In 1826, Sultan Mahmud II orchestrated the slaughter of 6,000–7,000 janissaries and, in order to incinerate any janissary remnants that had taken refuge there, burned the Belgrade Forest outside Istanbul. During his reign (1808–39), the sultan attacked many of the other bases of the ancien régime, such as the timar system, the lifetime tax farms, and the political autonomy of provincial notables. He also centralized the pious foundations, brought them under a special ministry, and expropriated their revenues. Such stories of Sultan Mahmud's dramatic and violent policies, as well as their 18th-century origins and their 19th-century legacies, are familiar ones in Ottoman and Middle Eastern history. It is a commonplace that Sultan Mahmud aimed to dismantle the power of the military and religious classes in favor of a new bureaucracy of administrators and scribes. And it is also known that his efforts had a major impact on the subsequent evolution of the Tanzimat reform programs during the later 19th century.

This article retells these renowned histories of transformation, elite formation, centralization, and state building in a new way, through the prism of regulations on the attire that the state required its servants and subjects to wear. No less than bureaucratic reform, fiscal centralization, and military action, clothing regulations—centered on an 1829 law—were powerful royal tools in Sultan Mahmud's effort to control and reshape state and society. The 1829 law specified the clothing and headgear to be worn by the varying ranks of civil and religious officials. It sought to replace ancient community and occupational signs of differentiation by dress with a homogenizing status marker—the fez—that placed the state at the center of Ottoman life as the sole remaining arbiter of identity. The law, in short, was a quite radical measure in its attempt to eliminate clothing distinctions that long had separated the official from the subject classes and the various Ottoman religious communities from one another.

Focusing on clothing legislation not only narrates the familiar story of state modernization in a novel way. It also illuminates the less-well-known popular resistance that the sultan's policies encountered. The familiar part concerns Mahmud II's attack on elite rivals: many of the targeted institutions and groups had been elite cornerstones of an administration that had undergone substantial transformation in the 18th century. This old order consisted of Istanbul-based officials and provincial notables...
who together enjoyed formidable political, fiscal, economic, and social privilege. The neglected aspect concerns the Ottoman popular classes and their role in political life, for Mahmud's clothing laws sought to demolish not only the elite but also the popular sources of opposition to the consolidation of his personal power. Notable among the latter were urban workers and their guilds, whose political and social influence, in alliance with the janissaries, was greater in the 18th century than it had been since perhaps the dawn of Ottoman rule, back in the 13th and 14th centuries. So when Mahmud eradicated the janissaries in 1826, he immediately moved against Ottoman workers and their associations, exiling thousands of migrant porters and day laborers—ethnic Turks and Kurds—to their provincial places of origin.

For more than two millennia, rulers and governments across the globe promulgated clothing laws in order to modulate gender, communal, political, and social relations within and among their administrative, military, and subject classes. For example, the history of the Roman republic and empire is studded with such laws, including one that forbade the toga for Roman citizens sentenced to banishment, thus removing the mark that distinguished them from the barbarians. In what became Western and Central Europe, there is a continuous tradition of governmental sartorial vigilance from Charlemagne until the late 18th century. There was a “blizzard” of clothing regulations in the late 12th and early 13th centuries, attempting “to reserve certain distinctive things for the nobility.” In 13th-century Burgundy, for example, the points on the shoes of commoners could reach only six inches, but the prince’s could be 24 inches. During the 14th and 15th centuries, such regulation “multiplied each year” in the areas of modern-day France, England, Spain, and the Low Countries. If the trains of their gowns were too long, Venetian women of the early 15th century could lose their souls through papal excommunication. In colonial Virginia and Massachusetts as well as in many European countries, the torrent of laws in the late 16th century became “a positive flood” in the following century.

In 18th-century Europe, contemporaries said, “money rules . . . [and] comfortable artisans and rich merchants rise above their estate.” In Paris (and elsewhere in Europe and in the American colonies), an emerging bourgeoisie offered its final challenge to the aristocracy for economic and political power. The emerging classes of Europe and America adopted increasingly luxurious lifestyles—ranging from clothing to horse harnesses—to express their new wealth and their social aspirations. In this accelerating world of fashion, the aristocracy, pressed to affirm its social dominance, had become entrapped in fashion wars that the bourgeoisie could best afford. For a time, in places such as France, monarchies propped up their embattled aristocratic allies with clothing laws, limiting the use of furs and other luxury items and demanding severe and plain dress of the bourgeoisie.

The significance of clothing legislation is not always self-evident. On the one hand, the laws frequently may reflect actual changes in fashion. On the other hand, the relationship of laws (clothing and otherwise) to behavior often is more complicated. Promulgation or reiteration of a law may not always mean an increase in violations. Other factors besides sartorial threats to stability triggered clothing-law enactments.
At the broadest level, European historians have understood the clothing laws as “instruments of political, social, and economic regulation.” Others have emphasized the economic or moral concerns of premodern governments, or a combination of the desire to restrain extravagance on the one hand and uphold morality on the other. One historian of European clothing laws has argued that clothing laws actually were not seeking to prevent extravagance and preserve morality—although the laws themselves avowed these goals. In fact, they were nothing less than a “concerted attempt to impose a visible hierarchy on shifting, flexible, and overlapping social groups.” By about 1400, in this argument, status based on birth had given way to more acquirable and visible markers, such as houses, furnishings, and apparel, increasing the need for regulation of these material social signifiers.

The interpretive differences among these scholars seems mainly a matter of emphasis rather than substance, because there is a general agreement that the goal of the regulations was to ensure that “distinctions in rank should continue to be visible in dress.”

Aristocratic dress openly performed a sociopolitical function—self-affirmation for some and subordination for the others—freezing everyone in their places by signaling the place of everyone.

By the end of the 18th century, however, clothing laws were a spent force in Western Europe, although they remained on the books in places such as France, the American colonies, and the German lands until as late as the 1780s. Their disappearance is tied to the mounting abundance of consumer goods that made it possible for the “middling” ranks to obtain the goods and thus blur the status markers of the elites. In response, elites adopted negative strategies of discretion and understatement. They abandoned the consumption of the elaborate and excessive that the bourgeoisie could better afford and pursued the more difficult to acquire refinement of taste and discrimination. Turning from an aesthetic of opulence to one of austerity and subtlety, they embraced the luxury of leisure time to absorb the mounting intricacies of taste, grace, and fashion.

