central trope of centuries-old Orientalist fantasies. In many fictional works featuring the Ottoman history (including *The Magnificent Century*), women are depicted as concubines in the Harem whose sole purpose in life is to become the sultan's favorite, and hopefully, the mother of his sons—one of whom will eventually inherit and rule the Empire. This popular Orientalist trope directs attention only to the characteristics of womanhood desirable by fictionalized harem standards; in this vision, for example, women are educated by the palace to bring out their feminine beauty and perform multiple skills like singing, dancing, playing an instrument, or calligraphy so that they can be liked enough by the sultan to be selected as his favorite (Lewis 142). These subordinate women have no direct agency in social and political decision-making processes and are shut down for voicing any opinions that go against the “hegemonic masculinity” (Connell 77).

Of course, such a view of women is not based entirely on an Orientalized vision of the Ottomans; an inferiorization resulting in women's limited involvement in social affairs was evident for the most part of the Ottoman history (Suğur *et al.*138). Women's status in Turkey improved by and large during the Republican period under Atatürk's leadership – granting women the right to vote and equality before the law (Gündüz 115-116). Despite significant modernization efforts to enhance women's rights and make them equal partners in society, however, there is an ongoing perception of women as the inferior sex and the negative consequences of this perception such as violence against women (see “Türkiye’de Kadına”) or a gender gap in terms of economic, political, and educational measures (“The Global” 11-12) in contemporary Turkey. Hence, women's treatment as “equal partners” in *Resurrection* is meaningful and, given the show's inevitable popularity, can be utilized by its producer and writers (known to include both men and women) as a significant tool for continued improvement of women's treatment – both at the perceptual and behavioral level – in Turkish society.

Therefore, this essay examines the portrayal of women in *Resurrection* as a rhetorical action with a potential to enact a form of social intervention. I explore the rhetorical patterns underlying the show's attempt to inspire contemporary Turkey with a historical ideal of Turkish society, which promoted gender equality and entrusted women with a prominent role in social affairs. Since this attempt alludes to actual Turkish history, it also has a potential to grant contemporary Turkish women a historical and, ironically, a traditional reference point that can help further justify their current efforts for equal treatment.

The rhetoric of *Resurrection* is important to study because research suggests that mediated popular culture texts:

- 1) Have an influential role in how we interpret the world around us;

2) Reflect beliefs, attitudes, and values;

3) And shape what people believe and how we behave. (Sellnow 7-9)

These functions of mediated popular culture texts are particularly important in contexts such as Turkey where television shows like *Resurrection* pervade people's daily lives. In recent years, up to a hundred serials a year air on various Turkish TV channels. Each episode of these serials lasts about two hours (three hours with commercial breaks). About fifty million people watch these shows, which means that the top-rated show (such as *Resurrection Ertuğrul* that gets about 30% share of the total ratings on Wednesdays) has about fifteen million viewers every week (Carney; "28 Aralık")—a significant number especially given Turkey's population of about seventy eight million as of 2016 ("Turkey from the World Bank").

There is also a recent boom in Turkish shows' international popularity—particularly in the Middle East, the Balkan countries such as Greece, and some former Soviet Republics in Asia. Scholars have even argued that this cultural development signifies a Turkish "soft power" (cultural colonialism) in the region (see Yörük and Vatikiotis). Some news articles also reported on Turkish serials' rising popularity in South America (Kaplan). According to one such article (January 2016), three Turkish dramas ranked among the first five most watched television broadcasts in Argentina. More interestingly, "Chile's largest television audience was captured not by the country's World Cup match against Brazil (2014), but by the Turkish TV series *One Thousand and One Nights*" ("Three Turkish"). According to TRT's reports, *Resurrection* itself was recently sold to about twenty-five countries in different parts of the world, and sixty other countries were interested in purchasing its broadcasting rights ("Diriliş Ertuğrul'a dünyanın"). Given this rising popularity and potential influence of Turkish television serials such as *Resurrection*, it is particularly important to analyze such shows' underlying messages about how

we should (or should not) believe and behave, for instance, with regards to gender roles in society.

Resurrection as an Attention Intervention

The ideas and notions from William R. Brown's Rhetoric of Social Intervention (RSI) model guide my textual analysis of *Resurrection* to uncover its underlying messages about women's place in society. The RSI model focuses on the process by which human beings symbolically constitute reality and ideology. According to RSI, a significant part of our symbolic construction is the systemic *naming* process. That is, human beings learn to *categorize* and *name* experience symbolically, and this symbolizing activity functions rhetorically. Our systemic naming practices direct attention to particular parts of experience—called *foregrounding*—and away from other parts of experience—called *backgrounding*. According to RSI, ideology evolves through this naming process (Opt and Gring 71-72).

