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Author: Adak Turan, Sevgi
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Chapter 1
Introduction

One summary day in the early 2000s, in my mother’s hometown Güney, a small district in the province of Denizli in Turkey’s Aegean region, I was sitting in the garden of our house and listening to the conversation between my grandmother and her niece, who was only two years younger than her. My grandmother’s niece complained about the regular pain she had in her leg, saying that she had been suffering from it since the day she fell down and injured her leg while trying to escape from a gendarmerie soldier when she was a teenager. My grandmother seemed to know the incident and showed no significant reaction; it would pass as a small detail in their conversation had I not intervened and asked the reason why she had to run away from the soldier.

She answered that the gendarmerie had tried to stop her in the street because she was wearing the local peştamal veil. “The peştamal was banned in Güney those days,” she said, referring to the late 1930s and early 1940s; but nevertheless, her father would not allow her to go out without wearing it.

I was surprised. To me, the peştamal was an ordinary, local cloth; I have known it as the main outdoor veil of women in Güney since my childhood. In fact, it was still common among older women at the time of this conversation; my grandmother, her niece and other women from their generation would wear it while going out. Why would the peştamal be banned? Who banned it and how? If it was banned, and if this ban was put into practice by force to the extent that the gendarmerie was employed in its implementation, then how did the peştamal survive this ban for decades? More striking, perhaps, was that in the literature on early Republican Turkey, it has been argued that although the Kemalist single-party regime (1923-1945) celebrated a new, “modern” Turkish woman and thus generally “discouraged”

1 Peştamal is a local fabric veil that has been used especially by rural women. Its color and pattern are different in different regions. In Güney, for example, it is composed of two rectangular pieces of cloth: a black and white plaid veil to cover the head and the upper body, and a red cloth with black stripes on it to be wrapped around the waist to cover the lower body.
veiling, there was no direct state intervention on women’s clothing. The standard comparison was with the aggressive attitude of the regime in changing men’s clothing: while there was a law banning the wearing of the fez and other traditional men’s headgears, there was no law banning women’s veils. In all major works on the period, we had read that women’s clothing was not regulated by the state, apart from the clothing of those women who were state officials. How could one understand this gap between the literature and the real life experiences of ordinary people in the periphery of the country?

This anecdote and the questions it raised continued to occupy my mind as I read more about the single-party era. As the formative years of the Turkish Republic, this period has been analyzed as an era of authoritarian modernization, characterized by some very radical reforms that were formulated by the ruling elite and imposed on the society in a top-down manner. Usually characterized as “modernization from above,” the Kemalist experience has been studied through a state-centered approach, preoccupied with the high politics of the political elite. As a result, the historiography of early republican Turkey has been heavily built on the analysis of the intellectual inspirations, ideological underpinnings and the political discourse of the regime elite, particularly placing Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his vision, ideas and “projects” at the center. The tendency to analyze a process dominated and shaped by Mustafa Kemal and the elites within his close political circle was not limited to those works that follow the Kemalist interpretations of the era. Studies that were critical of such interpretations also focus primarily on the doings of the regime as they could be followed in Ankara, and thus predominantly confined to the sphere of political history.²

The change in the theoretical frameworks through which the single-party era has been analyzed since the 1960s could hardly make a difference in terms of shifting the focus away from the state and the elite. Major works on modern Ottoman/Turkish history were written following the assumptions of modernization theory.³ In the narratives of the modernization process built on


this theory, the state appears as an autonomous institution controlled by the modernizing elite and it is seen as the main agent of social change. Prominent scholars of modern Turkey, such as Bernard Lewis and Niyazi Berkes, whose works remain among the best accounts of Ottoman/Turkish modernization, tend to present the republican state as the driving force in the formation of a modern Turkish society, which is a process seen as the logical result of the modernizing efforts put forward by the Kemalist modernizers’ Ottoman antecedents. Another set of works, framed by what comes to be called “the strong state approach,” also continued, even reinforced, this central place of the state in modern Turkish history. Accordingly, the Turkish state was a strong state, a polity with a strong state tradition historically inherited from the Ottoman Empire. This state tradition is defined by Özbudun in the following way: “a strong and centralized state, reasonably effective by the standards of its day, highly autonomous of societal forces, and occupying a central and highly valued place in Ottoman political culture.” Within this framework, the society appears as weak and predominantly passive or unimportant compared to this highly autonomous strong state. Even those approaches that were more sociologically oriented and emerged as a critique of the modernization school, such as the center-periphery analysis of Şerif Mardin, did not go beyond this dualism and, actually, contributed to the reproduction of the state-society dichotomy. Although the social actors, “the periphery,” was given more agency in this analysis, the distinction between the state and society as fixed entities positioned in opposition to each other remained intact and the Kemalist reforms were largely analyzed based on the ideology of the elite. For example, Mardin claimed that “the meaning of


5 For a classical example of this approach, see Metin Heper, *The State Tradition in Turkey*, Beverley: Eothen Press, 1985.


