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## **Feminism, philanthropy and patriotism : female associational life in the Ottoman empire**

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## CHAPTER SEVEN

# *Milli Kıyafet: Ottoman Muslim Women and the Nationality of their Dress\**

The urban and rural women from the Bursa region who worked as labourers in the local filatures, were probably hardly aware of the intricate international economic and financial relationships the Ottoman Empire was part of and which directly affected their daily lives. For the women discussed in this chapter and the following one, however, quite the contrary is the case: these women were very much aware of the awkward financial position of the Ottoman Empire due to its position within the web of international economic relations and felt that they could and should contribute to the turning of the tide.

In this chapter, the role assigned to and appropriated by urban Ottoman Muslim women in the adoption of European dresses and the resistance against it is analyzed. It shows how the discussion around adopting, adapting or rejecting European fashion and outfits was firmly embedded in the ongoing debates regarding the safeguarding of the national economy and the establishment of a national identity. It was no coincidence that just a few weeks after the Young Turk Revolution of July 1908 Fatma Fahrünnisa, a famous female author, published an article in one of the newly established daily newspapers, *Millet* (Nation), in which she argued strongly in favor of the development of a national dress and vigorously rejected the following of European fashion.<sup>1</sup>

After a general introduction to the relation between nation, nationalism and fashion in a more general sense, the second part of the chapter relates how European fashion entered the Ottoman Empire and what reactions this evoked.

\*Parts of this chapter were published previously in: Nicole A.N.M. van Os, "Milli Kıyafet: Ottoman Women and the Nationality of Their Dress" in: Hasan Celal Güzel, et al. (eds), *The Turks*, 6 Vols, Ankara: Yeni Türkiye Publications, 2002. Vol. 4, Ottomans, 580-592 and Nicole A.N.M. van Os, "Ottoman Muslim Women's Reaction to the Commercial and Cultural Intrusion of the West: the Quest for a National Dress" in: Katja Füllberg-Stolberg, et al. (eds), *Dissociation and Appropriation: Responses to Globalization in Asia and Africa*, Berlin: Verlag das Arabische Buch, 1999, 291-308.

<sup>1</sup> Fatma Fahrünnisa, "Gönül ister ki ..." *Millet*, 31 Temmuz 1324 (13 August 1908), 1-2.

The sense of freedom created after the Young Turk revolution forms the background to the third part, which discusses how women in the direct aftermath of this revolution got entangled in a play of action followed by reaction: every step towards change in the public appearance of women was followed by repercussions of conservative forces. Since the concept of what is ‘national’ is based on an intricate play between individuals, groups, and the state, these two parts pay attention to the reactions of the public as well as the authorities to the changes in dress. Finally, the last part shows how national dress became an issue of discussion in the Ottoman women’s periodicals of the early years of the *Second Constitutional Period* and how this discussion became indicative for the changes in ideas among Ottoman, Muslim women on their national identity.

### Dress and (National) Identity

Communities and individuals have always used garments as a tool to mark differences. Individuals, by wearing a certain outfit state that they belong to – or aspire to belong to – a particular community. Or, just the contrary, by rejecting the rules set, they may be making a statement of not wanting to belong to it. On the other hand, communities are able to distinguish the adherents of one community from another by their outfits. The transgression of dress codes often indicates the start of changes in the social fabric which may be undesirable for members of the community or those who are in control.<sup>2</sup> Clothing laws and regulations issued by rulers or (unpleasant) reactions from the public weary of these changes may be evoked by these transgressions.

One of the differentiations made with clothing is that between the sexes. Men or women wearing clothes attributed to the other sex may evoke surprise,

<sup>2</sup> This makes dress an indispensable part of the imagery in cartoons. See Nora Şeni, “Fashion and Women’s Clothing in the Satirical Press of Istanbul at the End of the 19th Century,” in: Şirin Tekeli (ed.), *Women in Modern Turkish Society: A Reader*, London: Zed Books Ltd, 1995, 25-45; Palmira Brummett, “Dogs, Women, Cholera, and Other Menaces in the Streets: Cartoon Satire in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908 - 1911,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 27, 1995, 433-460, 444; Palmira Brummett, “Dressing for Revolution: Mother, Nation, Citizen, and Subversive in the Ottoman Satirical Press, 1908 - 1911,” in: Zehra F. Arat (ed.) *Deconstructing Images of “the Turkish Woman”* New York: Palgrave, 1998, 38-63.

confusion, aggression, or other emotions.<sup>3</sup> Dress often indicates the vocation or profession of its wearer. Military uniforms or the white coats of the medical profession are examples of such a function of clothes. Another distinction that can be indicated is that of class or the social stratum. There are numerous proclamations issued by Queen Elizabeth I of England, in which was described in detail what people belonging to a particular degree of nobility were allowed to wear.<sup>4</sup> Women of the upper classes in Victorian Britain were allowed to follow the developments of fashion, but for lower class women having a “love of finery” was thought of as a manifestation of improper behavior and these women were suspected of having loose morals.<sup>5</sup> Clothes may also constitute a social identity as is the case with Friedman’s Congolese *sapeurs*, who defined themselves by dressing in *non-traditional*, Western clothes with clearly visible labels of the great brands.<sup>6</sup> The different stages of the life cycle may be understandable from the clothing of the wearer. Young, marriageable girls may wear clothes different from those of married or widowed women.<sup>7</sup> Dress may also serve to distinguish the various religious or ethnic communities in society. An example of this was the dress code for the different ethno-religious communities in Ottoman society. Only Muslims, for example, were allowed to wear yellow shoes.<sup>8</sup> Likewise the different ethnic communities in Greece wore different outfits, which “served to

<sup>3</sup> E.g. a woman who dressed in man’s clothes and was dancing in a café in one of the neighbourhoods in Istanbul was arrested by the police for doing so. BOA, Dahiliye Nezareti, Hukuk Kısmı (hereafter DH.H), 64/13, 13.11.1330 (26 January 1915). See also Marjorie Garber, “The Occidental Tourist: M. Butterfly and the Scandal of Transvestism,” in: Andrew Parker, et al. (eds), *Nationalisms & Sexualities*, New York & London: Routledge, 1992, 121-146.

<sup>4</sup> Early English Books Online ([www.eebo.chadwyck.com/home](http://www.eebo.chadwyck.com/home)) gives some examples of sixteenth (Elizabethan) and seventeenth century decrees and laws prohibiting “excesse in apparel.” These decrees aimed at regulating what kind of dresses and materials people of a particular statue were allowed to wear. E.g. to prevent those from lower nobility from wearing outfits meant to be worn only by men of higher nobility.

<sup>5</sup> Mariana Valverde, “The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse,” *Victorian Studies*, XXXII, 1989, 169-188.

<sup>6</sup> Jonathan Friedman, “Being in the World: Globalization and Localization,” in: Mike Featherstone (ed.), *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, London, etc.: Sage Publications, 1990, 311-328.

<sup>7</sup> See for an Ottoman Muslim example e.g. Jenkins, *Behind Turkish Lattices*, 47-49.

<sup>8</sup> Donald Quataert, “Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, XXIX, 3, 1997, 403-425, 410. See also Julia Pardoe, *Beauties of the Bosphorus. Illustrated in a Series of Views of Constantinople and its Environs*, London: Virtue and Co., n.d. [1850], 32-33.

differentiate them from their neighbours at a glance.”<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, dress varied from one geographical area to another. Thus the clothing of people coming from a group of villages in one district may differ from those of people of a cluster of villages in another district.

The rise of nationalism and the development of nation-states created a need for an outfit which would represent a national, collective identity, which had to serve two goals at the same time: it had to be exclusive and enable those belonging to the national entity to distinguish itself from the “outsiders;” at the same time it had to be inclusive and enable those supposed to be belonging within the national entity to identify themselves and to be identified by others both within and without that national entity as such. Although these national outfits were, in most cases, new creations, inventions, the need was felt to give them an air of authenticity by referring to history. That is, they were to be regarded and accepted as having been part of the regular dress of all the people within the nation-state for a considerable period of time. Thus, on the initiative of King Otto and Queen Amalia parts of *traditional* outfits from several regions in Greece were used to devise a Greek “national” outfit after Greece became independent from the Ottoman Empire in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. So, although all these elements were authentic as such and served to legitimate the outfit, the combination of these elements was totally new.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, this outfit was not representative but rather constitutive of national identity.

While dress may serve as visual marker for an ethnic or national community, ideological discourses on whether something is part of the ethnic or national community or not, are often centered on issues of morality and honor. More than that of men, women’s behavior in public is important in this context. As discussed in the introduction to this book, Anthias and Yuval-Davis stated that one way women participate in the formation of (national) communities is by serving as signifiers of differences, thus becoming a symbol for the national/ethnic community in ideological discourses.<sup>11</sup> While a woman may be assertive, proud and forthcoming within a group including only women or within the confines of the family home, in the public realm, where interactions

<sup>9</sup> Linda Welters, “Ethnicity in Greek Dress,” in: Joanne B. Eicher (ed.), *Dress and Ethnicity: Change across Space and Time*, Oxford & Washington, D.C.: Berg Publishers, 1995, 53-77, quotation 54.

<sup>10</sup> Welters, “Ethnicity in Greek Dress.”

<sup>11</sup> Anthias & Yuval-Davis, “Introduction,” 7.

with men from beyond the direct family circle occur, women have to be modest.<sup>12</sup> One way of showing modesty, or the lack thereof, is the way one dresses. A woman who is not dressed appropriately may be accused of immodesty even if her behavior does not warrant this.<sup>13</sup> She may become the subject of ridicule, mockery or, even worse, she may be excluded from the community. It is therefore no surprise that in the search for national dress the focus is on women's outfits<sup>14</sup> and especially the outfit women wear in public. Moreover, a community which is eager to keep its own identity will try to preserve the traditional outfit of its women. In the Ottoman Empire, however, ambiguity was prevalent. On the one hand, the Ottoman government "modernized" men's wear (especially that of the civil servants) by issuing quite specific orders on what men had to wear to show that the Ottoman Empire belonged to the "community of modern states."<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, consecutive Ottoman governments and other authorities at lower levels regularly issued sumptuary regulations in efforts to regulate the dresses of women, Muslim and non-Muslim alike. These laws were, in general, less specific, but in general aimed at preventing change and, thus, "modernization": outfits which were "immodest" or not according to the "traditional morals and values" were prohibited. While the difference in interpretation of these wordings led to confrontations between women and the police and between women and parts of the public in the street, the Ottoman authorities and public had little to say over what the wives and daughters of the bureaucrats were wearing within the confines of their mansions. It is within these more confined contexts that women started to wear European fashion in order to show their "modernity."

### Appropriating and Contesting European Fashion during the Hamidian Era

The introduction of Western clothing in the Ottoman Empire was a result of the political and economic developments of the nineteenth century. By the late

<sup>12</sup> Eickelman, *The Middle East*, 250-254.

<sup>13</sup> Valverde, "The Love of Finery: Fashion and the Fallen Woman in Nineteenth-Century Social Discourse;" Ann Bridgewood, "Dancing the Jar: Girls' Dress at Turkish Cypriot Weddings" in: Eicher (ed.), *Dress and Ethnicity*, 29-51.

<sup>14</sup> Joanne B. Eicher, "Introduction: Dress as an Expression of Ethnic Identity," in: Eicher (ed.), *Dress and Ethnicity*, 1-6, 3.