RSI conceptualizes an active and conscious choice to *foreground* selected parts of an experience and *background* other parts of it as an *attention intervention*—a mechanism that can be manipulated towards different ideological ends, depending on the primary intervener's worldview. In other words, a primary intervener can enact an attention intervention to encourage or discourage the acceptance of a different interpretation of an experience. What activates this mechanism is usually an *anomaly* arising out of the incomplete nature of ideology. The RSI model poses that ideology is always incomplete; subscribers of an ideology will encounter *anomalies* or *experiences that violate ideological expectancies* (Opt and Gring 72). An anomaly occurs, for example, when the gender hierarchy in the current social system violates the societal expectancy of who women can become or what they can accomplish. That is, the expectancy in the contemporary world (or, at least, in a supposedly modernized country) would be that women

can be more than sexual partners and mothers; they can be more than inferior matrons of the harem and hold other positions than the ones assigned to them in an Orientalist vision of the harem (i.e., concubine, favorite, wife, mother, etc). In the Turkish case, media portrayals of historical Turkish women in subordinate positions violate the expectancy regarding women's equal status in ancient Turkish tribes as well as in Turkish communities that existed on the verge of the Ottoman Empire's establishment (Çubukçu).

Once an intervener identifies such an *anomaly* in portrayals of women, they could then enact an *attention intervention* to *foreground* the ignored aspects of womanhood (e.g., intelligence, leadership, etc) and try to reason with viewers that women are capable of holding more diverse and powerful roles in society. Indeed, that is what the *primary intervener* – the producer and the first writer of *Resurrection* – Mehmet Bozdağ appears to be doing. Bozdağ is a filmmaker who used to work also as a historical researcher for Turkey's Ministry of Culture and Tourism ("Mehmet"). Hence, one can even say that his links with the government adds another layer of significance to his agency for an attention switch regarding women's place in society – as it can operate not only at the public but also at the political level. Together with his team of writers (including both men and women), Bozdağ enacts an *attention intervention* which *foregrounds* powerful qualities of women by reidentifying their social roles in *Resurrection*.

Women appear to enact four roles or social identities in *Resurrection* (all of which in some way defy the typical historical portrayals of Turkish women): *advisors*, *leaders*, *friends/peers*, and *warriors*. The next sections present some examples of the cases in which women enact these roles. While all seasons of *Resurrection* (three, as of the date of writing this article) are replete with such examples, this essay focuses on women's portrayals in the first season of the series—a season that establishes *Resurrection*'s tone towards women through the

following main female characters (in the order of their appearance below): Selcan Hatun (Ertuğrul's sister-in-law), Mother Hayme (Ertuğrul's mother), Halime (first a refugee and then an adopted tribal girl, Ertuğrul's love interest, and future wife), Aykız (an unmarried tribal girl and a prominent tribal soldier Turgut's fiancée), and Gökçe (an unmarried tribal girl and Selcan Hatun's younger sister).

Women as Advisors

Women in *Resurrection* are portrayed as advisors—not just of women but also of men; women are heard by the tribal men, and women's guidance is taken into serious consideration. This portrayal could actually be seen as a classic one in many historical television serials (e.g., *The Magnificent Century* or *The Tudors*), where we see similar representations of women (e.g., the sultan's or king's favorite/wife) trying to influence a male ruler (e.g., sultan, king, etc) on political matters. But, in those cases, women should usually act very subtly—because the favorite/wife, just like everybody else, is considered to be a slave with no authority in political decision-making. In one of the very first scenes of *Resurrection*'s pilot episode, however, we see Selcan Hatun (one of the tribal women and Ertuğrul's sister-in-law) directly advising her husband, Gündoğdu (Ertuğrul's brother) – a prominent tribal man and potential chief to the Kayi Tribe – on his future plans for the tribe (see Figure 1).



Figure 1: Selcan Hatun advising her husband in Episode 1.¹

As Gündoğdu enthusiastically shows his wife a rare map (retrieved from an unknown source) of some relatively wealthier states and emirates, appearing to have unrevealed plans involving those places, Selcan Hatun says: “Never mind the palaces of the Sultans and Emirs!” She then continues to advise her husband to avoid getting too ambitious with his life goals and going after too much power; she tells him to focus on the current needs of the tribe instead (i.e., the winter is coming, and the nomadic tribe needs to find a home, a conducive living environment to migrate). In other mediated popular culture texts depicting Turkish/Ottoman women of the later time periods, women could never address a prominent man in society with such directness; any such attempt to tell a prominent man what to do (or not to do) with his life or where to channel his energy would be considered a violation of masculine authority. In the scene mentioned above, however, Gündoğdu listens without protest, acknowledging his wife’s say on matters of the state.