[Kemalist] laicism as a project is best highlighted not by a description of its practice but by its relation to the primordial goals of the republican regime.”

In fact, approaching state-society relations in oppositional terms, the center-periphery analysis differed from the classical analysis of the Kemalist regime in emphasizing its failure in transforming the society based on a secular ideology. In other words, the authoritarian Kemalist state had failed to change the predominantly conservative society through its radical secular reforms, as the Muslim identity had remained strong and returned to fulfill the vacuum created by the single-party regime.9

The predominance of the state-centered and elite-centered perspectives, and the salience of state-society dichotomy in the literature have important implications. I argue that the dominant theoretical frameworks in the study of the single-party era briefly outlined above fail to reveal the complexity of the socio-historical reality on the ground. They underestimate the readiness of the state actors to negotiate and compromise with the dominant practices and structures in the society, and the tendency of the societal actors to tackle the reform processes in various and quite creative ways. In the literature, the role of non-state elite actors in the society, such as religious leaders or local notables, are either largely neglected or incorporated into the analysis as forces of “traditional” opposition.10 The Kemalist regime is portrayed as completely detached and alienated from the “people” (halk), imagined to be composed of uneducated, highly religious and conservative, poor masses. Within this rigid dichotomy, the regime vs. the halk, there is little

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9 See Şerif Mardin, Din ve İdeoloji, Istanbul: İletişim, 1992. For an article explaining the resurgence of political Islam in the 1980s based on this line of thinking, see Fuat Keyman, “Modernity, Secularism and Islam: The Case of Turkey,” Theory, Culture & Society 24(2), 2007, pp. 215-234.

10 This is in fact quite a prevalent assumption in the studies dominated by the modernization paradigm, since the history of non-Western countries has been seen as a struggle between the forces of modernity and tradition. For a critique of this assumption in the case of the Middle East, see Stephanie Cronin, “Introduction,” in Subalterns and Social Protest: History from Below in the Middle East and North Africa, Stephanie Cronin (ed.), London: Routledge, 2008, pp. 1-22. In the case of Turkey, exceptional here are the works by İsmail Beşikçi that focus on the relationship of the state with the Kurdish notables without falling into the trap of such established dichotomies. See his Doğu Anadolu’nun Düzeni: Sosyo-ekonomik ve Etnik Temeller, Istanbul: E Yayınları, 1969; Cumhuriyet Halk Firkası’nın Tüzüğü (1927) ve Kürt Sorunu, Ankara: Komal Yayınevi, 1979; and Cumhuriyet Halk Firkası’nın Programı (1931) ve Kürt Sorunu, Istanbul: Belge, 1991.
room to acknowledge the multiplicity of actors and discourses in all levels, and the complexity of their interactions. The role lower-level elites played in the way the regime functioned, for example, does not receive enough attention, and the fact that a considerable number of people were involved in Kemalist policies, supported them and shaped them in critical ways is overlooked. The non-elite groups and subordinated sectors of the society, namely, the experiences of the ordinary people, have almost been totally ignored. The field of social history of modern Turkey, particularly of the single-party era, is much poorer compared to the field of political history.

This has resulted in an unbalanced analysis: we know a great deal about the visions of the Kemalist elite, their ideological tenets and motivations, and the main frameworks of the reforms and policies formulated by them, but we know little about how these reforms and policies were implemented, how the main political and ideological parameters drawn in Ankara traveled to the provinces and translated into the daily mechanisms and conducts of the state, and how they entered the everyday life of ordinary citizens and were consumed by the individuals and communities. In other words, “the meeting ground of the fact and fiction” in Kemalist modernization, the encounter and interaction between the power of the modernizing state, and the limits of and myths about that power remain largely unexamined.

These questions can be addressed by a change in our perspective, in theoretical frameworks and conceptual tools we use to understand state-society relations. In this direction, one can draw upon ideas and inspirations from a number of theoretical and methodological debates. One of them is the theoretical break put forward by the critical historiography of the “history from below” school and the subaltern studies. Emerging out of a critical engagement with Marxist conceptual categories of social history and a

