Kemalism in the Periphery: Anti-Veiling Campaigns and State-Society Relations in 1930s Turkey

Adak Turan, S.

Chapter 5

Popular Resistance and Women's Agency

"*Trabzon bayanları, çarşafları atalım*
Hürriyete, güneşe, hayata kavuşalım…
…
Bu milletin kalmasın noksan hiç bir tarafı,
Atalım göze batan şu karanlık çarşafı…
Duydum ki Türk kadını onu atmış her yerde,
Bizim de karartmasın yüzümüzü bu perde…"[513]

I. Diversifying the Local: Multiple Actors, Multiple Voices

The previous chapter underscored the importance of looking at the local in order to understand how the Kemalist regime worked in practice. It discussed at length how the policies of Ankara cannot be analyzed by focusing solely on the acts and discourse of the central elite, as has been the case in the literature. In fact, it demonstrated that even a deeper examination of the orders and circulars sent by high authorities in Ankara does not suffice to understand the form the policies took in the provinces, since the local administrators were not passive receivers of these orders. Moreover, by focusing on the "local elite," a cluster of actors that comprise the power networks at the local level, Chapter 4 suggested that the local elite was a composite group that cannot be reduced to provincial administrators or local notables. Situated in different institutions and positions at the local context, these elites played a significant role in the shaping of the policies of the regime on the ground, as it was shown in detail in the case of the anti-veiling campaigns. In other words, so far, the discussion has focused on introducing the local into the analysis of Kemalist regime in the 1930s, and particularly, on diversifying the concept of "elite" in two senses: to emphasize the equally critical role the local elite played in the shaping of the policies, and the multiplicity of actors that compose the "elite" at the local level.

[513] An excerpt from a poem written by a woman, Hayriye Ural, entitled "*Çarşafları Atalım*" (Let's Throw off the *Çarşaf*s), which was published in a Trabzon newspaper, *Halk* on 30 March 1936.

However, it is crucial to note that the significance of the local cannot be reduced to the attitude of the local elite and the ways in which they negotiated and domesticated the policies of Ankara either. Just like the central authority was one actor operating within the complexities of the local society, the local elites were also surrounded by the same complexities and had to act *in relation* to the attitudes and reactions of ordinary people. It is only through analyzing these relations at the local level, the dynamics between the central authority, the local elites and the societal forces, that we can understand the shaping of the policies and the extent of social change that has come about as a result of these policies. Thus, the local has to be diversified; the role the non-elite actors and subordinated sectors of the society played should also be analyzed so that the multiplicity of the voices at the local level can be addressed. Moreover, women, who are a much less visible group in the conventional literature than men, deserve special attention. This invisibility cuts across the elite-non-elite divide; women's story is rarely told, and when told, the women are not analyzed as the "agents of the narrative."[514] Hence, any attempt to recover the voices of the local also needs to address this deficiency.

This chapter aims to do this in the case of the anti-veiling campaigns. Its focus is twofold. First, it concentrates on non-elite actors at the local level. It discusses popular reactions and resistance to anti-veiling campaigns of the 1930s. It will be argued that, generally speaking, people's choice to mainly follow relatively "secure" strategies of resistance confirms Hobsbawm's analysis that the subordinate classes are rather more interested in "working the system… to their minimum disadvantage."[515] The trouble these strategies of resistance created at the local level, particularly for the local authorities who had to deal with them on the ground, also reveals that such resistance was quite effective.[516] However, it will also be demonstrated that the reactions of ordinary people to the anti-veiling campaigns reflect the diversity of responses to the policies of the state, which included circulating rumors, engaging in negative propaganda and sending anonymous complaint letters. In other

[514] Joan Wallach Scott, "Women in History: The Modern Period," *Past & Present* 101, November 1983, pp. 141-157.
[515] Eric Hobsbawm, "Peasant and Politics," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 1(1), 1973, pp. 3-22.
[516] James Scott also suggests that "such kinds of resistance are often the most significant and the most effective over the long run." See Scott, 1985, p. xvi. For an analysis of ordinary people's strategy of "working the system" in the Ottoman/Turkish context, see also Necmi Erdoğan, "Devleti 'İdare Etmek': Maduniyet ve Düzenbazlık," *Toplum ve Bilim* 83, Winter 1999/2000, pp. 8-31.

words, people were involved in acts and expressed attitudes that went beyond passive resistance in their everyday experience; they could attempt to challenge, negotiate, and influence the policies of the state.

Second, the chapter focuses on women and discuss their reactions to the anti-veiling campaigns in a separate section. Since the primary concern of the anti-veiling campaigns was women, it becomes all the more important to analyze their role and influence. My aim here is to highlight women's agency in the anti-veiling campaigns, to emphasis their "visibility" and to show their contribution in the shaping of the process at the local level. In doing so, I also aim to demonstrate the space the anti-veiling campaigns created for various forms of women's involvement in the campaigns, and thus the analysis of their agency should go beyond the dichotomy of passive compliance and resistance. The emphasis is on women's roles as subjects of Kemalist modernization in the provinces, rather than its object, and on their capacity to manipulate, adapt, modify and domesticate the new dress codes in complex ways.

II. Popular Resistance to Anti-Veiling Campaigns

As emphasized in the previous chapter, the state-centered and elite-centered approaches prevail in the literature on early republican Turkey. One important outcome of this dominance has been the failure to analyze ordinary people's responses and reactions to the tremendous changes the Kemalist reforms tried to introduce. The experience of the larger masses and their participation in the modernization process have been mostly overlooked. While Brockett focused on the examples of collective action against the secularist reforms of the regime, a few other historians have tried to focus on other means of responses, such as petitions, complaint letters and everyday forms of resistance.[517] In fact, putting well-known rebellions and incidences aside, people largely refrained from organized, mass resistance to Kemalist reforms, and instead opted for comparatively safer and easier strategies, such as putting a protest letter on the door of a mosque or circulating rumors and gossip. In this sense, people in Anatolia conform to Scott's analysis that "the most subordinate classes throughout most of history have rarely been afforded the luxury of open, organized, political activity."[518] In addition, the form of resistance has been

[517] See Brockett, 1998, 2006; Akın, 2007; Lamprou, 2007; Cemil Koçak, *Tek-Parti Döneminde Muhalif Sesler*, Istanbul: İletişim, 2011.
[518] Scott, 1985, p. xv.

closely related to the form of domination, the character of the regime, and people's expectations of retaliation.[519]

Popular resistance to women's unveiling in fact predates the organized anti-veiling campaigns of the mid-1930s. Considering the increasing number of women, especially in big cities, who had "modernized" their dress in some way since the late-Ottoman times, combined with the earlier attempts of anti-veiling campaigns in the 1920s, it is predictable that reactions to this transformation would also follow. For example, in 1929, a preacher at the Büyük Mosque in Yozgat, Ethem Hoca, claimed during his sermon that unveiled women (*açık gezen kadınlar*) were prostitutes.[520] He was put on trial because of this provocative insult and other "reactionary comments" he made. Apparently, he was also sent to court a year earlier for the same reason.[521] Such cases of religious-based opposition initiated by preachers or imams in the mosques continued in the 1930s, as well, and usually targeted the secularist policies of the regime, in general, categorized as "opposition to regime" in the official documents. However, in some reports, we see references to specific issues, such as women's unveiling. In May 1935, for example, at the peak of the anti-veiling campaigns all over the country, a certain Sheikh Musa was sent to court in Istanbul for criticizing the republican regime in his sermons. He was preaching against the regime's Westernizing policies, and particularly, its agenda to emancipate women and to remove the *çarşaf*.[522] Similarly, on 27 December 1935, in Mersin, a preacher by the name of Hadımlı Ahmet Hoca, told a crowd during his sermon at the Yeni Mosque that unveiled (*açık gezen*) women were shameless, and when they die, their funeral prayer should not be performed. Immediately, an investigation was launched into the case and Ahmet Hoca was arrested. Having heard of the incident, the Prime Ministry had felt the need to warn the Directorate of Religious Affairs. According to the Prime Ministry, the frequency of such

[519] Ibid., p. 36.
[520] The circular from the Minister of Interior to the Prime Ministry, PMRA 030.10/102.668.8, 21 February 1929. For the copy of the circular, see Koçak, 2011, p. 232.
[521] There were other examples where the accused were sent to court more than once for the same crime. In a limited number of cases, we know that those who were convicted received light punishments, like a month of imprisonment. More interestingly, some of these people could continue their positions as preachers or imams. Koçak rightly indicates that such examples show the looseness of the regime rather than its rigidity; it was either considering it unnecessary to issue harsher punishments for these kinds of crimes, or was hesitant to do so. See Koçak, 2011, p. 37-38.
[522] Caporal, 1982, p. 249. The news about Sheikh Musa was published in Tan newspaper on 23 May, 1935.

examples demonstrated that the directorate was not careful enough when selecting preachers.[523]

In the absence of organized opposition, it seems that the most common way of resistance to anti-veiling campaigns was to engage in negative propaganda about women's unveiling. In addition to the preachers and imams, ordinary people were also involved in such propaganda activities. Rumor was the main way in which people tried to communicate their discontent and to decrease social support for, or at least compliance with, the anti-veiling campaigns.[524] In the official communications between Ankara and various local actors in the provinces, as well, the fear of counter propaganda was in fact visible and such activities were usually mentioned as rumor or gossip. The phrases like "there is no negative propaganda" (*menfi propaganda yapılmadığı*), or "the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* have been removed without leaving any opportunity for discontent and gossip" (*hiçbir sızıltı ve dedikoduya meydan bırakmadan*) or "those with harmful ideas and aims were not allowed to act" (*fena fikir ve maksat takip edenlerin bu vasıta ve fenalıklardan istifadelerine meydan ve imkan verilmemiş*) were used by some governors in their reports, for example, probably to assure Ankara that they were successfully handling the threat of resistance.[525] In some cases, however, such propaganda activities against the anti-veiling campaigns were reported to Ankara by the local authorities. In the Seyitgazi district of the province of Eskişehir, for example, there were people who attempted to propagandize against the ban of the municipality on the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* by spreading the idea that unveiling was immoral and contrary to tradition. This was reported by the district governor of Seyitgazi to the governor of Eskişehir, who then

[523] For all correspondence between the Prime Ministry, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Justice and the Office of the Public Prosecutor of Mersin, see PMRA 030.10/26.151.7. Another imam in Mersin criticized the new image of women and the hat reform in his sermons. "Vay Yobaz," *Köroğlu*, 8 January 1936, quoted in Metinsoy, 2014.

[524] Even years after the anti-veiling campaigns, rumors that women would go back to wearing the *çarşaf* or men would remove the modern hat were circulated. It seems that there were expectations or propaganda that there would be retreat from certain reforms of the regime especially after Atatürk's death in November 1938. See Metinsoy, 2014.

[525] See, the letter from the Governor of Sivas to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 3 September 1935; the letter from the Governor of Yozgat to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 12 November 1935; and from the Governor of Kars to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 27 April 1936, respectively. As mentioned in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, the governor of Izmir, Fazlı Güleç, also used similar phrases even though there was no open ban on the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* in the city; nor even was there any visible anti-veiling campaign in Izmir. See Güleç's letter, TPNA 13216-7/1, 24 November 1937.

forwarded the news to the Ministry of Interior.[526] Having received the news, the ministry had asked the governor for the identities of those people and what measures had been taken regarding them.[527] Apparently, as mentioned in the previous section, the people of Seyitgazi had thought that the decision of the municipality to ban the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* would be implemented immediately and by force. Since the majority of them were poor farmer families, many women could not afford to buy an overcoat and thus had to wear men's overcoats. This created disquiet in the city and people begun publicly complaining about the situation. Consequently, the governor sent a letter to the ministry. In it he reported that, as further investigation revealed, people in fact were not engaged in negative propaganda against unveiling, but rather were complaining and gossiping about the immediate implementation of the ban.[528] The ban of Seyitgazi municipality advised that the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* be replaced by hats and overcoats; the complaints had grown out of the inability of people to obtain this "modern" clothing.