Figure 2: Mother Hayme advising Ertuğrul in Episode 1.

In Figure 2, we see Ertuğrul in conversation with his mother, whom the tribe calls *Mother Hayme*, where she is also acting as an advisor by providing Ertuğrul with some perspective on a troubling situation he was said to bring upon the tribe (as claimed by Ertuğrul's brother and some other tribal members). In this particular case, the tribal dissent follows one of the very first storylines that begins in the first episode, where Ertuğrul and his three men (each of whom Turkish tribes name as an *alp*, meaning a strong, heroic fighter) go hunting on a typical day. While trying to hunt a deer, Ertuğrul encounters a group of knights—who are later identified as *Tapınak Şovalyeleri* or the Knights Templars, an order of medieval knights that existed for two centuries during the crusades. The previous scenes show the knights holding a kidnapped family consisting of a father, his teenage son, and his daughter (who is a young woman) as prisoners in a cage; the family members are being transported to an unknown location, which (from the dialogues) could be the Seljuks Palace—since the family appears to be Seljuks descendents and will be used as part of the Knights Templars' secret dealings with the Seljuks Sultan. The family of three is kept in dire conditions with scarce food and water and without clean clothing or ability to care for any personal needs. They also believe the Seljuks Sultan will kill them as the

father is considered to pose a threat to the Sultan's throne. In an effort to run for their lives, the family makes a failed attempt to escape the knights. Ertuğrul happens upon the knights as they are getting ready to assault the family in retaliation. Together with his *Alps*, Ertuğrul fights for the family, rescues them from the knights, and offers to bring the family to his camp—especially because the father is critically injured and needs medical care. After some resistance out of her post-traumatic stress, the rescued young woman prisoner—named Halime—accepts Ertuğrul's offer, and the camp becomes the family's refuge.

It is right after this point that the camp also becomes a target for a series of outside attacks, allegedly tied to the disgruntled Knights Templars. In the face of an entire tribe opposing Ertuğrul's decision to provide refuge to the Seljuks family, endangering the tribal people's lives, Ertuğrul has a talk with his mother about his conundrum. Mother Hayme acknowledges that Ertuğrul has played with the fire but also reassures him that he has done the right thing by protecting the family, when she says: "There's fire, it burns the bread, turns it into coal; and then there's fire, it bakes the bread. You have no right to rebel, neither does the tribe. This is a test. You can either turn to coal, or be baked. So, pay no heed neither to the delusions inside you, nor the presumptuous people in the tribe. Be a soldier of our traditions, son!"

Women as Leaders

Figure 3: Mother Hayme as acting tribal leader.

Women are also portrayed as leaders in *Resurrection*. Figure 3 depicts a scene where Mother Hayme serves as the acting leader of the tribe, when the then tribal chief Suleyman Shah goes away to take care of a conflict with another tribe. Although Mother Hayme and the Chief have four sons, two of whom are currently ready (per their age and geographical location) to lead the Kayi Tribe, it is not even in question to appoint the men to the position of Chief in the absence of Suleyman Shah; as long as she is alive and capable of ruling, Mother Hayme has the full privilege and responsibilities of the tribal leader position.



Figure 4: Mother Hayme speaks to tribal members to stop an attack on a refugee tent (Episode 4).

In the absence of Chief Suleyman Shah, Mother Hayme ensures the social order in the tribe, for example, in a crisis situation such as the one depicted in Figure 4. In this case, a group of tribal people attempts to violently protest hosting the previously mentioned refugee family by booing and stoning Halime's tent. Having noticed the unrest, Mother Hayme intervenes to stop the people, commanding: "Enough! Enough! What do you think you're doing, huh?" Various men from the group protests:

"Our sons die (in armed conflicts to protect the refugees from outside attackers) because of [this family], Mother Hayme!"

"The Caravan has been attacked! And you haven't even told us!"

Mother Hayme responds, relying on the authority trusted on the Chief and herself: "You trample our tradition (of having to provide refuge for the oppressed) and our Chief's decisions, huh? Shame on you!"

