The Europe as a Model.
Regulation and modernization of the Ottoman fashion in the XIX century

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Özet

XIX. yüzyıl Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nda *modernleşme* devletin bekası için gerekli görülen ve çok çeşitli meseleleri kapsayan bir konuydu. Osmanlı padişahları Batı'nın siyasi olarak güçlenmesinin ardındaki sebepleri irdeleyip gelişmelere ayak uydururken modernleşme olarak sınıflandırılan adımları da kabul ettiler. Modernleşme konusunda Osmanlı toplumunda ve devlet yönetiminde pek çok mesele hem o günlerde hem de tarihçilerin araştırma konuları içerisinde tartışıldı. Batı ile etkileşim neredeyse kurulduğu günden beri devamlı süren Osmanlı Devletinde modernitenin bir parçasını da moda yani güncel kılık kıyafetlerin Batı'dan Osmanlı Devleti'ne girişi oluşturuyordu. Kadın-erkek giyiminde toplumda oluşan eğilimlerin Avrupa'dakine benzer bir sanayi devrimi yaşayarak Burjuvazinin ortaya çıkmadığı Osmanlı toplumunda nasıl bir değişim ve gelişime sahne olduğu bu çalışmanın konusunu oluşturmaktadır. Bu kapsamda çalışmanın kaynaklarını arşiv belgeleri ve telif-tetkik eserler oluşturmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Osmanlı Devleti, XIX. yüzyıl, III. Selim, II. Maḥmūd, moda, fes.

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Abstract

In the 19th century Ottoman Empire, modernization was an issue that was considered necessary for the survival of the state and covered a wide range of issues. While the Ottoman sultans examined the reasons behind the political strengthening of the West and kept up with the developments, they also accepted steps classified as modernization. Many issues regarding modernization in Ottoman society and state administration were discussed both in those days and within the research topics of historians. In the Ottoman Empire, where interaction with the West continued almost since the day it was founded, a part of modernity was the introduction of fashion, that is, current clothing, into the Ottoman Empire from the West. The subject of this study is what kind of change and development the trends in women's and men's clothing witnessed in the Ottoman society, which experienced an industrial revolution like the one in Europe and where the Bourgeoisie did not emerge. In this context, the sources of the study consist of archive documents and copyrighted research works.

Keywords: Ottoman Empire, XIX century, Selim III, Maḥmūd II, fashion, fes.

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1. Reform, Regulate, and Influence: The Ottoman Empire, Fashion, and Nineteenth Century Europe.

In the early modern age, despite the conflict between the Ottoman Empire and the West over Mediterranean dominance, the Ottomans maintained diplomatic ties with European powers. This diplomatic continuity extended until the 19th century, a period highlighted earlier as one characterized by transformation, receptivity to Western influence, and the spread of cultural exchange. In the dynamic interactions between the Ottomans and Western Europe, the incorporation of clothing elements wasn't a one-sided decision. Turkish motifs made their way into European art during the 18th century, generating curiosity about attire. Albums containing illustrations of Ottoman clothing were published in England and France, eventually becoming a popular feature in theatrical presentations and *camouflage* practices[1].

The allure of the clothing's exoticism captivated Europeans primarily, yet it did not integrate into everyday attire. Instead, it remained reserved for occasions such as dances, theatrical performances, and certain artworks of that era. In a parallel to the preceding period, the influence of Turkish clothing styles is evident in the portrait of the renowned British poet George Gordon Byron (1788-1824), a key figure in the Greek War of Independence (1821-1832). Executed by the English painter Thomas Phillips (1770-1845), the portrait portrays Lord Byron adorned in Greek or Albanian garments. The Ottoman presence in Albania and Morea since the 15th century imbued the clothing with the characteristic colors and elements of Greek tradition, combined with lingering traces of Ottoman fashion. Byron, notably, sports a mustache - a feature emblematic of the Muslim world - and wears a turban along with a red velvet jacket embellished with golden floral motifs.

An anomaly to this trend was the sarik, which, during the 18th century, found use among men. In public settings, it was employed by individuals who adorned themselves with stuffed animals, while at home, its purpose shifted to providing a head covering.[2] Moreover, in the harem gatherings between Ottomans and Europeans discussed earlier, European women found fascination not only in the attire of their Ottoman counterparts but also in the rights these women held. Despite the perceived restricted role of Muslim women in Ottoman society, European women perceived them as having greater freedom. The establishment of the harem, viewed as a form of sanctuary, left a particularly strong impression on them[3].

The Şalvar or Siwal, donned by both men and women in the Ottoman Empire, symbolized gender equality. In the latter half of the 19th century, some women in the United Kingdom wore this garment as a protest the restricted freedoms they experienced. The American feminist movement during the same period was also influenced, in part, by this Ottoman attire. In Western society at that time, pants were exclusively worn by men, rejecting corsets and crinolines as symbols of subordination. Men's clothing played a significant role as well.

Charlotte Jirousek notes that by the second half of the 18th century, all clothing components had been integrated, later adapting to form the European men's suit: pants, shirt, vest, coat, and tie. She suggests that patterns of this attire can be traced back, in part, to Ottoman clothing. Ottoman fashion adopted and customized these elements of European clothing, notably tapering the "European pants" considerably to align with local traditions while retaining the characteristic tapered waist and trouser ends seen in Ottoman pants[4].