What was interesting about the case of Seyitgazi was that in addition to ordinary people who were accused of making these complaints, there were people who were engaged in the local politics and part of this "movement" (*cereyan*), as characterized in the report of the governor of Eskişehir. As mentioned in the previous chapter, some neighborhood delegates (*mahalle mümessilleri*) and members of the city council were accused of being involved in the opposition to the anti-veiling campaign. Thus, it seems, the public discontent over the implementation of the ban on the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* became part of a conflict between groups of local elites. If the accusations were correct, the head of the local party branch was indeed trying to challenge the mayor by a vote of no confidence, and interestingly, he was doing so by being part of, or at least by taking advantage of, the popular resistance that had emerged against the application process of the anti-veiling campaign. In fact, opposition or reluctance shown by some local elite in the course of the anti-veiling campaigns, especially against issuing of outright bans, often coincided with the social discontent already existing in the local community. In other words, while it was possible to encounter examples where some members of the city councils or even local party administrations in some cities

[526] Letter from the Governor of Eskişehir to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 22 January 1936.
[527] Letter from the Ministry of Interior to the Governor of Eskişehir, TNPA 13216-7/1, 31 January 1936.
[528] Letter from the Governor of Eskişehir to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 7 February 1936.

opposed these bans and thus were accused of being "fanatical" by the representatives of Ankara,[529] there were also cases, such as Trabzon, where the resistance shown by some local elite in the city council and social resistance shown by ordinary people complemented, and probably, reinforced, each other. Therefore, it is also important to keep in mind that it is not always possible to differentiate resistance by the elite and popular resistance; a native owner of a grocery store could be a member of the city council and could be accused of being part of the same opposition "movement" with an ordinary man complaining about the ban of the municipality, as in the case of Seyitgazi.[530]

Another form of resistance to anti-veiling campaigns was sending complaint letters to central authorities. These complaint letters could be written by lower-ranking officials who would accuse their superiors for their misconduct during implementation process of the campaigns, as in the case of Tosya district of Kastamonu, or by citizens themselves, as in the case of Ödemiş district of Izmir.[531] In fact, in the case of Ödemiş, we see a local notable, İsmail Efe, complaining to higher authorities after having already communicated with the local administrators himself. In his letter, İsmail Efe was saying that he had first told the district governor that the representatives in the parliament in Ankara did not have consent for the use of the police force in the issue of unveiling, but the district governor had paid no attention to this.[532] Thus, those local actors who were sending complaint letters were convinced that local administrators were acting without the consent of Ankara and thus exceeding their authority; or at least they had the hope that Ankara would not tolerate a forceful removal of women's veils. The complaint letters

[529] Such as the cases of Alanya district of the province of Antalya and Hadim district of the province of Konya. For more on opposition to anti-veiling campaigns by local elites, see Chapter 4.

[530] See the letter from the Governor of Eskişehir to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 7 February 1936.

[531] For the former, see the letter from second commissioner Tahsin to the General Directorate of Security, TNPA 13216-7/1, 21 August 1935. For the latter, see İsmail Efe's letter dated 18 December 1937, quoted in Yılmaz, 2006, pp. 78-79.

[532] İsmail Efe's letter is addressed to a certain Hamdi Bey, but Yılmaz does not explain the title of Hamdi Bey or his exact position other than stating that he was a high level state official. The interesting case with the letter of İsmail Efe is that he urges Hamdi Bey to let Celal Bey know about the situation. Thus his aim was in fact to reach Celal Bayar, the prime minister. As it is understood from his second letter, İsmail Efe had in fact known Celal Bayar personally, and had discussed this issue with him beforehand. This was how he knew that Ankara was against the use of force in the unveiling issue. For his second letter, see ibid., p. 82. For a more detailed discussion on İsmail Efe's case, see Chapter 4.

would also contain information about the social discontent such wrongdoings of local administrators created among ordinary people and thus warn Ankara about the possibility of a social reaction or harm in the image of the regime.

One sector of the society that constantly consulted the local authorities or tried to contact Ankara through letters against the anti-veiling campaigns was the weavers of the *çarşaf* or the *peştamal*. Since anti-veiling campaigns directly influenced their trade, the concern of the weavers of the *çarşaf* or *peştamal* was mainly economic. In fact, this group was not limited to the producers of the these veils; in places where the bans included certain men's clothes, those who were employed in weaving the fabric for the manufacture of these clothes also reacted and sent petitions to the authorities.[533] In some cases, weavers tried to influence the authorities in Ankara and limit the impact of the anti-veiling campaign in their localities by reporting all the misconduct in which the local administrators engaged in the implementation process of the bans on the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*. A certain weaver from Aydın, Dokumacı Ahmet Şevki, for example, even sent a telegraph to president Atatürk, explaining that horrendous instructions (*dehşetli emirler*), which included stationing watchmen in the streets and tearing off the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* of women, had been given by the local administrators to remove the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* in the province.[534] He characterized these acts as a violation of basic individual freedoms and law (*hürriyet şahsiye kanun ayaklar altında çiğnenmektedir*). Dokumacı Ahmet Şevki also informed the president that he reported these acts to the governorship of Aydın. However, the governorship had considered it enough to reply to his complaints by referring to the decision that banned the use of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*, and did not provide a further explanation. He asked the president to see to it that such actions be stopped if they were unlawful. As it is understood from his telegraph, Dokumacı Ahmet Şevki had also sent a telegraph to the president a year earlier, when there had

[533] One interesting case is the case of Maraş, where not only the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*, but also the baggy trousers of men, which were locally called *karadon* (literally, black pants), and *aba* (kind of a shirt without arms) were also banned. An owner of a weaving loom that was producing the fabric for *karadon*, Biçuv İbrahim from the Kılıç Ali neighborhood of Maraş, had sent petitions to the governorship, to the municipality, to the local party branch, as well as to the party headquarters in Ankara. The local authorities tried to convince him that he could produce the fabric for the modern trousers that the men of Maraş were now supposed to wear. They were also trying to help these weavers to establish a cooperative in order not to revitalize the craft. See correspondence from RPP Maraş Administration to RPP Secretariat General, PMRA 490.01/17.88.1, 24 January 1936.

[534] Telegraph from Dokumacı Ahmet Şevki to president Atatürk, TNPA 13216-7/1, 16 August 1935.

been attempts made by the governorship to remove the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*. Apparently, this earlier telegraph Şevki sent had an impact, and although it is not clear what they were, certain orders were sent to the governor of Aydın. Thus, Şevki was following the same strategy and applying to the president in order to limit the attempts of the governorship of Aydın.

The governor of Aydın, on the other hand, informed the Ministry of Interior on 17 August, 1935, one day after the telegraph of Dokumacı Ahmet Şevki, that the decision of the city council dated August 9th to ban the *peçe*, the *çarşaf*, and the *peştamal* had been received very well by the people of the province, and that no opposition or difficulty had been faced during the implementation.[535] The only opposition was that of a *peştamal* weaver, Şevki, who had informed the governorship that he would be left unemployed if the ban on the *peştamal* was implemented. He was informed that he could continue weaving the *peştamal* cloth to be used at the public baths, the *hamam*. The governor warned the ministry that the same weaver had send a telegraph to the president during the previous attempts at unveiling and managed to get some orders issued (*emir getirttiği*). According to the governor, it was also understood that Şevki would attempt to do the same this time as well. The governor finished his letter to the minister by characterizing Şevki as a person with a very low social status (*içtimai mevkii çok düşük*) and by indicating that they were also taking into consideration that "this guy" could encourage some action on the matter (*bu adamın teşvik eylemesi ihtimali göz önünde tutulmaktadır*), probably referring to the possibility that Şevki could engage in some propaganda activities against the anti-veiling campaign.

As mentioned above, the governor was indeed right in expecting Dokumacı Şevki to send a new telegraph to the president. Apart from the resistance of a *peştamal* weaver and his insistence on directly complaining to the president about the local affairs, the case of Dokumacı Şevki is also interesting in that it reveals how the Ministry of Interior handled such cases. The ministry sent to the governor of Aydın a code (*şifre*) asking for the identity of Ahmet Şevki, whether the signature on the telegraph was true or factitious, and what this guy wanted.[536] In other words, the ministry asked that an inquiry

[535] Letter from the Governor of Aydın to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 17 August 1935. The decision of the city council was put into practice on the 14th of August, only five days after the decision.

[536] Code from the Minister of Interior to the Governorship of Aydın, TNPA 13216-7/1, 26 August 1935. This code was sent as an urgent case and was a supplement to a previous code dated August 23rd, which was less detailed. It seems that some additions were made probably

be made about Ahmet Şevki by the governorship. The governor of Aydın, Salim Günday, responded to the code of the ministry with a detailed explanation of who Ahmet Şevki was and what he wanted.[537] According to the report of the governor, Ahmet Şevki was originally from Buldan, and he was mainly an artisan whose job was to weave and sell the *peştamal* garb. He was also known as the husband of a girl from Dinar (*Dinarlı kızın kocası*), since he got married to a "free" girl (*serbest kadın*) from Dinar when he was young. He had no reputable social position among the people and he was a half-wit (*yarım akıllı*). In previous years, when there had been attempts to remove the *peştamal* in Aydın, Şevki again sent "exaggerated" telegraphs and petitions to Atatürk, to the Prime Ministry, and to the ministries, and had managed to postpone the initiative. The governor again rejected Ahmet Şevki's accusations and assured the ministry that the implementation of the ban was uneventful and not a single woman was fined. Apparently, Ahmet Şevki had tried to encourage opposition against unveiling by showing people the response he received from Atatürk to his telegraph a year earlier. His actions, however, had been ineffectual, according to the governor. No opposition to or complaints about the ban on the on the *peçe*, the *çarşaf* or the *peştamal* in the province of Aydın had been received, and, having seen this, Ahmet Şevki had changed his attitude.

Unfortunately, there is no information in this correspondence regarding Atatürk's response to Ahmet Şevki's telegraph in 1934. It is interesting, however, to note that Atatürk indeed had replied to the complaint he received about anti-veiling campaigns, and apparently, due to his intervention, the campaign that year had been postponed, as it is indicated in the governor's letter. It is also not certain whether the president received Ahmet Şevki's telegraph in 1935. It is also interesting to see that the ministry's reaction to Ahmet Şevki's constant complaints was quite skeptical, despite the fact that the governor explained the reason behind his opposition to the campaign as being mainly economic. In response to the governor's letter, the ministry reminded the governor in Aydın that Ahmet Şevki's intention could very well stem from his reactionary ideas, rather than from his economic concerns.[538] In other words, the ministry was not satisfied with governor's

by the minister or his undersecretary; the owner of the hand-writing in the document is not clear. There is another supplement dated August 24th, all in the same file.

[537] From the Governor of Aydın to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 26 August 1935.

[538] From the Minister of Interior to the Governor of Aydın, TNPA 13216-7/1, 7 September 1935. In the same file, there is a letter from the undersecretary to the minister, Şükrü Kaya, informing him about the response the governor of Aydın had sent. See, letter from the

explanation and asked him to follow Ahmet Şevki more closely, to send his photograph, and to investigate on whose behalf he was acting and whether he was a member a religious order (*tarikat*). The ministry also urged the governor that necessary measures should be taken to prevent Ahmet Şevki from disturbing "high authorities." It is evident that the ministry was uncomfortable with Ahmet Şevki's telegraphs to the president. Having received the additional order, the governor sent another letter after a few weeks, summarizing the results of his investigation:

> 1- Dokumacı Ahmet Şevki's situation is being closely monitored.
> 2- Based on the investigations so far, although it is understood that he has a poor character and morals and is tainted by his addiction to gambling, no relationship had been detected between him and any religious order. In my opinion, he was provoked by a few backward-minded people on the issue of the *peştamal*, and encouraged by the reply he had received to his telegraph to Atatürk the previous year, he repeated the same initiative this year. He is a worthless person with no position in his own community, and with a tainted past. He has no relationship with the religious orders.
> 3- We are trying to find Ahmet Şevki's photograph. I respectfully submit that it will be sent as soon as it is obtained.[539]

The case of Dokumacı Ahmet Şevki of Aydın shows that any attempt at questioning or complaining about the anti-veiling campaigns was associated with a potentially more general ideological opposition to the regime and was thus approached with great suspicion by the Ministry of Interior. A similar reaction of the ministry can be seen in another case as well. On 18 September 1935, the governor of the province of Konya sent a letter to the Ministry of Interior indicating that a certain man named Taşçı Ahmet (Ahmet the stonecutter) from the sub-district (*nahiye*) of Sille had circulated a rumor that a gendarmerie soldier who had been assigned a task in one of the villages was killed because he tried to remove a woman's *çarşaf*.[540] Supposedly, he was killed by the brothers of the woman who was attacked. Ahmet had also told

undersecretary of the ministry of interior to the minister of interior Şükrü Kaya, 13216-7/1, 2 September 1935. There is a hand-written note on the letter saying that Ahmet Şevki could possibly have reactionary intentions. This is probably the minister's own writing. Based on this note, it seems, the ministry has sent a second order to the governor asking for more investigation.

[539] From the Governor of Aydın to the Ministry of Interior, 13216-7/1, 1 October 1935.

[540] From the Governor of Konya to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 18 September 1935.

people of his hometown Sille that a policeman and a gendarmerie were also killed for the same reason in the center of Konya. Having heard about such talk, the governorship had begun an investigation, and as a result, had found out that Ahmet was responsible for them. Upon being questioned, Ahmet said that he had heard about the killings while three men were talking at a coffeehouse in the province center. However, he could not identify the people from whom he had heard the story. His case was sent to the court as the police was of the opinion that he himself had created false stories and helped spread them, even among the little children of Sille. The Ministry of Interior again found the case suspicious and asked the governor of Konya to closely watch Ahmet's situation, to investigate his ethnic origin and whether he had any connections from outside (*hariçle ilgisi olup olmadığının*), and to send Ahmet's picture and fingerprints.[541] Twenty days later, the governor of Konya sent the picture and fingerprints, but assured the ministry that Ahmet was an ignorant man who had not engaged in any anti-regime activity in the past. There was also no information indicating that he had any connections from outside (*hariçle de bir ilgisi işidilmemiştir*).