<sup>15</sup> Quataert, "Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire."

eighteenth and early nineteenth century Ottoman rulers felt the need to reform the Ottoman bureaucratic system. With these reforms they aimed at centralizing the power of the state in Istanbul following the examples set by European powers. The reforms were accompanied by regulations forcing Ottoman officials, whose numbers increased considerably over the nineteenth century, to wear European-like suits independently from their religious background.<sup>16</sup> This change marked a break with the past, when the people belonging to the various religious communities in Ottoman society had been forced to dress differently.<sup>17</sup> The rules concerning these dress codes had been regularly confirmed by imperial decrees, which generally served to end a period of relative relaxation and thus to reestablish the old social order.<sup>18</sup> The imposed changes in the dress of officials were, however, meant to mark the transition to a new order. Thus, in the course of the nineteenth century the acceptance of European dress blurred the ethnic and religious borders marked by dress before and became an indication of “modernization” and “sophistication” (= “familiarity with things European”) of the wearer.<sup>19</sup> It also turned the officials from different creeds visibly into “Ottomans,” subjects of the House of Osman, instead of adherents to the leaders of their own ethno-religious communities, being the Roman Pope, the Greek-Orthodox Patriarch or otherwise.<sup>20</sup>

The change in dress of Ottoman women towards a more European garb started in the first half of the nineteenth century, but accelerated in the last three decades of that century.<sup>21</sup> This development was limited mainly to coastal cities like Istanbul, Izmir and Thessalonica, where the population was more likely to encounter European ideas and fashions.<sup>22</sup> One of the reasons for the increasing

<sup>16</sup> Jenkins, *Behind Turkish Lattices*, 121-122; Nurettin Sevin, *Onüç Asırlık Türk Kıyâfet Târihine bir Bakış*, Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı, 1990, 123-124; 127-128; Fatma Karabıyık Barbarosoğlu, *Modernleşme Sürecinde Moda ve Zihniyet*, İstanbul: İz Yayıncılık, 1995, 111-113.

<sup>17</sup> Quataert, “Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire.”

<sup>18</sup> Barbarosoğlu, *Modernleşme Sürecinde Moda ve Zihniyet*, 129-132.

<sup>19</sup> Micklewright, “Late-nineteenth-century Ottoman Wedding Costumes as Indicators of Social Change,” 171. Not only dress, but also other European artifacts were purchased as prove of the “modernity” of its owner. Şerif Mardin, “Super-westernization in Urban Life in the Last Quarter of the Nineteenth Century,” in: Peter Benedict et al. (eds), *Turkey: Geographical and Social Perspectives*, Leiden: Brill, 1974, 404-446.

<sup>20</sup> Quataert, “Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire.”

<sup>21</sup> Fanny Davis, *The Ottoman Lady: A Social History from 1718 to 1918*, New York, etc.: Greenwood Press, 1986, 195-196; Nancy Micklewright, “London, Paris, Istanbul, and Cairo: Fashion and International Trade in the Nineteenth Century,” *New Perspectives on Turkey*, 7, Spring 1992, 125-136, 129.

<sup>22</sup> Jenkins, *Behind Turkish Lattices*, 122.



interaction with Europe at this time was the industrialization of Europe and the consequently rapid increase of trade between Europe and the Ottoman Empire mentioned earlier. This served as a catalyst to familiarize the non-Muslim traders and merchants with European goods and manners.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, new educational institutions were created where Ottoman (Muslim) officers and bureaucrats got acquainted with European ideas and goods while they were being trained for their professions with the assistance of mainly French teachers and books. Several officers and bureaucrats were sent to Europe to complete their education.

The increased commercial and diplomatic contacts of this era also brought Europeans – with their families – to Istanbul and other main cities. Not only business and politics brought Europeans to Istanbul, but traveling to the Orient became very much *en vogue* amongst the members of the British upper-class, male and female alike.<sup>24</sup> While European women regarded a visit to an Oriental harem as an indispensable part of their visit to the East, Ottoman Muslim women themselves – initially – competed amongst each other to invite European women into their homes.<sup>25</sup> According to Micklewright, the visits of the Empress Eugenie of France in 1866 and the Prince and Princess of Wales in the same year, which were both widely published, formed an important impetus to the acceptance of European fashion amongst the women of the upper-class in Istanbul.<sup>26</sup>

The European governesses invited to teach the women of these well-to-do families French, English or German formed an important source of information on European fashion.<sup>27</sup> The increased interaction between Ottomans and Europeans led to a change of ideas regarding the education of women. Amongst the elite families European languages and arts, like playing the piano, preferably taught by a European teacher, became a part of the education of their daughters.

<sup>23</sup> For information on the growing hold of non-Muslims on foreign trade (and thus port cities) see, Quataert, “The Age of Reforms, 1812 - 1914,” 837-841 and Edhem Eldem, et al. *The Ottoman City between East and West: Aleppo, Izmir and Istanbul*, Cambridge, etc.: Cambridge University Press, 1999.

<sup>24</sup> Melman, *Women's Orients*.

<sup>25</sup> George Dorys, *La Femme Turque*, Paris: Plon, 1902, 9; Melman, *Women's Orients: English women and the Middle East, 1718 - 1918*. For the description of such a(n imaginary?) visit by an Ottoman woman see Alihé Hanoum, *Les Musulmanes Contemporaines; Trois Conférences, Traduites de la Langue Turque par Nazimé-Roukie*, Paris & New York: Alphonse Lemerre, 1894.

<sup>26</sup> Micklewright, “Late-nineteenth-century Ottoman Wedding Costumes as Indicators of Social Change,” 162.

<sup>27</sup> Jenkins, *Behind Turkish Lattices*, 29; Davis, *The Ottoman Lady*, 54-55.

The Ottoman women being educated by these European governesses learned to read the French and English newspapers appearing in the Ottoman Empire with their advertisements and columns on Parisian fashions<sup>28</sup> or the Parisian fashion periodicals which found their way into the Ottoman Empire.<sup>29</sup>

Towards the end of the century the Ottoman women's press also started to pay attention to Parisian fashion. They published pictures of European women and drawings of dresses with instructions on how to sew them, while they also discussed the dangers of a particular asset of European fashion of those days, the corset.<sup>30</sup> It would last until January 1911, however, before the first Ottoman fashion periodical appeared in Istanbul. This trilingual periodical, *La Reine de la Mode Parisienne*, was to appear twice a month and was printed in French, Greek and Ottoman Turkish.<sup>31</sup>

The European (and/or non-Muslim) shops with their display windows in Pera and their customers who displayed their wears in the streets of that neighbourhood formed another source for news of the latest Parisian fashion.<sup>32</sup> Finally, the settlement of European dressmakers in the European quarters of Istanbul, bringing along their skills and models, contributed to the growing familiarity of Ottoman Muslim women with the European ways of dressing.<sup>33</sup>

According to Micklewright, the first women to adopt European dresses were from the Armenian and Greek communities in the Ottoman Empire because “their commercial contacts with Europeans increased their familiarity with the new fashions” and because they might have seen these clothes as a means to identify themselves with their coreligionists in Europe.<sup>34</sup> Micklewright's last

<sup>28</sup> Nancy Micklewright, “Public and Private for Ottoman Women of the Nineteenth Century,” in: D. Fairchild Ruggles (ed.), *Women, Patronage, and Self-Representation in Islamic Societies*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000, 155-176.

<sup>29</sup> Hülya Tezcan, for example, found in the Topkapı Archives pages torn from French fashion periodicals of the 1870s. Hülya Tezcan, “Osmanlı imparatorluğu'nun son yüzyılında kadın kıyafetlerinde batılılaşma,” *Sanat Dünyası*, 37, 1988, 44-51.

<sup>30</sup> E.g. in *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, the longest living nineteenth century Ottoman Turkish women's periodical. Frierson, “Unimagined Communities,” especially 218-286; Frierson, “Gender, Consumption and Patriotism,”; Frierson, “Mirrors Out, Mirrors In.” See also Yavuz Selim Karakışla, “Osmanlı hanımları ve kadın terziler – I,” *Tarih ve Toplum* XXXIX, 232, 2003, 11-21.

<sup>31</sup> “Modeblatt,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 16. Dezember 1910, 2. A trial number was published in December 1910. Although it did exist for some time, only one issue without cover page (and thus date) is available in the Istanbul libraries.

<sup>32</sup> Frierson, “Gender, Consumption and Patriotism”

<sup>33</sup> Micklewright, “London, Paris, Istanbul, and Cairo,” 130-132.

<sup>34</sup> Micklewright, “Late-nineteenth-century Ottoman Wedding Costumes as Indicators of Social Change,” 161.

explanation, stressing the religious element, implies that the Armenian and Greek women by wearing these European dresses were making a religio-political statement against their Muslim fellow countrywomen. Exertzoglou, however, points out that Western products including clothing may have served as social markers through which new Christian Orthodox middle-class families could distinguish themselves from the other urban groups “in a period of high social mobility.”<sup>35</sup> Greek Orthodox women may thus have adopted European fashion to present themselves as European, modern and middle-class, as opposed to the “backward,” lower-class women, rather than as Christian.

Another reason for the relatively early appropriation of Western dress by non-Muslim women could be attested to the legal constraints for particularly Muslim women in the empire. The Sultan, who was not only the worldly ruler over all the inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire, but, in the context of Islamism, also claimed to be the spiritual leader of the Muslims, left the non-Muslim women freer in their choice of dress, while setting stricter rules for the Muslim women. Thus, as Frierson noted, the Ottoman Muslim women were presented with a dilemma:

[H]ow could [Muslim women] display their mastery and adaptations of the new European fashions, (...) while remaining in keeping with traditions of Islamic modesty, which dictated full and loose coverage from head to instep? (...) [M]inority and European women were relatively free (...) to display a streamlined, rocksolid profile of modernity.<sup>36</sup>

They were faced with the choice of following the “Indigenous Way of Life,” or “The Spirit of the Age” as Geertz states; the choice between becoming “Essentialist” or “Epochalist,” referred to in the introductory chapter.<sup>37</sup>

The first Ottoman Muslim women to wear European fashions were the women of the palace and upper-classes, followed by the wives and daughters of lower rank officials.<sup>38</sup> Their adoption of European fashion did not start by wholesale

<sup>35</sup> Haris Exertzoglou, “The Cultural Uses of Consumption: Negotiating Class, Gender, and Nation in the Ottoman Urban Centers during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, XXXV, 2003, 77-101, quotation 81.

<sup>36</sup> Frierson, “Gender, Consumption and Patriotism” 109-110.

<sup>37</sup> Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 240-249.

<sup>38</sup> Micklewright, “Late-nineteenth-century Ottoman Wedding Costumes as Indicators of Social Change,” 161-162; Tezcan, “Osmanlı imparatorluğu’nun son yüzyılında kadın kıyafetlerinde batılılaşma;” Davis, *The Ottoman Lady*, 195. There is little information on the

copying of European dresses: they commenced by using only accessories like gloves and stockings. Later traditional jackets were replaced by European-style ones to be followed by the adoption of parts of the traditional dresses to a more European fashion. Elderly women and those recently migrated from the provinces were more reluctant to adopt these western outfits.<sup>39</sup>

How did these Ottoman ladies obtain their Parisian gowns and dresses? The more well-to-do Ottoman ladies purchased their dresses from Paris, either by going there<sup>40</sup> or through the mediation of relations living there.<sup>41</sup> Others had their dresses made by the foreign dressmakers in Istanbul. Still others asked their traditionally non-Muslim, family dressmakers to sew a dress according to the examples from the periodicals.<sup>42</sup> The necessary cloth (and laces and frills) were ordered from Paris, bought in the European stores in Istanbul or purchased through the dressmaker. Another way to obtain a (relatively cheap) European outfit was to buy the *prêt à porter* from the European stores, which would then be adjusted if necessary by the seamstresses working there.

The Parisian robes which were purchased by Ottoman Muslim women were meant to be worn within the intimacy of the home. Within the confines of the home, Ottoman Muslim women were allowed to wear what they wanted. But outside the home, in the streets and other public places, Muslim women in Ottoman society were expected to obey the rules of Islam regarding their dress; they had to dress in *tesettür*. *Tesettür* literally means “a being veiled, hidden,

wearing of European style dresses by the lower classes. However, Hester Jenkins remarks that lower class women in the Ottoman Empire “abandoned their picturesque old costumes for cheap clothing ‘made in Germany’ or Vienna” at the turn of the century. Jenkins, *Behind Turkish Lattices*, 122. In France “fashion” started to influence larger parts of society only after the First World War with post war democratization of fashion due to mass marketing, the development of a popular press and an increase in advertising towards lower classes. Mary Louise Roberts, “Samson and Delilah Revisited: The Politics of Women’s Fashion in 1920s France,” *American Historical Review*, IIC, 3, 657-684.

<sup>39</sup> Micklewright, “Late-nineteenth-century Ottoman Wedding Costumes as Indicators of Social Change,” 161-162; Micklewright, “London, Paris, Istanbul, and Cairo,” 129-130.