While men acknowledge the leadership, they continue protesting their leader's approach to the refugee situation: "Enough is enough, Mother Hayme! Tradition, you say—but how many more of our own will die? Where are our sons?" A woman from the group also speaks up in a

disdaining tone: "It was my son who died, Mother Hayme! Not yours!" Mother Hayme, then, raises her voice to address the agitated crowd—she takes a pause to emphasize each and every sentence that effectively alludes to her authoritative position:

All members of this tribe are my children—they are my heart. The tribe stands when there is unity. If this unity is broken, we will set ourselves for defeat against the enemy, and perish. [...] If you try to trample our tradition, you too will be crushed one day.

Hence, Mother Hayme enacts her leadership to prevent the tribal men from attacking the refugees, emphasizing that the tribe's problem in this case is not the family who has taken the tribal camp as a refuge; it is the tribe's ability to stand in unity regardless of any circumstances, as what will protect the tribal people from outsiders' attacks is the tribal unity. Furthermore, Mother Hayme dares the tribe to attack the refugees again, identifying herself—the tribal leader—with the outsiders who took refuge in the tribe: "From now on, whoever throws a stone at them [the refugees], has thrown a stone at me! Whoever is against them, is against me!"

Having said her final word on the situation, Mother Hayme enters Halime's tent in a fury, grabs and throws away the sword that a scared Halime appears to hold in her hand waiting on her toes to protect herself, and drags Halime out of the tent breaking into the crowd waiting outside of the tent. People automatically pull to the side and respectfully give both women the way. As Mother Hayme and Halime leave the scene, they are immediately followed and escorted by two tribal soldiers, a man and a woman, ready to protect Mother Hayme as the tribal leader. Finally, the people return to their daily business, meekly accepting Mother Hayme's authority in the situation. In this manner, Mother Hayme demonstrates her power to stop the tribal members – either men or women – from doing something that she deems unacceptable.



Figure 5: Halime tells Ertuğrul about Mother Hayme's leadership skills in the absence of the Alps.

In Figure 5, we see Halime (the young woman refugee that Mother Hayme protected from the tribal people, who later becomes Ertuğrul's love interest, his future wife, and the mother of Osman) praising Mother Hayme's leadership skills (Episode 4). In reference to Hayme's protection against the tribal members' attack of her tent, Halime says: "You [Ertuğrul and the alps, prominent tribal soldiers] weren't here, of course... but Chief's wife, all the warriors' mother, Mother Hayme stood up to them (the rebels in the camp) like a mountain." In a sense, Mother Hayme's show of power also functions as a lesson of leadership in action for Halime, as Halime will also be supposed to serve in that capacity in the future. (And Halime indeed starts showing her knowledge and skills in tribal leadership by the show's third season that started airing in October 2016, when she herself becomes the then Chief's/Ertuğrul's wife.)

Women as Friends/Peers

Figure 6: *Aykız and the Alps (tribal men) teasing each other on a typical day in the camp.*

Women are also portrayed as friends/peers of men in *Resurrection* – another example indicating their equality – which is indeed significant, especially for an at once traditional and religious context such as this Muslim-Turkish tribe (as *Resurrection* depicts a time period that is a few centuries after Turkish tribes' conversion to Islam, a process that started in the 8th century). In the later depictions of Turkish/Ottoman women (as in the show, *The Magnificent Century*), women's movement is usually restricted to private places. Women living in the Ottoman Palace are required to stay within the harem quarters and cannot mingle with men outside of those boundaries, whereas the lay public women's place is their home and they are encouraged not to leave unless they really have to (e.g., for an emergency or occasional shopping for their essentials). In *Resurrection*, women are free to roam the tribal camp and mingle with tribal men—of course, given that they are all dressed modestly and stay within certain traditional boundaries (e.g., subtle flirting with a love interest or casual conversations with a tribal man or a woman are acceptable, while any interactions of sexualized manner are not). In Figure 6, for example, we see one of the tribal girls and main characters, Aykız hanging out with some of the

prominent tribal *Alps*—from left, Bamsı Beyrek, Doğan Alp, and Turgut Alp—on a typical day in the tribal camp (Episode 1). The men are playing a game that involves racing each other. Upon making it to the finish line, they start quarreling about who won, where Turgut calls for consulting Aykız as a referee. Bamsı Beyrek sarcastically protests this idea by saying that Aykız would of course declare Turgut a winner because she is his lover. Aykız banters with Bamsı: “Have a heart, Bamsı Beyrek! When did I ever lie?” Meanwhile, Doğan teases Bamsı by stroking his head, and Bamsı responds by grumbling: “Don’t do that! I told you not to do that!” In this manner, they keep teasing each other and hanging out casually without any social restrictions on their friendly interactions.