In the Ottoman world, similarly, there were deep roots to the tradition of clothing laws—extending to the beginning of the empire—that Sultan Mahmud was drawing upon. Ottoman clothing laws, moreover, gave a particular emphasis to headcoverings that, until 1829, endured as the most characteristic manner of officially designating honor and rank. For example, turbans played a key role in mid-18th-century rituals surrounding the Ottoman coronation ceremonies—the sword-girding at the Eyüp mosque in Istanbul. In the procession, two horsemen each carried turbans of the monarch, tilting them to the right and to the left to receive the homage of the accompanying janissaries. The centrality of headgear already was evident in the early 14th century, when a son of Sultan Orhan (1324–62) designated a particular headgear for himself, while some colors of headgear were reserved for the Ottoman court, and other colors belonged to the Greeks and the Franks. Sultan Bayezid I (1389–1402) introduced changes in the late 14th century, and Sultan Fatih Mehmed the Conqueror (1451–81) made yet others. Sultan Yavuz Selim (1512–20) adopted new headgear for himself because, he allegedly said, the sovereign could not dress in the same manner as others who came into his court.
As in many other areas of Ottoman life, Sultan Suleyman the Lawgiver (1520–66) codified—more rigorously than ever specifying both headgear and dress—the regulations concerning the attire of the Ottoman civil and military hierarchy. He wore a kind of turban unique to himself, while viziers and other important officials wore types particular to their rank. The ulema wore special headgear, while imperial guards and janissary officers had their own. Rank-and-file janissaries wore another form of head covering, while the “ordinary classes” bore yet other types, such as a simple turban. An early-18th-century source reported that essentially the same dress regulations promulgated by the Lawgiver in the late 16th century remained on the books to his own day.27

This lack of change in the clothing laws may be significant. Historians of European clothing laws have noticed a strong correlation between fashion changes and the permeability of the social structure. If they are right, then the many attire changes recorded in the era between the founding of the empire and the reign of Sultan Suleyman indicate a real social mobility.28 Subsequently, there is a relative absence, in the sources consulted, of clothing legislation between the late 16th century and the early decades of the 18th century. Although this may indicate social rigidity, the absence of laws might be only apparent, and the subject awaits further research. More certainly, as will be seen later, the volume of legislation is considerable from about 1720 until the end of Sultan Mahmud II’s reign, suggesting a period of social opening.

The regulations for official dress clearly were complex. In an important early study of the Ottoman administrative apparatus, J. von Hammer raised the subject of clothing laws for officials, emphasizing that he offered only an “overview” of these regulations. But this overview went on for some thirteen closely packed pages, outlining the attire prescribed for the various ranks and levels.29

The Ottoman state expected clothing laws to fulfill a host of functions; thus, their complexity is hardly astonishing. Although Ottoman rulers, in common with their contemporaries in many regions of the world, used clothing laws for a host of economic, social, moral, and political purposes, this study emphasizes their political dimensions. Hence, the focus is on their nature as regulations to maintain discipline and the most state control possible over functionaries and subjects. Clothing marked ranks within the official hierarchies, acknowledging and rewarding service to the ruler. One glance at the robes informed all—rivals and allies alike—of the precise rank and place of an official. Clothing laws also reflected the expanding power of the state. It is no coincidence that they received a definitive form in the reign of Suleyman the Lawgiver, when the state regularized and deepened its control over its own servants as well as its rural and urban subjects. Sultan Suleyman’s clothing regulations marked this growing penetration of the state into society just as surely as did his Kanun-i reaya, a legal code that dictated behavior in many arenas of his subjects’ lives, ranging from the level of workers’ wages, to the use of gold and silver serving vessels, to the amount of gluten in flour, and fat in butter.30 Clothing laws no less than wage, price, weights, measures, and criminal regulations all were means of disciplining behavior.31

Although clothing regulations originated in state requirements for control, they were not simply instruments of social discipline from above imposed on those below. Rather, the laws were instruments of negotiation, used by both the state and its elites,
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as well as by the various (occupational and religious) communal groups. The laws usefully demarcated community boundaries for the subject classes, immediately identifying insiders and outsiders. Clothing and headgear helped give status and a sense of identity to members of the specific religious, ethnic, and occupational communities in Ottoman society. Therefore, communities of Ottoman subjects—that is, the subordinate groups in society—often prompted the state to promulgate or enforce vestimentary regulations because, for them, clothing laws delineated, maintained, and reinforced gender, religious, and social distinctions.

Those with power in gender, communal, or political relations, however, especially benefitted from the laws. In controlling the public dress (and behavior) of their own (and all) women, men had the power of the state behind them. In the arena of communal relations, regulated street attire daily sought to affirm the superiority of Muslims in Ottoman society. And headgear and clothing visibly reinforced the claims to privilege by members of the Ottoman political hierarchy vis-à-vis the subject classes.

CLOTHING LEGISLATION, 1720–1808

The following section does not detail all of the known 18th-century legislation. Instead, it offers samples ranging across the period, from the 1720s, 1750s, and 1790s.32 Further, it presents examples of clothing legislation that respectively address gender, religious, and social distinctions.

During most of the long 18th century (1683–1808), the state was under extreme military pressure and, in the second half of the period, suffered fiscal crises as well. These were the days of military defeats, territorial withdrawals, and economic contraction (after ca. 1763). In such precarious political and economic circumstances, the clothing laws sought to assure Ottoman subjects and elites that the world was still an orderly place in which all retained their respective political and social positions. They worked to reinforce the existing social markers, stressing control of men over women, Muslims over non-Muslims, and elites over subject classes.33

The first example dates from the 1720s, when clothing laws were promulgated in the aftermath of the landmark 1699 Treaty of Karlowitz. For some subjects, this formal relinquishing of once-Muslim lands called into question the very raison d'etre of the Ottoman state. The post-Karlowitz era was a precarious one for the Ottoman state, one of shaky legitimacy. More particularly, the regulations appeared in the context of a disappointingly unsuccessful war, waged between 1723 and 1727, against a supposedly moribund Iran led by the collapsing Safavid dynasty. And finally, these restrictive laws coincide with the so-called Tulip Period (1718–30)—presided over by the grand vizier, the highest official outside the royal family—an era of social openness and experimentation, when leisure time and pleasure began defining the meaning and purpose of public space.34 In sum, the laws appeared in a context of shifting social (and moral?) values, combined with the instability of a frustrating war that followed close on the heels of epochal defeat.

In describing the Tulip Period, M. Zilfi has insightfully noted that the “Ottoman theatre of power and piety . . . was yielding to a theatre of leisure and consumption.”35 Remarkably like the nobles summoned to the court at Versailles, the Ottoman
aristocrats at Saadabad, the imperial pleasure complex of Sultan Ahmet III (1703–30), vied with one another for prestige and power, using luxurious display and conspicuous consumption as their weapons. The building of palaces, endless rounds of festivals, and extraordinary displays denote an intense competition over consumption within the court and among the notables for social position—status derived not from military derring-do or bureaucratic skills but, rather, from the sophistication of one’s consumption, whether of tulips or parties.