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[1] Onur İnal, "Women's Fashions in Transition: Ottoman Borderlands and the Anglo-Ottoman Exchange of Costumes", *Journal of World History*, 22, 2, 2011, pp. 251-252.
[2] Charlotte Jirousek, *The Transition to Mass Fashion System Dress in the Later Ottoman Empire. U Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922: An Introduction*, State University of New York Press, 2000, pp.192-193.
[3] İnal, *Women's Fashions in Transition...*, p. 255.
[4] Jirousek, *The Transition to Mass Fashion...*, p. 200.

Throughout the century, legislation regarding clothing was implemented, aiming to standardize Ottoman society. Starting from the reign of Sultan Selim III (1789-1807), the disparity between the immense wealth of Christian landowners and merchants and the poverty of the common people (halk) grew. Economic inequality, coupled with a climate of rebellion in border territories - especially in the Balkan provinces - fueled social unrest, highlighting the fragility of central authority. Among various measures, new clothing regulations were introduced. The innovative aspect of Selim III's decrees lies in their objective, diverging from earlier regulations that sought to solidify hierarchical structures and identity affiliations. Instead, these were now linked to economic considerations.

The sultan aimed to establish a unified society, no longer stratified, and divided. While viziers, pashas, and certain aristocrats continued to showcase their wealth by adopting Western fashion, the sultan's motivation was not merely about emulation but also driven by economic factors. By doing so, these elites inadvertently enriched Christian merchants who imported fabrics and garments from the West, disadvantaging local crafts and Muslim merchants. The sultan's severe penalties were also prompted by the negative consequences of such behavior. Notably, lower-ranking state and military officials, desiring the latest fashion despite its higher costs compared to their incomes, often succumbed to bribery, contributing to one of the primary issues plaguing the Ottoman and later Turkish state apparatus: corruption[5].

The empire's state of instability necessitated symbolic elections to rebuild trust among subjects and stimulate internal production. Selim III restored dress laws from previous decades, compelling officials to adopt modest attire and demeanor. While economic repercussions were carefully considered, political motivations were not overlooked. By aligning with the concerns of local artisans, Selim III garnered the neutrality and leniency of the janissary corps for a period. This alliance helped counter the influence of mesocratic groups within the court, which had long vied for control of the Sublime Porte.

The aesthetic regulations, supported by the common populace, became a tool to confront the elite groups perceived as adversaries by the sultan. Among these elites, the practice of using Persian and Indian textiles had established itself through Armenian and Greek merchants, signifying a long-standing tradition, who had replaced the Jewish merchants and textile producers of the Thessalonica and Smyrna areas[6]. A comprehensive overhaul of military clothing and uniforms preceded a significant military reform, the outcomes of which proved crucial for the sultan's fate.

The introduction of new uniforms marked the definitive shift towards a hierarchical military structure, moving away from the previous feudal chivalric model and aligning itself more closely with the main European army corps, causing discontent among the members of the Janissaries.[7] The changes faced strong opposition from the latter group, who, far from accepting a reduction in their authority, actively resisted the reforms. Collaborating with local dignitaries, they instigated a violent uprising that culminated in the deposition of Selim III in 1807. As previously mentioned, the pivotal factor contributing to the sultan's downfall was primarily the lack of support from auxiliary troops, many of whom were part of the newly established army corps (Nizam-i Cedid) that Selim III had envisioned.

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[5] Donald Quataert, "Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720-1829", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 29, 3, 1997, p. 411.
[6] Angeliki Hatzimichali, *The Greek Folk Costume*, vol. II, Benaki Museum Publications, Athens 1984, p. 440.
[7] Stanford J. Shaw, "The origins of Ottoman military reform: the Nizam-i Cedid army of Sultan Selim III", *The Journal of Modern History*, 37, 3, 1965, pp. 291-306; John P. Dunn, "Clothes to Kill For: Uniforms and Politics in Ottoman Armies", *The Journal of the Middle East and Africa*, 2, 1, 2011, pp. 85-107.

At the core of the mutiny was not only the introduction of European military instructors, particularly French at this stage, but also the imposition of new Western-style uniforms across various ranks of the army, a decision that carried significant weight[8].

Another crucial juncture in clothing regulation occurred during the reign of Mahmud II, as previously mentioned. In 1829, having quelled the Janissaries' resistance three years prior, he enacted a decree exempting women and *'ulamā*, establishing an egalitarian foundation among the empire's subjects. By challenging the prevailing secular dress code built on easily recognizable distinctions, this measure aimed to create equality among male subjects in every aspect. The sultan and his advisors held the belief that, through a unified aesthetic appearance, all men would attain equality.[9]

While the Ottoman leadership had yet to embrace the ideals upheld by European egalitarian movements, the clothing decree of 1829 can be seen as a pivotal initial stride in the challenging endeavor to transform the multiethnic empire into a unified and modern body politic. This decree aimed to instill the notion of Ottoman identity in its subjects. Beyond the traditional universalism associated with the sultan rooted in Islam, the decree also exhibited characteristics aligned with the universalist theories of the European Enlightenment. These elements sought to perceive subjects as part of a unified body of citizens.