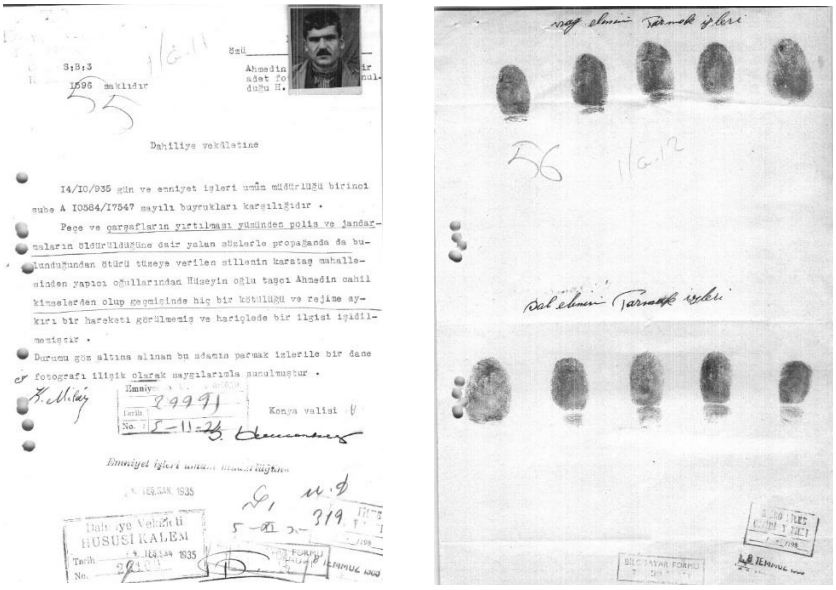

Figure 5.1. Letter sent by the governor of Konya to the Ministry of Interior to which Taşçı Ahmet's picture and fingerprints were attached. TNPA 13216-7/1, 5 November 1935.

[541] From the Ministry of Interior to the Governor of Konya, TNPA 13216-7/1, 14 October 1935.

Based on the existing documents, it is impossible to tell for sure whether the stories told by Taşçı Ahmet about the killing of two gendarmerie soldiers and a policeman in the province of Konya were at all true. However, the killing of or attacks against the gendarmerie, the police officers or the municipal police forces because they intervened in women's clothing during the implementation of the anti-veiling campaigns were in fact not pure construction. In the province of Trabzon, for example, the British Pro-Consul reported that a man had killed a gendarmerie soldier who had forcibly removed his wife's veil in the district capital of Akçaabat.[542] As discussed in the previous chapter, some local administrators had had a very hard time in handling cases of resistance to the implementation of the bans on the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* through the use of police force. The mayor of Trabzon had received anonymous letters threatening his life. His wife was physically attacked in the street and injured.[543] Similarly, the governor of Gaziantep was accused of retreating from his initial firm position on the issue of unveiling because he had received threatening letters.[544] Thus, in addition to attacks against the police forces and soldiers, it seems that sending threatening letters to the local authorities who were seen as responsible for the anti-veiling campaigns, or even targeting their unveiled female family members, were ways some people used to stop the anti-veiling campaigns, or at least to prevent the authorities from using force while implementing the bans.

III. How to approach women's agency

A great deal has been achieved in the last four decades in making women a subject of historical enquiry.[545] From major historical developments to the histories of ordinary people, "her-story" has begun to be told and thus the conventional historiography, in which women were mainly invisible, has been challenged. Feminist historians, aiming to go beyond simply incorporating women into old schools of social history or writing "her-story" as supplementary to the existing grand narratives, have increasingly begun to use

[542] Letter from the British Pro-consul in Trabzon to British Embassy in Ankara, FO371/20087, 16 April 1936.
[543] Ibid.
[544] From Mr. Yazıcıoğlu to General Director of the Police Şükrü Sökmensüer, TNPA 13216-7/1, 1 June 1936.
[545] For a general discussion on the achievements of feminist historians, see Joan Wallach Scott, "Feminism's History," *Journal of Women's History* 16(2), Summer 2004, pp. 10-29. See also commentaries to Scott's article in the same issue.

gender as an analytic category.[546] The objective in doing this has been to emphasize that gender is not a separate or complementary topic of analysis but rather a fundamental and essential part of any historical narrative. Studying gender is a method for rewriting history; it consists of not only analyzing men and women in relation to one another, but also studying how gender shapes the structure of social, economic and political authority.[547] Scott explains this in the following way:

> The realization of the radical potential of women's history comes in the writing of narratives that focus on women's experience *and* analyze the ways in which politics construct gender and gender constructs politics. Female agency then becomes not the recounting of great deeds performed by women, but the exposure of the often silent and hidden operations of gender which are nonetheless present and defining forces of politics and political life.[548]

The use of gender as an analytic category, and in relation to that, feminist approaches to women's agency, have been informed by the questions raised about the structuralist analyses of power and domination.[549] In the feminist understanding of agency, women's choices, behaviors and reactions are not determined by structure (i.e., patriarchy); they have a capacity to act upon their world and "to reinterpret received gender models contextually."[550]

As Najmabadi points out, however, the achievements of feminist history have been geographically uneven.[551] While a longer distance has been

---

[546] See Natalie Zemon Davis, "'Women's History' in Transition: The European Case," *Feminist Studies* 3(3/4), Spring-Summer 1976, pp. 83-103. See also, Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91(5), December 1986, pp. 1053-1075.

[547] Scott, 1983, p. 153.

[548] Ibid., p. 156. For more, see also Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1989.

[549] Scott, for example, suggested that an understanding of power as unified, coherent and centralized should be replaced by a Foucauldian understanding of power, which leaves room for human agency. See Joan W. Scott, 1986, p. 1067.

[550] Azam Torab, "Piety as Gendered Agency: A Study of Jalaseh Ritual Discourse in an Urban Neighborhood in Iran," *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 2(2), June 1996, pp. 235-252. Torab refers to Inden's discussion on agency in his first chapter. See Ronald B. Inden, *Imagining India*, Bloomington: Indiana University, Press, 2000.

[551] Afsaneh Najmabadi, "From Supplementarity to Parasitism," *Journal of Women's History* 16(2), Summer 2004, pp. 30-35. Najmabadi also notes the temporal unevenness of the achievements of feminist history. "Much of our success story is located in the present. Feminist re-mapping of the fields of ancient history, even medieval and early modern, is far less developed than modern Euro-America."

covered in European and American history, in Middle Eastern history, less progress has been achieved in introducing women into social history, and gendering history is still a marginal endeavor. Studies about women in modern Middle Eastern history have mainly focused on outlining women's roles in the nationalist movements of the late 19th century and in the modernizing reforms that were put into practice once independence was gained and nation-states were established in the region. In other words, the most popular topic has been the link between nationalism and modernization, and the centrality of the "woman question" in this framework.[552] While most studies have tried to deal with this question and have focused on what this centrality entailed for women by writing her-story, relatively fewer analyses have attempted to deal with the issue of how gender fundamentally altered the way modernity was imagined and constructed, and how central women's agency was in this construction.[553] As Paidar stressed in her work on Iran, any discourse on the question of political and social reorganization of the society, whether the discourse of the political elite or that of other societal actors, has indeed entailed a redefinition of gender relations,[554] and women were part of this redefinition process. Because portraying Muslim women as submissive and passive receivers of patriarchal male policies and domination has been historically very salient, especially in the West, feminist scholars of the region have paid particular attention to the question of Middle Eastern women's agency. Although an important contribution has been made in this vein, the focus has largely been on women's movements, which were mainly composed of upper-middle class educated women. In other words, understandably, vanguards of feminism and women's rights in major countries of the region were the topic of early works and the emphasis, thus, has remained largely on feminist agency.

Nevertheless, though limited, a wider discussion on women's agency has also emerged in the field of Middle Eastern women's studies and the

---

[552] For example, see Kumari Jayawerdena, *Feminism and Nationalism in the Third World*, London: Zed Books, 1986; Chadra Talpade Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Laurdes Torres (eds.), *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991; Deniz Kandiyoti (ed.), *Women, Islam and the State*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991; Valentine Moghadam (ed.), *Gender and National Identity: Women and Politics in Muslim Societies*, London: Zed Books, 1994.

[553] For example, see Lila Abu-Lughod (ed.), *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernism in the Middle East*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998. For examples of case studies emphasizing women's agency, see Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society and the Press*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994 and Parvin Paidar, *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

[554] Paidar, 1995, p. 2.

question of how to approach and analyze this agency has received more attention recently. In her ethnographic study of an urban women's mosque movement in Cairo, which has emerged as a part of the Islamic revival in Egypt in recent decades, Saba Mahmood questions the model of agency that "seeks to locate the political and moral autonomy of the subject in the face of power" and argues that such an understanding of agency severely limits our capacity to understand the lives of women who participate in religious movements such as the one she studies.[555] Although such movements can be seen as male-dominated, it would be misleading, she claims, to explain women's participation in them as false consciousness or internalization of patriarchal norms. By referring to the feminist literature that examines how women use the conceptual and practical resources of various religious traditions to foster their own interests, she suggests that this too should be seen as a site of women's agency.

Here again, Mahmood's suggestion is to go beyond restoring the absent voices of women and showing their roles in the making of history. Moreover, her proposal is to enlarge the existing feminist literature by taking into consideration the instances where women do not engage in an "explicit *feminist* agency," and to "look for expressions and moments of resistance that may suggest a challenge to male domination."[556] She advocates thinking of agency "not simply as a synonym for resistance to relations of domination, but as a capacity for action that specific relations of *subordination* enable and create."[557] This is a capacity to act, to the extent that it is possible, to achieve one's interest, choice or self-expression. As regards to women's agency, this capacity refers to women's efforts to shape their own lives in whatever way possible.

There are two important repercussions of such an understanding of agency. First, as Mahmood stresses, it enables one to see power as a set of relations that not only dominates the subject, but also creates possibilities for her. Following Foucauldian analysis and Butler's concept of "subjectivation," Mahmood reminds us that the very conditions and processes that subordinate women can also provide the means through which they become agents. In fact, an increasing number of studies in the field of Ottoman/Turkish women's history have begun to rethink the changing state policies and modernizing

[555] Saba Mahmood, "Feminist Theory, Embodiment and the Docile Agent: Some Reflections on the Egyptian Islamic Revival," *Cultural Anthropology* 16(2), 2001, pp. 202-236.
[556] Mahmood, 2001, p. 206. Emphasis in the original.
[557] Ibid., p. 210. Emphasis in the original.

reforms in this sense. In her study of the politicization of reproduction in the 19th century Ottoman Empire, Gülhan Balsoy, for example, looks at the ways in which policies to discipline the female body, and to regulate and medicalize women's sexuality, which mainly aimed at establishing a legal and medical control over women's lives, enabled women to situate themselves as agents.[558] Ottoman government's laws and regulations banning abortion, she argues, cannot be read only as signs of absolute state domination over women's bodies. It was also through these laws and regulations that Ottoman women gained legal subjectivity.[559] Balsoy also reminds us that the state attempts to control female sexuality and body were never without limitations and contentions, and as repressive as they were in many respects, they entailed opportunities for women.[560] Likewise, the prescriptive books and news discourses on pregnancy and childbirth that emerged in the 19th century "were both empowering and oppressive at the same time."[561] They were drawing new limits and boundaries for women, but also attributing responsibility to them. By analyzing these new milieus of state control and domination over women's bodies and sexuality as part of the pronatalist policies of the 19th century Ottoman state, Balsoy concludes that "in return for bearing the children needed for a prosperous country, women received their share in the promised redefinition of the relationship between the Ottoman state and society."[562]

Second, such an analysis of women's agency is also giving rise to thinking about women's acts, attitudes, choices and motivations that goes beyond the dichotomy of resistance and subordination.[563] In other words, there may be a variety of ways women react to social and political changes that impact their lives, including but not limited to open resistance and full submission. In addition, what seems to be resistance or compliance in the first

---

[558] Gülhan Balsoy, *The Politics of Reproduction in Ottoman Society, 1838-1900*, London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013.

[559] For a similar analysis, see Selçuk Akşin Somel, "Osmanlı Son Döneminde Iskat-ı Cenin Meselesi," *Kebikeç* 13, 2002, pp. 65-88. See also Tuba Demirci and Selçuk Akşin Somel, "Women's Bodies, Demography, and Public Health: Abortion Policy and Perspectives in the Ottoman Empire of the Nineteenth Century," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17(3), 2008, pp. 377-420.

[560] See chapter 3 in Balsoy, 2013, pp. 51-75.

[561] Ibid., p. 80.

[562] Ibid., p. 75.