<sup>40</sup> Suad Sait, “İşçilik,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, I, 60, 2 Haziran 1329, 2-4.

<sup>41</sup> The French teacher of Refia Sultan, one of the daughters of Sultan Abdülmecid, for instance, served not only as her example, but also as a go-between between the (European) stores in Istanbul and in Paris and the princess. Akyıldız, *Mümin ve Müsrif bir Padişah Kızı Refia Sultan*, 48-50.

<sup>42</sup> In most mansions there was a sewing room, which was the domain of the family seamstress who would come in once every while to do the sewing for the family.

shrouded; concealment.”<sup>43</sup> For an Ottoman Muslim woman it meant that certain parts of the body should be covered in such a way that they could not be seen by men who were not part of the immediate family of the woman, or who, in other words, were allowed to marry the woman.

This outdoor garb also changed. The changes were partly relatively small: the women adorned themselves using fashionable accessories, such as shoes, gloves, umbrellas, parasols and stockings which could be purchased from the shops in Pera. Partly, however, there were other more fundamental changes.

The biggest change was the gradual disappearance of the *ferace* and *yaşmak* at the end of the nineteenth century. The *ferace* was basically a long, loose coat from shoulders to the ground with long sleeves. The width of its sleeves and collar varied over time. It was worn by Muslim and non-Muslim women alike.<sup>44</sup> While non-Muslim completed their outfit with head covers leaving their faces free, Muslim women covered their heads and faces with a *yaşmak*, a two-part head cover of which the first was draped over the head and tied in the neck, covering head and forehead to the eyebrows, while the other part covered the face below the eyes.<sup>45</sup>

While the *yaşmak* was supposed to make a woman's features invisible, it seems that women constantly tried to negotiate the limits of what was permissible by making the veil ever thinner.<sup>46</sup> Under the reign of Abdülhamid II the *ferace* started to disappear from the street scene. While non-Muslim women replaced it with the European style coat (*manto*) and hat (*şapka*),<sup>47</sup> Muslim women donned the *çarşaf* which they combined with a *peçe* (facial veil).<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> *New Redhouse Turkish-English Dictionary*, Istanbul: Redhouse Yayınevi, 1995 (15th edition), 1156.

<sup>44</sup> Davis, *The Ottoman Lady*, 188. *Woman in Anatolia: 9000 Years of the Anatolian Woman*, İstanbul: Turkish Republic Ministry of Culture, 1993, 272-273.

<sup>45</sup> Davis, *The Ottoman Lady*, 189.

<sup>46</sup> “Fashion in Constantinople,” *West Coast Times*, 25 August 1877, 3.

<sup>47</sup> From the literature it does not become clear when non-Muslim women in the Ottoman Empire started to use European-style street wear.

<sup>48</sup> There are two different explanations for the origin of the *çarşaf*. According to Sevin the *çarşaf* originated from Bağdad from where it was introduced in Istanbul in the 1890s because it was more convenient than the *ferace* for the Art-Nouveau-style dresses which had found their way from Paris to Istanbul. Davis and the catalogue of the exhibition on women on the other hand, mention that the *çarşaf* was brought from Syria to Istanbul in the 1870s by the women of the family of the Ottoman governor in Syria, Suphi Pasha. Sevin, *Onüç Asırlık Türk Kıyafet Tarihine bir Bakış*, 130-132; Davis, *The Ottoman Lady*, 1986, 198; *Woman in Anatolia*, 283.



**Figure 9** Postcard showing a woman with *ferace* and *yaşmak*.

Davis quoting Pakalın describes the *çarşaf* as “a two-piece, dark-colored outer garment for street wear that covered a woman from head to foot. One piece was a skirt, one a sort of cape that started at the top of the head and came down over the skirt.” However, the *çarşaf* was not necessarily dark-colored, as Davis stated herself, too. Its appearance also depended on the age, or stage in the lifecycle of its wearer. Especially for young girls other, lighter colors were available. Nor was the *çarşaf* always consisting of two-pieces. Skirt and cape could be joined at the waist, with the cape blousing over the skirt with the help

of a sash with openings for the arms. The latter form was (and is) called torba (literally, bag).<sup>49</sup>

The *çarşaf* was originally completed with a facial veil named *peçe*. The facial veil, like the *çarşaf* had many variations. It varied in color - although in general it seems to have been black - the material and the way of wearing. The thickness of the cloth used varied from very flimsy gauzes through which all facial features were visible to more coarse versions which not only made it more difficult to be seen, but also to see. The *peçe* started at the edge of the *çarşaf* just above the eyebrows thus covering the whole face.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, an Ottoman Muslim woman in the urban context of Istanbul, Thessalonica or Izmir, thus, could well be dressed in an afternoon gown after the latest Parisian fashion at home, but once she went outside, she had to fulfil the requirements of *tesettür*, and cover herself. However, what parts of the body should be covered and in what way was (and is) subject to debate and offered women ample room for negotiation.

The appearance and apparel of Ottoman Muslim women in the street had been subject to negotiation for centuries as documents in the archives show us. From the mid nineteenth century onwards, however, the nature of the debate on Ottoman Muslim women's apparel in the street changed. In the first place, the debate became more public than ever before. While women sought to adjust their outerwear to newly developing tastes, both the authorities and some sectors of the public contested these changes, because they felt they were in violation of what was deemed proper for Ottoman Muslim women. While the authorities continued to issue decrees, literate Ottoman Muslims used the newly developing press to ventilate their ideas on the developments they witnessed. Secondly, the content of the debate changed due to the changing internal and international economic and political relationships: contested were not just the appearance and apparel of Ottoman Muslim women in the street as such but more particularly the increasing appropriation of European, and thus Christian, fashion.

The color, length and tightness of the garments and the transparency of the veils were subject to continuous discussion. The decrees which were issued testify to the disapproval of the authorities regarding the developments in the nature of garments. They were often issued just before or during the month of

<sup>49</sup> Mehmet Zeki Pakalin, *Osmanlı Tarih Deyimleri ve Terimleri Sözlüğü*, İstanbul, 1946 - 1954 (3 Volumes), Volume I, 327-329 quoted in: Davis, *The Ottoman Lady*, 187; *Woman in Anatolia: 9000 Years of the Anatolian Woman*, 283.

Ramadan<sup>50</sup> or in reaction to events taking place in the streets of, mainly, Istanbul. These events, in turn, were often the result of reactions of the public to acute political developments which involved Christians and Muslims. Their frequency shows us that women did not easily surrender to those rejecting change.

Thus in 1877 – notably when the Ottomans were at war with Russia – a New Zealand newspaper quoted an edict the Ottoman authorities allegedly issued because they regretted that

“Turkish women unmindful of their dignity, walk about in the streets and bazaars attired in a manner not at all in keeping with the established usages (sic!) and regulations. Their feredjes instead of being of a sombre and uniform tint, are dyed with the most varied and fantastic colors. Their yashmaks instead of forming a veil of thick material are made of light gauze. Their feet, instead of being shod in the ancient and simple yellow slipper, are confined in ridiculous and uncomfortable Frankish boots.” (...) a spectacle “offensive in the eyes of respectable people.”<sup>51</sup>

In 1890 Abdülhamid II after having seen some women in a black all-covering *çarşaf* with a transparent facial *peçe* forbade women to wear this garment because “they were ‘immodestly’ (*açık saçık*) dressed to a degree that they were ‘not covered’ (*örtünmemiş*).” And, as it was stated in the imperial edict, in order to prevent Allah from bringing material and immaterial damages to individuals and the state, women had to dress according to the orders of Allah and thus not in *çarşaf*. An additional reason was that the shapeless form of the *çarşaf* could serve as a cover for males who for less honorable reasons did not want to be recognized as such.<sup>52</sup>

Not long after this edict, however, the prohibition was lifted and the *çarşaf* was allowed. Instead, the older *ferace* and *yaşmak*, which continued to be worn by women of the aristocracy, were forbidden.<sup>53</sup> During the reign of Abdülhamid

<sup>50</sup> See e.g. BOA, DH.MKT, 1620/135, 1 Ramazan 1306 (1 May 1889); BOA, İradeler: Dahiliye, 1221/95618, 27 Şaban 1308 (7 April 1891); BOA, İradeler: Hususi, 122/1322-S088, 28 Şaban 1322 (6 November 1904); BOA, BEO, 2444/183268, 28 Şaban 1322 (6 November 1904); BOA, DH.MKT, 908/37, 29 Şaban 1322 (7 November 1904).

<sup>51</sup> “Fashion in Constantinople,” *West Coast Times*, 25 August 1877, 3. The quotation marks here are the quotation marks as used in the original newspaper article.

<sup>52</sup> Rukiye Bulut, “İstanbul kadınlarının kıyafetleri ve II. Abdülhamid’in çarşafı yasaklaması,” *Belgelerle Türk Tarihi Dergisi*, 8, 1968, 34-36, quotation 35.

<sup>53</sup> Davis, *The Ottoman Lady*, 198.



II many more imperial rescripts were issued which forbade Muslim women to “wander around immodestly dressed and without taking into account the rules of *tesettür*.”<sup>54</sup>

In order to understand these prohibitions and the concern of the Ottoman Sultan with the dress of Muslim women the political situation of that period should be taken into account. As mentioned before, the Ottoman Sultan, Abdülhamid II, had embraced pan-Islamism as a reaction to the growing opposition to his government and the growing European influence. He and some of the people around him thought the loosening of the rules of Islam to be one of the reasons for the perceived decline of the Ottoman Empire and saw the solution to it in a stricter adherence to these rules. Moreover, he tried to use his position of Khalif and proclaimed head of all the Muslims in the world, as a counterweight against the growing influence of the European powers. As such, of course, he could not allow the Muslim women of his country to ignore the code of dress prescribed by Islam. Thus, he and the traditionalist forces around him felt the need to prevent women from wearing “indecent” outfits in public spaces, especially at the most sacred month of Islam and in situations where the Ottoman Empire felt threatened by non-Muslim states.

While the changes in the indoor and outdoor apparel of women were critically followed for reasons of morality, the financial dangers of following fashion formed another reason for a critical approach by, for example, Fatma Aliye in her book *Nisvan-ı İslam* which was published in 1881.<sup>55</sup> In the third chapter of this book, three Ottoman Muslim women discuss their preferences regarding their attires. One of them prefers a European outfit, the second one prefers a “Turkish” garment. The third one, the first person narrator who is probably reflecting Fatma Aliye’s view, dresses sometimes in European outfits and sometimes wears a Turkish dress, according to her mood of the moment. She thinks the Ottoman women are lucky, because they have such a choice. However, during the discussion some problems were raised regarding fashion in general and Parisian fashion in special. The first objection raised was that following fashion was expensive and led to squander: dresses were replaced by

<sup>54</sup> BOA, İradeler: Zabtiye, 368/1, 18 Ramazan 1317 (19 January 1900). See also fn 50.

<sup>55</sup> This book was twice translated into French. I used the translation by Nazime Rukiye Hanım: Alihé Hanoum, *Les Musulmanes Contemporaines*, 125-131.

new ones, not because they had worn out, but because they had gone out of fashion.<sup>56</sup>

The supposedly high cost of following (Parisian) fashion had been a reoccurring theme in the criticisms published regarding dressing the European way ever since the 1860s in Ottoman Greek publications<sup>57</sup> and since the 1880s also in the Ottoman Turkish press.<sup>58</sup> One of the arguments which had been resurfacing ever since the early eighteenth century, were the dangers of women's expenditures on fashion for family life. These arguments were based on the general idea that women spent the money their husbands earned, an idea further elaborated upon in the next chapter. As Quataert points out, decrees prohibiting immodest public display were issued regularly from the 1720s onwards using as argument that women were bankrupting and corrupting their husbands in their efforts to keep up with fashion.<sup>59</sup> Similar arguments were used in the Greek Ottoman press of the nineteenth century.<sup>60</sup>

Besides the expenditures as such and their potential dangers for family life, the issue of where the money was spent was another point of criticism. As the first person narrator in Fatma Aliye's book had already pointed out, most of the European-style and even Turkish-style dresses were not made of locally produced materials, but of imported goods. Thus a large amount of money was flowing abroad, at a time the country needed it so badly.<sup>61</sup> The issue was also debated in *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete* in the late 1890s: several women wrote to the periodical when they had been able to buy high quality goods from Muslim owned shops at a relatively cheap price to stress how happy they were.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Alihé Hanoum, *Les Musulmanes Contemporaines*, 125-131. This argument had been used before by the father of the author, Cevdet Pasha, who sent a memorandum to the Sultan in which he complained about the sums of money spent for the sake of following fashion. Cevdet Paşa, *Ma'ruzat*, Haz. Yusuf Hallaçoğlu, İstanbul: Çağrı Yayınları, 1980, 4 and Cevdet Paşa, *Tezahir*, Haz. Cavit Baysun, Ankara: T.T.K. Basımevi, 1986, 1-20, page 20 quoted in Barbarosoğlu, *Modernleşme Sürecinde Moda ve Zihniyet*, 117.