A blend that sets the Ottoman Empire apart from the nationalist upheavals that ravaged Europe during the same months is fueled by the spread of individualism embedded in Johann Gottfried van Herder's concept of the nation. These notions, which would later contribute to the uprisings of 1830 and 1831, as well as the so-called spring of the peoples in 1848, stand in contrast. Within the 1829 decree, one can discern, as Bulliet has previously emphasized, the Ottoman Empire's endeavor to carve out its unique path toward modernity. This was a response to the events unfolding in Europe, aiming to transform its subjects into modern citizens[10].

With the onset of the *Tanzimat* period, political developments became intricately linked with sumptuary regulations. The disappearance of traditional markers precipitated a swift breakdown of social boundaries, ushering in a period marked by significant social mobility. This transformation particularly impacted the Ottoman middle class, comprising both Muslims and non-Muslims, manifesting in the adoption of new fashions such as frock coats and trousers. This shift created novel avenues for advancement[11].

Nevertheless, individuals situated at the two extremes of the Ottoman social hierarchy - namely, the common laborers and the affluent nobility - opposed the fes, viewing it as a direct assault by the "modern" state on the longstanding traditional corporate system that had, for centuries, preserved their respective privileges.

Despite encountering resistance from certain segments of Ottoman society, the sultans initiated the drafting and issuance of decrees aimed at restructuring the state. Particularly during the reign of Mahmud II (1808-1839), the initial reforms were implemented, focusing on altering attire within the military and administrative apparatus. This marked a discernible trend toward the militarization and bureaucratization of fashion in the Ottoman Empire throughout the 19th century.

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[8] Uriel Heyd, *The Ottoman 'Ulema and Westernization in the Time of Selīm III and Maḥmūd II*, in *The modern Middle East: a reader*, edited by Albert H. Hourani, Philip S. Khoury and Mary C. Wilson, University of California Press, 1993, pp. 29-59; Bernard Lewis, *The emergence of modern Turkey*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2002, p. 100.
[9] Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005.
[10] Richard W. Bulliet, *La civiltà islamico Cristiana. Una proposta*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2005, p. 81.
[11] Haris Exertzoglou, "The cultural uses of consumption: negotiating class, gender, and nation in the Ottoman urban centers during the 19th century", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 35, 1, 2003, pp. 77-101.

2. Militarize and Bureaucratize: Fashion and the Sultanate of Maḥmūd II.

During the 19th century, the Ottoman Empire underwent an extensive and intricate series of reforms aimed at reorganizing and modernizing its structure and operations. Spearheaded by reformist sultans, these changes ushered the empire towards a tangible alignment with Western practices in various aspects, including clothing. The initial significant alterations to the dress code occurred towards the end of the Ottoman Empire, notably during the reign of sultan Maḥmūd II (1808-1839), who played a pivotal role in reshaping the use of headdresses. During Ottoman history, distinguishing social strata based on appearance and the style of clothing worn became notably significant. The headdress served as a revealing indicator of its owner's social status, as well as their ethnic and religious affiliation[12].

This strategy persisted throughout the final centuries of the Ottoman Empire, and Maḥmūd II was cognizant of the social importance attached to these garments. However, his approach to maintaining power centered on fostering equality rather than accentuating differences. The primary instrument employed for this policy was the fez, a red wool cap resembling a truncated cone adorned with a blue, black, or gold tassel, named after the Moroccan city of Fez.

In 1826, Maḥmūd II mandated the fes as obligatory headgear for the navy and army, both of which he restructured following the massacre and dissolution of the janissary military caste in the same year. Prior to this decree, soldiers had worn a *furbörk* or *šubaru*, a hat made of sewn linen. At that time, the fez adorned the heads of Tunisian marines serving under Admiral Mehmed Hüsrev Pasha.

Inspired by this, the sultan conceived the idea of making this headgear mandatory for the entire army. Maḥmūd II's version of the fez, known as the mahmudiye kalıb, was characterized by its red hue (ranging from bright red to dark red) and featured a blue tassel. Additionally, under Maḥmūd II's directive, the wearing of kaftans and shalwars was forbidden, and a new dress code was established, requiring tight-fitting pants and a "western" jacket resembling a redingote (tailcoat), akin to those worn by French and English soldiers of that era[13].

The officer's jacket boasted two rows of buttons, while ordinary soldiers wore jackets with a single row. The uniform buttons of each rank were intricately attached to the uniform, forming the emblematic Muslim crescent with a star - a symbol synonymous with the Ottoman infantry. A novel addition to the uniform was the introduction of a cloak. Soldiers were equipped with a waterproof *avniye* featuring a hood, while officers sported a sleeker, longer armaniye. Both ranks were also provided with boots.

This updated uniform not only afforded greater mobility to soldiers but also offered enhanced protection against the elements. The navy underwent a parallel reform around 1833. Students at the Naval Academy donned gray-blue trousers and a buttoned jacket, sailors transitioned to white linen shirts and trousers, and officers wore setter jackets inspired by Western styles, embellished with rows of buttons. Some officer jackets were adorned with epaulets carrying gold bows on the shoulders. Distinctive insignia were introduced, worn around the neck, such as anchors for naval officers. Consequently, the new sultan's army, known as *Asâkir-i Mansûre-yi Muhammadiye* (the troops of the victorious Muhammad), was outfitted in these new uniforms.