[563] In fact, Mahmood's analysis departs from Butler's analysis of agency in the last instance, as she thinks that Butler's "theorization of agency (as much as her demonstrations of it) are almost always derived from, and directed at, the articulation of resistance to social norms and the subordinating function of power." Mahmood, 2001, p. 211.

instance may very well not be intended as such by women themselves. Or, even if women's first reaction was compliance, it might not mean submission to domination. On the contrary, it might be one way of, and possibly the most rational/effective tactic for, handling the situation. As Torab underlines, compliance provides security and social recognition for women in certain contexts, and can be turned into an advantage, a source of power. Thus "compliance is often the result of rational assessment of the situation and its viable alternatives. It is not always a matter of simple choice, nor does it automatically entail agreement."[564] Likewise, there may be instances of "resistance" that are "momentary, fragile and often not even conscious."[565] Similarly, women may behave such that simultaneous processes of compliance and resistance can be seen. It is imperative to analyze, therefore, women's reactions and attitudes through such a multifaceted conception of agency. This is also necessary to avoid attributing an unchanging essence to women. As Inden notes, we need to keep in mind that "all agents are relatively complex and shifting."[566] In other words, women do not act in isolation, but in relationship to one another and within the constraints generated by the male-dominated social structure and male agents. Moreover, their actions are subject to change based on the context within which they find themselves.

This chapter aims to demonstrate that the anti-veiling campaigns in early republican Turkey and the ways in which women reacted to them reflect such a multi-layered notion of agency. An important body of literature is available analyzing the impact of the modernizing reforms of the early republic on women and women's changing social status in the society. Feminist scholars of modern Turkey have successfully revealed that although the Kemalist regime had championed a discourse of women's emancipation, women were largely instrumentalized and they were seen mainly as objects of social change rather than as active subjects.[567] This gendered analysis of

---

[564] Torab, 1996, p. 245.
[565] Ibid., p. 238.
[566] Inden, 2000, p. 2.
[567] For example, see Şirin Tekeli (ed.), *Women in Modern Turkish Society: A Reader*, London: Zed Books, 1994; Deniz Kandiyoti, *Cariyeler, Bacılar, Yurttaşlar: Kimlikler ve Toplumsal Dönüşümler*, Istanbul: Metis, 1997; Deniz Kandiyoti, "Gendering the Modern: On Missing Diemsions in the Study of Turkish Modernisty," in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (eds.), Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997, pp. 113-132; Yeşim Arat, "The Project of Modernity and Women in Turkey," in *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey*, Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba (eds.), Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1997, pp. 95-112; Zehra F. Arat, 1998; and Berktay, 1998.

Kemalism finds its most salient and famous formulation in Kandiyoti's article summarizing women as "emancipated but unliberated" citizens of the new republic.[568] It should be underlined that this feminist critique has been essential in decoding the patriarchal nature of the new regime and its reforms as far as the gender roles and women's social positions are concerned.

As Bozdoğan emphasizes, however, this compelling critique "does not alter the progressiveness of the reforms as viewed in their own time, especially by women themselves, who felt empowered by their new rights and new visibility in public life."[569] In other words, patriarchal and limited as they were, the legal and social reforms introduced by the Kemalist regime significantly *increased* the space and capacity for women's visibility and participation in the public life, as well as for their empowerment in their personal lives. Similar to Najmabadi's analysis of Iranian modernization, one can argue that the Kemalist project of modernity can also be seen as simultaneously regulatory/controlling and empowering for women.[570] Moreover, some women, at least, were active supporters and even initiators of the Kemalist reforms. This agency of course was not limited to compliance and support. If we turn our attention away from the discourse and reforms of the Kemalist elite at the center and look more at the ways in which policies were implemented at the local level, we can see that women could influence these policies in many different ways. That is to say, although it has been much less appreciated in the literature, women had as much an impact on the shaping and implementation of the Kemalist reforms as they were influenced by them. Especially the policies such as the anti-veiling campaigns, which were mainly local in character and put into practice based on the discussions and negotiations at the local level, allowed even larger space for women's agency. If all the complexities of the campaigns that were discussed in the previous chapters are taken into consideration, one can understand better that there was in fact a wide range of possibilities for the new dress codes to be manipulated in the public sphere and women had the capacity to adapt, modify and/or resist them in various ways. Thus, this chapter suggests that the feminist critique of

[568] Kandiyoti, 1987.
[569] Bozdoğan, 2001, p. 82.
[570] Najmabadi claims that the discourse of domesticity and the idea of serving the state enabled Iranian women to acquire more education and the right to work, and to participate in the public sphere. However, at the same time, these rights were subjected to the agendas of women. See Afsaneh Najmabadi, "Crafting an Educated Housewife in Iran," in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernism in the Middle East*, Lila Abu-Lughod (ed.), New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1998, pp. 91-125.

early republic has to be revisited and enlarged in order to reflect this complexity of women's reactions and roles in the shaping of the Kemalist experience.

IV. Women in the Anti-Veiling Campaigns

As discussed in detail in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, anti-veiling campaigns in the 1930s were much more effective than the earlier attempts to remove the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* in the 1920s. They were more organized, wide-spread and determined; they more consistently targeted the use of the *peçe*, the *çarşaf* and other local veils and replaced them with "modern" clothing through the power of local institutions and actors, including municipalities, members of the local sports clubs, governors and members of teachers' associations. They had a strong impact on the shaping of new gender roles and codes not only in the political sphere, state offices and educational institutions, and the urban space, but also in the daily life of ordinary people, at the heart of gender relations in the private sphere. In this sense, however inconsistent and ambiguous in practice and diverse in discourse they were, it should be underlined that these campaigns nevertheless touched the lives of many women.

This section aims to discuss how women responded to these campaigns and to show the diversity of these responses. As mentioned in the previous section, women's agency is conceptualized here as women's capacity to act and is seen as consisting of more than the dichotomy of resistance and subordination. Thus, dividing the section into two sub-sections only serves to present the discussion in a more organized way rather than to reproduce this dichotomy. The sub-sections and various types of women's reactions they discuss should be read as a continuum or scale of responses women could embrace; while different groups of women in the same city could follow different strategies, negative or positive, to the same anti-veiling campaign, a particular woman could also change her attitude towards veiling or unveiling in time depending on the changing dynamics/conditions around her.

IV.a. Non-compliance, resistance, selective adaptation

Public discourse on anti-veiling campaigns in the 1930s, as it was reflected in the local newspapers, overwhelmingly emphasized women's compliance. News reports and articles about the anti-veiling campaigns tended to mention

women's approval of the changes and their willingness to adopt the new clothes. This was partly a result of the propaganda the local newspapers had initiated; they shared a similar language to imply how the bans on the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* were well-received and enthusiastically supported, particularly by women, by using titles like "women remove their *peçe*" or "women throw off their *çarşaf*". In fact, such reports highlighted women's agency on purpose; it was a strategy, a part of the attempt to present these campaigns as local initiatives, as changes stemming from women's genuine desire to alter their clothing. However, below the surface of this propaganda, there were many ways in which women tried to resist anti-veiling campaigns or at least to limit the influence the campaigns had on their own choices.

One common way women used to resist unveiling was disobedience. There were women who continued to wear the *peçe* or the *çarşaf* in the public sphere despite the existence of open bans in their cities.[571] In Bursa, for example, a local newspaper reported on 10 October 1935 that because of women's disobedience, the municipal police had to apply legal sanctions, and, as a result, over a hundred women were fined for wearing the *peçe* or the *çarşaf* in a few months' time.[572] It seems, however, that such actions of the municipal police were insufficient to overcome women's disobedience in the city. In the following months, the existence of women who insisted on wearing the *peçe* or the *çarşaf* continued to draw the attention of some local newspapers and some members of the city council in Bursa.[573] There were discussions on the implementation process of the ban, and some argued for an even more vigorous enforcement of the council decisions.[574] Another place where women insisted on wearing the *çarşaf* despite the ban and the threat of

[571] In addition to women's incompliance, there were also worries about men who would use the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* to hide themselves. As mentioned in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3, this had been a major concern of the authorities since the Ottoman times. It seems that this continued to be a source of fear during the anti-veiling campaigns in the 1930s as well. The governor of the province of Elâziz was reporting that although women abided by the ban on the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*, there could still be harmful people who would wear women's veils and would enter the province for bad purposes. The security forces were watchful for such cases. See the letter from the governor of Elâziz to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 5 November 1935.

[572] "Çarşaflar Kalkıyor," *Hakkın Sesi*, 10 October 1935. The same newspaper was reporting at the beginning of November that the municipal police had drew up a total of 700 records (*zabıt varakası*) on various matters in the last four months, and some of these records were on the cases of disobedience to the *çarşaf* ban. See "Uray zabıtası dört ay içinde neler yaptı?," *Hakkın Sesi*, 7 November 1935.

[573] See "Kendi kendilerini cezalandıranlar…," *Hakkın Sesi*, 30 November 1935 and "Peçeli Kadınlar," *Hakkın Sesi*, 24 December 1935.

[574] "Dünkü Uray Kurulunda," *Hakkın Sesi*, 15 February 1936.

fine was Sivas. Two sisters who were fined for entering a government office with their black *çarşaf*s, did not hesitate to write a letter to Ankara, complaining about the fines issued by the local authorities, arguing that there was no law banning these veils.[575] In Denizli, there were also women who continued to wear the *peştamal* veil in certain neighborhoods in the provincial center, and in some district centers and villages.[576] Local newspapers of the city reported some of those women who were fined by publicly listing their names.[577] Similar news about women who tried to avoid authorities by hiding from them or reports mentioning women's insistence on using the *peçe* or the *çarşaf,* especially in the remote neighborhoods away from city centers, can also be seen in other provinces.[578] Sometimes, the continued use of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* in some cities could create reactions in other cities where the bans were implemented. The situation in the big cities, such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, had a particularly great impact on people living in the provinces. The head of the local party branch in Yozgat, Yusuf Duygu, for example, complained that people from Yozgat who travelled to these big cities and saw women there wearing the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* were surprised about Yozgat's insistence on unveiling when they returned.[579] Thus, he indicated to the General Secretary of the RPP that it was critical that these veils be removed

[575] See Metinsoy, 2014.
[576] See Uyar, 2006, p. 573.
[577] Uyar cites two news reports from the newspapers *Denizli* and *Babadağ*, which mention the names of ten women in total from various neighborhoods and towns of Denizli who were fined in November and December 1935: in the province center, a certain Hatice from Kaplanlar neighborhood, Ganime from Eskimüftü neighborhood, and Fatma (the wife of Kalak O. Ömer) from Gerzile village; in the district of Sarayköy, Ayşe from the Hatipoğlu neighborhood, Zeliha from Yeniköy village, Şerife from Bereketler village; in the district of Honaz, Hatice from the Beylerce village, Ayşe from the Irlıganlı village, and Hatice (the wife of İbrahim) from Haydar neighborhood; and Rabia from Şahanlar neighborhood of the district of Acıpayam. See ibid, p. 573 and fnt. 82.
[578] For example, for Konya, see "Zaman ilerler ilerlemezden sürükler," *Babalık*, 18 January 1936; for Çorum, see From the Governor of Çorum to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 22 November 1935. As reported by the police, in Adana as well, many women continued to wear the *çarşaf* even after the decision of the city council to ban the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*. The date of the report is not stated. See Metinsoy, 2014. In 1939, the governors of the provinces of Tokat and Urfa were also reporting to Ankara that women continued to wear the *çarşaf*. These reports are quoted in Metinsoy, 2014. However, it is not clear in Metinsoy's account whether there were organized anti-veiling campaigns in these two provinces in the 1930s.
[579] Letter from the Head of Yozgat RPP branch to the Secretariat General of RPP in Ankara, PMRA 490.01/17.88.1, 13 November 1935. Yusuf Duygu was one of those delegates who supported a general law banning the use of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* at the party congress in May 1935. For more, see Chapter 4.

very rapidly, altogether everywhere, especially in big cities. This consistency was significant in order to prevent rumor and discontent in the periphery.

If women did not or could not challenge the bans by open disobedience, they tried to find other ways to handle them. One way was to minimize, as much as possible, the frequency at which they left their houses. In other words, some women tried to avoid adopting the newly imposed outdoor clothes such as overcoats by remaining in their private spheres. A complaint letter sent from Tosya, a district of the province of Kastamonu, to the General Directorate of Security indicates that the decision of the city council to ban the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* was implemented in the district center by using the gendarmerie.[580] As claimed in the letter, the soldiers forcefully removed some women's *çarşaf* in the middle of the street, leaving them in a very difficult situation.[581] Having seen or heard these instances, women in the district center and in the villages refrained from leaving their houses. Village women who were accustomed to regularly visiting the district center on the day of the city market stopped going to Tosya. [582] Similarly, in Maraş, there were women who did not step outside their houses for years, as reported by the governor in 1939. Some of them preferred to travel in carriages at night to visit their relatives.[583]

Another way in which women handled the ban on the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* was using alternative means to cover themselves. The most noteworthy of these alternative means was to use umbrellas to replace the *peçe*. Women would hide their face with the umbrellas they carried so they could follow the norms of veiling without violating the ban. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the governor of Ordu complained that some women began to carry umbrellas unnecessarily. [584] Similarly, in Maraş and Kilis, women were using umbrellas day and night to hide themselves.[585] In Rize, the use of umbrella for

---

[580] From second commissioner Tahsin to the General Directorate of Security, TNPA 13216-7/1, 21 August 1935.

[581] The author was claiming that women were left with their "pants" in the middle of the street: *… kadınları "donları ile" sokak ortasında bırakmaktadırlar*. Quotation marks in the original letter.