<sup>57</sup> Exertzoglou, "The Cultural Uses of Consumption."

<sup>58</sup> E.g. in the *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, the longest living nineteenth century Ottoman Turkish women's periodical. Frierson "Unimagined Communities," especially 218-286; Frierson, "Gender, Consumption and Patriotism."

<sup>59</sup> Quataert, "Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire," 408-411.

<sup>60</sup> Exertzoglou, "The Cultural Uses of Consumption," 83.

<sup>61</sup> Alihé Hanoum, *Les Musulmanes Contemporaines*, 132-138.

<sup>62</sup> Elizabeth Brown Frierson, "'Cheap and Easy': Patriotic Consumer Culture in the late-Ottoman era: Consumption in the Ottoman Empire, 1550 - 1922," in: Donald Quataert (ed.), *Consumption Studies in the Ottoman Empire, 1550 - 1922: An Introduction*, Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 2000, 243-260.

Thus, the increasing tensions between the Ottoman Empire and the European powers on the one hand, and the Muslim and non-Muslim population of the Ottoman Empire on the other were reflected in the discussions and repercussions regarding the public apparel of Ottoman Muslim women. Although these discussions and repercussions may seem to have limited the freedom of dress for women, they also provided women with some leeway to gradually change their apparel.

### 1908: “From Despotism to Freedom”

The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 which brought hope for a more liberal regime led women to seize the opportunity to experiment with their dress, including the *çarşaf*. The upper part of the *çarşaf*, also called *car* (literally, shawl or scarf),<sup>63</sup> gradually turned into a kind of pelerine which became increasingly shorter and which was combined with long gloves to keep the arms covered. The skirt of the *çarşaf*, on the other hand, tightened correspondingly with the changes in fashion of the indoor, Parisian fashion.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the skirts of the *çarşafs* started to get shorter or were discarded completely by some women who continued to only wear the upper-part as a kind of cape. Instead of the traditionally dark-colored fabric more lively colors and different materials started to be used. Towards the end of the First World War the *çarşaf* of the more fashionable Muslim women from Istanbul looked very much like the European-style coat of their Christian compatriots.<sup>65</sup> The part covering the head was replaced by a piece of cloth wrapped fashionably around the head looking like a turban or even a hat and made these women resemble their Christian neighbours even more. Moreover, some women took the liberty of throwing back the veil, while others just discarded it altogether.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Davis quoting Seniha Morali is referring to it as zar which means “envelope”; Seniha Sam Morali, “Çarşaf modası bize Suriye’den geldi,” *Hayat*, Eylül 30, 1960, 4-5 as quoted in Davis, *The Ottoman Lady*, 198.

<sup>64</sup> Nebile Kamuran, “Kıyafetimiz,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, I, 20, 23 Nisan 1329, 3.

<sup>65</sup> Sevin, *Onüç Asırlık Türk Kıyafet Tarihine bir Bakış*, 139-140; 144-145.

<sup>66</sup> “La Vie feminine,” *Revue du Monde Musulman*, XV, 7-8, Août 1911, 148; Jenkins, *Behind Turkish Lattices*, frontispiece.



Figure 10 Postcard showing *Meşrutiyet Hanımları* (Ladies of the Constitution) with the two women in the front dressed in *Coutume Moderne* (Modern Costume) and the woman in the back in *Ancienne Coutume* (Old-fashioned Costume). Note that the French text is reading *Beautés Orientales* (Oriental Beauties) where the Ottoman text says *Meşrutiyet Hanımları*. As such it addressed two separate publics: an Ottoman one which obviously did not need the specifications “modern” vs “oldfashioned” and a foreign one which did.

The increased visibility of women, in the press and on the streets and public squares, gave the more conservative forces a tangible aim to direct their anger at. In the months directly following the Young Turk revolution women were harassed by those who thought the place of women to be within the confines of the family home and not in the public space of the street even if they were dressed according to the rules of *tesettür*.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> See for complaints related to such harassments and calls upon the police to secure the safety of women in the street “Kısm-ı siyasi: zabıta ve kadınlarımızın muhafaza-ı hukuku,”

The adherents of the traditionalist view who were behind the counterrevolution of April 1909 (*Otuzbir Mart Olayı*) also directed part of their criticisms towards the increased freedom of women as symbolized by the changes in their dresses. One of the goals of their attacks was the “hat” which some Muslim men and women had begun to wear after the revolution as a token of their being modern and civilized,<sup>68</sup> but which for the counterrevolutionaries symbolized the loss of Islamic morals and the growing influence of the unbelievers or, in short, westernization.<sup>69</sup>

Although this counterrevolution was beaten down in eleven days, women’s outdoor clothing remained a bone of contention between those with a more religiously based conservative view of society and those propagating more secular and modernist ideas.

In March 1910 the printing and distribution of a pamphlet arguing in favor of lifting *tesettür* was forbidden.<sup>70</sup> In 1912 the Ministry of the Interior ordered that foreigners who published writings against *tesettür* were to be banned from the Ottoman Empire.<sup>71</sup> Despite these prohibitions, articles arguing in favor of lifting *tesettür* appeared in periodicals of the “westernists,” such as *İçtihad* (Opinion).<sup>72</sup> The views and arguments of these “westernists,” however, were fiercely contested by the authors of articles in *Sırat-ı Müstakim* (Straight Path)

*Demet*, 4, 8 Teşrinievvel 1324 (21 October 1908), 62-63; Hakkı Behiç, “Kısm-ı siyasi: mümtaziyet-i nisvan ve kadınlara hürmet,” *Demet*, 7, 29 Teşrinievvel 1324 (11 November 1908), 105-107.

<sup>68</sup> Mesut Çapa, “Giyim kuşamda medeni kıyafetlerin benimsenmesi ve Trabzon örneği,” *Toplumsal Tarih*, 30, Haziran 1996, 22-28.

<sup>69</sup> van Os, “Kandilli Sultâni-i İnas,” 28-29. See also Abbot, *Turkey in Transition*, 34-36. The hat continued to be a focus of attention: in 1910 the Ministry of Interior forbade the wearing of hats by the “children of Muslim families;” in 1914 a young Muslim was reported arrested because he had worn a hat during carnival; Atatürk and his supporters, on the other hand, thought the use of hats in the 1920s an important step on the road to civilization. BOA, DH.MUİ, 96-1/38, 12 Cemaziyelahir 1328 (20 June 1910); “Ein Muhamedaner mit einem Hut,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 4. März 1914, 2; Çapa, “Giyim kuşamda medeni kıyafetlerin benimsenmesi ve Trabzon örneği.”

<sup>70</sup> BOA, DH.MUİ, 69-2/4, 19 Safer 1328 (2 March 1910).

<sup>71</sup> BOA, DH.MUİ, 57-1/53, 2 Rebiülevvel 1330 (21 February 1912).

<sup>72</sup> See e.g. “Tesettür meselesi,” *İçtihad*, II, 29, 15 Ağustos 1327 (28 August 1911), 809-811; Server Bedii, “Haftaneme,” *İçtihad*, IV, 85, 26 Kanunuevvel 1329 (8 January 1914), 1889-1892, 1890; Server Bedii, “Haftaneme,” *İçtihad*, IV, 86, 19 Kanunuevvel 1329 (1 January 1914), 1913-1914; Server Bedii, “Haftaneme,” *İçtihad*, IV, 87, 2 Kanunusani 1329 (15 January 1914), 1937-1940; [Server Bedii], “Haftaneme,” *İçtihad*, IV, 89, 16 Kanunusani 1329 (29 January 1914), 1995; Server Bedii, “Haftaneme,” *İçtihad*, IV, 92, 6 Şubat 1329 (19 February 1914), 2065-2067; Kılıçzade Hakkı, “Tamamen hal olunmadıkça bitmeyen bir mesele,” *İçtihad*, IV, 92, 6 Şubat 1329 (19 February 1914), 2067-2070; Selaheddin Asım, “Tesettür ve mahiyeti,” *İçtihad*, IV, 100, 9 Nisan 1330 (22 April 1914), 2255-2258.

and its successor, *Sebilürreşad* (Straight Path), who represented the view of the “Islamists.”<sup>73</sup>

In August 1910, the most important religious authority in the Ottoman Empire, the *Sheikh ül-Islam*, called upon the police to warn women who unveiled themselves unduly and who were thus “behaving and moving in contradiction with the national morals and ethics” (*adab ve ahlak-ı milliyeye muhalif*).<sup>74</sup> In the same month the Ministry of the Interior issued a short memorandum reminding that women should follow the rules of *tesettür*.<sup>75</sup> In March 1912, the *Sheikh ül-Islam* again felt the need to publish a proclamation in the daily newspapers in which he urged the heads of family to make sure their women dressed according to “the religious prescripts and national morals” (*evamir-i diniye ve adab-ı milliye*).<sup>76</sup> Muslim students of the American College for Girls were surprised by this proclamation during their weekend leaves. As many of them had left the school in their “modernized” dresses, they were forced to borrow some “old-fashioned (...) skirts and charshafs from their relations.” They were not very impressed, though, realizing that such a rule was “as frequently relaxed as it is enforced.”<sup>77</sup> According to the *Österreichische Monatschrift für den Orient*, the reason for issuing this particular order was the religious fervor which had increased due to the Tripolitanian war with Italy, a Christian state.<sup>78</sup>

The girls of the College were right: the continuous struggle between the modernizing forces of change and the conservative forces resisting these changes which pinpointed at women’s outside apparel and public appearance, resulted in a constant stream of often confusing and contradictory rules and regulations. In January 1913, for example, the Military Commander of Istanbul forbade Turkish women “to appear in the streets in attire which is contrary to the religious law

<sup>73</sup> See below fn 83.

<sup>74</sup> BOA, DH.HMŞ, 17/33, 8.8.1328 (13 August 1910); BOA, DH.MUİ, 121/15, 8 Şaban 1328 (13 August 1910); “Tesettür-ü nisvan,” *Tanin*, 19 Ağustos 1910, 3; “Sittenvorschrift für die muhamedanischen Frauen,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 30/8/1910, 2.

<sup>75</sup> BOA, DH.MUİ, 5-1/8, 20 Şaban 1328 (25 August 1910). A Russian officer who ignored the warnings he received because his Muslim wife was going around “uncovered” (*gayr-ı mestur*) also brought the Ministry of Interior into action. BOA, DH.MUİ, 126/43, 3 Ramazan 1328 (7 September 1910).

<sup>76</sup> Havadisçi, “Kadının haberleri,” *Kadın*, 5, 17 Mart 1328 (30 March 1912), 11-13.

<sup>77</sup> “Turkish Women Told to Return to the Veil,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 30 April 1912, 16. See also “Crushing Turkish Women’s Revolt,” *New York Times*, 8 April 1912.

<sup>78</sup> “Die türkischen Frauen,” *Österreichische Monatschrift für den Orient*, XXXVIII, 6, June 1912, 101-102.

and to the national custom.”<sup>79</sup> Only a little later, after the Bab-i Ali coupe of January 23, 1913, when the CUP forced the anti-Unionist government to resign and sat itself firmly in the saddle, Cemal Pasha, who had become the Military Governor of Istanbul, “issued a warning that men who used insulting language and women who accosted [elegant and well-dressed] ladies should be transported to the interior.”<sup>80</sup>

From the continuous stream of regulations and orders it is clear that the authorities at several levels were not sure how to deal with the changes in the apparel of Muslim women and the reactions evoked by them amongst the public. The lack of specifics in the regulations issued, moreover, left so much room for interpretation that they often resorted no effect and only contributed to the confusion.