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[12]Anastasia Falierou, *Réglementer, Identifier, Homogénéiser: quelques réflexions autour de la modernisation vestimentaire ottomane*, in *U Penser le XIXe Siècle. Nouveaux Chantiers de Recherche*, edited by Silvia Marton and Constanța Vintilă-Ghițulescu, Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", Iași, 2013, pp. 273-291.
[13] Nancy Micklewright, *Women's Dress in 19th century Istanbul: Mirror of a Changing Society*, Tesis doctoral, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 1986, p. 5.

The primary objective of this reform was to erase the memory of the Janissaries, who had garnered substantial support among the populace, and to establish a fresh, triumphant Ottoman military tradition. It's noteworthy that Mahmud II was not the first sultan to attempt military uniform reform in emulation of European countries. His predecessor and cousin, Selim III (1789-1807), who was overthrown by a Janissary revolt and replaced by his brother Mustafa IV (1807-1808), endeavored to introduce tight trousers and short coats as mandatory attire for Ottoman soldiers. This initiative mirrored the uniforms worn by European armies. However, conservative forces such as the janissaries and the ulama, who were staunch guardians of Ottoman traditions and customs, rebelled against these changes, resulting in the absence of any significant alterations[14].

However, this endeavor holds significance as an indicator of the persisting modernization trend evident in subsequent Ottoman rulers. The clothing reform of 1829 extended its influence on various official groups and the civilian population.

Previous attire combinations, which denoted one's rank, profession, and religion, were abolished, replaced by new European garments. Civil servants were mandated to wear *setra* instead of *entari* and *kaftans*, each slightly distinct from naval versions. The administration employee's uniform featured a high collar, a row of buttons, and knee-length extension. The uniform color varied, including dark shades like green, blue, black, and beige. Traditional *gömlek* gave way to European ties and shirts. European pants replaced traditional *šalvar*, *potur*, and *çakşir*. Concerning headgear, nearly all government officials, except for the Grand Vizier and select senior officials, were obligated to wear an identical plain fes, devoid of insignia or special cloth, irrespective of their religious or ethnic background. Faiths replaced the former *sarikas*, previously serving as a "sign of recognition" between social groups and officials occupying diverse roles in the administration.

After a century of diverse hat styles, this initiative aimed to standardize the appearance of public officials and the civilian population throughout the Empire. It's noteworthy that the ulama, who persisted in wearing the *cübbe* and the white *sarik*, along with the religious officials of the ethno-religious communities (millet), remained exempt from the dress reform. By the mid-19th century, due to the mandatory adoption of European clothing, a slightly modified European redingote gained popularity in the Ottoman Empire, colloquially known as the "istanbulin"[15]. The easing of ethno-religious distinctions in clothing resulting from Maḥmūd II's reforms had a notable consequence. As previously noted, many Ottoman cities were predominantly divided into zones designated for the life and economic activities of different ethno-religious communities, and there were some limitations on people moving to areas outside their own community.

While the regulations weren't strictly enforced, allowing for mixed neighborhoods, it was generally considered inappropriate for a Muslim to participate in events or gatherings in non-Muslim neighborhoods. Post- Maḥmūd's reforms, as the boundaries between ethno-religious communities became less pronounced, Muslim individuals, eager to socialize in minority neighborhoods, easily integrated with members of those communities, thanks to the implemented clothing policies. Non-Muslim communities, likely tired of the clothing segregation that hindered social mobility, readily embraced the new dress code and the fez.

The most significant resistance to the dress reform, particularly the ordinary fez, came from workers and artisans. According to Donald Quataert, this opposition stemmed from a strong disapproval of Maḥmūd II's economic policies, which were perceived as detrimental to the categorie[16].

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[14] İnal, *Women's Fashions in Transition…*, p. 262.
[15] Murat Tutar, *Between Traditional and Modern: Men Dress Code in the Light of Turkish Modernization*, Diplomski rad, Jagiellonian University, Kraków 2014, p. 32.
[16] Quataert, *Clothing Laws, State…*, pp. 403-425.

This assertion finds support in the collective rejection of the dress reform by both Muslim and non-Muslim workers and artisans, who stood in solidarity against the change. On the contrary, a significant portion of Muslim workers and artisans, representing the popular and traditional stratum of society, expressed dissatisfaction with the elimination of the *sarik*. In Islam, the sarik served as a head covering designated for Muslims and held the potential to distinguish a believer from a non-believer. Consequently, this alteration was viewed as conflicting with religious beliefs. Hence, Muslim workers and craftsmen persisted in wearing traditional attire such as *çepken* and *mintan* jackets, *gömlek* and *šalvar* garments, along with çakşir and potur accessories. They adorned their heads with a fez enveloped in a *tülbent*, a muslin band from which the term turban (sarık) is derived, present in various languages globally. However, despite the Sultan's preferences, some individuals continued to wear the *sarik*.[17] In pursuit of reform success and the stability of his government, Maḥmūd II employed diverse strategies. The primary objective of these reforms was to foster a physical unity among the populace and enhance the sultan's image as the sovereign, with the aim of popularizing the desired dress reform implemented by the ruler[18].

Apart from donning the fez, the Sultan adopted the military attire he had implemented, trimmed his beard, and commenced traversing the city in an exposed European carriage. On numerous occasions, he also made appearances on horseback before his subjects[19].