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11 Zürcher briefly touches on the lack of the attention in literature on the those educated sectors of the society who in fact supported the regime: “the Kemalist leadership did inspire a great many people – mostly writers, teachers, doctors and other professionals and students – with its vision of a modern, secular, independent Turkey. These people, who saw themselves as an elite, with a mission to guide their ignorant compatriots, often worked very hard and with great personal sacrifice for their ideals. This ‘noblesse oblige’ attitude of the Kemalist elite is something that modern revisionist writers of the right and the left tend to overlook.” Erik J. Zürcher, Turkey: A Modern History, London: I.B. Tauris, 2004[1993], p. 181.
Gramscian intellectual agenda, both came as a challenge against traditional elitist perspectives, emphasizing the agency of the subaltern classes and the historical experience of the common people.\textsuperscript{14} The call for grassroots by the “history from below” tradition aimed at bringing back the common people, especially the working class, as actors of their own history.\textsuperscript{15} Likewise, in addressing the history of postcolonial South Asia, subalternist historians aimed to “rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work in this particular field.”\textsuperscript{16} In addition to the critique of elite-centered narratives, another major contribution of the subaltern studies school was their challenge to Eurocentrism, which opened the way to investigate the non-Western pathways to modernity and to rewrite the history of the modernization process in non-Western societies by analyzing the politics and agency of the societal actors.\textsuperscript{17}

Another theoretical source for drawing an alternative understanding of state-society interaction can be derived from the literature on relational sociology.\textsuperscript{18} In this approach, critical concepts of social theory, such as power and agency, are redefined as concepts referring to a relationship. Therefore, agency cannot be separable from the dynamics of situations. The situatedness of agency within the structure should not be ignored; agency and structure reproduce and transform one another through this interaction. Accordingly, structure cannot be equated with constraint only; “it is always both constraining and enabling.”\textsuperscript{19} This also necessitates a redefinition of the state in a relational manner, and more specifically, a rethinking of the state-society divide. Recently flourishing literature on the anthropology of the state and the theoretical approaches behind it can be quite helpful in this regard. These


approaches, derive from theorists like Gramsci and Foucault and formulated by scholars like Philip Abrams and Timothy Mitchell, seek to go beyond the understanding of the state as a clearly bounded, autonomous institution that is distinct from the society. Rather, they try to “reconceptualize the state within other institutional forms through which social relations are lived.”

In this understanding, the state-society boundary is not a fixed, but an elusive one. This, however, does not mean to erase the distinction altogether, nor it means to conceptualize the state as a pure social construct. “The state cannot be dismissed as an abstraction or ideological construct and passed over in favor of more real, material realities.” Rather, it means that it is necessary to revise the dominant understanding of the state-society relations in oppositional terms, and as a unidirectional interaction, formed and dominated by the state.

Anthropological perspectives to state-society relations contribute also to our understanding of how people perceive the state through their own experience of encounter with the state in their localities. The interaction between the state officials and common people in local contexts is essential to understanding how the state manifests itself in everyday life. This reminds us the significance of the micro in studying the macro; the critical role that “the micropolitics of state work,” namely, how the state operates in daily lives and plays a role in the making of larger processes. It also suggests that it is this encounter in the local context through which people create their own means to cope with these larger processes. As Sharma and Gupta suggest,

> Everyday statist encounters not only shape people’s imagination of what the state is and how it is demarcated, but also enable people to devise strategies of resistance to this imagined state. Those who are subjects or targets of state programs, and thus ‘outside’ bureaucracies, learn to use the very same techniques that lower-level state agents use to sabotage official mandates and orders.

In grasping the strategies of common people in tackling the state, James Scott’s conception of the “everyday forms of resistance” can be illuminating. According to Scott, the most significant difference of everyday

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22 Sharma and Gupta, 2006, p. 17.
resistance is “its implicit disavowal of public and symbolic goals” and its avoidance of direct confrontation with the authority, interested largely in immediate, de facto gains. Everyday forms of resistance are shaped by the form of control and domination. In other words, each form of control is likely “to generate its own distinctive form of quiet resistance and counterappropriation.” By the same token, different ways in which the societal actors respond to control and domination bring along different state policies in response. The crucial point is that whatever the response, the resistance of the common people changes or narrows the policy options available to the state. Therefore, it is this interplay that determines the outcome of state-society interaction, and of the processes that are shaped by this interaction.

Perhaps Joel Migdal’s state-in-society approach is one that most directly deals with the question of how to understand state-society relations beyond a dichotomous view. Having emerged as a part of the Weberian literature on state and state-society relations, the state-in-society approach shares the assumptions regarding the analytical separation of state and society and the significance of states as agents of change. However, it diverges from the state-oriented approaches in critical ways and thus offers valuable insights to maintain a more balanced perspective in analyzing state-society interaction and social change. One of the main pillars of this balanced perspective is an understanding of state as an agent situated in a certain social setting (thus “state-in-society”) and susceptible to the influence of social forces. In other words, the state-in-society approach is a critique of seeing state as the fulcrum of the process of domination and change, as a force capable of shaping people’s lives entirely. In contrast, it maintains that state is by no means the only force that matters, and not even the central one: “societies affect states as much as, or possibly more than, states affect societies.” In this sense, state autonomy and effectiveness are always constrained, and even in countries

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24 Scott, 1985, p. 36.
27 Ibid., p. 2.
with authoritarian regimes, the reach of state is more limited than it is usually assumed.