I believe that it is appropriate to consider that the shift to a theatre of leisure and consumption applies not merely to the Tulip Period but to the entire 18th century. As in Europe, Asia, and America, new groups in the Ottoman Empire were challenging the economic, social, and political power of the royal families and aristocracy. In this Ottoman transformation, the new social groups emerged from outside and within the state apparatus, thanks to quickening foreign trade and an increasing circulation of goods. While many prospered from the European trade, the commercial links to the Indian–Iranian East also were important. Because of Ottoman particularities, most of the new 18th-century merchants dealing with the West and some of those trading with Iran came from the Greek and Armenian communities, the so-called Ottoman minorities.

This Ottoman merchant group also owed much to the “ravenous patterns of consumption” seen at the Istanbul court. For a long time, the Ottoman court had served as a comparatively vast market for goods and services, necessities and luxuries alike. Lavish spectacles were common, such as the fifty-day fete for Sultan Murat III’s (1574–95) son, on the occasion of his circumcision. Other examples include the prolonged wedding feasts of the daughter of Sultan Ibrahim (1640–48) and the succession extravaganza of Sultan Mehmet IV (1648–87). Subsequently abandoned (allegedly because they were too expensive), they were resumed with a vengeance during the early-18th-century Tulip Period—take, for example, the sixteen-day circumcision festival, celebrated in 1720 “with the greatest pomp ever,” for the sons of Sultan Ahmet III. Supplying such opulence required merchants, some of whom profited mightily, and the rise of the 18th-century Ottoman merchant group certainly was given a powerful additional impetus by the splendors of the Tulip Period court.

But it seems unlikely that the consumption competitions in Ottoman Istanbul during the Tulip Period are a salvo (as they were in contemporary Europe) in the notables’ wars against the rise of the merchant group—an aristocratic use of luxurious consumption to defend against the increasing wealth of the merchants. A rising bourgeoisie does not seem to have been present in sufficient numbers to explain the events of the Tulip Period.

Rather, the Tulip Period competitors emerged from within the state apparatus, and it is there that we must look in order to understand the consumption competition of the age. A transfer of power away from the sultan—to others in his court—already had occurred during the late 16th century, and another shift began at the mid-point of the 17th century. Political power now shifted away not only from the sultan but also from his court to bureaucrats. As this happened, the state less frequently imposed its will by sheer force or command. Instead, in a pattern that acquired increasing momentum during the 18th century, it adopted other stratagems to exercise influence. Among those who emerged in positions of political prominence in the
18th century were Istanbul officials who owned lifetime tax farms (malikâne’s) in the provinces. As early as 1694, the Istanbul regime inaugurated a fiscal system that exerted control over the provinces in a new way in Ottoman history, so indirect and subtle that, until recently, it was overlooked by analysts of the period. In the new system, central bureaucrats who also were holders (malikaneci’s) of lifetime tax farms sublet some of them to provincial notables (ayans). This practice created ties of common financial interest that bound the local magnates to the capital and also made them prey to its political will. They expressed loyalty to the state by copying artistic and architectural forms from Istanbul and decorating their provincial palaces with murals portraying the imperial skyline.

In Istanbul, at the Saadabad pleasure complex, the Grand Vizier Ibrahim used the luxuries and new forms of consumption legitimation of the Tulip Period to discipline and control potential rivals such as these emergent malikaneci’s. He was taking the lead in stimulating and trying to direct patterns of consumption to enhance his own prestige and power and to set himself above rivals within official circles and at the court.

Passage of restrictive clothing laws during the 1720s—in the middle of this fabulous display of consumption—shows the conflicting currents in Ottoman society at the time. Three similar decrees, focusing mainly on gender concerns, date from the late 1720s, when, according to a respected authority on the history of Ottoman clothing, the first laws against immodest public display were promulgated. Some “good-for-nothing” women, the decrees stated, had adopted various innovations in their clothing, imitating Christians in the deliberate effort to lead the public astray on Istanbul’s streets. Moreover, women allegedly were nearly bankrupting their husbands in order to buy these fashions and, in the process, were hurting the artisans and second-hand-clothes buyers who provided or resold the old styles. To resolve these problems, the decree specified the precise widths and measurements of the items used for the outer coats and headgear. Additionally, the 1727 regulation in this series of three decrees forbade non-elite men and women from wearing ermine fur.

In focusing on a combination of moral and economic issues and appealing to forces that opposed the new displays at court and the broader social changes that they were generating, the laws (unsuccessfully) sought to relegitimize a government shaken by failed foreign wars. They also represented the elites’ attempts to regulate the spread of the new consumption beyond the groups surrounding the grand vizier and the Ottoman court. Consumption competition within elite circles and as a legitimation device among privileged persons was one thing, but its percolation downward to others bore risks. The hazards were hardly imaginary. In 1730, a popular revolt—the so-called Patrona Halil rebellion—toppled the sultan and destroyed the voluptuary grand vizier and the pleasure palaces around Saadabad.

Even though the grand vizier was dead and the palaces smashed, the genies of political, economic, and social change were out of the bottle, and clothing laws could not put them back in again. Elite Muslims, through their control of the malikâne holdings, remained powerful for the rest of the century. Moreover, because many of their holdings were based on trade, they benefitted from the expanding international commerce—with Europe and with India–Iran—that characterized the 18th century. Hence, two groups were benefitting from the mounting trade: the almost exclusively
Muslim elite group within the government and the predominantly (but not solely) non-Muslim and foreign merchant groups outside. The ongoing commercialization of the two groups acted as a powerful solvent on Ottoman social markers that the clothing laws continuously tried to neutralize for the rest of the century.

The clothing laws of Sultan Osman III (1754–57) and Mustafa III (1757–74) illustrate their continuing use as disciplinary tools. Both began their reigns in times characterized by peace abroad but also by the internal weakness of a political, sultanic center that reigned only through careful negotiation and compromise with other power groups. The brief reign of Sultan Osman III, who ascended the throne when he was nearly 56, was noteworthy for little else than his extraordinary concern about the sartorial displays of his subjects. In his few years on the throne, this sultan vigilantly prowled the streets of Istanbul in disguise, haranguing men and women for their clothing improprieties. In the same breath, he condemned women for clothing that was too tight and men for using gold thread on their horses and saddlecloths in a manner inappropriate to their rank.49 His successor, Sultan Mustafa III, began his reign with a similar outburst of activity on the sartorial front. A son of Ahmet III, Sultan Mustafa reportedly was allowed the throne because the “Great believed him weak, and that he would easily submit to be governed by their directions.”50 The powerful Grand Vizier Ragip Pasha caused “his Master inhumanly to renew the Clothing laws.”51 The sultan sent out criers to announce the regulations, aimed at preserving the existing attire of Greek, Armenian, and Jewish subjects in the capital city while also re-regulating the furs that each Muslim could wear, as well as the height of women’s headdresses. Several unfortunate violators were immediately executed. These included a Christian beggar who, a famous story goes, pitifully was wearing a pair of used yellow slippers (the color was reserved for Muslims) that he had just received from a charitable Muslim.52 The point seems clear: the Sultan’s justice would be utterly merciless, no matter what the mitigating circumstances, in upholding the proper order of things. The laws of sultans Osman III and Mustafa III can be readily understood as disciplinary actions needed in the changing times of fiscal crisis and ongoing commercialization of the economy. More specifically, it also seems clear that each sultan, lacking military and other direct means, used the clothing laws in an appeal for support when his hold on the throne was most precarious—at the moment of accession.53