Maḥmūd II had transformed into a genuine Western-influenced ruler. Nonetheless, the opposition to the reforms from workers and artisans was so formidable that the Sultan had to abandon their enforcement. Instead, he permitted them to wear a fez wrapped in various types of cloth (yemeni, abanî, çenber, yazma dülbent), which were subsequently removed from the standard fez designated for soldiers.[20] All the mentioned provisions and decisions pertain to men; Maḥmūd II did not institute regulations or alterations concerning women's clothing, as their attire was already established. The reforms did not encompass altering the position of women in society, eliminating the need for clothing reform in their case.

The primary aim of this reform was to establish a standardized bureaucracy, thereby diminishing the influence of various social groups that posed a threat to the Sultan's authority. While the reform did not achieve complete success, it did result in a partial reduction of ethnic, religious, and class distinctions within society. This process would continue to gain momentum in the subsequent decades of the Ottoman Empire.[21]

3. Fez: symbol of reformism and Mahmudian modernization.

During far-reaching social and economic shifts marked by the assimilation of modern Western European cultural elements, the introduction of a new dress code by Maḥmūd II gains notable significance. Initially, the şubara, paired with a turban, served as a headdress for specific ranks until 1827. This headgear was formerly linked to the *Bostanci-yan*, or the "Imperial Gardeners", tasked with safeguarding the Imperial Palaces and the Bosphorus waterfront but was eventually replaced by the iconic fez.

While historical accounts, such as those by Ottoman historian Ahmed Lütfi Pasha, often recount the fez's origin and its incorporation into official dress, it is crucial to note that its usage was

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[17] Falierou, *Réglementer, Identifier…*, p. 289
[18] Darin N. Stephanov, "Ruler Visibility, Modernity, and Ethnonationalism in the Late Ottoman Empire", in *Living in the Ottoman Realm: Empire and Identity, 13th to 20th Centuries*, edited by Christine Isom-Verhaaren and Kent F. Schull, Indiana University Press, Bloomington 2016, p. 260.
[19] Ibid., p. 261.
[20] Quataert, *Clothing Laws, State…*, pp. 412-417
[21] Ibid., p. 413.

not a recent development. The fez had been in common use in the Ottoman Empire for centuries, particularly among sailors and fishermen.

The novelty of the fez lies in its role in replacing various headdresses throughout the 19th century, emerging as a tool for homogenizing and constructing Ottoman identity. Adolphus Slade, a British officer quoted by Bernard Lewis in "The Emergence of Modern Turkey," keenly observes the evolution of chivalrous practices through changes in attire, accompanied by shifts in riding techniques and equipment. Slade highlights the drawbacks of the new clothing and emphasizes the significant consequences this attire has had on established everyday practices.[22]

The subsequent phase involved a decree promulgated by Maḥmūd II in 1829, ushering in a new era of modern attire for public officials, "sought to replace the ancient signs of differentiation of community and work through clothing"[23] The legislation intricately outlined diverse male attire options, yet it singularly mandated one specific headpiece: the fez, characterized by its conical shape and crafted from red felt. "This regulation of 1829, whose drama actually corresponds to that of the destruction of the Janissaries, set aside the centuries-old Ottoman tradition in which the headdress had provided the crucial and central indicator of identity, status and rank." [24]Analyzing the significance of the fez, Donald Quataert argues that regulations dictating attire have wielded considerable influence in reshaping both the state and society.

These regulations, akin in impact to bureaucratic restructuring, fiscal centralization, and military endeavors, witnessed a transformation where the rebellious push led by the administrative and military elite of the Ottoman Empire supplanted the traditional dress codes of the old elites[25]. Furthermore, Maḥmūd II's initiatives successfully erased discernible boundaries between Muslims and non-Muslims. The recently implemented dress code, inclusive of the fez, rapidly found favor among prosperous individuals, regardless of religious affiliation, residing in urban centers.

Delving into the clothing choices of Ottoman officers in this era, Nureddin Sevin, in his essay on the history of Turkish dress, posits that the Ottoman style in the late 1820s and 1830s closely mirrored that of contemporary European military officers. This style encompassed shorts, a single-breasted jacket, and a frock coat[26].

Maḥmūd II disapproved of extravagance and grandiosity, deeming them inappropriate. Grounded in a rational and canonical religious perspective, he regarded the "splendor and sumptuousness" resulting from pious habits as not only preferable but also beneficial for both physical and financial well-being. The imperial decree, devoid of explicit references to terms like Europe, European, modern, or Western culture, as well as specific garment names such as pants, skirts, or coats, exclusively highlights the fez.

Other clothing items are delineated based on fabric, color, and types of decorations, potentially reflecting the growing acceptance of the new dress code. Alternatively, the absence of terms like Western or European might have been retroactively assigned to these measures in later decades when the Ottoman Empire was perceived through an orientalist and imperialist lens, imbuing this style of

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[22] Lewis, *The emergence of modern Turkey...*, p. 112.