The concept of a state’s “autonomy” is often an illusion and helps explain very little; a state’s apparent disconnectedness from social groups turns out to be associated in some cases with “strength” (as in some rapidly industrializing countries) and in other cases with “weakness” (as in several African countries). We suggest instead that a state’s relative effectiveness is a function of the varied forms in which state-society relations are interwoven.  

As an implication of such an understanding of state, the second pillar of state-in-society approach is an emphasis on the process of interaction between the state and social forces, “on the ongoing struggles among shifting coalitions over the rules for daily behavior.” This implies a change in focus, from the center of state power to periphery, from the peak institutions of the state to its diffuse parts. Rather than clear-cut boundaries, the state-in-society approach sees blurred and constantly changing boundaries between the state and the society, and it is in the study of these boundaries, these junctures of encounter, conflict, negotiation and compromise we can better evaluate the state power and its effectiveness, and the power of the societal dynamics and the extent of social change. In such an analysis, just like the state, the social forces are also contingent on empirical conditions. The state and the society are mutually transformative, and, thus, the outcome of their interaction is rarely predictable. By referring to Scott’s analysis of the failures of state plans in *Seeing Like a State*, Migdal claims that “state policy implementation and the outcomes in society have ended up quite different from the state’s original blueprints. Even the boldest state plans, as Scott has demonstrated in his discussion of the designs of modernism, can turn into disastrous follies.” This is why the state-in-society approach suggests that in order to understand the processes of domination and change, we should analyze the “practices” of the state while also recognizing the “image” of the state, that is, “a clearly bounded, unified organization that can be spoken of singular terms.” In other

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28 Migdal, Kohli and Shue, 1994, p. 3.
29 Migdal, 2001, p. 11.
30 Migdal, Kohli and Shue, 1994, p. 3.
words, the state is also composed of “the practices of a heap of loosely connected parts and fragments, frequently with ill-defined boundaries between them and other groupings inside and outside the official state borders and often promoting conflicting sets of rules with one another and with ‘official’ law.”

Migdal’s state-in-society approach proved particularly inspiring for studying authoritarian regimes and developing countries. It has also been noted in some recent studies as being useful for analyzing the Turkish case. In fact, Migdal himself commented on the Turkish experience of modernization. He indicated that to understand the social transformation initiated by the Kemalist regime, one should look at the “effects” of the modernity project and these effects “can be found not in an examination of elites and their institutions exclusively, nor in a focus solely on the poor or marginal groups of society, but on those physical and social spaces the two intersect.”

Recently, a new body of literature on modern Turkey, which is inspired by these theoretical insights and turns the focus away from Ankara and the central elite, has begun to flourish. Diverse in their focus, methods and sources, these works nevertheless share a similar perspective. Though in varying degrees, they are all concerned about examining the dynamics of the state-society relations, restoring the agency of people as social actors, and looking at the everyday politics of modernization as a relational process. Meeker’s anthropological work, for instance, ascertained the ways in which the Turkish state was embedded in the local society and how this embeddedness remained basically intact in transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic. New sources were analyzed to shed more light on the mechanisms though which the agents of the state encountered the society. For example, in his article on the petitions received by the secretary-general of the Republican People’s Party (RPP), the party that ruled Turkey for two decades until the transition to multi-party system in 1945, Akın analyzed these documents to understand “the intricate web of discursive and

32 Migdal, 2001, p. 22.
33 For a recent study that draws on Migdal’s approach and looks at the gap between what the state planned to achieve and what it actually could achieve in the Kurdish provinces in early republic, see Senem Aslan, “Everyday Forms of State Power and the Kurds in the Early Turkish Republic,” International Journal of Middle East Studies 43(1), February 2011, pp. 75-93.
34 See Migdal, 1997.
practical interactions between people and representatives of state and party power.” Brockett looked at the provincial newspapers that were published immediately after the beginning of multi-party politics in 1945 to understand how the larger sectors of the society raised their voice through print media and how they challenged and negotiated the parameters of the national identity envisioned by the single-party regime in the previous era. Studies that focus on the implementation process of a particular reform enlarged our understanding of the gap between the visions and plans of the Kemalist elite in introducing that reform on the one hand, and what had actually happened in practice when the “plan” was confronted by the micro mechanisms of interaction and negotiation between the forces of the state and the society, on the other.