So at the end of January 1914, for example, the Military Commander of Istanbul published the following announcement:

Every land has its own habits, which are acknowledged and followed by the nation at large. As in all other countries, not observing these habits is being frowned upon by us as well. When, however, this is taken too far, the government is forced to counteract this. Within the known limits, men as well as women are totally free. When on the one hand, those men who behave improperly vis à vis women are being court-martialed, the government cannot on the other hand remain indifferent vis à vis Mohammedan women who transgress the borders set by law with their dress and their behavior. The conspicuous way, and manner, some women at particular places behave offends the feelings of those families, who respect the habits and prescriptions of Islam. It is, therefore, decided to curb the immorality in the capital, which serves as an example for the provinces. The heads of family, who do not want to be sued, punished or embarrassed by the police, should make sure that the female members of their family will be veiled as is determined by the religious laws.<sup>81</sup>

A few days later, the Commander of the Istanbul Police issued instructions to his men on how to act upon this announcement: those harassing “modernly dressed Turkish women” would be arrested, “inflammatory speeches” in public spaces would be prevented and “coquettishly dressed women” would be reprimanded

<sup>79</sup> “Curbs Dress Reform of Turkish Women,” *New York Times*, 21 January 1913.

<sup>80</sup> Djemal Pasha, *Memories of a Turkish Statesman – 1913 - 1919*, New York: George H. Doran Company, 1922, 17.

<sup>81</sup> “Die Verschleierung der Muhamedanerinnen,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 1. Februar 1914, 2.

not by regular police, but by police in plain-clothes.<sup>82</sup> A common problem of all these regulations, however, was that they were prohibitive rather than prescriptive. And when they carried a prescriptive note, they lacked specifics. What was “coquettishly dressed”? What did to “be veiled as is determined by the religious laws” mean?

While the demur of the “people in the street” at the modernization of women’s outerwear can be inferred from the incidents occurring in the streets of Istanbul and the reactions of the Ottoman authorities to these incidents, the more educated parts of the public gave voice to their objections in periodicals in which religious arguments were brought forward. Authors of articles in *Sırat-ı Müstakim* and *Sebilürreşad*, for example, used mostly these arguments. They argued that the Ottoman state was part of Muslim civilization and thus that its (Muslim) inhabitants had to obey the rules of Islam. According to these rules women had to cover themselves. In their view, the changes taking place led women to be disobedient to these rules.<sup>83</sup> The women who were misbehaving confused *hürriyet* with *serbestlik*, according to one of the authors. Both words can be translated with “freedom,” but it is clear that the author referred to political freedom versus moral laxity, respectively, in using these terms.<sup>84</sup> From these arguments it is clear that the increased presence of Ottoman Muslim women in the street, which belonged to the men’s domain, combined with a change in their outerwear was perceived to be a menace to a community which felt already threatened by internal and external forces. Women’s conduct and their clothing as the most visible symbol of their conduct were perceived to be crucial to the maintaining and strengthening of the identity of a community whose communality by that time was largely determined by its religion.

<sup>82</sup> “Die Kleiderordnung für Frauen,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 5. Februar 1914, 1. See also Server Bedii, “Haftaname,” *İctihad*, IV, 92, 6 Şubat 1329 (19 February 1914), 2065-2067.

<sup>83</sup> An example is the series by Mehmed Fahreddin, “Medeniyet-i islamiye’den bir sahife yahut tesettür-ü nisvan,” which appeared in eight parts in Vol 6, nos 141-152 between May - July 1911. Other articles in this period, partly in reaction to these series, are: İffet-i İslam Namına bir Aciz, “Bu hafta neşr olunan...” *Sırat-ı Müstakim*, VI, 139, 21 Nisan 1327 (4 May 1911), 139-140; “Tesettür meselesine cevap,” *Sırat-ı Müstakim*, VI, 156, 18 Ağustos 1327 (31 August 1911), 413-417; “Tesettür-ü nisvan,” *Sırat-ı Müstakim*, VII, 169, 17 Teşrinisani 1327 (30 November 1911), 210. Most of these articles are reactions to comments on the series by Mehmed Fahreddin in other periodicals, such as, for example, “Tesettür meselesi,” *Mehtab*, 4, 1 Ağustos 1327 (14 August 1911), 29-31.

<sup>84</sup> M[im] Muhittin, “Mükatib,” *Sırat-ı Müstakim*, VI, 139, 21 Nisan 1327 (3 May 1911), 138-139.



The initial hope for freedom felt by women in the direct aftermath of the Young Turk revolution of 1908 thus proved to be partly false. The rather radical changes some of the Ottoman Muslim women belonging to the urban intellectual and bureaucratic elite had hoped for met with fierce resistance from the conservative forces. Women's freedom of movement and their choice of clothing were heavily discussed in the popular press. A popular press, which more than ever before was able to play on the feelings of a public confronted with the continuously felt imminent or actual threat of Christian neighbouring states before and during the Balkan Wars. Although radical changes, therefore, proved to be impossible, the struggle of the Ottoman authorities to find a balance between modernization and conservatism gradually allowed Ottoman Muslim women to carve out more freedom for themselves.

Not only the visible aspects of following fashion of European origin were subject to discussion, but also economic arguments were used. The various consequences of the high expenditures on fashion and the dangers related to them that were used in the nineteenth century Ottoman Turkish and Greek press were reiterated, but new arguments against the conspicuous consumption with which following fashion was equated were added.

The women writing in the Ottoman Turkish women's periodicals of the Second Constitutional Period also pointed at the risks involved in following fashion for the family as such and eventually for the larger family of the community. Some women argued that the squandering which following fashion caused would put a heavy burden on the family budget. One possible consequence of that burden was the corruption of family life. Husbands who would not be able to live up to the demands of the women of his family and who would therefore meet with unhappy faces upon arrival at home would look for his entertainment outside the home. Thus, it was argued, he might end up spending his time with prostitutes, gambling, or other immoral activities. Or, in order to meet the demands of the women he would be pushed into corruption to supplement his salary.<sup>85</sup> As a result of this the society as a whole would become corrupted and the morality of the community would be affected badly.

A further consequence of high fashion expenditures, according to some authors, was its effect on the national finances. After the revolution of 1908 the Young Turks sought a way to improve the financial situation. Due to the agreements and concessions which the Ottoman Empire had granted to several

<sup>85</sup> Fahrünnisa, "Gönül ister ki..," *Millet*, 13 August 1908, 1-2; Sıdika Ali Rıza, "Ben de aynı fikirdeyim," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 24, 27 Nisan 1329 (10 May 1913), 3.

European countries, it was impossible to do this by taking protective measures as mentioned in Chapter Five. Moreover, the prevailing liberal economic policy prevented such a solution. The way to improve the financial situation of the Ottoman Empire was sought in spending less and saving more. This saving had to start at the lowest level: the family unit. In 1908, Mehmed Cavid, who would become Minister of Finance in 1909, wrote in an article in one of the first women's periodicals appearing after the Young Turk Revolution that those who spent money and those who had the power to save it were one and the same: the women of the family. They needed to refrain from spending the money their husbands earned on frivolities.<sup>86</sup> Emulating French women's fashion was equated with unnecessary spendthrift.<sup>87</sup> By being frugal, refraining from following fashion and saving money women, on the other hand, could help the Ottoman Empire to pay its debts. A good housewife, therefore, was a woman who would control her expenses and who would know how to manage a budget.<sup>88</sup> Moreover, Ottoman women's squander formed one of the reasons of the unfavorable balance of trade according to Emine Seher Ali. She claimed in the first *Kadınlar Dünyası* appearing in April 1913 that Europe managed to extract up to 15 million Ottoman pounds out of the Ottoman economy due to the spendthrift nature of Ottoman women.<sup>89</sup>

Money spent on fashion, moreover, could not be spent on other, morally more appreciable goals. The former publisher of *Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete*, İbnülhakki Mehmed Tahir, for example, criticized the fashionable women of the Second Constitutional Period in a small booklet he wrote. He complained that they were constantly talking about the poor fatherland without making any serious effort to help it. Boasting about having given a small amount of money to a charitable organization, he wrote, they spent much larger sums of money on "fashion, frills and lace" (*moda, süs ve dantel*), while the poor soldiers were dying on the battlefield.<sup>90</sup> N. Sabiha, the president of the Muradiye branch of the

<sup>86</sup> Mehmed Cavid, "Kadınlara dair," *Kadın*, 1, 13 Teşrinievvel 1324 (26 October 1908), 2-4.

<sup>87</sup> Refia Şükran, "Biz ne için terakki edemedik," *Kadın*, 19, 6 Şubat 1324 (19 February 1909), 1-3.

<sup>88</sup> See also Behice Mehmed, "Osmanlı hanımlarını intibaha davet," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 35, 8 Mayıs 1329 (21 May 1913), 3.

<sup>89</sup> Emine Seher Ali, "Kadınlıkta seviye-i irfan," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 1, 4 Nisan 1329 (17 April 1913), 1-2. See also "Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlâkı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi'nin beyannamesi," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 4, 7 Nisan 1329, 4; "Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlâkı Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi'nden," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 77, 19 Haziran 1329, 4.

<sup>90</sup> İbnülhakki Mehmed Tahir, *Meşrutiyet Hanımları*, İstanbul: İttimad Kutüphanesi Sahibi Sabr Tahir, 1330.

Beşiktaş *Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti*, in a speech before a group of women also called upon her audience not to spend their money on jewelry, but to buy government bonds with it in order to support the soldiers.<sup>91</sup>

Not only was the sheer fact of spending money as such relevant. In the years covering the period between the Young Turk Revolution of 1908 and the beginning of the First World War, the discussion on where and from whom to purchase goods including clothing or where or from whom not to purchase them, also resurfaced. However, the answer to these questions shifted over time, in line with the political and economic developments both nationally and internationally.

In October 1908, only a few months after the revolution, Austria annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina, while Bulgaria declared its independence. The Istanbul public, which had just learned the power of popular activism because of the Young Turk Revolution, reacted with a spontaneous boycott of Austrian and Bulgarian goods.<sup>92</sup> The CUP supported the boycott and by taking the initiative it tried to channel the popular actions and to prevent them from getting out of control.<sup>93</sup> Seniha Nüzhet thus fervently called upon her fellow countrywomen not only to spend their money on locally produced goods (*yerli mallar*), but more specifically to boycott the goods of Austrian and Bulgarian origin.<sup>94</sup>

The criticism against expenditures on foreign fashion intensified at times of external military threats and during the long years of war. Worse than just the flowing abroad of much needed capital, was that the money might end up in the hands of the enemy. An enemy could buy bullets for it, which would end up in the heads and chests of the sons and brothers of those spending the money on foreign goods. The theme of money returning as a bullet was repeatedly used, although “the enemy” changed over time.

Ever since its independence in 1829, one of the potential enemies of the Ottoman Empire had been Greece, the island of Crete forming a continuous bone of contention. The Greeks on Crete revolted several times over the nineteenth century demanding separation from the Ottoman Empire and unification with Greece. Renewed upheaval amongst the Cretans in the course of

<sup>91</sup> “Türk hanımlarının toplanişı,” *Büyük Duygu*, 2, 16 Mart 1329 (29 March 1913), 31-32.

<sup>92</sup> Erdal Yavuz, “1908 boykotu,” *Türkiye İktisat Tarihi üzerine Araştırmalar [Gelişme Dergisi: 1978 özel sayısı]*, 1978, 163-181.

<sup>93</sup> Y. Doğan Çetinkaya, “Muslim Merchants and Working-Class in Action: Nationalism, Social Mobilization and Boycott Movement in the Ottoman Empire 1908 - 1914,” 47-107.

<sup>94</sup> Seniha Nüzhet, “Avusturya ve Bulgar malları almayalım.” *Millet*, 68, 28 Eylül 1324 (11 October 1908), 3.