[23] Quataert, *Clothing Laws, State...*, pp. 419-420. These measures were introduced for all officials, except for members of the religious class. In contrast to the Westernization of men's clothing, existing norms for women's clothing were strengthened by the sultanal administration of Mahmud II. In this regard, see also Cihan Aktaş, *Tanzimat'tan Günümüze Kılık Kıyafet ve Iktidar, Nehir Yayınları: İnceleme - Araştırma Dizisi*, Nehir yayınları, Istanbul 1989, p. 63.

[24] Patricia L. Baker, "The Fez in Turkey: A Symbol of Modernization, Costume", *The Journal of the Costume Society*, 20, 1986, pp. 72-85. For the text of the law see Ahmed Lütfi, *Vakaniüvis Ahmed Lütfi Efendi Tarihi*, in *Tarih Vakfı-Yapı Kredi Yayınları: Eski Yazıdan Yeni Yazıya*, vol. 2/3, edited by Ahmet Hezarfen and Nuri Akbayar, Tarih Vakfı-Yapı Kredi yayınları, Istanbul 1999, pp. 268-273, Appendice 18.

[25] Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922...*, p. 65.

[26] Nureddin Sevin, *Onüç Asırlık Türk Kiyâfet Târihine Bir Bakış*, vol. 1, Kültür Bakanlığı yayınları, Ankara 1991, pp. 123-124.

dress with altered meanings. The styles introduced by the decree underwent evolution over the century, influenced by European fashions, modes of production, and Ottoman preferences.

The fez, too, experienced variations in shape and color, ranging from a more adorned, embroidered, and voluminous style to a simpler, narrower shape, and from light red to dark red or even black.[27] In his essay "Ottoman Civil Officialdom", focused on the Ottoman civil service, Carter Findley intricately describes the adoption of the new dress during the Tanzimat period, asserting that "Throughout this era, the standard attire for civil officials evolved into a combination of the fez, a modified frock coat known as istanbulin, and trousers, a wardrobe evident in contemporary portraits. The istanbulin typically paired with knee-length trousers featured a European-style frock coat with a closed front and a high collar, likely adopted to alleviate high-ranking officials from the discomfort of starched shirts and ties"[28].

The historian Lütfi Efendi characterizes Maḥmūd II's protracted elimination of traditional headwear as a liberation from the "burden of large and small kavuk." He interprets the 1829 dress decree as an attempt to address the disorder in headgear that emerged post the dissolution of the Janissary order. The subsequent introduction of the fez, following a period marked by chaotic headwear choices among public officials, ushered in a sense of uniformity in hierarchies manifested through appearances.

During this era, Lütfi Efendi observes the difficulty in distinguishing between various officials, highlighting those visible disparities now arose primarily between these officials and religious scholars ('ulamā), who found themselves subject to a new dress code. Does Lütfi Efendi suggest that the new regulation aimed to create a distinction between administrative officials and religious figures? Does he attribute the origin of this regulation to its consequential effects? The new law transformed the 'ulama from a religious class that had previously been merely "one among many medieval orders" due to the absence of a "clergy" in Islam[29].

Like public officials, the discernible differences among various ranks within the ulama diminished as their attire underwent simplification and assimilation. The impact of the fez in eroding specific internal boundaries has sparked debates on various fronts. To exemplify this, will present two instances that highlight the participants in the debate and the methods employed during the initial decades following its introduction[30].

In 1835, multiple instances emerged concerning the adoption of the new headdress, underscoring the importance of its modest and minimally adorned appearance. One case aimed to discourage the practice of wrapping a turban around the fez, while another advocated for servants to wear a fez to distinguish themselves from their turban-wearing ulema masters. Additionally, discussions in state offices revolved around negotiations by the sultan on whether ministers and specific officials could embellish their fez with jewelry.

Finally, in 1844, precautions were instituted against those who opposed an Armenian notable wearing an insignia on his fez, recognizing his loyalty to the Ottoman state. Throughout the initial decade of the new clothing regulation, debates persisted over whether the fez could be worn in conjunction with a turban, as evidenced by an imperial edict in 1835[31].

Targeting prominent figures such as the finance minister, imperial office scribes, advisers to the imperial mint, and senior military officers, the decree extensively addresses the question of

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[27] Reşad E. Koçu, *Türk Giyim, Kuşam ve Süslenme Sözlüğü*, Sümerbank Kültür Yayınları 1, Başnur Matbaası, Ankara 1967, pp.115-116.

[28] Carter V. Findley, *Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 1989, p. 213. On the clothing of Ottoman officials before the clothing reform, cfr. Mehmet Lale, "Sultan Mahmud II and the Fez Revolution", in *The Great Ottoman-Turkish Civilization*, *Philosophy, Science and Institutions*, (Edited by Kemal Çiçek), Yeni Türkiye, Ankara 2000, pp. 91-95; Koçu, *Türk Giyim, Kuşam…*, pp. 113-14.

[29] Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, McGill, Montreal 1964, p. 124.

[30] Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA), HR.MKT. 7/34 (ca. 1844).

[31] BOA, HAT. 758/35654.

whether individuals, particularly public officials, are permitted to wear turbans over their fezzes. A duplicate of the imperial edict was dispatched to local administrations, imams, and Ottoman army officers, serving both as a warning and an informative measure regarding the prevailing regulations. The intention behind this dissemination was to prevent the recurrence of what was deemed "rude and disapproved behavior".