Clothing legislation from the era of Sultan Selim III (1789–1807) reflects the long-term changes that were occurring as well as the immediate crises in the social, economic, and political order. More disastrous wars and rebellions, notably in the Egyptian and Serb lands, had led to further territorial losses. Ruinous policies and extortionate taxation to finance those wars had inflicted serious harm on the economy.54 Sharp inflation and currency devaluations, for example, had reduced the silver content of the main silver coinage by one-half.55 In Selim III’s era, there must have been a glaring discrepancy between the prosperity displayed by the malikâne holders and international merchants and the more general impoverishment that stalked Ottoman streets.

At a time when his domestic power was very weak and the legitimation gained from foreign ventures nearly nonexistent, Sultan Selim III endeavored to maintain social discipline by demanding modest dress. Soon after ascending the throne, the
sultan disapprovingly noted that his aristocrats (hanedan) and statesmen were displaying themselves publicly in the latest fashion while their retinues strutted around in similarly elaborate dress as a means of announcing their attachment to these great men. Because many officials did not have the requisite incomes, the decree stated, corruption and bribery increased. Further, he condemned the behavior of those tradesmen and workers (esnaf) and other common people (halk) who, seeking to emulate their superiors, had adopted these aristocratic fashions. And so, the sultan formally demanded restoration of the sartorial status quo ante. In this way, the state imposed control obliquely, showing itself to be the upholder of public morality and justice. It sought legitimacy with a general public that daily was living with personal impoverishment. While many officials really were living in luxury and ostentatiously displaying their wealth, the sultan's pronouncement aligned the state with the Istanbul street and demanded frugal, modest public behavior.

In Selim III's reign, clothing laws occasionally had an emphasis that, in several respects, seems different from earlier times. In the past, the laws primarily expressed a concern for morality, social discipline, and order, stressing extravagance and waste on the personal level—including the matter of wives bankrupting their husbands. As just seen, these themes are repeated in Selim III's laws: for example, the notion that personal extravagance beyond one's means leads to corruption and bribery. But Selim's pronouncements sometimes shift away from disciplinary issues to economic ones, focusing on profligates who were buying foreign goods and harming the domestic production of goods and the treasury. While such economic concerns can be found in earlier Ottoman periods, they seem to appear much more frequently in the reign of Selim.

I [said Sultan Selim III] always wear Istanbul-made and Ankara-made cloth. But my statesmen wear Indian-made and Iran-made cloth. If they would wear the cloths of our country, local goods would be in demand.

Clothing laws took on economic dimensions as the sultan directly appealed for support among Ottoman artisans who made the goods that the monarch himself claimed to wear. The Ottoman artisanal guilds at this time were in disarray; they probably had suffered more than any other group from the new taxes imposed to finance the failed wars of the late 18th century. In his bid for artisans' support, the sultan was addressing a politically potent group, thanks to its ties to the janissaries. Thus, the clothing laws' appeal to the economic concerns of artisans also reached out to the janissaries, whose political support and military arms he still needed against foreign enemies.

Sultan Selim III's clothing laws differed from those of his predecessors in a second way. They did not merely seek to maintain legitimacy but more particularly to (re)concentrate political power around the person of the sultan. His just-quoted statements about the fashionable hanedan and the statesmen, and about those wearing Indian and Iranian cloth, are notable in this regard, for he was directly criticizing ranking members of his own government and contrasting their improper behavior with his own correct demeanor. He pointed out their public over-indulgence and distinguished their disloyal consumption of foreign textiles from his own sartorial support of local producers.
In sum, the sultan was appealing for broad popular support in his struggles with elite rivals. Even though they defeated the monarch, costing him both throne and life, it seems important to note the role of clothing laws in this rehearsal for the more successful centralization reforms of the 19th century.

THE CLOTHING REVOLUTION OF SULTAN MAHMUD II

From the perspective of internal peace, foreign wars, and fiscal stability, the reign of Sultan Mahmud II was marked by a series of disasters that probably surpassed the dismal record of Selim III. A weakened sultanate signed the Document of Alliance with an emboldened group of provincial notables, a milestone in the emergence of their autonomy. Somewhat later, only Great Power intervention prevented Mohammad Ali Pasha of Egypt from seizing or overthrowing the Ottoman Empire (his goals are still debated), at about the time that Greek rebels were gaining their own independent state, offering a powerful attraction to more than 2 million Ottoman Greeks who remained under the sultan’s authority. And devaluation of the currency accelerated, the silver content of the piaster falling by a full 85 percent.62

In this setting, Sultan Mahmud II employed drastic changes in attire to help create a strong monarchy with a new legitimation. He began by officially adopting the fez for the military, a process that took place in a number of steps after 1826. According to one standard account, the sultan was seeking headgear for his new army—the Victorious Muslim Soldiers (Asakir-i Mansure-i Muhammadiye)—that would be unconnected to the janissaries. He found success in 1827, when his naval commander and men came to court wearing the fez, which they had embraced while serving in the western Mediterranean. The approving sultan modified this headgear for his new army, ordering the men to wrap a cloth around their fezes (iğri bir sark).63

With suitable headgear in place for his navy and army, Mahmud II in 1829 issued the new regulations for his civil and religious officials that were the key element in his drive to reconstitute the state on a new basis. To distinguish civil from army personnel, he ordered his bureaucrats to wear a plain fez, expecting that the populace at large also would adopt the new headgear.64

This 1829 regulation, whose drama actually matches that of the destruction of the janissaries, pushed aside a centuries-old Ottoman tradition in which headgear had provided the crucial and central marker of identity, status, and rank. In this landmark legislation, the sultan publicly worried that the symbolic value of clothing had been undercut: widespread imitation of official costumes, he feared, deprived civil servants (seyfiye) and religious classes (ilmiye) of their grandeur. To guard against this, and, he added, to prevent squandering and extravagance among officials, he carefully prescribed in painstaking detail the clothing (and sometimes the riding attire) for each rank. Altogether, he singled out for attention at least seventeen different groups of civil and religious officials and noted the clothing and headgear that each henceforth would wear.65

At first glance, these stipulations of attire for officials of particular ranks and positions appear very similar in form and content to sultanic clothing prescriptions of earlier centuries. A revolutionary notion, however, was embedded in the apparently familiar invocation to differentiation by dress, for the decree also specified that each
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Civil official at every single rank (except for a handful at the very top) was to wear exactly the same headgear, the fez. Thus, all fez-wearing officials, be they kaymakams or clerks, would appear the same.