[582] Similarly, a complaint letter from the Ödemiş district of the province of Izmir was also stating that women could not go out to the market in the city because of the anti-veiling campaign. See Yılmaz, 2006, p. 78.

[583] The report of the governor of Maraş dated 23 March 1939 is quoted in ibid., p. 73.

[584] Copy of the Declaration on the *Peçe,* the *Çarşaf* and the *Peştamal* ban by the Governor of Ordu, TNPA 13216-7/1, 5 March 1937.

[585] For Maraş, see the copy of the Report of Mitat Aydın, deputy of Trabzon, PMRA 490.01/273.1091.2, 7 May 1943. See also Yılmaz, 2006, p. 73. For Kilis, see "Kiliste Şemsiye Modası," *Son Posta*, 17 December 1935.

veiling purposes reached such a level that the decision of the city council to ban the *peçe* also asked women to not carry umbrellas.[586] In addition to the use of umbrellas, some different combinations of outdoor attire that would provide women with a middle ground, that is, that would not violate either the bans on the *çarşaf* or the traditional customs, also prevailed. Hence, using long and wide (usually black) headscarves, and preferring overcoats that reached the heels, thus providing a veiling closer to full-body covering, could also be seen as means employed by women to overcome the difficulty the banning of the *çarşaf* had created for them.[587]

One indication of women's reluctance to adopt the new clothes was the frequency of notices published in the newspapers calling on women to abide by the decisions. In Trabzon, for example, where there was also resistance by some male members in the city council against issuing a ban, a lot of women were hesitant to remove their *peçe* and *çarşaf*.[588] Therefore, several articles and notices were published in the local newspapers to convince women that the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* were inappropriate customs, not Islamic, and were the major obstacles to women's progress and participation in the social life. The emphasis on the "non-Islamic" character of the *peçe* and *çarşaf* was particularly visible, showing that there was a widespread perception that those women who insisted on wearing these veils were doing so because of religious reasons. There was also a perception that women were reluctant to comply with the necessities of a "modern" social life because of the conservative attitude of the Turkish society in general, or because traditional norms (not necessarily Islamic) were very dominant. Those who stressed this dominance of the traditional norms as the major obstacle before the modernization of women's clothing also referred to the social resistance to women's public visibility in general. The same local newspapers in Trabzon that complained about women who insisted on wearing the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* also complained that women were not active in the public life of the city in general. For example, women were not willing to participate in the activities of the People's House. The inability of the theater section of the Trabzon People's House to stage plays, for example, was directly related to the

[586] See "Rizede Peçeler ve Çarşaflar Kalkıyor," *Yeni Asır*, 1 March 1935.

[587] Such preferences by women were also stigmatized as resistance to the anti-veiling campaigns by some local authorities. See Chapter 4.

[588] There were also complaints that women's insistence on wearing the *çarşaf* would harm the image of Trabzon as a "modern," "progressive" city. For example, see "Eni konu konuşmalar…," Halk, 11 April 1935.

disinclination of women to appear on stage.[589] Even the women teachers in the city were reluctant to participate in such activities.[590] Having seemed to understand that women were trapped between the traditional norms and the necessities of the "new" life, these male authors would nevertheless not abstain from blaming women for their inability to overcome this difficulty - for not being brave enough to challenge this social pressure. Cemal Rıza, a columnist in *Halk*, addressed the women of Trabzon by saying that it was unacceptable for them to still be reluctant to join the modern social life, and not to be able to get rid of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* after all the progress they had accomplished in other fields:

> The revolution has given you the rights you have been denied for centuries. You have gained all the seats you deserve. Is there any point in looking at your rights from behind the *kafes*? You too know, see and enumerate the meaninglessness of bad customs, of useless habits. Why do you not get rid of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*? There is a sun, a life, a light awaiting your new existence that got rid of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*? What difficulty do you see in front of reaching this life, this light as soon as possible?[591]

Another common theme in explaining resistance or hesitance of women to removing the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* was that they were forced by men to continue to wear these veils.[592] Male authors of the newspapers were especially alert to men's attitudes regarding unveiling, and did not hesitate to address them directly in their articles: Turkish men would not represent their sisters to the world in a bad way, as backward women;[593] and their reluctance (rather than women's) could be the real reason for the slow pace of progress in unveiling.[594] There was also propaganda calling on women to be strong vis-

[589] "Gösterit işleri neden çalışamıyor?" *Halk*, 3 October 1935.
[590] There were similar complaints in other places as well. The reluctance of women teachers to participate in the plays displayed by the People's Houses was an issue even in places like Izmir, a relatively more advanced and less conservative province. For a recent and important article on this issue, see Alexandros Lamprou, "Halkevi Sahnesinde 'Yeni Türk Kadını': 1930'lu ve 1940'lı yıllarda kadınlı-erkekli yeniliklerin sahnelenmesi," *Toplum ve Bilim* 130, 2014, pp. 6-35.
[591] "Peçe ve Çarşaf, Şehrimizin Sayın Bayanlarına," *Halk*, 19 December 1935. See also "Peçe ve Çarşaf, Şehrimizin Sayın Bayanlarına," *Halk*, 23 December 1935.
[592] In fact, the idea that women were wearing the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* because of men was very influential in the official circles as well. This was visible both in the discussions held at the General Congress of the RPP in 1935 and some circulars sent from Ankara. See Chapter 4.
[593] "Peçe ve Çaşaf," *Halk*, 17 October 1935.
[594] "Trabzon gençliği ve müsbet hamlesi," *Halk*, 19 March 1936.

à-vis the men who force them to veil. In Trabzon, for example, where women's compliance with the bans on the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* was low, local newspapers were trying to convince women not to obey their husbands or other closely related men. In an anonymous article, the local newspaper *Halk* was particularly addressing those women who wait until the deadline imposed by the city council to remove their *peçe* and *çarşaf*, warning them to not listen to the men who preach to them to do so.[595] Women were advised by the newspaper to reply those men in following words:

> I am the one who creates the society. The society awaits me. We will get out of this backward veil that slaps our social existence for once and all; we will throw off the *çarşaf* just like you have removed and mangled the fez. Like you, we will adopt civilized clothing. … Even if it came late, the decision of the municipality has emerged out of our deep desire to be part of the civilized life, out of our long lasting interest in joining society.

Such news reports and comments on them usually did not use incriminating language against women who continued to wear the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*. However, there were some examples of a more radical tone that tended to represent especially those women who continued to dress in the black *çarşaf* as reactionaries who opposed the revolutionary ideas of the new regime. Their participation in the public sphere was seen by some as a direct attack on the creation of a civilized, modern public life, which was seen as the first condition for entering the world of civilized nations. In one of his articles emblematic of such a tone, Aka Gündüz, a prominent columnist and play writer of the time, claims that there are three groups of women who continue to wear the *çarşaf*: old women, young women who are forced to wear this veil and young women who willingly insist on wearing it.[596] Older women who continue to use the *çarşaf* can be excused, according to Gündüz, because it is understandable that they remain loyal to old traditions. It is, however, unacceptable for young women to follow the example of these older women. If they do, Gündüz suggests, this means that they either deliberately oppose the new regime's ideals, or that they are forced to do so. The latter could be excused; but conscious disobedience to the dictates of the civilized life by younger generations, who insist on participating in the public sphere in "uniform-like" *çarşaf* was unacceptable. That is why he argues that one should

[595] "Çarşafı Atalım," *Halk*, 13 April 1936.
[596] Aka Gündüz, "Çarşaf Nümayişleri," *Yeni Asır*, 17 July 1934.

be very skeptical about those groups of women who wear black *çarşaf*s in similar styles and wander in the most crowded areas in cities together. For him, this cannot be seen as normal and should be approached as a kind of demonstration; what he calls a "*çarşaf* demonstration" (*çarşaf nümayişi*). He characterizes women who dress in black *çarşaf* as "demonstrators" of a different kind; those who do not protest in usual gatherings or by organizing uprisings, but by simply wandering around in the public sphere with their "silk, chic and black" *çarşaf*. "*Çarşaf* demonstrations" were a clear sign of reaction to the new - to what was civilized and modern. This "black unity," in his own words, must have been organized and planned by the "backward mind" still alive and waits to be crashed by the forces of the revolution. Aka Gündüz here warns his readers about the possibility of unconventional political demonstrations: demonstrators against the regime should not always need to carry Derviş Mehmet's flag and shout; they can also use a fashionable, silk, black *çarşaf*.[597]

It is important to note that although Gündüz's article was originally published in a well-known pro-regime national newspaper, *Hakimiyeti Milliye*, it was then reprinted in some local newspapers. Thus, such concerns about women who continue wearing the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* also had local resonance, and this was because of still high visibility of women wearing these veils. In other words, there was awareness that anti-veiling campaigns could remain limited in impact, at least in the short run. In fact, Gündüz's article was motivated by the same awareness; because these veils were so durable and because many women were reluctant to remove them, he claimed that decisions by local authorities to ban these veils were important, but it would take a long time for these decisions to be publicly accepted as a norm. His aim was to warn the public that some women's resistance should be taken seriously, and this struggle should continue if Turkey wants to be part of the civilized world. One fear was that Turkey's image would be harmed because of the visibility of women wearing the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*. As explained in Chapter 3, this question of "what the Europeans would think about us" was in fact a major motivation behind the anti-veiling campaigns in general. However, it seems that there was a more particular concern about women's noncompliance with the anti-veiling campaigns; there was a fear that this noncompliance would be seen as resistance to the regime in the West as well.

[597] Gündüz refers here to the Menemen incident happened four years ago, an attempt by a small group of Islamists to organize a counter-revolutionary movement. For more, see the short discussion and references cited in Chapter 3.

In fact, an article published in an American newspaper, *Daily Eagle*, had alerted both the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[598] As the Turkish Embassy in Washington DC reported, the article claimed that in Kastamonu and in some other Anatolian cities, groups composed of six to eight women would prefer to go out to the streets wearing thick *peçe*s and *çarşaf*s. This was perceived as a protest against the "modern" clothing that had been introduced by the regime. The article was based on a telegraph the newspaper had received from Ankara. The Ministry of Interior sent a reply to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that such news were fabrications of those who wanted generate or strengthen the idea in the West that Turks were backward-thinking (*geri düşünceli*).[599] The Ministry of Interior was asked to refute the article.

Although it is hard to find detailed information, there are indications that women's compliance with the ban on the *peçe* was higher than their compliance with the ban on the *çarşaf*. Some provincial governors indicated in their reports to Ankara a similar tendency; while women had "easily and happily" removed their *peçe*s, the *çarşaf* was only "partially" removed as a result of the anti-veiling campaign.[600] It was probably easier, or more acceptable, or desirable for women to expose their face than to replace their *çarşaf*. The fact that the struggle against the *peçe* had a longer history, and that it was much strongly stigmatized as the "veil" to be removed because of the symbolic meanings attributed to the opening of the face, it can be argued that the removal of the *peçe* began earlier than the removal of head covering or full body covering as provided by the *çarşaf*. It was also probably perceived as more "doable" by the general public compared to the removal of the *çarşaf*. An article in a Trabzon newspaper, for example, complained that while women easily got rid of their *peçe*, the *çarşaf* proved more durable despite all the propaganda against it.[601] Specifically targeting the *çarşaf*, the author claimed that the removal of the *peçe* was in fact more important and symbolic

[598] Circular from the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 28 October 1935.
[599] Circular from the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, TNPA 13216-7/1, 19 November 1935. There is another circular sent from the General Directorate of Security to the General Directorate of Press (Matbuat Umum Müdürlüğü) informing the later about the circular sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asking the ministry to refute the article. See the circular from the General Directorate of Security to the General Directorate of Press, TNPA 13216-7/1, 27 November 1935.
[600] See, for example, the letter from the Governor of Sivas to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 3 September 1935.
[601] "Çarşaf," *Halk*, 12 November 1935.

to reflect the civilized character of the nation, and the will of Turkish women had succeeded in achieving this task. Yet, although the *çarşaf* was a foreign tradition and thus should be easier to remove according to the author, women of Trabzon were very reluctant to do so.