The edict reinforced the social categories delineated in the new dress code. Notably, it remained silent on the specific individuals authorized to wear a fez without a turban. Another imperial decree from 1835 expressed dissatisfaction with attempts to bridge social divisions by choosing a turban over a fez. It explicitly highlighted that the servants of the ulama were mandated to wear a fez, not a turban, as a means of distinguishing between the master (Efendi) and the servant (Hizmetkar).[32]

Reacting to what was perceived as a "deceitful desire (murād-ı me-kkār)" linked to the wearing of turbans, an official order was issued. The precise nature of this desire was not explicitly elucidated. Intriguingly, rather than serving to level social distinctions, the fez, in this context, was utilized to uphold or introduce additional differences. As discussed earlier, it played a pivotal role in distinguishing the ulama as a distinct religious class, recognizable by their traditional turbans and long robes.[33]

The document emphasizes that the fez is not intended to establish a noticeable distinction between the Efendi and the Hizmetkar but, conversely "to differentiate them from their masters, each one wears a fez"[34]. While the rest of her clothing remained unaltered, the document does not provide details regarding the specific characteristics expected of these dresses. I presume a similar flexibility extended to those in service to the ulama, or they would not have been explicitly referenced: "Their robe will remain as before, and there will be no modification of these..."[35].

Following this, the Grand Vizier (Vekaletpenahi) and the Minister of War (SerʿAsker Paşa) were entrusted with the task of negotiating and communicating the outcomes to the *şeyhülislâm* (fetvapenah). Given their close ties and involvement with the Ottoman court, most of the higher ranks within the ulama expressed support for Maḥmūd II's reforms, recognizing these changes as crucial for the preservation of their positions.

As demonstrated in the presented case, the dress reform could function as a symbol of their distinct social status, making them the sole Ottoman group permitted to retain their turbans. In that same year, several high-ranking officials in Istanbul and the provinces, including the Grand Vizier and the governor of Bosnia, sought permission to adorn their fezes with one or more jewels. However, this proposal did not receive significant approval from Sultan Maḥmūd[36].

However, he did authorize the donning of this style of fez during festive occasions, expressly prohibiting its use on other instances, as indicated by multiple imperial decrees. I emphasize this incident because it establishes a link between the adoption of the fez and the premodern politics of attire within the context of sumptuary laws, which imposed restrictions on the display of luxury to maintain societal boundaries. This occurrence also sheds light on how the fez functioned as a tool for crafting social distinctions, displaying status and rank a topic that has somewhat faded in historical records[37].

Insights into this matter are derived from three distinct documents, serving as a manifestation of the transition from the old order to the new. These documents center around the notion of elegant

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[32]BOA, HAT 476/22800.
[33] Heyd, *The Ottoman 'Ulemā and Westernization...*, pp. 63-96.
[34]BOA, ZB. 324/60; BOA, DH.MKT. 2620/10; BOA, DH.MKT. 2688/40.
[35]BOA, DH.MKT. 2692/40.
[36]BOA, HAT 697/33640, BOA, HAT 330/19080; BOA, HAT 697/33562.
[37] Robert Ross, *Clothing: A Global History*, Polity, Cambridge 2008, pp. 20-21. On the sumptuary laws enacted in premodern Europe, cfr. Madeline C. Zilfi, "Whose Laws? Gendering the Ottoman Sumptuary Regime", in *Ottoman Costumes: From Textile to Identity*, edited by Suraiya Faroqhi and Christoph K. Neumann, Eren, Istanbul 2004, pp. 125-141. On late-Ottoman discourses on consumption practices considering luxury regulation, Exertzoglou, *The Cultural Uses of Consumption...*, pp. 100-101.

attire as a privilege conferred upon deserving officials in the Ottoman government. The initial document, dispatched by Vecih Paşa, the governor of Bosnia, to the kethüda-yi bāb, seeks permission to wear a jewel-encrusted fez. It delves into inquiries regarding who else might be eligible for this privilege and on what additional occasions, beyond the significant ones, it could be worn. Vecih Paşa proposes potential recipients for the honor of wearing this fez, explicitly connecting it to questions of honor and pride, thereby advocating a specific conception of honor linked to the traditional order.

This example illustrates that, for a brief period and on specific occasions, the fez operated within the old paradigm of power, privilege, and sumptuary laws, where sartorial luxury was bestowed as a favor from the sultan. The narrative begins with the grand vizier wearing a jewel-adorned fez. How was this message disseminated in the provinces? Although this type of fez was initially intended for ministers, Vecih Bey sought to ascertain whether its usage could be extended to others. "Trusted individuals (muḫliṣ)"[38]. However, the governor of Bosnia directed the kethüda to approach the Grand Vizier to seek the sultan's opinion on another matter: the reimbursement of expenses incurred for these fezzes.

The sultan responded affirmatively by granting reimbursement. The narrative concludes with a letter from Vecih Paşa, expressing commendation to the sultan for permitting the wearing of the fez exclusively for certain officials during holidays. While instances like these exist, the fez also functioned as a tool to curtail the privileges of Ottoman elites. This shift may be linked to the emergence of constitutionalist ideas in the Ottoman Empire, even if unintentional and not the result of an autocratic "inventor." As I will demonstrate later, the evolution of the fez toward sobriety and simplicity aligned well with notions of bourgeois respectability and late 19th-century conceptions of masculinity. Thus, the fez played a role in shaping a new identity, an administrative class, and a modern, efficient social structure. These subjects were interrelated and took on different forms through the influence of the fez.