1910 led to a boycott of Greek goods which lasted until November 1911. Although the boycott was officially directed against Greece and Greeks from Greece and explicitly not against the Ottoman Greeks, the latter were inadvertently affected by it as well. For several reasons, it was difficult to separate the two communities.<sup>95</sup> The prohibition of the sales of hats by the Ministry of the Interior in 1910 must be seen in this context. The Ministry of the Interior stated that although hats were not included in the list of articles the sales of which were prohibited, they thought it unwise to purchase hats since a large part of the income received through these sales was thought to be spent on supporting the Greek Navy.<sup>96</sup> The reasoning behind this prohibition was that the producers of hats were predominantly Ottoman Greeks, who would supposedly use the money earned with their products to support the Greeks in Greece. The idea that the Christian subjects of the Ottoman Sultan were financially supporting the Balkan states with the money the Muslims spent in their shops was also behind the calls to boycott the shops owned by Christians, Ottoman and non-Ottoman alike, in the period directly following the Balkan Wars of 1912 - 1913.<sup>97</sup> After the Balkan Wars the number of articles in the women's periodicals asking women to refrain from patronizing the shops of these "foreigners" increased.<sup>98</sup>

One of the authors seeing the Ottoman Christians as direct agents of the European powers was Nezihe Muhlis (=Muhittin). In a speech she held at a meeting of "our country's enlightened ladies" at the *Darülfünun Konferans Salonu* (University Conference Room) on 18 April 1913, she stressed the importance of a healthy economy free of chains for a politically strong and independent nation (*millet*). She fulminated against the foreigners, who not only were the reason for the outflow of money but who did not even have to abide by the laws of the Ottomans, and vehemently demanded the abolition of the capitulations. She called upon her female audience to fight the Europeans and the Christians and to buy only from Muslims.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>95</sup> One reason was, e.g. that many Ottoman Greeks had chosen to get Greek passports when Christians had become liable to conscription in 1909. Çetinkaya, "Muslim Merchants and Working-Class in Action," 109-161.

<sup>96</sup> BOA, DH.MUİ, 123/45, 14 Şaban 1328 (19 August 1910); Donald Quataert, *Social Disintegration and Popular Resistance in the Ottoman Empire, 1881 - 1908. Reactions to European Economic Penetration*, New York & London: New York University Press, 1983, 121-145.

<sup>97</sup> Çetinkaya, "Muslim Merchants and Working-Class in Action," 189-236.

<sup>98</sup> See e.g. Hadiye İzzet, "Moda sevdasını bırakalım!" *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 40, 13 Mayıs 1329, 4.

<sup>99</sup> "Konferans," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 3, 6 Nisan 1329 (19 April 1913), 3-4.

The women (and men) writing about the economic hegemony of Europe also were critical of the growing influence of European culture on Ottoman life. This was reflected in the discussions on fashion as well. Fatma Fahrünnisa, in the article in *Millet* referred to above, made this cultural appropriation a central point of her criticism. In her view people only imitate those whom they admire and respect. Thus, she argued, the Ottomans having freed themselves from the yoke of Abdülhamid must establish themselves as trendsetters, not imitators. But in order to be emulated, she continued, a national outfit was essential.<sup>100</sup>

Women wearing either a traditional or European outfit also took a prominent place in the satirical press of those days. Dressed in a traditional garb with a *çarşaf* standing opposite clearly European men in outfits symbolizing their national identity, they represented the Ottoman Empire which was threatened by the European powers. Dressed in a European outfit, on the other hand, they symbolized the cultural supremacy of the European powers and the subsequently felt loss of Ottoman culture. Imitating European dress not only meant acknowledging the cultural supremacy of the Europeans, it also meant a loss of one's own habits and morals. The woman dressed in a European outfit was a woman with loose morals who had allowed herself to be seduced by the Europeans or Europeanized, and thus corrupted, Ottomans. She became the symbol for certain groups which, in the view of the editors of the satirical magazines, collaborated with the West and which looked down upon or ignored the needs of their own people. Woman's dressing in a European style became a symbol of the Ottoman Empire selling itself to the European powers.<sup>101</sup>

Thus the protests raised had several, interrelated aspects which all point at the wrestling of a community trying to maintain and/or create an identity of its own. First, the changes in the outdoor dress of women evoked opposition from those who thought certain types of clothes were not in accordance with religious rules and national morals. Second, expenses incurring while following fashion, defined as a constantly changing of clothes without an actual necessity, were a reason for the rejection of fashion. Third, and often connected with the other reasons, there was a growing resistance amongst a part of the population to the increasing economic, political and cultural influence of "the Europeans," and the perceived subsequent loss of Ottoman independency and identity. Diminishing

<sup>100</sup> Fatma Fahrünnisa, "Gönül ister ki ..." *Millet*, 13 August 1908, 1-2.

<sup>101</sup> Şeni, "Fashion and Women's Clothing in the Satirical Press of Istanbul at the End of the 19th Century;" Brummett, "Dogs, Women, Cholera, and Other Menaces in the Streets," 444; Brummett, "Dressing for Revolution."

this influence and regaining independence combined with the wish for the creation of a distinctive, national identity came high on the agenda of the reformers, women included.

### The Search for a “National Dress”

According to the (female) authors writing in the newspapers and women’s periodicals the solution was to be found in the development of a *milli kıyafet*, a national dress. By creating such a dress these women hoped to be able to actively contribute to the formation of a national identity. However, what should this national attire be like? What turns attire into a national one? Is it its look or are there other elements that are of relevance?

On one point most authors seem to have agreed; the national dress had to be devoid of any ornaments. Above all else it had to be “simple and plain” (*sade*). Various arguments were brought forward in favor of this plainness. First of all, simplicity would diminish the expense and squander. Firstly, a simple dress would be cheaper as such. Moreover, a dress without any frills and laces would not go out of fashion very easily and thus did not need to be replaced without having been worn out. By dressing in less fashionable clothes less stress would be put upon the family’s budget and the family’s breadwinner would be under less pressure. Moreover, less money would go to the “foreigners.”

Besides the financial aspects, there were other reasons to dress simply. During the war years in which so many people suffered so badly, it was regarded politically incorrect to spend money on expensive clothes. Moreover, during these years more and more women were forced to work outside their homes because their breadwinners were fighting or had died in the war. Neither these women, nor those who for ideological reasons wanted to contribute to the elevation of the fatherland by being active outside the confines of the family home would find a dress full of frills and laces practical. Only idle women could afford to spruce themselves up. An industrious woman who was useful for her society would not be able to do so. A reference to this particular reason can be found in the program of the *Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti*. One of its aims was to develop an outdoors dress for women which would be according to the Islamic dress code, which would have no useless frills, and

which would be “suitable to work in” (*iş görebilmeyi salih*).<sup>102</sup> The founders of the organization may have had the heroine of Halide Edib’s novel *Yeni Turan* (New Turan) and the women around her in the *Yeni Turan* organization in mind while writing this. Halide Edib took great care to describe how they were all dressed in very simple clothes not to be hampered in their activities as teachers and public speakers.<sup>103</sup>

Several women’s organizations deployed activities to meet the demands of these women or were actually founded with the single aim of stimulating the patriotic consumption of Ottoman Muslim women. For those women who wanted to continue to embellish their dresses with lace, the *Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti*, for example, opened first a course center (*dershane*) and later a *Beyaz Dikiş Yurdu* (White Needlework Home), where girls would be taught how to make “white parts,” various kinds of lace, which were used to embellish women’s dresses, to show how even locally made toilets could be embellished with locally made ornaments.<sup>104</sup> Thus they could at least comply with one of the other pre-conditions of a “national dress”: to prevent money from flowing into foreigners’ coffers, the national dress should not only be plain, it should also be a national product.

To make an outfit a truly national dress it had to fulfil several conditions. First, the cloth used should be locally produced. Instead of buying materials from Paris, the fabrics should preferably be purchased from Baghdad, Aleppo, Damascus, and other places within the Ottoman Empire. In order to stimulate the use of locally produced goods by Ottoman women a woman named Melek took the initiative to found an organization called the *Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*.

<sup>102</sup> Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti, *Osmanlı Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti Mukaddeme*, [İstanbul], 1329 (1913), 2.

<sup>103</sup> Halide Edib, *Yeni Turan*, İstanbul: Tanin Matbaası, 1329 (1912).

<sup>104</sup> “Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti’nde kadın dersleri,” *Mektep Müzesi*, I, 3, 1 Haziran 1329 (14 June 1913), 79; “Teali-i Nisvan Cemiyeti’nin yeni bir teşebbüsü,” *Halka Doğru*, 52, 3 Nisan 1330 (16 April 1914), 415.

### The *Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*

The *Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* was founded in March 1913.<sup>105</sup> Melek became the president of the organization, while the third wife of the Sultan was its patron.<sup>106</sup> The aim of the organization was “to spend efforts on the subject of the consumption of local merchandise.”<sup>107</sup> One of the problems in the use of locally produced goods, already remarked upon by Fatma Aliye, was that local production was limited and that, therefore, women did not have much choice. Other women complained about the quality of locally produced goods. Another problem was the lack of, what today would be called, a proper marketing strategy for these goods. Women who were willing to buy local products did not know where they could purchase them. Other women complained of having been cheated when trying to buy such goods, ending up buying a foreign product or of having been treated badly by sellers of local products.<sup>108</sup> The organization hoped to put an end to this situation by increasing the demand and thus stimulating the number of enterprises and workshops. In this way not only the range of products would increase, but also the quality would improve.<sup>109</sup>

To encourage the purchase of local products the organization, which by May 1914 had 90 members, undertook various activities to increase public awareness and the consumption of local products. Organizing exhibitions was part of these efforts. At these exhibitions products from every corner of the Ottoman Empire, ranging from carpets to lace and other products from the home industries, were exhibited for sale.<sup>110</sup> These exhibitions were obviously so successful that they

<sup>105</sup> According to the police report of 1922, the official date of foundation was 10 April 1912. This seems to be mistaken by one year, though. BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB, 79/30, 30 Zilhicce 1337 (26 September 1919).

<sup>106</sup> “İstihlak-i Dahili Kadınlar Cemiyeti’nde,” *Tasvir-i Efkar*, 19 Eylül 1330 (2 October 1914), 4.

<sup>107</sup> “Mamulat-ı dahiliye için; kadınlarımızın vatanperverane bir teşebbüsü,” *Tanin*, 2 Mart 1328 (15 Mart 1913), 4; “Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi’nin beyannamesi,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 7, 10 Nisan 1329 (23 April 1913), 4.

<sup>108</sup> Nazife İclal, “Böyle ticaret terakki etmez,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 41, 14 Mayıs 1329 (27 May 1913), 3-4; Hayriye Nuri, “Muhterem hanımefendiler,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 12, 15 Nisan 1329 (28 April 1913), 4.

<sup>109</sup> In article one of its byelaws it said it had “the aim of distributing and producing current local products, locally manufactured goods and textiles and of encouraging and stimulating the [development of] industrial expertise.” “Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi’nin beyannamesi,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 5, 8 Nisan 1329 (21 April 1913), 4.

<sup>110</sup> “Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi’nden,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 77, 19 Haziran 1329 (2 July 1913), 4; Halka Doğru, “İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,”



were turned into a permanent shop, the *İstihlak-i Milli Mağazası* (National Consumption Store) or *İstihlak-i Milli Ticarethanesi* (National Consumption Trading House).<sup>111</sup> According to an article in *Christian Science Monitor* this shop generated 1,100 – 1,300 (Ottoman) pounds per day by July 1915.<sup>112</sup> The organization also organized excursions for its members to centers of local textile production such as the textile factory in Hereke, with whose director the organization co-operated.<sup>113</sup>

It also opened workshops in Istanbul, Üsküdar, Beylerbeyi<sup>114</sup> and Ermigan, where young girls were educated to become fully skilled dress makers using, of course, only locally produced materials. By doing this several aims were achieved at the same time: impoverished young women were prevented from falling into professions such as prostitution because they earned a decent income in an honorable job; furthermore a labour pool of local dressmakers was created. Moreover, in the workshops where these young women gained practical experience, female consumers who wanted to dress in locally made clothes could order their tailor made dresses at relatively cheap prices instead of having to go to the allegedly more expensive dressmakers of Beyoğlu, the European neighbourhood of Istanbul.<sup>115</sup> By April 1914, 55 women and girls, “wearing *yeldirmes* and a head scarf,” were employed in the workshops, while another 300

*Halka Doğru*, 13, 4 Temmuz 1329 (17 July 1913), 104; “Bir müessesesi-i milliye: İstihlakat-i Milliye Hanımlar sergisinin resm-i küşadı,” *Tanin*, 21 Haziran 1329 (4 July 1913), 3; “Die Frauenverein zur Förderung einheimischer Produkte,” *Osmanischer Lloyd*, 12. April 1914, 3; “Bizde hareket-i nisvan,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 140, 25 Nisan 1330 (8 May 1914), 4-7.