This reluctance of women cannot, of course, be understood without taking into account the patriarchal and conservative social dynamics by which they were surrounded. In fact, references to social pressures in explaining the unwillingness of women to remove their veils was common in the reports of the local authorities to Ankara, and these cannot be read only as attempts of these actors to create excuses for their inability to enforce a successful anti-veiling campaign in their localities. Especially in less developed or smaller provinces or in places where there was a more homogenous local culture, ethnically or religiously, the conservativeness of the society regarding women's public appearance was a major concern for women in the issue of veiling/unveiling as well. Thus, the strictness of patriarchal social control of women played a key role in their decision to veil or unveil. The governor of Sinop, for example, reported in March 1935 that many of those local women who had removed the *çarşaf* and came to the municipality building with an overcoat during the national elections a month earlier, in February 1935, again switched back to wearing the *çarşaf* due to the influence of old customs.[602] It seems that the local propaganda regarding the modernization of women's clothing in Sinop had some effect on the women of the city, at least in the beginning, and many women had chosen to unveil only during the elections, perhaps because there was more public attention on them during this first voting process after women gained their political rights in December 1934. Once the elections were over, however, many of them continued to use the *çarşaf* instead of the overcoat. Similarly, in Çorum, the governor attributed women's insistence on wearing the *çarşaf* despite an open ban to the entrenched moral and traditional norms in the province.[603] Under such circumstances, he maintained, it was very difficult for women to make up their own minds and adopt new forms of attire at the expense of having to face social pressure and exclusion. The poor and the older women proved

[602] From the governor of Sinop to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 4 March 1935.
[603] From the governor of Çorum to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 22 November 1935. A similar argument was employed by the governor of Maraş. See, the governor of Maraş to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 13 August 1935. The governor of Çankırı was also complaining in 1939 about communal pressure on women and religious fanaticism, which made it very difficult for most of the women of the city to adapt to the new clothing norms. See Metinsoy, 2014.

particularly determined to wear the *çarşaf*. Even in the circulars sent from Ankara to the provinces, this idea that the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* were surviving in the provinces due to social pressures was salient. As quoted in Chapter 4, the circular of the Minister of Interior on 22 June 1935 claimed that these veils had been totally removed in big cities like Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir, but were in use in other provinces because of the power of traditions and because women were afraid of gossip.[604] In fact, the minister indicated that women living in places where the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* were surviving would adopt the overcoat when they visited big towns, but then would go back to wearing the veils when they returned to their hometowns. A contemporary observer also points at how local community pressure influenced women's ability to unveil. In her tour through Eastern Anatolia, Lilo Linke notes the reaction of a woman she met on a train from Malatya to Adana in mid-1935 to the banning of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* in the city. Having learned the news of the ban, the woman stated that women of Adana were lucky since they did not need to worry about what people would say about them if they removed their *çarşaf*.[605] The bans, it seems, were making it easier to unveil for those women who would like to unveil but were not able to do so because of the social pressure they were surrounded by.

The extent of pressure the patriarchal and conservative character of the society put on women can also be seen in the harassment and attacks some women faced because they removed their veils. In other words, in addition to labeling, gossiping and exclusion, which would already make women's daily life very difficult and thus hard to bear, women also had to cope with the threat of physical harassment in case of unveiling. In the province of Afyon, for example, women who had removed their *çarşaf* were harassed and assaulted by some men in the streets. As the governor reports, these "malicious men" would make a pass at women, saying "what nice domestic goods we have" (*ne iyi yerli mallarımız varmış*),[606] or use ruder language words, and even

[604] From the Minister of Interior to general inspectorships and provinces, TNPA 13216-7/1, 22 July 1935.
[605] Linke, 1937, p. 231.
[606] Here, the verbal assault cited in the report of the governor, "what nice domestic goods we have," probably had a double connotation and was also referring to another contemporary campaign to promote the use of "domestic goods." In the aftermath of the Great Depression, the 1930s in Turkey witnessed a national campaign aiming to minimize the effects of the economic crisis by encouraging saving and promoting the use and consumption of domestic products. For this task, a special association, the National Economy and Savings Society (*Milli İktisat ve Tasarruf Cemiyeti*), was established by the support of the regime in December 1929. The association was very organized in the provinces. It established various committees for

physically attack them.[607] A certain Emine, for example, a 20-year-old woman who was the daughter of Mevlüt and wife of İsmail from the neighborhood of Nurcu in the center of Afyon, was physically harassed by Abdurrahman, son of Ahmet from the Kırkalioğulları family in the Mecidiye neighborhood. Abdurrahman had harassed Emine because she was unveiled when she was passing by the İstasyon Avenue of Afyon with her child on November 12th. He had grabbed Emine's arm and began dragging her down the street. Emine was rescued only by the assistance she received from people around them. Abdurrahman was captured and handed over to the police. As indicated in a subsequent report from the governor, however, he was acquitted of this crime.[608] Similarly, the decision of the city council of Bergama, a district of the province of Izmir, to ban the *peçe*, the *çarşaf*, and the *peştamal* also included an article indicating that those who would hurt and harm women wearing "national" (meaning "modern") attire would also be fined.[609] This shows that such acts either happened in Bergama or at least there was a strong concern that they could happen once women unveiled. In order to apply it more effectively, the committee that prepared the ban also proposed to the city council that the chairs placed in front of the coffeehouses should also be removed. These chairs, according to the committee, were occupied by unemployed men (*işi gücü olmayan*), who could harm those women who would pass by in national attire. Having heard of these cases of harassment and attacks against women, Ankara had urged the local authorities to strengthen their measures against such actions, to apprehend immediately those who were involved, and to report on the results of the legal

propaganda purposes, which were active in publishing booklets and posters, and organizing exhibitions, conferences and meetings. The association was particularly active in organizing events during the Savings and Domestic Products Week (*Tasarruf ve Yerli Malı Haftası*), celebrated each year in 12-19 December. For more information, see Doğan Duman, "Milli İktisat ve Tasarruf Cemiyeti," *Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi* 1(2), 1992, pp. 127-141. See also Doğan Duman, *Ulusal Ekonominin Yapılanmasında Yerli Malı Haftaları*, Izmir: Dokuz Eylül Yayınları, 2001.

[607] From the Governor of Afyon to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 13 November 1935.

[608] From the Governor of Afyon to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 25 May 1936.

[609] "Bergama'da Çarşaf, Peçe ve Kıvraklar Kaldırılıyor," *Anadolu*, 6 December 1934. Metinsoy claims that in the 1930s, "numerous men who verbally attacked women in the streets were sentenced to imprisonment or a heavy fine" after the Ministry of Justice issued a circular in 1929 ordering the judicial authorities to take legal action against those men who harassed women. Metinsoy, however, does not explain in detail whether these cases of imprisonment or fines were related to women's unveiling. See Metinsoy, 2014.

procedures.[610] It seems that Ankara was concerned that such kinds of events could be used as excuse for open or secret opposition and provocation.

Women also had to confront the pressures coming from the state authorities and various local actors pushing for unveiling. Considering especially the cases where fines were imposed and the municipal police, the police or the gendarmerie were involved in the implementation process of the bans, it would not be an exaggeration to argue that some women were coerced, and probably had to remove their veils even if they did not want to.[611] In other words, women were caught between two patriarchal forces. On the one hand, religious concerns, traditional habits, social and family pressures surrounding women certainly played an indispensable role in their attitudes towards unveiling; on the other hand, the pressures coming from the state authorities created yet another obstacle to women trying to realize their own preferences and choices as individuals.

In addition to these factors, economic reasons also had a great impact on women's ability to comply with the new dress codes. Because anti-veiling campaigns promoted the replacement of the *çarşaf* with an overcoat and presenting it as the "modern" outdoor clothing of women, the removal of the *çarşaf* was equated with the adoption of an overcoat, which was unfamiliar to many people in the provinces, in short supply and more expensive than the *çarşaf* or other local body veils, such as the *peştamal*. The *çarşaf* or the *peştamal* had become customary, were locally produced and thus easily available for people. Considering that the majority of the population lived in the rural areas and in poor conditions, acquiring an overcoat was not easy. Some women openly complained about this by writing letters to newspapers and explaining their inability to afford overcoats.[612] In fact, the inability of the poor people to abide by the decisions of the local institutions banning the

[610] For example, see the letter from the Minister of Interior to the Governorship of Afyon, TNPA 13216-7/1, 28 November 1935.

[611] In addition to the case of Tosya mentioned above, there were other instances where women were physically attacked. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a complaint letter from Aydın claims that women's *çarşaf*s were forcefully removed. Telegraph from Dokumacı Ahmet Şevki to president Atatürk, TNPA 13216-7/1, 16 August 1935.

[612] A woman from Çorum and groups of women from Milas had written to the newspaper, *Köroğlu*. They were not against unveiling but they were complaining that overcoats were very expensive. A group of men from Akseki had also written a letter to the same newspaper indicating that they were unable to afford an overcoat since they were poor people living on bread. This letter was reported in the newspaper with the title "Overcoat or Bread?". See Metinsoy, 2014.

çarşaf was also observed by the authorities.[613] Thus, the widespread tendency of the local administrators to allow more time for the removal of the *çarşaf* in the decisions was not a coincidence. Poverty also explains why local institutions such as the People's Houses, the Red Crescent, the party branches, and chambers of commerce were mobilized to provide poor women with overcoats. In some cities, the wives of the governors or mayors were personally in charge of these organizations to help poor women to replace their *çarşaf*. As mentioned earlier, in Antalya, for example, a special committee was formed by the provincial council to help poor women and the head of this committee was the wife of the governor.[614] In Trabzon, the wife of the mayor, Emine Kadri Evren, was in charge of the efforts of the Red Crescent to provide poor women with overcoats.[615] In fact, even for these initiatives, it was hard to provide enough overcoats for women in need.[616] They tried to mobilize donors to collect money for the initiative, or to convert women's *çarşafs* into overcoats in cases where the cloth of the *çarşaf* was suitable for such a change.[617] In Çanakkale, for example, village women tried to produce overcoats out of the local cloth they had woven themselves.[618] In places where such initiatives did not exist or could not provide the number of overcoats needed, women had to find other ways to handle the difficult situation in which they found themselves. In Seyitgazi, for example, a district of the province of Eskişehir, the ban on the *çarşaf* was put into practice immediately, thus those women, who could not afford to buy an overcoat but had to go out to work, had to wear men's overcoats and jackets.[619] This "awkward scene" created a reaction in the district. The people of Seyitgazi, the majority of whom were poor farmers, complained that the municipality should have

[613] For example, see the letter from the governor of Çorum to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 20 August 1935 and the letter from the governor of Kırklareli to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 27 September 1935.
[614] "Kentimizde kadın kılığı işi bütün hızıyla yürüyor," *Antalya*, 2 May 1935.
[615] "Kızılay fakirlere 50 manto dağıttı," *Halk*, 30 April 1936.
[616] In some news reports, this difficulty was implicit in the language. It was emphasized that these institutions will "search for ways" of how to provide the overcoats. See, for example, "Halkevi çok fakir ailelere manto yaptıracak," *Halk*, 27 February 1936. As it can be followed by local newspapers, all initiatives combined, they could provide 319 women with overcoats in Trabzon: 200 by the Red Crescent, 119 by the local party administration. See "Kızılay fakirlere 50 manto dağıttı," *Halk*, 30 April 1936; "Kızılay bugün 150 manto daha dağıtıyor," *Halk*, 4 May 1936; "Bugün 119 Manto daha dağıtılacak," *Halk*, 1 June 1936.
[617] This was the case in Antalya, for example.
[618] Letter from the Governor of Çanakkale to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 21 March 1936.
[619] Letter from the governor of Eskişehir to the Ministry of Interior, TNPA 13216-7/1, 7 February 1936.

postponed the implementation of the ban on the *çarşaf* until the end of harvest season so that people could at least save some money to comply with the new dress codes.

Such examples also point to the various ways in which women in different cities reacted to the clothing change. In other words, the effectiveness and the influence of the anti-veiling campaigns were uneven; depending on the social, cultural and economic factors in different cities, and differences across social classes in a particular city, there were significant variations regarding how women dressed.[620] Age would also matter.[621] Even within the same family, generational differences would play a role; a mother would continue to use some kind of a headscarf, while her daughters could be totally unveiled. Also, a woman who used to veil by wearing the *çarşaf*, could adopt a turban or a hat for some time, but could prefer to use a headscarf as she gets older. Thus, just as in the case of the 1920s, in the 1930s it is rather more appropriate to talk about a coexistence of many forms of veiling and unveiling.[622] The *peçe* and the *çarşaf* never totally disappeared, but decreased at least during the campaigns, though perhaps more in some places than others.[623] More "modernized" forms of veiling, ranging from larger headscarves to turbans, became common. In fact, women' insistence on veiling, more particularly, on covering their hair, whether in a more traditional form or in more modernized, modified forms, clearly influenced the outcome of the anti-veiling campaigns. In other words, the insistence on

[620] In fact, even before the anti-veiling campaigns of the 1930s, these factors already caused a change in women's clothing. Graham-Brown suggests, for example, that the change in women's clothing was partly a result of the shift in the meanings attributed to certain dress forms: "In Turkey, in 1890, the wearer of a *yashmak* and a *charchaf* would have been assumed to come from a well-to-do elite family. In 1930, a woman from that class would have been recognizable by the fashionable cut of her dress and coat or suit…" Graham-Brown, 1988, p. 132. Yashmak (*yaşmak*) is a veil that was used together with the *ferace*, which consisted of two pieces, a head-veil and a face-veil. It was replaced by the *peçe* with the spread of the *çarşaf*.

[621] For a similar observation by a contemporary author who underlined the difference between the old generation of women and the new in terms of adopting modern clothing in Istanbul in 1934, see A.E., "Yüzü kapalı gezen kadın," *Son Posta*, 6 August 1934.

[622] For various examples of women's adaptation to new clothing and their new ways of covering their hair, see Oya Baydar and Feride Çiçekoğlu (eds.), *Cumhuriyet'in Aile Albümleri*, Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998.