The controversies over what could be attached to the fez and how it should be worn influenced discussions in the first decades after the implementation of the new dress code. From the archival material I reviewed, the fez was no longer explicitly the subject of conflict over excessive consumption, nor did it imply social distinctions. Rather than being merely used to negotiate ethno-religious distinctions, it became a tool to assert national identity.

Conclusion

On the 1839, Grand Vizier Mustafa Reşid Pasha announced a decree from Sultan Abdülmecid I, known as the Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerif, initiating a series of reforms across various facets of the Ottoman Empire. The objective was to modernize the Ottoman state, drawing inspiration from the practices of Western European nations. This transformative era, termed *Tanzimat-ı Hayriye*, extended until 1876, marking the onset of the initial constitutional period. The provisions of the *Hatt-ı Şerif*, promoting enhanced security and civil rights for all inhabitants of the Empire, marked a significant stride toward equalizing the rights of both Muslim and non-Muslim populations. Consequently, the term "Ottomans" came to encompass all inhabitants of the empire[39]. Moreover, the 1856 edict brought about complete parity between the Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

The Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerif, encompassing Mahmud II's clothing reforms, was extended to include the entire male populace of the Ottoman Empire, albeit without imposing compulsory adoption of European attire for civilians. Those who had resisted Mahmud's reforms, particularly workers and artisans, exhibited a similar resistance to the Tanzimat reforms. The decree did not introduce

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[38]BOA, HAT 697/33640.

[39] Şükrü M. Hanioğlu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Princeton University Press, Princeton 2008, p. 74

alterations to women's clothing, resulting in a notable divergence in the attire of men and women across the empire, a departure from the previous similarity in the dressing styles of common people. The most pronounced Westernization of women's clothing transpired during Sultan Abdülaziz's reign.[40]

Indeed, the term "Europeanization" encompassed a broader cultural notion signifying the adoption of the European lifestyle and values. Its connotation varied between positive and negative depending on the period, with the Tanzimat era associating it predominantly with a positive sense. This period witnessed an enthusiastic embrace of European values and accomplishments during the Ottoman Empire's reformative phase. Those who welcomed European culture, as Şükrü Hanioğlu contends, perceived themselves as morally superior and progressive, attributing this superiority to the supposed preeminence of European culture over Ottoman traditions.

Concerning fashion, women in high society predominantly adorned European clothing, a departure from centuries-old traditions that often drew ridicule from the more conservative segments of society[41]. Those opposing the Tanzimat period advocated a reversion to traditional Islamic values and the consolidation of all Muslims in resistance to the West.

Advocates of this stance held a negative view of the substantial foreign presence in the Empire, leading to occasional attacks on foreign nationals. Resistance to the reform policy was further manifested as opponents of Tanzimat predominantly adhered to traditional attire, or at the very least, personalized adaptations of Western clothing[42].

Resistance to modernization was more pronounced in the provinces, where the traditional population held sway and was less aligned with the sovereign's aspirations for modernization. Sultan Abdülmecid I was cognizant of this resistance, and thus, during his visits to the provincial regions of the Empire, he opted for attire that was more acceptable to the local population: "It appears that Abdülmecid dressed in a slightly more refined manner than during state ceremonies in Istanbul; his military uniform coat was adorned with gold embroidery and featured diamonds on the collar, invoking reminiscences of bygone eras".[43] The implementation of various reforms in the empire, coupled with the deepening connections with the external world, culminated in the establishment of a burgeoning bureaucracy. This bureaucracy wielded authority over the entire state machinery throughout the *Tanzimat* period[44].

Proficient individuals, educated both in recently established domestic institutions and overseas, served as the embodiment of the emerging bureaucracy. This group laid the foundation for the nascent middle class that took shape in urban centers during the mid-19th century. Simultaneously, in rural areas, the middle class started to coalesce around the progeny of influential village Ayanos, their ascent gaining momentum following the dismantling of the timar (feudal) landownership system in 1834[45].

The emergence of a more liberal atmosphere in Ottoman society has given rise to a class of intellectuals, primarily comprised of former and existing bureaucrats. This group holds distinctive views on the trajectory the state should follow and is unreserved in expressing critiques of the government.

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[40] Fatma Koç, Emine Koca, "The Clothing Culture of the Turks, and the Entari (Part 1: History)", *Folk Life: Journal of Ethnological Studies*, 49, 1, 2011, p. 22; Jennifer M. Scarce, *Women's Costume of the Near and Middle East*, St Edmundsbury Pres Ltd, London 2003, p. 38.

[41] Hanioğlu, *A Brief History…*, p. 100; Zilfi, "Whose Laws? Gendering the Ottoman Sumptuary Regime…, pp. 137-140.

[42] Stanford J. Shaw, Ezel K. Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol. II: *Reform, Revolution, and Republic: The Rise of Modern Turkey, 1808*-1975, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977, pp. 157-158.

[43] Stephanov, *Ruler Visibility, Modernity…*, p. 262

[44] Hanioğlu, *A Brief History…*, p. 73.

[45] Micklewright, *Women's Dress in 19th century Istanbul…*, pp. 64-67.

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