




## Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcript

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**Gönderim Tarihi/Received:**  
12.10.2021  
**Kabul Tarihi/Accepted:**  
01.06.2022

### Abstract

This review critically analyzes James Scott's book, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. Scott's account explores the mysteries of unequal power relations in society and the reflection of human behavior in the intellectual world. The book examines the reflections of people's positions on their actions in social life. In addition, by producing new concepts such as public and hidden transcripts, the author contributes to the process of social interpretation. Based on these concepts, Scott tries to analyze why people behave differently in different environments and examine these behaviors' motives. In this way, he explains that the emotions that people involuntarily reflect in some extraordinary situations come from these hidden urges. Within the scope of this book review, we analyzed the book based on Scott's strategies for advancing this scholarship and the relationships in our daily lives. We also tried to emphasize the importance of the book reflected in human life and observed in the social sphere.

**Keywords:** Domination, Arts of Resistance, Public Transcript, Hidden Transcript, Power Relations.

## Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcript

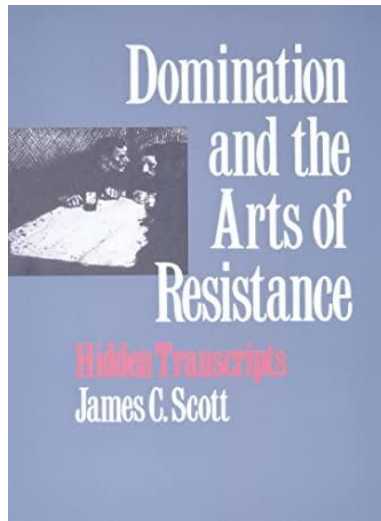
### Öz

Bu inceleme, James Scott'ın *Hakimiyet ve Direniş Sanatları* kitabını eleştirel bir şekilde analiz etmektedir. Scott'ın anlayışına göre kitapta, toplumsal alanda bulunan eşitsizlik ilişkilerinin gizemleri ve bunun insan davranışının entelektüel dünyasındaki yansımaları incelenerek keşfedilmeye çalışılmaktadır. Kitap, insanların sahip oldukları konumlarının toplumsal hayattaki eylemlerine yansımalarını inceler. Ayrıca yazar kitapta, kamusal ve gizli transkript gibi yeni kavramlar üreterek toplumsal alanı yorumlama sürecine katkıda bulunur. Scott, bu kavramlara dayanarak, insanların farklı ortamlarda neden farklı davrandıklarını analiz etmeye çalışır ve bu davranışların arkasında yatan güdüleri inceler. Bu şekilde, insanların bazı olağanüstü durumlarda istemsizce yansıttıkları duyguların, bu gizli dürtülerden kaynaklandığını

açıklamaya çalışır. Bu kitap incelemesi kapsamında bizler de Scott'ın kitabını oluşturma stratejilerini ve günlük hayatımızdaki ilişkileri baz alarak kitabın analizini oluşturduk ve kitabın insan hayatına yansıyan ve toplumsal alanda gözlemlenebilen önemini vurgulamaya çalıştık.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Egemenlik, Direniş Sanatları, Kamu Deşifresi, Gizli Deşifre, İktidar İlişkileri.

SEEHEAD



**Book Review: Scott, James C. (1990). *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*. Yale University Press. 273 pp.**

*Domination and the Arts of Resistance* is an inclusive book written by James Scott to analyze the strong and weak relationships in society, the difference between apparent and off-stage action, and how dominant ideology leads a particular part of society. The author aims to review the relations of subaltern societies with dominant groups using analytical categories and methodological tools (Valle, 2019, p. 94). Especially by creating the concepts of public and hidden transcripts, he tries to reveal why people exhibit different behaviors in different environments, the relationships of power, and discourse. The book's starting point is Malaya village life and the class relations in this village. This book presents the reasons why the behavior of the villagers in the public sphere contradicted their real thoughts in various sections that stimulate the reader to think through the concepts developed by the author.

The first chapter of the book, the *Evaluation of Behind the Official Story*, begins with Coryphaeus's phrase, "I tremble to speak the words of freedom before the tyrant," and this sentence is convenient for understanding the central theme of the writer's critics (Scott, 1990, p. 1). Many people cannot find the strength to tell the truth against power and, therefore, are hypocritical by not showing their true feelings. It happens everywhere in every social relation. Again, everyday social relations differ from behaviors staged in the public sphere. Thus, the public and hidden transcript concepts are included in the subject in this context. Scott's premise is that he presents the idea of a public transcript exhibited under domination, that is, in the face of direct auditability, and a hidden transcript that is spoken offstage. (Myrsiades, 1992, p.138). The public transcript reveals the relationship between power and subordinates. To survive, the lower groups in society exhibit their behavior in the public sphere as if they were on a performance. This inequality of power which is caused by the disparity of position between the dominant and the subordinate, causes weak people to hide their emotions and act as a player to endear themselves to the dominant group seems normal. Therefore, Scott thinks that every person who could threaten power is normalizing by making thicker masks. Another essential concept is the hidden transcript that expresses the main feelings towards events. Scott presents these two concepts to the reader with the example in the book of a black slave woman who cannot openly oppose her master, who beats her daughter and then curses her master when she is alone and hopes for a coup to happen one day. Also, in this chapter, three features of the secret scenario are mentioned: it is specific to a particular place and actors, it covers all the practices, and the boundary between the public and the secret scenario is not completely clear; that is, there is a continuous field of struggle.