<sup>111</sup> Nazire Rasım, “İstihlak-i Milli Ticarethanesi’ni ziyaret,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 100-8, 7 Eylül 1329 (20 September 1913), 7; Lebib Selim, “Türk kadınlığının harb-i umumideki faaliyeti,” *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 5, 5 Teşrinisani 1331 (18 November 1915), 2812-2816.

<sup>112</sup> “Woman’s Part is Apparent in Turkish Affairs,” *Christian Science Monitor*, 28 July 1915, 2.

<sup>113</sup> Mükerrerrem Belkis, “İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi’nin Hereke’ye ziyareti,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 109, 14 Eylül 1329 (27 September 1913), 6-7; “Yalnız hanımlara mahsus Hereke tenezzühü,” *Sıyanet*, 15, 19 Haziran 1330 (2 July 1914), 1; “İstanbul postası,” *Sıyanet*, 15, 19 Haziran 1330 (2 July 1914), 2; “İstanbul postası,” *Sıyanet*, 16, 26 Haziran 1330 (9 July 1914), 2-3; Ruşen Zeki, “Bizde hareket-i nisvan,” 348; “Frauenschkikal und Frauenarbeit: Brief einer jungen Türkin aus Konstantinopel,” *Die Islamische Welt*, 7, [1917], 380-383.

<sup>114</sup> According to the police report of 1922, the branch in Beylerbeyi was established in December 1914 and still active at the time the report was made. BOA, DH.EUM.5.ŞB, 79/30, 30 Zilhicce 1337 (26 September 1919).

<sup>115</sup> “Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlak-i Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *İkdam*, 30 Mart 1330 (14 April 1914), 1; “Türk kadınlığında eser-i intibah,” *Tanin*, 31 Mart 1330 (13 April 1914), 4; Lebib Selim, “Türk kadınlığının harb-i umumideki faaliyeti,” *Türk Yurdu*, IX, 4, 22 Teşrinievvel 1331 (4 November 1915), 2797-2799.

women worked in their own homes for the organization.<sup>116</sup> Over the years the number of women and girls working at these workshops increased gradually to more than 200. Some of the girls and women educated at these workshops opened their own ateliers; others found employment at the workshops of others.<sup>117</sup>



**Figure 11** Group of women at one of the workshops of the organization. The banner in the back reads: *Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*. “Frauenshicksal und Frauenarbeit: Brief einer junge Türkin aus Constantinopel,” *Die Islamische Welt*, I, 7, 1917, 380-383.

Obviously, the well-to-do women got also interested in learning the trick of the trade and in July 1915 the organization announced that it had found a (male) Ottoman Muslim dressmaker educated in Paris ready to teach the “ladies” on

<sup>116</sup> “Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *İkdam*, 30 Mart 1330 (14 April 1914), 1. A *yeldirme* is a kind of light cloak for women.

<sup>117</sup> “İktisadi haberler: İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti,” *İktisadiyat Mecmuası*, 69, 21 Eylül 1332 (4 October 1916), 7.

Fridays.<sup>118</sup> Although the organization seems to have suspended its activities for an unknown reason at some point, it resumed them with the establishment of a new *İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti Terzihanesi ve Darüssınaası* (Women's Organization for National Consumption's Tailor's Shop and Workshop) at its old place at the Divan Road in September 1916.<sup>119</sup>



Figure 12 Letter head of the *İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*. BOA, HR.SYS, 2174/2, 19 January 1915.

Between its foundation in 1913 and the publication of the first issue of its own periodical, *Sıyanet* (Protection) in March 1914, however, the focus of the organization seems to have shifted. Although the periodical carried as subtitle *Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi'nin mürevvic-i efkarıdır* (Organ of the Charitable Women's Organization for the Consumption of Local Products), the first article stating its aims was signed by its president, Melek Hanım as “Founder and President of *İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* (Charitable Women's Organization for National Consumption).<sup>120</sup> The change in name is not a coincidence, but an indication of the shift towards an increasingly nationalist economic policy which aimed at the creation of a “national,” *id est* Muslim, commercial elite to make an end to the domination of non-Muslims in the commercial and financial sectors.

The term “local products” in the initial name of the organization seems to have referred to goods produced within the borders of the Ottoman Empire, by Muslims and non-Muslims alike, as opposed to those produced outside those

<sup>118</sup> “İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi'nden yeni bir teşebbüs-ü mühimme,” *Servet-i Fünun*, 1259, 9 Temmuz 1331 (22 July 1915), 175.

<sup>119</sup> “İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi'nden,” *Tanin*, 16 Ağustos 1332 (29 August 1916), 3; “İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti,” *Tanin*, 17 Eylül 1332 (30 September 1916), 3.

<sup>120</sup> “İktisadi haberler: İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti,” *İktisadiyat Mecmuası*, 69, 21 Eylül 1332 (4 October 1916), 7.

borders.<sup>121</sup> With “National Consumption,” however, the organization referred to products of Muslim producers. “National” was equated with “Muslim.” Another indication of this shift may have been that in its first statements the organization referred to the education of young girls and women in general, while by 1914 it explicitly referred to *Turkish* and *Muslim* women and girls. As Melek *Hanım* wrote in the first issue of its own periodical, *Sıyanet* in March 1914:

Our newspaper will put in front of the public eye the works of our organization which boasts with just pride of its efforts to facilitate the steps made by *Muslim* women towards a working life and the successes and progress *Turkish* women have reached with their patriotic activities [emphasis added]<sup>122</sup>

The shift from Ottomanism, the ideology that had aimed at creating a community including all inhabitants of the Ottoman Empire, to a nationalism of a Turkish, Islamic character thus is very obvious.

This form of nationalism was also advocated by most women writing on this topic in especially the first 80 issues of *Kadınlar Dünyası*, the women’s periodical in which the discussion on the development of a national dress almost exclusively seems to have taken place. Only Emine Seher Ali explicitly stated that when she was writing about “national fashion” she was referring to the Ottoman nation (*millet-i Osmaniye*).<sup>123</sup> For the other women writing in the same periodical, however, Islam seems to have formed an indispensable part of their national identity.

<sup>121</sup> In the article in *Halka Doğru* on the opening of the exhibition and shop in July 1913, for example, the author refers explicitly to the opposition of products coming from the *Osmanlı memleket* (Ottoman country) vs *yabancı malları* (foreign goods). Halka Doğru, “İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi,” *Halka Doğru*, 13, 4 Temmuz 1329 (17 July 1913), 104.

<sup>122</sup> M[elek] M., “Meslek ve muradımız,” *Sıyanet*, 1, 27 Mart 1914, 1-2, quotation 1.

<sup>123</sup> Emine Seher Ali, “Artık iş başına,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 20, 23 Nisan 1329 (6 May 1913), 1-2. This is also clear from her article in the first *Kadınlar Dünyası* referred to above. Here she points at the money flowing into European coffers due to the spendthrift of Ottoman women without any reference to a possible boycott of shops owned by Christians. Her difference in opinion on this topic may have been the reason for her to withdraw from *Kadınlar Dünyası* and set up her own periodical *Kadınlık Hayatı* in whose first issue she criticizes the *kadınlık alemi*, an expression which means more or less the same as *Kadınlar Dünyası*. Emine Seher Ali, “Kadınlıkta seviye-yi irfan,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 1, 4 Nisan 1329 (17 April 1913), 1-2; Emine Seher Ali, “Kadınlığa bir nazar,” *Kadınlık Hayatı*, 1, 31 Ağustos 1329 (13 September 1913), 1-2.

This shift towards a Turkish, Islamic nationalism<sup>124</sup> also appeared in other aspects of the discussion regarding the national dress. While before the Balkan Wars women consumers were called upon not to buy foreign goods from the foreign owned stores, with the Balkan Wars women were stimulated to buy their goods preferably from Muslim shop owners. Similarly the women were asked to have their dresses made not by foreign, and later non-Muslim, dress-makers, but to give preference to Muslim ones. The distinction between “foreign” and “non-Muslim” was not always clearly made, though. A man named Cemal Nadir,<sup>125</sup> for example, published a 12-page *Hanımlara Açık Mektub* (Open Letter to the Ladies) in which he called upon Ottoman women to buy local products. Their preference for “foreign” products ruined the country and made the commercial sector fall into the clutches of non-Muslims, he wrote. The last pages of his booklet were, conveniently, filled with advertisements of shops of Muslim entrepreneurs.<sup>126</sup>

As the number of Muslim dressmakers was limited, other women’s organizations besides those mentioned, such as the *Osmanlı Türk Kadınları Esirgeme Derneği* and the *Türk Kadınları Biçki Yurdu* set up courses for Turkish Muslim women so they could replace the non-Muslim women as seamstresses and dressmakers. Not devoid of class consciousness the latter organization stated in its statutes that it aimed at creating an opportunity for Muslim ladies (*hanımlar*) to purchase their clothes in the way a true patriot should by educating poor Muslim women (*kadınlar*) as seamstresses.

Thus, by the end of 1913 the true patriotic woman would ideally dress in a simple garb devoid of unnecessary frills, made by a Muslim dressmaker or seamstress, cut out of locally produced cloth (preferably from a Muslim manufacturer), and purchased from a Muslim-owned shop. These conditions were valid for both indoor and outdoor clothes.

<sup>124</sup> This connection between being Turkish and being Muslim had been brought up earlier by Halide Edib also. The simple and plain dress of the women of Yeni Turan was characterized by her as being “according to the Turkish and Muslim world created by them [=the women of the organization Yeni Turan, NvO].” Halide Edib, *Yeni Turan*, 10.

<sup>125</sup> He was the owner of *Rübab* and some other periodicals in the second decade of the twentieth century. Nâzım Polat, “II. Meşrutiyet devri Türk kültür-edebiyat ve basın hayatının bir yansıtıcısı olarak *Rübab* dergisi,” <http://www.tubar.com.tr/TUBAR%20DOSYA/pdf/2003GUZ/t1.nhp.rbap.7-42.pdf> (consulted 8 March 2011).

<sup>126</sup> Cemal Nadir, *Hanımlara Açık Mektub*, [Istanbul]: Necm-i İstikbal matbaası, 1332. See also, *Müslümanlara mahsus Kurtuluş Yolu*, [parasız dağıtılır], 1329 (1913), transliterated in: Toprak, *Milli İktisat - Milli Burjuvazi*, 170-180.

However, when it comes to what the outfit should look like, the distinction between indoor and outdoor clothing becomes significant. It seems that the majority of women writing on this topic in the Ottoman Turkish women's periodicals thought that the "nationalization" of the look of the outdoor garment was of more importance and that such a change would realize a reform of their nationality (*milliyet*).<sup>127</sup> Since nationality for these women was defined largely by their Muslim identity, *tesettür* became an inseparable part of the required national outdoor wear for patriotic women.<sup>128</sup> Those arguing against *tesettür* claimed that the Muslim outfit formed an obstacle to the modernization and progress of which European outfits were the symbols. In response to these arguments others claimed that *tesettür* hindered the progress of neither individual women nor society. To underline their argument they cited examples of famous women in Muslim history.<sup>129</sup> Once *tesettür* was accepted as an essential part of a modern and patriotic Muslim women's dress, the question turned to what exactly the requirements of *tesettür* were. All the protests and most of the official decrees and declarations lacked a clarification of what "according to the religious precepts and national morals" actually meant. Women were desperate to get an answer to this question not only for ideological reasons, but also for practical ones. To their unpleasant surprise they often found that what was acceptable to police officers (and the public) in one area of Istanbul was deemed improper by officers (and the public) in other areas of the city.<sup>130</sup> So how was one to dress when outside the home?