Drawing on the theoretical insights stemming from studies on social history, the anthropology of the state, state-society relations, everyday life and subordinated groups, and particularly, from Migdal’s state-in-society approach, this thesis is a part of and contributes to this recently flourishing body of literature on the Turkish Republic. In general terms, it is a study of state-society relations in 1930s Turkey, aiming to understand the ways in which the Kemalist policies and reforms were received, interpreted, negotiated, compromised and/or resisted by various actors in the provinces. It looks at the spaces/fields where these actors interacted, and how these interactions drew and redrew, and thus contested and blurred the boundaries that are supposed to clearly separate the state and the society. The argument is that through an analysis of these spaces of interaction, it is possible to reveal a better understanding of the actors, dynamics and complexities of the social change experienced under the Kemalist single-party regime. The space/field this study focuses on to address these questions is the regulation of women’s clothing, namely, the anti-veiling campaigns in the 1930s.

The focus of the study: Anti-Veiling Campaigns in the 1930s

Like other modernizing regimes, for the Kemalists, the importance of clothing primarily originated in the power it had on shaping identities in the public sphere. As Alev Çınar argues, clothing can be considered as “one of the most powerful tools for the display of identities due to its temporally and spatially proliferative quality,” and this quality was what concerned the Kemalist regime the most, in terms of both controlling and regulating the society and transforming it into a modern, civilized nation. The Hat Law in 1925 was perhaps the most apparent and earliest manifestation of this Kemalist concern. Regulating men’s clothing only, the law nevertheless made it explicit that one fundamental aspect of the Kemalist project of building a secular nation state was to create new, “modern” subjects who would transform the public sphere into a modern domain through their very existence. Unlike its determined will to directly intervene in men’s headgear, however, the Kemalist regime was more hesitant and reluctant to apply the same approach to women’s veiling and clothing.

The main strategy Ankara followed regarding the issue of unveiling was to transfer the matter to the local level and to encourage the local administrative bodies and their actors to deal with it. In other words, despite the fact that there was no law or decree banning women’s veiling country-wide, there were anti-veiling campaigns organized at the local level that were clearly encouraged by Ankara, but in some cases, could also stem from the local elite’s own initiatives. Thus, there was state intervention on women’s clothing in the early Turkish Republic, but it was local in character, shaped and implemented mainly by the local actors. Given the complicated involvement of Ankara in the process and its reluctant attitude swaying between promoting local efforts and limiting them, combined with the diversity of the attitudes and reactions of the local elite and the larger societal actors, the process at the local level was in fact quite complex. The local character of the anti-veiling campaigns and the lack of solid and consistent policy guidelines allowed space for discussions, negotiations and local variations, which, in the end, resulted in a complex and less radical

transformation of women’s clothing in the provinces. Moreover, although Europeanization of women’s dress was the ideal, the anti-veiling campaigns mainly aimed at the removal of the peçe (face veil) and the çarşaf and certain local equivalents of the çarşaf, such as the peştamal. The covering of the hair was never openly targeted. This limited scope of the campaigns provided certain room for women’s selective adaptation, and created possibilities of maintaining the existing dress norms, except for the use of the peçe, the çarşaf, and the peştamal.

Since veiling encompassed the whole system of seclusion of women, unveiling entailed a direct state intervention both in deeply-rooted gender codes and the private concerns of the people. As such, the example of anti-veiling campaigns offers a very rich terrain to explore the attitudes, strategies, and actions of the central state actors, local elites, and ordinary people, and the ways in which they interacted and negotiated. One additional opportunity the study of the anti-veiling campaigns provides is to see how deeply gendered these interactions and negotiations were. In other words, the analysis of the anti-veiling campaigns support the argument that the gender aspect of the social change initiated by the state elite cannot be treated as a chapter separate from other processes. As Kandiyotı emphasized, women-related issues were in fact part of an ideological terrain where broader questions, such as modernity, secularism or cultural identity were discussed, and as such, they functioned as “boundary markers” for all actors. The transformation of the gender regime appears as a field where one can observe the intersection and conflict of various discourses. Likewise, any political discourse or debate on social change had connotations for women’s social position, and for gender relations.

However, the number of studies on the anti-veiling campaigns in early republican Turkey is very limited. In fact, as stated above, even the knowledge