The law in general sought to reorder a regulatory process that had broken down and escaped state control. The state's use of clothing regulations to differentiate and reward as a means of enticing support and service and to demarcate among the many social and economic groups had foundered in the extraordinary messiness and confusion of the 18th century, when so many different groups had clamored for social and political position and when the sultan was merely one of many centers of power. With the 1829 law and its fez provision, Sultan Mahmud attempted to sweep the floor clean and reset the rules for differentiation. He began again at ground zero and sought to reimpose the sultanic state's monopoly over this vital social, political, cultural, and religious sign. The law erased the confused markers of dying elites—the timar and lifetime tax-farm holders, the provincial notability, the pious foundation administrators, and the janissary corps—and set up new ones for the emerging central state bureaucratic cadres that he was creating. But he did not repeat the old practice of distinguishing each group. When he placed the identical fez on all officials and allowed only a very select few, such as the grand vizier, to wear headgear with a distinguishing feature, he laid claim to a new kind of sultanic control. Before him, all officials appeared equal. And to reinforce his monopoly over status making, he began creating medals and decorations that only he could award as a means of establishing rank and hierarchy.

There is an additional, remarkable aspect to this headgear legislation. It was a leveling device that symbolically restructured the Ottoman state on a completely new footing—one that was no longer religious in its distinctions but nonreligious in its uniformity. For centuries, the empire had been a multireligious entity based on Muslim supremacy; its military and bureaucratic personnel had been drawn (essentially) from the ranks of a Muslim populace that enjoyed a position of general social superiority over non-Muslims. The 1829 law removed the visible distinctions between (most) non-Muslims and Muslims and facilitated the formation of a new elite without the distinctive markings that had long set one community apart from the other. Wearing the fez, all civil officials would not only appear equal before the sultan; they would also look the same to one another. This outward sameness of a religiously undifferentiated bureaucracy betokened the effort of this ruler of a Muslim state to remake that state. In using clothing laws to erode distinctions based on religion and create a new base for this regime, Mahmud II offered non-Muslims and Muslims a common subjecthood/citizenship. More specifically, his action came at the very moment when the success of the rebel Greeks was so gravely challenging his hold on non-Muslim Ottomans. At this crucial moment, he renegotiated Ottoman identity, stripping it of its religious component. In this manner, the law anticipated by a full decade the Tanzimat (1839–76) commitment to the formal equality of all before the law and the entry of non-Muslims into the military and bureaucracy on the same legal basis as Muslims.

Some Ottoman subjects responded positively and quickly to the law. The new headgear found a ready acceptance among Muslims and non-Muslims seeking careers in the new Ottoman civil bureaucracy. There it became the standard, as countless
surviving photographs (Figures 1 and 2) of Ottoman ministers, officials, and gradu-
ating classes of the various state schools—medical, military, and agricultural—make
clear.70 Many non-Muslims—mainly, it seems, the more prosperous ones in larger ur-
ban centers—embraced the fez as a means of escaping discrimination and “adopted
the new official dress with alacrity.”71 Freed now from state-imposed clothing laws
premised on religious differentiation, non-Muslims more publicly expressed their
wealth through their clothing.72 Thus, non-Muslim merchants
not only aspired to appear like their Muslim countrymen but also sought to enter into private
competition with the highest government officials in differentiating themselves from ordinary
people of all faiths.73

In contrast to this eager acceptance by the upper and upper-middling strata of
Muslims and non-Muslims, Ottoman workers rejected the new headgear.
The tradesmen/artisans (kalabalik esnaf kitişesi), who were extremely conservative, totally
fanatical and tied to Janissary traditionalism, persisted in not wearing the simple fez, one
without a turban. On this, he [the sultan] abolished the turban wrappings on the fezes of the
army and gave permission to the esnaf class to wind on their fezes things [fabric wrappings]
like yemeni, çember, abanî, and yazma dülbent. After this, wearing the fez spread among the
people as it should have.74

This narrator may have been partly right in attributing artisans’ opposition to the plain
fez to conservatism and religious fanaticism.75 Here, I am postulating that the Mus-
lim popular classes were insisting on a difference between themselves and the official
class for religious reasons, because the official class now could and did include non-
Muslims, who wore fezes that disguised their religious affiliation. After all, Mahmud’s
law had been against not only the Muslim elites who contested his power. By eroding
the visible distinctions of attire among the religious communities, it also undermined
the particular and superior social place of Muslims in general. Hence, it was an issue
of popular concern. Demanding distinctive headgear, workers rejected the path toward
religious undifferentiation that the sultan was proposing.

There is a second, different hypothesis to explain rejection of the plain fez. Here
I am conjecturing that the action was an expression of a distinctive workers’ culture
among both Muslims and non-Muslims. This interpretation fits into a broader picture
of state–worker interaction before and after promulgation of the law. In their actions,
the workers were spurning Mahmud II’s economic policies, which reversed the pro-
tectionism of his predecessors, most recently displayed in Sultan Selim III’s appeal
to artisanal groups and their janissary allies. The janissaries’ massacre reduced the po-
itical power of workers, and Sultan Mahmud began to dismantle Ottoman protection-
ism, replacing it with a laissez-faire economy that subsequently evolved at the expense
of the once-privileged and protected guilds. In 1831, for example, he attacked the
monopolistic privileges of guilds and threatened many workers’ livelihoods.76 Then,
in 1838, he signed the Anglo–Turkish Convention, an important step on the road to
a free-trade economy that sided with merchants involved in international trade (who
by this time were mainly non-Muslim or foreign). In this interpretation, the plain fez
worn by the Muslim and non-Muslim bureaucrats and by the non-Muslim merchants
represented support for the laissez-faire economic policies of the sultan (Figure 3).
Clothing Laws in the Ottoman Empire


FIGURE 2. Students at the Imperial Medical School, ca. 1890. Personal collection, from the Sultan Abdul Hamid II albums.
Without their armed janissary allies, the workers nonetheless resisted Mahmud. In the provinces as well as in Istanbul, popular resistance erupted in the face of Mahmud's policies in general and the fez legislation in particular. In "the first three months after the destruction of the Janissaries, [the lower classes] burned 6,000 houses in Istanbul." Months after passage of the 1829 clothing law, workers of Istanbul who had been dragooned into the Ottoman army defending Edirne threw off "the obnoxious fez." One soldier asked, "How can you expect them to fight . . . with this thing on their heads."78

Sultan Mahmud had intended to extend adoption of a standard fez from his civil servants to the subject classes and all of Ottoman society. But in the late 1820s and 1830s, he had few means available. The state was particularly vulnerable. The new Greek state was about to receive formal recognition, Mohammad Ali was knocking on the door of Istanbul, and the sultan had not yet found effective military replace-
ments for the vanished janissary battalions. In this environment, artisanal and popular resistance to the clothing legislation was successful, and the sultan backed down.