Gülsüm Kemalova, a Muslim Tatar Turk, who came from Russia to nurse the Ottoman soldiers during the Balkan Wars,<sup>131</sup> described the "national dress" in a letter home as follows:

it is a costume as ours which is made in Russia; on the head they have a square cover in the color of the costume. This cover is fastened separately onto the breast

<sup>127</sup> C.H. "Milli moda," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 26, 29 Nisan 1329 (14 May 1913), 4.

<sup>128</sup> One of the authors is even referring to a *tesettür-ü milliye* (national *tesettür*). Muzaffer, "Tesettür-ü milliye-i nisvanıyemiz hakkında bir mütalaa," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 38, 11 Mayıs 1329 (24 May 1913), 3. Emine Seher Ali, however rejects the idea of *tesettür* as a national issue. For her this is only a religious issue. Emine Seher Ali, "Tesettür meselesi," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 39, 12 Mayıs 1329 (25 May 1913), 1-2.

<sup>129</sup> Pertevnisar, "Muhterem Kadınlar Dünyası," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 35, 8 Mayıs 1329 (23 May 1913), 3-4; Hatice Baise, "Tesettür-ü nisvan," *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 36, 9 Mayıs 1329 (24 May 1913), 1-2.

<sup>130</sup> "Bu haftanın vukuatı," *Musavver Kadın*, I, 2, 14 Nisan 1327 (27 April 1911), 2-3; Havadisçi, "Kadının haberleri," *Kadın*, 5, 17 Mart 1328 (30 March 1912), 11-13.

<sup>131</sup> See Chapters Twelve and Thirteen.

with an English pin. Over the face again this black *peçe*. (...) This is what they call *çarşaf*. Some of them think it suitable to accept this as the national dress.<sup>132</sup>

She added that although she had seen pictures of women with a *ferace* and *yaşmak* while in Russia, she had not seen any women wearing them in “Turkey.”<sup>133</sup> However, from the discussion which took place on this subject in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, it is clear that not all women agreed on such a description of a national dress. Some women rejected the *çarşaf* as described above stating that it was an alien product, too.<sup>134</sup> Thus something new, something national had to be developed. But how? A woman from Üsküdar suggested that a “fashion society” (*moda cemiyeti*) should be formed in which at least members with three different kinds of background should participate: women with a thorough knowledge of Turkish<sup>135</sup> history, who should do research on “all our national outfits” and publish their findings; dressmakers, who could turn the findings of the historians into new fashions; and finally, painters and journalists, who could introduce the new models to the public with drawings and writings in periodicals, shop catalogues and in the fashion books distributed to tailors.<sup>136</sup> Her call did not find any response from the readers of the periodical.

Another woman, Belkıs Şevket, called upon the government to issue more prescriptive regulations on the issue of women’s outdoor wear, and she asked *Kadınlar Dünyası* to make some proposals to this effect.<sup>137</sup> The women behind *Kadınlar Dünyası* took up the challenge and founded the *Osmanlı Müdafaa-ı Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti* (Ottoman Organization for the Defense of Women’s Rights) whose first aim became “to create a national outdoor wear for [their] women.”<sup>138</sup> Its idea was that the outfit to be created should be acceptable to the general public. It should be in compliance with the national and religious

<sup>132</sup> Gülsüm Kemalova, “Türk hanımları,” *Büyük Duygu*, 7, 23 Mayıs 1329 (5 June 1913), 101-102.

<sup>133</sup> Gülsüm Kemalova, “Türk hanımları,” *Büyük Duygu*, 7, 23 Mayıs 1329 (5 June 1913), 101-102.

<sup>134</sup> Emine Seher Ali, “Tesettür meselesi,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 39, 12 Mayıs 1329 (25 May 1913), 1-2.

<sup>135</sup> This author is consistently referring to the “Turkish womanhood.”

<sup>136</sup> C.H. “Milli moda,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 26, 29 Nisan 1329 (12 May 1913), 4.

<sup>137</sup> Belkıs Şevket, “Kıyafet-i milliyemizi nasıl düzeltmeli,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 52, 25 Mayıs 1329 (7 June 1913), 4. See also Vahan Cardashian, “Two Turkish Suffragettes on ‘Harem’: An Interview with the Author. Appeared in “Travel” Magazine, May, 1914,” in: idem, *Actual Life in the Turkish Harem*, [Third Edition], n.p.: n.pub., 1914, 90-104 where an interview of the author with Belkıs Şevket and Ulviye at the offices of the *Kadınlar Dünyası* is reproduced.

<sup>138</sup> *Kadınlar Dünyası*, “Faaliyet başlıyor,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 58, 31 Mayıs 1329 (15 June 1913), 2; *Kadınlar Dünyası*, “Osmanlı Müdafaa-ı Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti programı,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 56, 29 Mayıs 1329 (12 June 1913), 1.

traditions (*ananat-ı milliye ve diniye*). In order to find out what that was they suggested convening a meeting with women and men from both Istanbul and the provinces. Based on the ideas brought forward in this meeting designs should be made. These designs should be given names and be published in *Kadınlar Dünyası*. This way, they argued, the public would be able to vote for the dress they wanted to become the national one.<sup>139</sup> A woman signing with the name Aliye from Moda, however, pointing out that the understanding of *tesettür* varied in time and place, added that the first thing to do was to decide what exactly the religious requirements or, as she called them, the “illustrious orders of Allah” were.<sup>140</sup> Belkıs Şevket concluded that the various interpretations of these requirements and thus different ways of covering in the Islamic world were not based on religious grounds, but locally, or nationally, determined.<sup>141</sup> Something which was confirmed by Pakize Sadri who, writing about the different areas in Anatolia, also touched upon the outdoor wear of women, pointing out the large variety that existed.<sup>142</sup> For the Istanbul women writing on women’s outdoor wear in *Kadınlar Dünyası*, the debate focused on whether covering the face with a *peçe* was or was not in accordance with the commands of Islam.<sup>143</sup> With this discussion the search for the new look of the national dress ended inconclusively. *Kadınlar Dünyası* did not appear for the most part of the First World War, while other periodicals did not seem to be interested in the issue during these years. The debate would resurface only at the end of the First World War.

<sup>139</sup> Kadınlar Dünyası, “Kıyafetimizin ıslahı,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 57, 30 Mayıs 1329 (12 June 1913), 1; Kadınlar Dünyası, “Teenni şarttır,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 58, 31 Mayıs 1329 (13 June 1913), 1; Kadınlar Dünyası, “İşe başlamalı,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 62, 4 Haziran 1329 (17 June 1913), 1.

<sup>140</sup> “Kıyafet-i nisvan hakkında,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 60, 2 Haziran 1329 (15 June 1913), 2.

<sup>141</sup> Belkıs Şevket, “Tesettür ve peçe,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 72, 14 Haziran 1329 (27 June 1913), 4.

<sup>142</sup> Pakize Sadri, “Anadolu İhtisasatı,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 66, 8 Haziran 1329 (21 June 1913), 1-2; Pakize Sadri, “Anadolu İhtisasatı,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 76, 18 Haziran 1329 (1 July 1913), 1-2.

<sup>143</sup> Mehpare Osman, “Bizde tesettür-ü nisvan,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 74, 16 Haziran 1329 (29 June 1913), 4; Mehpare Osman, “Hukuk-u nisvan cemiyeti,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 76, 18 Haziran 1329 (1 July 1913), 3-4; Semiha Peyami, “Mehpare Osman hanıma - tesettür hakkında,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 76, 18 Haziran 1329 (1 July 1913), 4; Halide Nusret, “Kadınlar Dünyası vasıtasıyla Mehpare Osman Hanıma,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 78, 20 Haziran 1329 (3 July 1913), 4; P[akize] S[adri], “Tesettür-ü Nisvan,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 79, 21 Haziran 1329 (4 July 1913), 3; Belkıs Şevket, “Tesettür ve peçe; son söz,” *Kadınlar Dünyası*, 79, 21 Haziran 1329 (4 July 1913), 3-4.



## Conclusion

The political and economic developments of the nineteenth century inevitably increased the contacts between Ottomans and Europeans. These contacts not only led to an exchange of knowledge and ideas, but also of material culture: European artifacts and clothes entered the urban houses of the Ottomans as symbols of modernization. The attires of men and women changed both inside and outside the privacy of the home. In particularly the changes in the street attires of Ottoman Muslim women led to heated debates in the newspapers: the authors increasingly protested against the appropriation of European fashion. Donning European fashion was perceived to be financially disadvantageous for the Ottoman Empire and, at the same time, to entail a moral threat for the Muslims within an Empire whose leader was at the same time the head of the world-wide Muslim community. At a time that not only the tensions between the Ottoman Empire and the European powers increased, but also those between the Muslim and non-Muslim population within the Empire, emulating European, and thus Christian, fashion was felt to pose a threat to the identity of Muslims.

After the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, the Ottomans felt the need to establish a new identity. Freed from the tyranny of the old Abdülhamidian regime, they were eager to diminish the influence of Europe on their political, economic and cultural life. Some urban Ottoman Muslim women hoped that the revolution would allow for more freedom of dress and experimented with changes. The reactions of the public and the prohibitive measures of the Ottoman authorities, however, left Ottoman Muslim women confused and in dismay. Ottoman women felt they could contribute by a reform of their dress. This reform, however, involved multiple, entangled aspects. One of them was its “economic” aspect, the other was related to “national” identity.

Believing that economic independency was a precondition for political independency, women felt they should support the national economy. This support took two different forms between 1908 and 1918 in accordance with the economic policies followed during that period. While during the first period of a rather liberal economic policy women were called upon to be parsimonious and frugal, the more protectionist and nationalist policy followed during the second period led to appeals not only to spend less, but also to spend consciously by buying “national goods,” a concept which changed in meaning over time. Before the Balkan Wars national products were goods which had been produced (and sold) by someone Ottoman, regardless of his or her religion. After the Balkan

Wars, however, there was a turn towards a nationalism which excluded the non-Muslim, and especially Christian, inhabitants of the Empire. A product manufactured and sold by Muslim hands became the criterion for defining a national product. Reformist women of this era responded to these narrowing definitions of “nationalist” and adapted the basic conditions for their national dress accordingly: it had to be simple in order to avoid squandering and the labour pool in all stages of production had to consist of Muslims.

Islam, thus, seems to have become an indispensable part of the national identity of these women. This was also shown in the discussions regarding the way the outdoor apparel of women had to look. There seems to have been agreement on the fact that it should at least fulfil the requirements of *tesettür*. How *tesettür* should be defined, however, remained subject to debate.

The texts written by women in the Ottoman Turkish women’s periodicals and the activities deployed by Ottoman women’s organizations such as the *İstihlak-i Milli Kadınlar Cemiyeti / Mamulat-ı Dahiliye İstihlaki Kadınlar Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi* and the *Müdafaa-i Hukuk-u Nisvan Cemiyeti* clearly indicate that Ottoman Muslim women regarded themselves to be active participants in the national effort. They were keenly aware of the fact that by becoming conscious consumers instead of conspicuous consumers they turned into at the same time cultural, economic and political agents. While the cultural agency of Ottoman Muslim women in the late nineteenth century led them to adopt European ways of dressing in order to become “modern,” the economic and political situation in the early twentieth century led them to look for alternative forms of modernity. The discussion around Ottoman Muslim women’s clothing developed around two major issues: supporting the national economy by becoming patriotic consumers and disseminating, or rather (re)creating, a national identity.<sup>144</sup> For the educated urban women in the late Ottoman Empire this national identity became to be symbolized by the national dress, or rather “national fashion” (*Milli Moda*). Rather than being modern by emulating European women, they opted to be modern in an Ottoman way which in their perception was inevitably and increasingly Muslim.

<sup>144</sup> See also Auslander who describes how these issues were also relevant for French women in the second half of the nineteenth century. Leora Auslander, “The Gendering of Consumer Practices in Nineteenth-Century France,” in: Victoria de Grazia & Ellen Furlough (eds), *The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective*, Berkeley, etc.: University of California Press, 1996, 79-112.