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41 The çarşaf is a full-body cover. It is similar to the Iranian chador, but it is either gathered at the waist or in two pieces, consisting of a long and loose skirt covering the lower body, and a veil covering the upper part of the body and the head. It is usually black, but it can be in other colors as well. Although very rare, there were even patterned ones. Although it was common to wear the çarşaf together with the peçe, the peçe was not a standard part of the çarşaf.
of state intervention in women’s veiling during the single-party era was lacking in the literature until quite recently. The first scholarly work that mentioned local bans on the peçe and the çarşaf issued by a number of municipalities and provincial councils was Bernard Caporal’s doctoral dissertation entitled “La Femme turque à travers le kémalisme et le postkémalisme (1919-1970),” which was translated into Turkish and published in 1982. Caporal, however, did not discuss these bans in any detail except for listing the dates and places of the bans he could locate. This short note mentioned by Caporal remained largely unnoticed until women’s headscarf became an issue in Turkish universities and was transformed into a matter of political controversy in the public debates in the 1980s. Those women who faced the headscarf ban in the universities became increasingly politicized. Religious women intellectuals, in particular, began to search for the historical grounds on which women’s veiling came to be linked to political debates on modernity, secularism and the public sphere in Turkey. One of those women, Cihan Aktaş, published a detailed account of the history of state intervention in clothing in the Ottoman/Turkish context based on secondary sources, in which she cited Caporal on the local bans on the peçe and the çarşaf, complemented with a few oral historical accounts. In the first major scholarly works that were published on the headscarf issue and Islamic women’s identity in the early 1990s, a discussion on the question of state intervention in women’s veiling in the early republic was still missing, apart from the emphasis on the Kemalist project of creating a modern and national Turkish womanhood.

A short but important article by Metin Çapa in Toplumsal Tarih provided the first account of the banning of the peçe in Trabzon in 1926. Another article by Hakkı Uyar enlarged Çapa’s analysis of this early banning of the peçe in Trabzon, and established that the peçe and the çarşaf had in fact

45 Caporal provides the following list of cities where there was a ban: Rize, Mersin, Trabzon, Bodrum, Adana, Antalya, Sungurlu, Zile, Konya, Afyon, Maraş, Antakya, and Hatay. Caporal’s source for this list was Sabine Dirk’s book, La Famille Musulmane Turque published in Paris in 1969.
46 Cihan Aktaş, Tanzimat'tan 12 Mart'a Kılk-Kıyafet ve İktidar, Istanbul: Kapı, 2006[1989].
became an issue in Turkey in the mid-1930s by referring to the discussion held at the RPP general congress in May 1935.\(^49\) This was a discussion on whether to enact a law banning the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* countrywide.\(^50\) Uyar had encountered a number of news items on the banning of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* in some provinces in the 1930s in a few local newspapers during his dissertation research about the provincial branches of the RPP.\(^51\) His notes based on these news items provided brief yet significant information, especially on the banning of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* in Trabzon in 1936. Uyar’s article was also encouraging for further research, since it showed that more information on the anti-veiling campaigns in 1930s Turkey could be uncovered by consulting the provincial newspapers of the time, which were sources that had been largely neglected in the literature until then.

The opening of the Prime Ministry Republican Archives (*Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi*) was a major development contributing to the emergence of a new body of literature drawing on the rich documents made available to researchers working on the early Turkish republic.\(^52\) The first article that benefited from this advantage and used a few documents from the archive of the RPP on the anti-veiling campaigns in the 1930s was Kemal Yakut’s article.\(^53\) Yakut also referred to a compilation of police documents that was published by the General Directorate of Security (*Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü*) on the occasion of the 75\(^{th}\) anniversary of the establishment of Turkish Republic in 1998.\(^54\) Based on these few documents, more information was revealed on the anti-veiling campaigns in provinces other than Trabzon, such as Afyon, Maraş and Yozgat. In particular, the police documents published in the compilation, although composed of only a very limited number of examples from an apparently very rich archive that was closed to researchers,

\(^{50}\) This discussion is analyzed at length in Chapter 4.
\(^{52}\) Prime Ministry General Directorate of State Archives (*Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müdürlüğü*) was established in 1984 as part of a new law on the organization of the Prime Ministry. The general directorate is composed of three main departments: Documentation, Ottoman Archives and Republican Archives.
provided a hint of the involvement of Ankara in the process, as it included one circular about the issue by the Minister of Interior Şükrü Kaya addressed to all governors and general inspectors.

These three short but important articles published in Turkish did not receive the attention they deserved in subsequent scholarly works. Although they were able to reveal only a few examples of anti-veiling campaigns and discussed them very briefly, they were crucial contributions to the literature since they established that there was in fact state intervention in women’s clothing in the early republican era, albeit at the local level. They also provided some significant insights as to how research on the anti-veiling campaigns could be enlarged. Following these insights, Hale Yılmaz devoted a chapter on the regulation of women’s clothing in the early republic in her dissertation, which has recently been published as a book. The chapter discusses the unveiling campaigns with a focus on their social and cultural implications as experienced in the everyday lives of women and men. Yılmaz’s work is an important contribution, since it brings the anti-veiling campaigns into the English-written literature on early Turkish republic and expands the discussion on them based on new documents from police archives and oral historical accounts. Her own interview with a woman from an educated, middle class family in Trabzon, combined with recently published accounts from other provinces, allow us to hear the voices of people who had lived through the anti-veiling campaigns and how they recall that experience.