By wearing fezes wrapped in a wide variety of fabrics, workers aimed to differentiate themselves from the Ottoman official classes, international merchants, and other laissez-faire advocates who had so quickly adopted the plain fez. They spurned the path of emulation and pursued that of identity solidarity. And as photographs of Ottoman workers make clear (Figures 4 and 5), many continued to do so for the remainder of the 19th century. These photographs also seem to show that the headgear for Muslims and non-Muslims was the same; their headgear identified them as workers.


rather than members of a particular religious group\(^8\) (compare Figures 3 and 6 with 4, 5, and 7).

**CONCLUSION**

This examination of Ottoman clothing laws illustrates: the many ways they mirrored broader issues such as wars and political instability; their important role as a tool in the regime's negotiations with the various contending parties, both within the state and the larger society; the limits on state influence over society; and the forces shaping the subsequent evolution of Ottoman society.

Historically, clothing laws in Europe, America, and the Ottoman Empire had served to create or maintain *differences* among the social ranks (or, to put it more accurately, to give the impression that the state was trying to do so). As economic and social change rendered maintenance of these laws difficult in Europe and America, they were abandoned outright, and by about 1800 governments there had given up the business of seeking to dictate attire. Rather than surrender the sartorial field to the competing social classes, the Ottoman state in 1829 sought to dominate Ottoman society by creating a uniform, state-centered dress code. In so doing the government turned clothing laws on their head. For perhaps the first time, a state sought to use
clothing laws to promote homogeneity, uniformity in dress instead of distinctiveness. In at least this respect, the 1829 law stands out as unique in the annals of European, American, and Ottoman clothing laws.

After passage of the 1829 law, Ottoman society was demarcated in a new way as the state sought to sweep away the confusion of the past century and resume control over differentiation. On the one hand, the state penetrated more deeply into society by eliminating the visible symbols distinguishing the official and nonofficial strata. In its effort to become the ultimate arbiter of status, it created totally new categories of dress, distinction, and identification. Competing forms of demarcation by religion, ethnicity, or occupation thus became more indistinct than ever before. Through the law, the state sought to take control of a reshaping of Ottoman society that had been taking place since the 18th century, as non-Muslims dressed like Muslims and subordinate Muslims dressed like their social superiors. As the state intended, upper- and middle-strata Muslims and non-Muslims superficially, sartorially, came to resemble one another in an unprecedented manner. On the other hand, Ottoman workers repudiated the spirit and letter of the new law and perpetuated their own distinctiveness in pursuit of their own economic goals and identity. Taking their identity from the workplace, they rejected the state’s alternative. The state thus failed to control fully the demarcation process. Status markers that resembled signs separating class from class emerged to compete with those originating from the state.

The evolution of a post-1829 Ottoman society in which workers developed or retained a sense of community among themselves should not be overstated. Other factors continued to weaken the bonds developing among workers as a result of shared work experiences and common opposition to state policies and merchant interests. For example, the foreign origins of many 19th-century enterprises (such as railroads, utilities, and the Public Debt Administration) meant that hiring policies favored the recruiting of non-Muslim over Muslim workers. State policies of divide and conquer also corroded workers’ sense of common identity. To illustrate the impact of state policies, recall the Turkish and Kurdish porters who were exiled after the janissary massacre in 1826. As has been detailed elsewhere, Sultan Mahmud immediately replaced these banished workers with Armenians from eastern Anatolian villages. In turn, these Armenian laborers were eliminated from the Istanbul workplace in the 1890s, massacred by angry mobs from the lower classes of the capital. Sultan Abdul Hamid II then replaced these dead porters with Kurds, drawn from the same eastern regions. In their actions, both sultans were exploiting existing divisions among persons of shared economic status. Their ability to do so obviously meant that religious and ethnic differences sometimes overrode the bonds of worker solidarity.

The example of the porters also illustrates a fundamental confusion in state efforts to redefine Ottoman subjecthood and citizenry. On the one hand, Mahmud’s policies and those of his successors demonstrate the move toward a new common identity, with a more powerful state (sometimes led by a strong monarch) demanding the allegiance of uniformly dressed servants and subjects. In this vision, all derived a common identity from their relationship to the state. On the other, the state continued—both in Mahmud’s reign and later—to play one group off against the other. These actions exacerbated rather than submerged differences and worked against the formation of a state-centered identity.
The confusion in state policies mirrored that in the Ottoman streets and public spaces of the 19th century. By the 1850s, the area of the Grand Champs du Mort/Tepebaşı in Istanbul had become perhaps its preeminent place of public display. One observer, the French flâneur Théophile Gautier, describes the fancy carriages (sometimes from America) that carried rich, non-Muslim Pera families in an area that also had become the haunt of fashionable Europeans and Muslim gentlemen (çelebis). These fops and dandies not only followed European fashion but were ahead of it. Gautier’s description has several points of interest. First, the public spaces of Istanbul long dominated by the Muslim elites—such as the Sweet Waters of Europe—were being overtaken by spaces in which non-Muslims and Europeans prevailed. Second, it offers additional evidence that the state’s 1829 policy of redemarcation was only partially succeeding. On the one hand, the fez, frock coat, and pantaloons had become the standard garb of the official and aspiring classes, both Muslim and non-Muslim. But wealthy non-Muslims were distinguishing themselves from their Muslim counterparts through extravagance and the up-to-the-minute fashionability of their attire. Third, the 1829 effort to set a code of (state-centered) modest, simple attire had foundered. Unlike 19th-century Europe and America, where simplicity and refinement of manner overcame magnificence and became the elite code of fashion and behavior, sumptuousness endured as the standard in the Ottoman lands. Fourth, Muslims (the çelebi gentlemen) were using non-Muslims as their models. To add to this confusion, as already noted, many artisans and workers refused to emulate their official and merchant superiors and created or maintained their own distinctive markers.

The state was mired between legitimacies. Long-standing religious distinctions were embroiled in emerging class differentiations that clashed with immature notions of a common subjecthood/citizenry. The Ottoman Empire had no face.