Figure 7: Male visitors of the tribe (an Islamic spiritual leader and his male assistant) visit the tribal girls, Aykız and Gökçe, in the women’s chambers.

In another scene shown in Figure 7, we see male visitors of the tribe – an Islamic spiritual leader and his male assistant – visiting the tribal girls, Aykız and Gökçe, in the women’s chambers. The visitors are there to provide the girls with emotional support for their current misfortunes (i.e., their significant others are missing due to war). First, in the later depictions of

Ottoman women (or even in current reality in more traditional parts of Turkey), it is considered inappropriate for any man to visit women in the women's chambers; yet, that seems to be perfectly acceptable in *Resurrection*. Second, as seen in Figure 7, men seem to have no problem sitting below women's level—even if one of the men hold a highly esteemed religious/spiritual leadership position; this is highly unlikely in later depictions of women's physical position in relation to men—especially men of certain prominence in society (where women are even expected to greet the prominent man by bowing to him and waiting for permission to speak and act).

Women as Warriors



Figure 8: Image promoting Episode 8 of Resurrection Ertuğrul—posted on the show's official Facebook page.

In *Resurrection*, women are also portrayed as warriors who are ready to go after their men to save them from dire situations, for example, when tribal men fall captive. In episode 8, Aykız reacts to news that Alp Turgut (her fiance) is imprisoned in the Knights Templars' castle as follows: “if my man is alive, it is my job to bring him back!” Figure 8 shows a promotional

image posted on the show's official Facebook page depicting the unfolding situation. In the bottom center of the image is a helpless Turgut. Aykız is shooting an arrow, symbolically aligned with the castle and which she indeed shot towards the castle in the original episode in order to send a threatening sign to the knights therein. The following dialogue among Aykız, the Chief, Gökçe, and Mother Hayme takes place before Aykız sets off to rescue Turgut, as they contemplate about how to bring back (and who will bring back) their missing soldiers:

Aykız: "I will go! Of course, if you let me, Chief."

Suleyman Shah (Ertuğrul's father, then the Tribal Chief): "We don't know what's going on in Aleppo (where the soldiers are). It is inappropriate to send you to the unknown."

Aykız: "You know better, Chief, but they wouldn't perceive a wanderer girl as a threat."

Gökçe: "If you let me, I want to go with Aykız, too! We can watch each other's back."

Mother Hayme (slowly nods in approval): "When the situation calls for it, the Kayi women know how to be as brave and as strong warriors as the Kayi men."

Aykız's claim that "they (those in Aleppo) wouldn't perceive a wanderer girl as a threat" implies that people outside of the Turkish tribe do not expect women to be warriors, that this is something unique to this Turkish community. Mother Hayme's words are not only a testament to the Kayi women as portrayed in *Resurrection*, but they also hold true for women's agency in situations that called for defense or armed conflict in many historical Turkish tribes.

Indeed, women in *Resurrection* are not part of an entirely fictionalized vision. Of course, some of the female characters such as Aykız and Gökçe are made up, while Mother Hayme and Halime were real persons who were Ertuğrul Ghazi's mother and wife, respectively. Yet, the portrayals of all of these women's abilities in advising, leading, and fighting or women's

treatment as men's peers and equal partners in society are based on the actual Turkish history, adding further value and credibility to *Resurrection's attention intervention*.

According to historical records, Turkish women knew how to hunt for sustenance and were trained in archery and using a sword, ready to fight their way through armed conflicts and ward off outside threats (Çubukcu). Furthermore, the 8th-century Orkhon Inscriptions also emphasize the leadership role assigned to women. The Orkhon Inscriptions refer to a several-part text – which deliberates on Turks' sociopolitical situation in the 8th century – inscribed on different sides of a monument by the Göktürks in the Orkhon valley of Mongolia. The inscriptions include verses suggesting that God (*Tengri*) assigns both the Kagan/Hakan (the male ruler) and his wife – *Hatun* or *Katun* – to protect and govern the Turkic nation (Bilge Kagan, East Side: 10 and 21). The *Hatun* had administrative privileges in the Turkic states and was entitled to precede meetings on behalf of the *Hakan*; any legal settlements made by the *Hakan* would not be considered final and official without the *Hatun's* seal (Korkmaz 65). By *foregrounding* the strong agency, skills, and characteristics of womanhood that allude to this history, *Resurrection* is enacting an *attention intervention* to symbolically resurrect women from the historical ideal of the Kayi Tribe and restore their “equal” place in Turkish society.