[623] Yılmaz argues that the regional differences can in part be explained by the limits of the RPP penetration in the periphery. Yılmaz, 2006, p. 66. Yılmaz also refers to a report by the governor of the province of Hakkari, where he indicated that the notable native families continued to wear the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* despite the anti-veiling campaign. The governor was pointing at a difference between the civil servants who were natives of the region and those who were not; native ones also continued to wear the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*. Ibid., p. 68.

the covering of the hair had an impact on the general public discourse on women's clothing, and also, on the expectations of the Kemalist elite. As mentioned above, even a Kemalist as radical as Gündüz was willing to accept the fact that it would take a long time for the ideals to be internalized by the masses. As a matter of fact, however dominant the image of "modern" Turkish woman was, in the popular press, there was not a total disappearance of women with some forms of head covering, for example.[624] In other words, since the co-existence of many forms of women's clothing in practice was undeniable, the tendency of the Kemalists to opt for a more gradual transformation in the matter of modernization of women's dress grew; the "symbolic 'revealing' of the face and body operated within constraints recognized and accepted by authorities prompting dress reform."[625] Thus, in addition to the patriarchal concerns of the Kemalist male elite and their fear of "over-Westernization" of Turkish women,[626] it was women's insistence on having a say on what they wear that drew the boundaries and limits of the anti-veiling campaigns.

IV.b. Compliance, Support, Participation

It would be misleading to think that women's compliance can be seen as a matter of pure propaganda. Although it is impossible to know the exact percentages, there were in fact many women who removed their *peçe* and *çarşaf*. Likewise, it would also not be true to attribute this compliance of women to the repressiveness of the campaigns and women's fear of the regime or the social pressures. Some women willingly removed their *peçe* and *çarşaf*, having seen anti-veiling campaigns as an opportunity to adopt the new clothes, to relax the rules of seclusion, to follow fashion, or simply because they

[624] Libal, 2014.
[625] Ibid.
[626] Even during the heyday of the anti-veiling campaigns in the mid-1930s, the control over women's sexuality and the obsession with preventing women from being "too much Westernized" were very visible. Various commentaries in local newspapers were warning women to remain loyal to moral codes in the public life. The length of women's skirts, their hair styles or how much make-up they should put were all constant issues of concern. For example, see "Kadın ve Erkek," *Babalık*, 2 December 1934; Orhan Selim, "Çok Boyanıyorsun Kadınım…," *Babalık*, 18 December 1934; "Çok Açılıyorsun Kadınım," *Babalık*, 19 December 1934; "Kız talebeler hakkında verilen güzel kararlar…," *Hakkın Sesi*, 28 February 1936. For more on the patriarchal side of Kemalism and its reflection on the discussions regarding women's clothing, see Chapter 2 and Chapter 3. See also Y. Arat, 1997; Z. Arat, 1998; and Nereid, 2012.

thought it was more convenient to do so.[627] Since anti-veiling campaigns addressed all women and aimed at achieving a mass movement of change in women's clothing, they also created a chance for individual women, who had the intention or desire to remove these veils, to do so in groups. In other words, it can be argued that those women who were prepared to remove these veils but were afraid or reluctant to do so on their own might have found it easier and more preferable to change their outdoor clothing together with other women and as part of a politically supported and socially propagated local campaign. In fact, although less obviously, such opportunities were available even before the main wave of anti-veiling campaigns had begun in 1934. Women participating in public education or joining the workforce were among the factors that significantly increased their capacity to socialize with unveiling as a norm, or at least to familiarize with the idea that their clothing can change just like their social status. In Tarsus, for example, a local factory distributed over 300 overcoats to women workers in November 1933 so that they could remove their *peçe* and *çarşaf*.[628] Some other working women in the town also followed this example and begun wearing an overcoat instead of the *çarşaf*. The public cotton factory in Adana went one step further in 1934 and introduced a standard dress for its 1200 workers, composed of both men and women. As reported in a national newspaper, especially the new elegant dress for women workers, "black dress with a white belt," had emancipated them from the baggy trousers, the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*.[629]

As briefly discussed in Chapter 3, the beginning of the 1930s witnessed an increasing stigmatization of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* as uncivilized attire and the promotion of European dresses as the norm in a number of media, ranging from propaganda posters of the RPP to the various milieus of popular culture. As Shissler argued in the context of beauty contests, the new practices and norms introduced or legitimatized under the new regime in the 1930s "shifted the parameters of where women could go

[627] Yılmaz indicates based on her sources that "local elites found many of the state-promoted reforms and lifestyles acceptable and desirable." However, it should be underlined that it is hard to generalize this to all local elites since not all of them were "already modernized, urban and educated" to easily adopt the new dress norms. See, Yılmaz, 2006, p. 68. She quotes one of her informants, Meliha Tanyeli, who recalled that women of her family in Trabzon very easily adopted the new dress norms: "Everyone put on a *manto* [overcoat] right away. First they put s headscarf (*eşarp*) above it. Later hats become fashionable." Ibid., p. 69.

[628] "Tarsus kadınları," *Cumhuriyet*, 29 November 1933.

[629] "Adana Amele Kıyafeti," *Son Posta*, 3 August 1934. It was also stated in the news that male workers were seen quite elegant in public with their new dresses, a blue trouser and a worker's shirt (*işçi gömleği*).

and what they could do;" they entailed a "redefinition of the concept of respectability or honor, *namus*, and an expansion for women of the limits of the social contract."[630] Similarly, the anti-veiling campaigns also enhanced women's capacity to make choices and expanded the space in which women could realize them. This does not mean that this happened to the same degree everywhere, or that all women enjoyed the advantages of this redefinition equally. However, it should not be overlooked that anti-veiling campaigns and the discourse and propaganda regarding women's clothing in the press and popular culture significantly contributed to the relaxation of certain social norms, by marking the removal of the veil as "normal," acceptable and even desirable, by redefining "socially acceptable standards of women's dress."[631]

This redefinition was reinforced by the encouragement of the adoption of "new" dresses to replace the *çarşaf* in various ways, the most important of which was the flourishing of the sewing courses for women in the provinces. In other words, women were not only persuaded to remove their "old" clothes, but they were also trained to create their new clothes by learning modern sewing techniques and the latest fashion patterns. Usually called the *Biçki ve Dikiş Yurdu* (literally, Home for Cutting and Sewing), schools that provided sewing courses for women were opened by both private initiative and public institutions like the People's Houses.[632] The opening of such a place in a certain city was usually announced in the local newspapers and included detailed information such as its address or the school from which the head of the course graduated.[633] It was also common for such schools to provide courses on hat making, which would make women's access to "modern" headwear easier and cheaper. This would be especially emphasized in the ads

[630] Shissler, 2004, p. 107.
[631] Libal, 2014.
[632] The idea of training women in sewing goes back to the late Ottoman era. They emerged as part of the debate on the "national dress" as briefly mentioned in Chapter 2. *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti* (Association for the Advancement of Women) had established first a course center and then a sewing house, which was called *Beyaz Dikiş Yurdu* (White Sewing Home), in Istanbul in 1913. Later, *Malumat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Women's Organization for the Consumption of Local Products) opened workshops in a few neighborhoods in Istanbul where women were educated as dress makers by using locally produced materials. There were also other organizations, like the *Türk Kadınları Biçki Yurdu* (Turkish Women's Cutting Home) that organized sewing courses for women. See van Os, 2013, pp. 230-240.
[633] See, for example, "Elçin Biçki ve Dikiş Yurdu," *Halk*, 6 February 1935; "Münevver bir kızın muvaffakiyeti," *Hakkın Sesi*, 25 January 1936. One of the sewing courses was called "Modern Family Sewing Course" (*Asri Aile Dikiş Yurdu*) in Trabzon. See "Trabzon Halkevinde Biçki ve Dikiş Sergisi," *Son Posta*, 1 August 1934.

about sewing courses. These sewing schools also frequently organized fairs, exhibitions, and fashion shows to display the clothes, hats, flowers and other home decoration items they produced for the general public. Always reported on in the local newspapers, such organizations were sometimes hosted by the People's Houses or the party buildings, and attended by the highest local administrators and other leading members of the local society in the provinces.[634] In some cities, the contribution of the sewing schools to replacing the *çarşaf* with the overcoat during the anti-veiling campaigns was particularly emphasized. In Trabzon, for example, only a few weeks before the enforcement of the ban on the *peçe* and the *çarşaf,* the sewing schools were working at higher capacity, day and night, by bringing more women into their workforce.[635]

Figure 5.2. Women at a sewing course in 1930s Hacı Bektaş, a district in the province of Nevşehir.
Source: *Cumhuriyet'in Aile Albümleri*, Feride Çiçekoğlu and Oya Baydar (eds.), Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998.

[634] For example, see "Malatyada Biçki ve Dikiş Sergisi," *Son Posta*, 14 June 1934; "Trabzon Halkevinde Biçki ve Dikiş Sergisi," *Son Posta*, 1 August 1934; "Samsunda Biçki ve Dikiş Sergisi," *Son Posta*, 4 August 1934; "Halkevinde açılan sergi," *Halk*, 11 July 1935; "Elçin Dikiş Yurdu sergisi açıldı," *Halk*, 25 June 1936; "Halkevinde Sümer Biçki, Dikiş, Nakış yurdu açıldı," *Halk*, 27 July 1936.
[635] "Peçe ve Çarşaf tarihe karıştı," *Halk*, 23 April 1936.

In addition to the sewing courses offering short-term training for women, seemingly organized predominantly for women in the provinces, a more limited number of women had the chance to acquire a longer education and thus more complex skills in sewing at the Girls' Institutes (*Kız Enstitüleri*). As vocational schools established in 1929 specifically for training girls, these institutes aimed at creating educated, modern and rational housewives.[636] One of the main components of this project was equipping women with the knowledge necessary to make their own clothes, and preferably, to help spread them as the norm. Graduates of the institutes would be the role models for all other Turkish women, and through the clothes they created, for sale, for exhibition or for themselves and women around them, they would symbolize the transformation of ordinary Turkish woman under the republic.

Women's positive attitude towards the removal of the *peçe* and *çarşaf* was not limited to their simple compliance with the bans or campaigns initiated by men. There were, in fact, many women, mostly from the local elite families or among state officials, who organized meetings, gave speeches, and supported unveiling by being part the campaigns. Especially local women's associations, women members of other associations and sports clubs or of the local branches of the Red Crescent and the Turkish Airplane Association were actively involved. The Diyarbakır Women's Association, for example, organized a meeting where the head of the association, Behiye Baturay, declared their wish for the removal of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*, which, she argued, had no connection with women's honor or Turkish women's dignity.[637] Equally, women could act as facilitators and initiators of these campaigns. In fact, one of the earliest examples of an anti-veiling campaign was the decision of a group of women in Bursa on October 29th, Republic Day, in 1933 to remove their *çarşaf* and to declare this publicly in order to inform and encourage other women in the city.[638] A similar decision was made by a group of women in Kütahya in May 1934.[639]

---

[636] Like the sewing courses, the origins of the Girls' Institutes also go back to the late Ottoman Era. For more information on the history of the Girls' Institutes, see Elif Ekin Akşit, *Kızların Sessizliği: Kız Enstitülerinin Uzun Tarihi*, Istanbul: İletişim, 2005. See also Fatma Gök, "The Girls' Institutes in the Early Period of the Turkish Republic," in *Education in 'Multicultural' Societies: Turkish and Swedish Perspectives*, Marie Carlson, Annika Rabo and Fatma Gök (eds.), Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 2007, pp. 93-105.

[637] "Diyarbekir kadınlar derneği…," *İkbal*, 27 January 1935.

[638] "Bursada artık çarşaf giymeyecekler," *Cumhuriyet*, 29 October 1933.

[639] "Kütahya hanımları ve çarşaf," *Cumhuriyet*, 6 May 1934.