Most recently, an edited volume by Stephanie Cronin brought together examples of fresh and critical research on the anti-veiling campaigns in the Muslim world. Three chapters in this volume, written by Libal, Metinsoy


and myself, are devoted to the Turkish case and discuss the anti-veiling campaigns from different angles by using a rich variety of sources, including the police archives and the memoirs.\textsuperscript{58}

This study is the first monograph on the anti-veiling campaigns in the early Turkish Republic. It aims to go beyond an analysis of these campaigns based on the discourse and strategies of the high-level state actors. Such an elite-centered analysis has in fact shaped much of the literature on clothing change in the Middle East. As Tapper and Ingham indicate, approaches to dress and clothing change in the region have been focusing exclusively on the role of political or religious authorities. According to this approach, the impetus for clothing change comes only from above and inevitably and automatically change social and cultural identities in the way the imposer of the change/reform imagined.\textsuperscript{59} This thesis rather examines them as they were implemented through concrete policies and actions at the local level, and shaped as a result of the interaction of various actors and positions. Its contribution to the existing literature on the anti-veiling campaigns in early republican period is two-fold. First, it presents a detailed trajectory of the debates on and attempts at women’s unveiling in Turkey starting from the late Ottoman Empire onwards, discusses the anti-veiling campaigns of the 1920s separately as weak but significant attempts creating certain patterns for later campaigns, and focuses on what I call the main wave of anti-veiling campaigns in the mid-1930s, by contextualizing them as part of a new phase the Kemalist regime entered in the 1930s. Thus this study gives the most comprehensive account of the anti-veiling campaigns in the early Turkish republic, analyzing the general political discourse behind them and looking at the legal and institutional mechanisms through which they were formulated and implemented. It provides a snapshot of the campaigns in all aspects and as a general reform experience. By drawing upon a large survey of provinces,


this study clearly demonstrates that unlike Yılmaz’s claim that bans on the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* were more common in the Western provinces and in the coastal and border cities, the anti-veiling campaigns were a country-wide phenomena with no specific regional concentration.\(^{60}\)

Second, while looking at the main characteristics of the anti-veiling campaigns across the provinces and analyzing them as a wide-spread reform process, at the same time, this study digs deeper into the local context. With a strong emphasis on the significance of studying the local, it analyzes the campaigns within the complexities of their local settings and politics. However, digging into the local context does not mean focusing on a small number of cases. This study does not claim that it discusses a particular anti-veiling campaign in all its details, for example. Nor does it aim at such an exhaustive analysis. In other words, this is not a study of the local as micro history. Rather, it delves into the local to see the micro dynamics of the campaigns across various cases, and examines them within common conceptual frameworks such as resistance and agency. Two of these conceptual frameworks, in particular, through which I examine the anti-veiling campaigns, the concept of the local elite and women’s agency, set this study’s analysis of the campaigns aside from other studies.

This two-fold focus of the study, the general discursive, legal and institutional framework within which the anti-veiling campaigns were shaped and implemented country-wide, on the one hand, and the micro dynamics of this process at the local level, on the other, was possible based on a selection of diverse sources. First, this study is the first study that makes extensive use of the local newspapers for the study of the anti-veiling campaigns. Twelve local newspapers from eight provinces, Adana, Antalya, Bursa, Izmir, İçel, Kars, Konya and Trabzon, were analyzed.\(^{61}\) This not only provided a very rich and new body of information to see the details of the situation at the local level, but also to draw the most comprehensive map of the anti-veiling campaigns in the 1930s existing in the literature so far.\(^{62}\) Second, like Yılmaz and Metinsoy, I use documents from the state and the police archives, some of which are new to the literature. The correspondence between the provinces and the Ministry of Interior proved to be specifically helpful in discussing the role of the local elites. Third, this study also uses American and British consular reports, most of which are revealed for the first time. The British

\(^{60}\) See Yılmaz, 2013, p. 102.

\(^{61}\) For the list of these newspapers, see the bibliography.

\(^{62}\) The list of the local bans that I could locate is provided in the Appendix.
consular reports, in particular, were extremely helpful to enrich the analysis of the local context, since they provided very rare observations of the situation at the local level, which could be compared and contrasted with the reports coming from Turkish state sources in the provinces. In fact, it is the combination of these three different sources of information, the local newspapers, the Turkish state and police documents and the consular reports that provided a very rich lens to get a general picture of the patterns of interaction between actors in various levels while at the same time to dig into the local to see the complexity and diversity in the periphery of the country.