NOTES

Author’s note: An earlier version of this paper was presented to the conference on “Istanbul: The Making of a City,” held at the University of Texas at Austin in March 1995. I am indebted to the following for their assistance in preparing this version: Howard Brown, Cengiz Kirli, Walter Denny, Brendan McConville, Jean Quataert, Ariel Salzmann, and the four anonymous readers for IJMES.

1The estimate of the dead is from Ed. Engelhardt, La Turquie et le Tanzimat (Paris, 1882), 11, n. 1.


3For the text of the law, dated 6 Şevval 1244, see Ahmet Lütfi, Lütfi Tarihi (Istanbul, 1291 A.H.), II, 269–73. See also his remarks on p. 148.


5This argument is sketched out briefly in my “Janissaries, Artisans and the Question of Ottoman Decline, 1730–1826,” Workers, Peasants and Economic Change in the Ottoman Empire, 1730–1914, ed. Donald Quataert (Istanbul, 1993), 197–203, and sources therein.
The connection between guilds and the ahi organizations is still not well understood. For some interesting insights into this period, see Ahmet Karamustafa, God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Islamic Later Middle Period, 1200–1550 (Salt Lake City, 1994).

For an excellent introduction to consumption issues in general, including clothing laws, see the various contributions in Consumption and the World of Goods, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (London, 1993). See also Anthony Reid, Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450–1680, I (New Haven, 1988).


For details of the regulations, see Brewer and Porter, Consumption; Von Boehn, Modes and Manners; Batterberry and Batterberry, Fashion; and sources cited later, esp. in n. 16. Also see Liselotte Constanze Eisenbart, Kleiderordnungen der deutschen Städte zwischen 1350 und 1700 (Göttingen, 1962).

Von Boehn, Modes and Manners, I:251–52.

Batterberry and Fashion, 88.


Von Boehn, Modes and Manners, III: 170.


Perrot, Fashioning the Bourgeoisie, 15.

Herald, Renaissance Dress in Italy, 39; Frances Elizabeth Baldwin, Sumptuary Legislation and Personal Regulation in England (Baltimore, 1926), 131, 266; Wilfred Mark Webb, The Heritage of Dress (London, 1912), 260; Von Boehn, Modes and Manners, II: 133.

Claire Sponsler, “Narrating the Social Order: Medieval Clothing Laws,” Clio (Spring 1992), 280. She prefers the term “clothing laws” to “sumptuary laws” because the purpose of the latter is to curb excess. In this article, I have followed her usage.

Ibid., 266.

Von Boehn, Modes and Manners, I:251; also ibid., II:192.

Perrot, Fashioning the Bourgeoisie, 10. He discusses the advantages of clothing legislation for the aristocracy but does not deal with its utility for other social groups.

Von Boehn, Modes and Manners, IV:249. In England, although James I repealed clothing legislation in 1604, a 1745 measure prohibited the Scots from wearing the tartan: Webb, Heritage of Dress, 261.


Baron Francois de Tott, Memoirs of Baron de Tott, English ed. (London, 1785), I:119–20, reporting on the accession ceremonies of Sultan Mustafa III (1757–74). I have not determined when this practice first became part of the procession ceremonies.


Hammer, Histoire, V:24–25. Specifically, the “ordinary classes wore either a pershani, dulbent or a shemle, one carelessly wrapped around the head.”

I must note that elsewhere in his history, Hammer makes an error on the issue of tobacco consumption, a subject that I currently am researching. He correctly states that the Kanun-i reaya included a section on the payment of taxes called resm-i duhdn, but he erroneously describes this tax to be one on the use of smoking tobacco (“le droit sur l’usage du tabac a fumer”), VI:2071, n. 6. Rather, the duhdn resmi mentioned by Hammer is a tax on land use. For example, see, inter alia, Ahmed Akgündüz, Osmanlı Kanun-nameleri (Istanbul, 1990), II:158, from the era of Bayezid II (1481–1512); ibid. (Istanbul, 1991), III:106,
418, 466, 494, for examples from Selim I (1512–20); and ibid. (Istanbul, 1992), IV:316, from the era of the Lawgiver.

Hammer himself points out elsewhere in his history (VIII:90) that tobacco was introduced in the Ottoman lands only about 1605.

Perrot, Fashioning the Bourgeoisie, 16. The firmness and rigor that Sultan Suleyman employed in establishing and codifying dress might suggest an end to this mobility; this conclusion could be in error, and the point needs further exploration.

Hammer, Das osmanischen Reichs, 436–49.

Hammer, Histoire, VI:275–79.

There is a wide body of literature linking the early modern state to social discipline—for example, in the workplace and in schools. For a general overview of the research, see R. Po-Chia Hsia, Social Discipline in the Reformation: Central Europe, 1550–1750 (London and New York, 1989).

I have found perhaps twenty examples of legislation concerning these gender, religious, and social distinctions. Madeline Zilfi seems to have found others; see her “Stories from the Mahalle: Urban Encounters in Eighteenth Century Istanbul” (unpublished paper, 1 March 1995), presented to the 12–25 March 1995 conference, “Istanbul: The Making of a City,” University of Texas at Austin. For yet other examples, see Fatma Müge Göçek, Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change (New York, 1996).


Zilfi, “Stories from the Mahalle.”

Zilfi, “Women and Society.” Here and in “Stories from the Mahalle,” Zilfi offers important observations about the shift to leisure that characterizes the Tulip Period.


Carson et al., Of Consuming Interests; and Bushman, Refinement of America.

For a discussion of Muslim domination of mercantile activities in earlier centuries, and the broader issue of Muslim and non-Muslim participation in trade, see Halil Inalcik with Donald Quataert, ed., An Economic and Social History of the Ottoman Empire, 1300–1914 (Cambridge, 1994)—for example, pp. 188 ff, 474 ff, 695 ff, 837 ff, and sources therein.

The quotation, from Porter and Brewer, Consumption, refers to European courts.


Quote from And, History of Theatre, 18; also, see Hammer, Histoire, XIV:41–46, 62–65; and Suraiya Faroqhi, Kultur und Alltag im Osmanischen Reich (Munich, 1995), 187 ff.

A more precise understanding of the role that satisfaction of court needs played in forming the 18th-century Ottoman bourgeoisie requires investigation.


Faroqhi, Kultur und Alltag, and sources therein.


Hammer, Histoire, XIV:181–82.

See Zilfi, “Stories from the Mahalle,” for a discussion of the enlarged public sphere being created as a result.

Elena Frangakis-Syrett, The Commerce of Smyrna in the Eighteenth Century (1700–1820) (Athens, 1992), shows steady trade increases in late-18th-century Izmir; Inalcık with Quataert, Economic and Social History, 736, Table III:2, shows impressive increases of total trade in Salonica. The rising revenues of mukataa based on trade are amply documented by Mehmet Genç; for example, his “Osmanlı Ekonomisi ve Savaş,” Yapı 49, 4 (1984): 86–93.