Women's role as facilitators or initiators of the anti-veiling campaigns was particularly valid for women who were politically active. As it was briefly discussed in Chapter 3, Turkey in the 1930s witnessed an increase in women's political mobilization. Women's acquisition of the right to participate in the local elections in 1930 was a turning point and their membership in the party began to be promoted by the regime leadership in Ankara. The completion of women's political rights with their participation in the national elections beginning in December 1934 created an even stronger momentum for women's greater involvement in political life, in the party, in provincial and municipal councils, and also in other institutions, like the People's Houses. Although it was promoted by the regime leadership, women's increasing participation in political life clearly widened the space for their participation in the public life in general. In other words, as can be followed from the provincial newspapers, not only did women's membership in the party begin to increase by the beginning of 1935, but their membership in other institutions and associations also grew along with their political mobilization.[640] Many women willingly became politically and socially active, and they usually participated very enthusiastically and vocally in the institutions they joined. This was especially so in issues related to women, including unveiling. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, in the General Congress of the RPP in May 1935, among those who supported the idea to enact national legislation banning the *peçe* was a women delegate from Niğde, Naciye Osman Kozbek. In fact, in its report on the congress, one local newspaper claimed that it was a women delegate who first submitted a proposal to the congress for such legislation. [641] The newspaper argued that this women delegate had promised her fellow women in her constituency that the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* would be removed. Some local decisions to ban the use of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* were in fact made on the basis of the proposals of women members of the local councils. In Mersin, for example, the capital of the province of İçel, Zekiye Hanım, a women member of the city council, submitted a proposal to ban the *çarşaf*.[642] In Tarsus, a district of the province of İçel, the proposal to ban the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* was submitted to the city council again by a women member, Meliha Dağseven.[643] In Bursa, the suggestion to have the *kafes* removed from windows was made to the city

[640] See, for example, "Samsunda Kadınların Toplantısı," *Kars*, 24 Ocak 1935; "Parti Kongrelerinde Kadın Üyeler," *Hakkın Sesi*, 20 October 1935.
[641] "Kurultay ne yaptı," *Ak Günler*, 3 June 1935.
[642] "Mersin'de çarşafların Men'i İstendi," *Cumhuriyet*, 7 April 1934.
[643] "Tarsus Belediye M. Toplantısı," *Yeni Mersin*, 4 February 1935.

council by the deputy mayor, Zehra Hanım, the first women deputy mayor of Turkey.[644] In Maraş, it was Nuriye Bülbül, the only women member of the local party administration, who was the first woman in the city to remove her *çarşaf*.[645] In Antalya, a women's committee of the People's House was the forerunner of the anti-veiling campaign.[646]

Women's roles as facilitators and initiators of the anti-veiling campaigns were not limited to a small number of women who were members of the local councils or the People's Houses. Women became the vanguards of the campaigns in relatively higher numbers especially in the context of their acquiring the right to vote and to be elected in December 1934. In gatherings women organized in various cities to celebrate this right, the removal of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* was advocated as part of women's efforts to be worthy of this reform. A news report states that in Ordu, for example, women who gathered to celebrate and to send telegram messages to Atatürk and Prime-Minister İnönü indicating their appreciation for having gained this right, decided to no longer wear the *çarşaf*, which they saw as the legacy of the sultanate.[647] Likewise, in Kilis, about a hundred and fifty women gathered to celebrate their political rights and decided to remove the *peçe*.[648] In Muğla, a group of women also led the call to organize a campaign to remove the *çarşaf* as part of their decision to be politically more active.[649] They had gathered to discuss the issue of becoming members of the party, the People's House and other institutions, and to remove their *çarşaf*. In Bor, a district of the province of Niğde, about forty women organized a meeting at the library of the People's House, where they all removed their *peçe*s and requested that the veils be kept in the museum. They also asked the municipality to issue a ban on the use of the *peçe* in their city.[650] At similar meetings in Izmir and Konya, women's speeches drew a direct link between the opening of the doors of public life in the republican regime and their liberation from the social seclusion symbolized by the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*: "The Turkish woman, who, until

[644] "Belediye Meclisinde," *Hakkın Sesi*, 3 February 1935.
[645] Mentioned in the Report of Mitat Aydın, deputy of Trabzon, on the province of Maraş, PMRA 490.01/273.1091.2, 7 May 1943.
[646] "Antalyada Çarşaf ve Peçelerle Mücadele Başladı," *Yeni Asır*, 23 December 1934.
[647] "Türk Kadınlığının Kıvancı," *Yeni Asır*, 9 Aralık 1934.
[648] "Atatürk Kadınlarımıza Değerli Işler Dileyor, Her Tarafta Kadınlar Kıvanç Içinde," *Yeni Asır*, 11 December 1934; "Kiliste kadınların tezahüratı," *Kars*, 13 December 1934; "Kilis bayanları," *Yeni Adana*, 12 December 1934.
[649] "Muğla Kadınları Çarşafları Kaldırıyor," *Halk*, 31 December 1934; "Muğla Bayanları," *Yeni Adana*, 30 Aralık 1934.
[650] "Kadınlar peçelerini müzeye koydular," *Yeni Adana*, 11 Ocak 1935.

yesterday, was supposedly incapable of doing anything else than napping behind her *kafes* and stumbling in her *çarşaf*, has progressed as fast as an eagle in flight in her short life of 11 years."[651]

This equating of the removal of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* with the gaining of women's political rights continued in subsequent years. It was in fact reinforced by women themselves and used to mobilize other women in the struggle against segregation and veiling. It became for women a milestone that differentiated between a period characterized by women's segregation and their degraded status in the society, and a new era marked by women's increasing public visibility and roles.[652] At a meeting at the Antalya People's House held to celebrate the first anniversary of the political rights of women, Nihal Güzey pointed to this difference in her speech addressing the Turkish woman:

> In days when the women of the advanced nations were living in total freedom, the sultanate had reserved you a space behind the *kafes* and covered your face with a thick and black piece of cloth. It had seen no harm in insulting you by believing that this *kafes* and piece of cloth would be the guardians of your chastity. The Atatürk revolution, on the other hand, could not digest this insult that was deemed worthy of you. It has showed that you are not a slave but a human being that deserves respect worthy of civilized people. It has given you freedom. You have come into existence. You have also lifted and taken away that black cloth on your face that was of use for nothing.[653]

Women also wrote in the local newspapers to promote unveiling, directly addressing the women of their city. The idea frequently emphasized by women was that they could modernize their dress themselves, without any need for men's guidance, in conformity with modernization and with the aim of reaching a better position in society. In her poem entitled "Let's Throw off the *Çarşaf*s," which was published in a local newspaper, Hayriye Ural, a woman from Trabzon, emphasized how Turkish women easily adjusted to the major changes the Kemalist revolution had introduced, and called on them

[651] "Kadınların söylevleri," *Babalık*, 16 December 1934. For women's speeches in Izmir, see "İffeti Kara Peçede ve Kafesin Arkasında Arıyan Zihniyet Yıkılmıştır, Bayanlarımızın Heyecanlı Söylevleri," *Yeni Asır*, 16 December 1934.
[652] For an article by a women author in a local newspaper emphasizing this historical break, see Melahat Saim, "Türk Kadınının Saylav Seçimi," *Kars*, 14 January 1935. See also "Türk Kadının Cemiyetteki mevkii," *Halk*, 26 March 1936.
[653] "Aydın Antalya kadınları siyasi haklarını kutluladılar," *Antalya*, 12 December 1935.

to do the same on the issue of unveiling as well.[654] In her opinion, it was meaningless for the women of Trabzon to adhere to the meaningless and outdated veil called the *çarşaf* at a time when all archaic beliefs were in fact being eliminated. Having emphasized that the *çarşaf* had nothing to do with religion and had been removed in other cities, she invited the women of Trabzon not to fall behind in bringing about this change.

The discrepancy in terms of veiling (and in fact, in terms of women's social status in general) between Istanbul and Ankara, on the one hand, and Anatolia, on the other, had often been mentioned as a sign of the disadvantaged position of the women living in the periphery of the country, and, thus, the anti-veiling campaign was promoted as an opportunity to fill the gap by women themselves in the periphery. In her article entitled "Let's do away with veiling," Nihal Güzey drew the attention of the women of Antalya to this opportunity:

> Why do we [as women of Anatolia] not benefit from the right that our revolution has given to women? Are we still going to continue to wear this dress that does not belong to us at a time we passionately struggle against foreign culture and get rid of the Arab alphabet?[655]

For her, women of Anatolia should also adopt civilized clothing in order to be part of the social life, and "enlightened" women should be the vanguards for them, especially in removing the *peçe* before all else. She also warned these enlightened women against wearing fancy overcoats and hats, since ordinary women were possibly not removing their *çarşaf* because it would be too expensive to replace them with modern clothes. That is why she stressed the necessity of creating options to adopting modern clothes in an affordable manner, one solution of which would be training women to make their own overcoats and hats at free courses. She suggested that these free courses could be organized by People's Houses.

This acceptance of new clothing by a significant number of women was represented as "women's struggle against the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*." These examples, indeed, reflect some women's support for the anti-veiling campaigns. Equally, these examples are also an indication of the regime's satisfaction with the gradual change that this support was supposed to bring in

[654] Hayriye Ural, "Çarşafları atalım," *Halk*, 30 March 1936. For a similar call written again by a women author, Mürşide Akyol, in the province of Adana, see "Adana'da Türk Kadını," *Ak Günler*, 29 Ekim 1936.
[655] Nihal Güzey, "Örtünmeden Vazgeçelim," *Antalya*, 10 January 1935.

the future. In the eyes of the Kemalist elite at the center, women's approval and adoption of modern clothing was the most significant precondition of the success, and unlike in other reforms, they were more patient to wait for the ultimate success, trusting in women's agency to spread the reform. Moreover, particularly educated women did not think of these campaigns and the propaganda concerning them as instrumentalization of women. In fact, as presented above, they participated in the campaigns to "modernize" women's clothing, primarily because the clothing change was so thoroughly related to the ideas opposing women's seclusion and supporting their participation in the public life. Thus, for particular groups of women at least, it was an alliance with the regime - an alliance through which they gained the political support for their decades-old struggle against traditional norms and achieved the right to participate in the public sphere as the agents of modernization.

Figure 5.3. Women at the Develi branch of the Airplane Association, the province of Kayseri, 1930s. They are seen wearing overcoats; some with headscarves.
Source: *75 Yılda Değişen Yaşam, Değişen İnsan: Cumhuriyet Modaları*, Derya Özkan and Oya Baydar (eds.), Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998.

V. Conclusion

Despite the fact that there were significant local varieties in terms of both scope and effectiveness, it can be argued that anti-veiling campaigns of the 1930s created an important impetus for the change of women's clothing in Turkey. They played a role, at least for a certain period of time and more in some places than others, in the decreasing use of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*, though they did not result in the total removal of these veils. And although bans were enacted in most of the cities where the campaigns were initiated, and in some places, were in fact imposed strictly, at least for a certain period of time, there was no massive protest or collective action against the anti-veiling campaigns. However, this hardly meant that there was no resistance; both the central authorities in Ankara and the local administrators had hard time dealing with the creative ways in which people responded to the campaigns and the various forms of selective adaptation they underwent. From circulating rumors to sending letters, people's "repertoire of responses" was in fact quite rich.[656]

Perhaps, the way the anti-veiling campaigns were put into practice determined the way people responded. Since the campaigns were mainly local in character and unveiling was not imposed by a central degree or law, the reactions were mostly organized against the local authorities. In some cases, reactions involved both members of local elite and ordinary people, blurring the distinction between elite and popular resistance. The examples discussed above reveal that some people who complained to Ankara about the provincial administrators were of the opinion that they were acting outside the scope of their authority, and even against the will of the center. The case of Aydın, where the president responded to the complaint of a local *peştamal* weaver and sent orders to the local authorities, actually confirms that such an opinion could have some basis. However, as far as the attitude of the Ministry of Interior was concerned, one can argue that any act of questioning or complaining about the campaigns was approached quite suspiciously. Thus, the local administrators had in fact strong backing from Ankara in implementing the anti-veiling campaigns. Yet, as discussed in Chapter 4, this backing had its limitations; Ankara could act quite ambivalently when it came to the use of force by the provincial authorities. In fact, in cases where force was used in the implementation of the anti-veiling campaigns, the resistance

[656] Brockett, 1998, p. 61.

was stronger; as in cases of Trabzon and Gaziantep, it could even include countering the intervention by the police or the gendarmerie by force, and threatening the authorities.

As the main target of the anti-veiling campaigns, women were in a central position in shaping the process. Between the poles of passive compliance and open resistance, women had various ways of handling this dramatic change. While some women resisted the bans on the *peçe* and the *çarşaf* and continued to wear these veils despite the threat of punishment, some others supported the campaigns and even participated in them as initiators or facilitators. Many of them tried to find a kind of middle way through which they could deal with the multiple pressures and difficulties they were facing; the pressure for unveiling as imposed by the anti-veiling campaigns, the social and cultural pressure for keeping the veil as imposed by the local community and/or the family members, and their own preferences. Some of them withdrew from the public life for some time, others tried to veil by using other means, and still others creatively adapted their outdoor clothes by domesticating the new norms. For some of them who were more educated and/or with high social status, not only the removal of the *peçe* and the *çarşaf*, but also total unveiling was happily welcomed; for some others, this was a more gradual process, a journey from wearing the *çarşaf* to covering their head with a turban or a kind of headscarf, and eventually, to opting for a modern hat. Thus, it is crucial to acknowledge this diversity of women's responses, to take into consideration the various ways through which they involved in the anti-veiling campaigns as agents, and to underline that these responses and agency shaped the process in each locality critically.

In this sense, it is also crucial to revisit the scholarship on women in the early republican era in the light of these analyses. Particularly the examples where women actively participated in the anti-veiling campaigns and promoted them challenge the salient argument that the clothing reforms of the Kemalist regime associated political agency only with men.[657] Women were not only victims to be liberated; the roles attributed to women were indeed far more complex. It can be argued that one of the goals of the anti-veiling campaigns was to create modern female subjects that would not passively follow the Kemalist male elite, but would actively participate in and further the modernizing reforms, especially at the local level. Thus, like in other state policies, the anti-veiling campaigns entailed regulation and control of women's bodies and choices while at the same time providing opportunities

[657] For a detailed discussion on this argument, Çınar, 2005, pp. 53-98.

for them to position themselves as agents. This empowering aspect of the Kemalist policies on women should be analyzed alongside their patriarchal and interventionist character.