Discussion

This essay focused on the portrayal of women in the Turkish television series, *Resurrection*. With all its neo-Ottomanism catering to a conservative Turkish audience, the series still seems to revive a part of the Turkish tradition that grants women with a prominent role in social affairs. William R. Brown “rhetoric of social intervention” model helps us see *Resurrection's* portrayal of women as an *attention intervention*, which *foregrounds* the overlooked abilities of women as equals in society.

According to RSI, an awareness of an *anomaly* necessitates a shift; in the case of *Resurrection*, an *attention* shift takes place from the portrayal of women as “inferior matrons of the harem” to “equal partners” of men. The producer (the primary intervener, Mehmet Bozdağ) and writers of *Resurrection* *intervene* and try to *rhetorically reason with* viewers that the actions in the typical portrayal of Turkish or Ottoman women do not fit the roles attributed to them in actual Turkish history. This intervention recovers an older Turkish tradition which calls for a treatment of women as “equal partners” and attempts to inspire Turkey with a historical ideal of Turkish society where women are capable of holding men’s roles as effectively as men do. On the whole, *Resurrection’s attention intervention* addresses an *anomaly* with a potential to change contemporary Turks’ interpretation of gender hierarchy in society. Given the producer’s apparent or speculated links with the current Turkish government and the fact that the show airs on a state-owned television channel, the show’s potential agency for change can also serve as an opportunity for the government to reinterpret and reshape its “conservative” image (which would typically be expected to limit women’s social roles to wives, mothers, etc).

RSI helps us understand how the systemic *naming* in this process can potentially reconstitute a worldview—that reidentifying women’s social roles (as *advisors, leaders, peers, and warriors*) *foregrounds* powerful qualities of womanhood to help shape and reshape people’s worldview about women’s place in society. As per the rhetorical power of popular culture explicated by scholars like Deanna Sellnow, television shows such as *Resurrection* – by subverting an inferiorizing view of women that can result in violence, gender gap in economic, political, and social measures, and any other types of gender discrimination – can have a significant potential to change individuals’ worldview and real-life behavior towards women.

At the opening of each *Resurrection* episode, audiences are informed that the show is inspired by true Turkish history. The emphasis on this information – in and of itself – serves as an *attention intervention*; that is, as *Resurrection* portrays a triumphant history that the Turkish people could draw inspiration from (e.g., Kayi people's heroic resistance to the "enemy"), it also symbolically restores women's place in a historical and traditional Turkish society—this symbolism can have potential perceptual and behavioral results for equal treatment of women in contemporary Turkey. Given its premise of historical accuracy, *Resurrection* can also grant contemporary Turkish women a historical and, ironically, a traditional reference point, which can help further justify their current efforts for equal treatment.



Figure 9: Alp Turgut tells Ertuğrul about Kayi women's warrior skills.

A woman viewer's reaction to a screenshot of a scene (Figure 9) posted on the show's official Facebook page is meaningful as it helps to glean how *Resurrection's attention intervention* can begin to influence people's perception of the gender hierarchy, in this case, by empowering contemporary Turkish women to trust their capabilities in the face of adversity. The screenshot features Alp Turgut in conversation with Ertuğrul after the Mongols start attacking to

conquer Anatolia (based on the true history of the 13th century), massacring everyone on their way. The image was captioned with Alp Turgut's following lines: "They (the Mongols) used their sword against even women and children, Chief! They thought that our women would surrender. But our women fought back just like any other *alp* (soldier)." Nurcan Bicer publicly commented on the posting: "We are Turkish women, Alp Turgut! By God's grace, we can both rock a cradle and rock the world, too" (September 23, 2015).

Finally, the *attention intervention* in *Resurrection* could serve as a model for other television serials – either with a historical or contemporary focus – in the Turkish or other contexts with a problematic perception of women's place in society. In addition, since as of the date of writing this article *Resurrection* is preparing to air its fourth season on TRT, it can further utilize the latitude it has for character development and drama related to women in a way to harness the show's potential in restoring and maintaining women's equal status in Turkish society—as well as other societies (where *Resurrection* has aired or will air) that might follow the lead.

Note

1. All images used in this essay are screenshots from *Resurrection* episodes available at the show's official website, dirilisdizisi.com (Figures 1-7) or downloaded from the show's official Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/Dirilisdizisi> (Figures 8-9).

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