The Plan of the Study

The thesis is composed of five main chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on the debates on women’s un/veiling and attempts of anti-veiling campaigns before the 1930s. The chapter first begins with a discussion on the Ottoman legacy, showing that the debate on the peçe and the çarşaf goes back to the 19th century and originates from questions of modernization, progress and women’s roles in the context of a rapidly changing Ottoman society. It draws connections between the Kemalist state’s attempts at unveiling and the initiations of the Ottoman state to intervene in women’s clothing. The chapter then looks at the initial years of the Turkish Republic, early Kemalist vision of women’s clothing and modernization, the Hat Law of 1925, and the question of how the regime’s intervention to male clothing was linked to the question of women’s veiling. A number of anti-veiling campaigns that were initiated at the local level in the second half of the 1920s are discussed in detail. They are analyzed within the context of a general discourse and campaign on the modernization of dress that the Hat Law of 1925 triggered. The chapter concludes by discussing the patterns and mechanisms these early attempts at women’s unveiling set for the following anti-veiling campaigns in the next decade.

Chapter 3 discusses the anti-veiling campaigns in the 1930s as the main wave of women’s unveiling and situates them within the broader context of 1930s Turkey. Following a discussion of the 1930s as a turn to a more authoritarian Kemalist regime, eager to penetrate into the society and to increase its control over the economic, social and cultural domains, the chapter looks at the anti-veiling campaigns as one of the reforms that characterized this turn from the mid-1930s onwards. It analyzes the increasing stigmatization of the peçe and the çarşaf as “uncivilized” clothing as part of women’s becoming particularly active actors of the social and political life in
the 1930s and a greater emphasis on their “emancipation” given by the regime in order to incorporate them as agents of modernization. In the third section, the anti-veiling campaigns are analyzed as a country-wide, general phenomenon by detailed discussions on three main questions: why did the main wave of the anti-veiling campaigns begin in the mid-1930s, more specifically, in 1934? What were their scope, content and political discourse? And on which legal bases were they organized and implemented? Overall, chapter 3 provides a macro picture of 1930s Turkey as a new phase of the Kemalist regime, and of the anti-veiling campaigns as an important country-wide reform shaped as part of this phase.

Chapter 4 turns the focus to the local and looks particularly at the role the local elites played in the anti-veiling campaigns. It first discusses the place of the local in the literature on the single-party era in Turkey and claims that the local should be brought into the picture in order to better understand the dynamics and outcomes of the modernization process as experienced in the provinces. The first section provides a working definition of the concept of local elite and examines how to utilize this concept in order to see the diversity of actors at the local level. The second section outlines the position of Ankara on the anti-veiling campaigns. It shows the gradual increase in Ankara’s tendency to intervene in the local context and control the situation in the provinces while at the same time remaining hesitant to intervene in people’s lives “too much” in the issue of un/veiling. This, in a sense, ambivalent position of the central elites on the anti-veiling campaigns, it is argued, helped to widen the space of action for the local elites. The third section focuses on this space of action and looks at the various ways in which the local elites influenced the shaping and the implementation of the anti-veiling campaigns. It shows that as a composite group, the attitudes of the local elites were diverse and their tackling of the question of women’s unveiling ranged from “being more royalist than the king” to openly resisting it. While some local elites envisioned themselves as the agents of change in the provinces, others just pretended that they were. State officials seemed more supportive in the reform processes, but those local elites who were natives of the provinces they resided could also act quite actively in the shaping of the campaigns.

Chapter 5 discusses the questions of resistance and agency in the anti-veiling campaigns. It continues to focus on the local context, but turns to the attitudes and reactions of the ordinary people with the contention that the importance of the local cannot be fully highlighted by looking at how the local elites negotiated Kemalism. It claims that the local should be diversified, since
the local elites were part of a matrix of actors and power struggles where the societal forces also played a crucial role. The chapter discusses the reactions of non-elite actors, defined as popular resistance, and the extent to which this resistance could influence the shaping of the anti-veiling campaigns. Then, the chapter specifically focuses on reactions of women as the primary target of the campaigns. As a much less visible group, largely neglected in the conventional historiography, women are situated as “visible” actors whose agency could not be reduced to the dichotomy of passive compliance and open resistance. One aim of Chapter 5 is to also engage in a critical dialogue with the feminist literature on the Kemalist regime. It emphasizes the complex ways in which women became subjects of the Kemalist modernization and how this contributed to women’s visibility and participation in the public life.

Chapter 6 locates the Turkish anti-veiling campaigns within the greater map of the Muslim world in terms of the debates on and attempts at changing women’s clothing during the inter-war period. It discusses the Turkish experience of unveiling together with other experiences of state-initiated campaigns for women’s unveiling and deals with the question of how these experiences informed and influenced each other. It contends that general common trends and discourses on issues of women and the modernization of their clothing can be traced across the Muslim world. However, the way these issues were handled differed quite significantly. While the cases of the Arab countries, Afghanistan and Muslim countries under the Soviet rule are also discussed, it is claimed that three cases, Albania, Iran and Turkey, differ from the other examples and should be analyzed comparatively. A separate section attempts at such a comparative discussion with the aim of understanding the Turkish anti-veiling campaigns of the 1930s more vividly.