53How well the clothing laws helped Sultan Osman is unclear, because he died of natural causes less than three years later, just short of his fifty-ninth birthday. Sultan Mustafa, for his part, reigned for sixteen years and died of natural causes just as his empire suffered catastrophic military defeats, rivaling those at the end of the 17th century. The 1774 Treaty of Kucuk Kaynarca registered the consequent territorial losses, de-Ottomanized the Black Sea, and opened the way for the destruction of the Crimean Tatars as well as mounting Russian interference in Ottoman internal affairs.

54Inalcik with Quataert, *Economic and Social History*, 639 ff, where Bruce McGowan summarizes his own work and that of Mehmet Genc for the 18th century.


58This was hardly the first reference to the drain on the treasury; there is a long history of fear of state bankruptcy as a motive for controlling consumption. See, for example, the fine quotation from the chronicler Mustafa Naima (ca. 1665–1716) in Halil Inalcik, “The Ottoman Cotton Market and India: The Role of Labor Cost in Market Competition,” trans. Douglas Howard, in *The Middle East and the Balkans under the Ottoman Empire: Essays on Economy and Society*, ed. Halil Inalcik (Bloomington, 1993), 272–73. My thanks to Elizabeth B. Frierson for calling this quote to my attention. See also, for example, Şem‘dânî-zâde, II.A:69–70, for a 1764–75/1178 regulation.

59Karal, *Selim III*, 102, 136. Notably, as the quotation shows, the competitive assault was not coming from European makers but, rather, from the East.


61I am leaving aside, for further investigation, the question of the precise nature of the janissary-worker relationship.

62Pamuk, “Appendix,” in *Economic and Social History*, 970.

63Koçu, *Türk Giyim*, 113–14. In the name of the new military unit, Victorious Muslim Soldiers, the sultan appealed for the loyalty of his Muslim subjects, while his 1829 law threatened to jeopardize their status.

64For some of the regulations concerning military attire changes, see BOA HH 17584, 17614, 17647, 17890, 18446, 18671.


67It is widely known that the ilmiye were permitted to continue to wear turbans and robes and that, more generally, the religious hierarchies were left outside the clothing-regulation process. The implications of this policy have been analyzed by Berkes, *Secularism in Turkey*, and others.

68This practice was vastly expanded by Sultan Abdul Mecid. My thanks to Walter Denny for his helpful remarks on this matter. See also BOA HH 17594.

69Later, Mahmud allegedly said: “I distinguish among my subjects, Muslims in the mosque, Christians in the church and Jews in the synagogue, but there is no difference among them in any other way.” Quoted in Avigdor Levy, *The Jews in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, 1994), 103, 145, n. 358, for a discussion of the dating of the statement.

70The story of the Tanzimat reforms is well known, as is the lack of non-Muslim participation in the 19th-century Ottoman military and the under-representation of non-Muslims in the civil bureaucracy. On
the latter subject, see the excellent article by Carter V. Findley, “The Acid Test of Ottomanism: The Acceptance of Non-Muslims in the Late Ottoman Bureaucracy,” in Jews and Christians in the Ottoman Empire, ed. Benjamin Braude and Bernard Lewis (New York, 1982), 1:339–68.

Sec. i.a., photographs published in Mahmud Kemal Inal, Son Sadrazmlar, 3 vols., 4th printing (Istanbul, 1969); Carter V. Findley, Ottoman Civil Officialdom: A Social History (Princeton, 1989), for example, 198, 214, 238; Carney E. S. Gavin, Imperial Self-Portrait: The Ottoman Empire as Revealed in the Sultan Abdul Hamid II's Photographic Albums (Cambridge, Mass., 1988); Louis Vaczek and Gail Buckland, Travelers in Ancient Lands (Boston and New York, 1981).

Berkes, Secularism in Turkey, 125.


Berkes, Secularism in Turkey, 125–26. This is a part of the quotation cited earlier on the “alacrity”.

Koçu, Türk Giyim, 114.

Koçu, Türk Giyim. Despite his own statement, the tale recounted by Koçu also credits the desire for social differentiation from the official classes as a motive for the popular opposition. Berkes, Secularism in Turkey, 124, offers a religious explanation: “Shoes, pants, coats, shirts did not encounter resistance. The real difficulty arose over the question of headgear. It is difficult to explain why . . . . The only clear explanation appears to be religious.”

Donald Quataert, “The Social History of Labor in the Ottoman Empire, 1800–1914,” in The Social History of Labor in the Middle East, ed. Ellis Jay Goldberg (Boulder, Colo., 1996), 23, 35, n. 7. The 1831 measure removed esnaf masters’ right to gain monopolistic access to work sites through the issuance of new gedik certificates; the action may have helped the rank and file in their struggle with the masters.

Ömer Demirel, II. Mahmud döneminde Sivas’da esnaf teşkilatı ve üretim-tüketim ilişkileri (Ankara, 1989), 57, n. 81, and sources therein document popular resistance to the fez in the Anatolian city of Sivas. This information, randomly collected, suggests the presence of resistance in other regions, as well.

Adolphus Slade, Records of Travels in Turkey, Greece, etc., new ed. (London, 1854), 194. For other examples of opposition to the fez, see ibid., 139–41, 379. Slade, a contemporary, vociferously opposed Mahmud’s programs. The entire subject of popular resistance to Mahmud’s anti-janissary actions and to his overall policies needs further study.

Coçu, Türk Gıyım, 115–16. Obviously, other factors in addition to opposing state policies also help to explain distinctive worker dress. For an illustrated list of various headgear in the 18th and 19th centuries, see Sebahaddin Doras and Serafeddin Kocaman, Osmanlılar Albümulü, ikinci kitap (Istanbul, 1983), 129–31.

The black-and-white photographs are not always clear, but those available do not suggest any difference between Christian and Muslim workers. For photographs of Armenian workers, see Raymond H. Kevorkian and Paul B. Paboudjian, Les Arméniens dans l’Empire Ottoman a la Veille du Génocide (Paris, 1992). For photographs of Ottoman workers in general, see, for example, Sedad Hakkı Eldem, Istanbul Antıları (Istanbul, 1979); Bahattin Öztuncay, James Robertson: Pioneer of Photography in the Ottoman Empire (Istanbul, 1992); Carney E. S. Gavin, The Image of the East (Chicago, 1982); Ekmeleddin Ihsanoğlu, Istanbul: A Glimpse into the Past (Istanbul, 1987).

For a discussion of emulation as the cause of changing fashion, see, for example, the articles in Brewer and Porter, Consumption.

Whether workers’ headgear became more or less homogeneous later in the 19th century is not clear.