The second chapter of the book, "*Domination, Acting, and Fantasy*," provides the scope of interpretation of the political goals of groups and the control and secret scenario between power and the acting group. In this context, the chapter tells the reader that the villagers do not revolt in the public arena because of their lower level in stratification relations. If they act in conflict with their feelings, they express their feelings through anonymous attacks or name blackening. While showing positive feelings towards

power, they cheat while indicating consent and try to show their feelings among their group through rumors, gossip, or secret codes. The author states that this situation can be applied to all of them based on the negative experiences of humanity, such as colonialism, slavery, and racism. Due to the possibility of being unemployed or being excluded from society, people cannot respond to those who are more complicated than themselves. They can never use violence against violence. In today's modern age, even the new working class avoids conflicts because it risks not getting compensation from its boss. It shapes the relations of respect by showing the effect of these power relations in the public sphere. For this reason, the author cites the concepts of power and role-playing as directly related and emphasizes that this situation cannot easily change unless there are extremely dishonorable situations, such as rape.

The third chapter begins with Madame de Sevigne's saying that the inferiors should be bowed to maintain social order (Scott, 1990, p. 45). It gives the reader a hint as to how the public scenario works. The chapter explains the value and cost of the public scenario. It emphasizes that relations of domination are relations of resistance and that any model of domination can use actions such as prison, death penalty, or beatings to prevent resistance. Thus, the representation of the public scenario of political work is one of the main problems. The separation of the dominant group and the people begins almost from birth because, for the dominant group, education is how the aristocrat must learn to act that way. These habitual behaviors are actually constructed. Unlike a white man who is not afraid in front of the natives, a black man must be frightened in front of his masters. In social life, euphemisms are used, for example, using the word contain instead of armed attack and occupation. So, the public scenario affects all vital functions of individuals, even the terms they use. Even public meetings that individuals can hold are limited, and unauthorized meetings are not considered legitimate. It shows that the dominant group is even included in expressing personal opinions. The public record also gives the image of consensus to create social solidarity between groups. For example, today's events published on social media and news constitute the common point of society and allow individuals to come together. However, sometimes the consensus that is tried to be created can be realized by the demands of the dominant group to suppress different ideas and the pretext of holding together. In short, the public scenario is tried to be created as a show and applied to people, who are often in this situation unconsciously.

The fourth chapter, *False Consciousness or Laying It on Thick?*, explains with an example that the strong one always preserves their charisma in the form of a cycle of society and the weak one continues in the same way. It can be seen in caste relations, class analysis, or the example of nations exposed to racism. In this section, the author of the book used Bourdieu's sentence that "Every established order tends to produce the naturalization of its arbitrariness" (Scott, 1990, p. 75). This sentence explains the basics of how ideologies are presented as logical in the public sphere and how the king's son becomes a king. It shows that the public scenario that causes people to put their feelings and thoughts in the background is socially constructed that needs to be prioritized and perceived.

The fifth chapter explains the details of the hidden scenario and the experience of domination. The author gives an example from traditional Marxist thought, emphasizing that that thought only focuses on material exploitation but that the exploitation in the book mainly proceeds out of class relations such as humiliation and obedience (Scott, 1990, p. 111). For this reason, the reason for the resistance mentioned in the chapter is personal humiliation. However, public injustice to honor is one of the fundamental problems

experienced by the working class, both today and in the past, and they are tried to be persuaded ideologically. For example, the Protestant ethic discourse in Weber (2001)'s analyses forms the basis of capitalism by encouraging people to work hard religiously and develops based on the idea of a religiously convinced community. As another example, the concept of class, which is explained by the belief in karma in caste relations, is ideological persuasion, supporting the author's analysis. Within this ideological framework, the people can advance their secret scenario only where the permission of the ruling class is included. In medieval Europe, the only place where the public could not be oppressed was the market areas, and the clergy was not respected in these areas, indicating that the people would abandon their gestures of respect within the public scenario when they had the opportunity. In addition, in this section, the author emphasizes that the following subordinated class, just like Marx, can only succeed in their social struggle if they can initiate solidarity.

In the sixth chapter, to hide the secret scenario of the subordinated class from the dominant class, the author presents the act of hiding it to the reader with the concept of the arts of political disguise. Even in their everyday lives, people are afraid to show their feelings to the other party, but they continue to show their feelings with sociolinguistic expressions such as grumbling. In the public scenario, the ruling class is directly attacked by gossip and rumor, as they try not to reveal their secret scenarios. It shows that people's suppressed emotions come out whenever they have the opportunity, taking place in the verbal or behavioral culture. As a continuation of the previous analyses, the scope of domination and resistance relations are examined in the seventh chapter with the theme of the infra-politics of subordinate groups. For example, although people publicly declare their problems with petitions, demonstrations, or boycotts, they show violations of rules in daily life as a sub-policy, with actions such as poaching, desertion, and tax evasion (Scott, 1990, p. 198). In this context, the author explains that infra-politics emerge as the effort of people to get more of what they want strategically by forcing what is allowed.

The book's eighth chapter tries to deal with the situations when the hidden transcript is exposed openly in public discourse. It discusses how the public has opened the way to reveal the hidden scenario and how the political effects of its public announcement will be realized. Often the lower class must adhere to the existing rules in society through relations of domination, but it is a challenge to reject this behavior openly. For example, as mentioned in the chapter, accidentally hitting someone is different from deliberately hitting. It is also a threat to relations of domination in actions such as stop showing respect to someone in a higher position. It is not easy to trigger such resistance, and it is difficult to break the silence. However, resistance can feel like being reborn, and when the pressure is lifted, people give up their forced act of respect. For example, although enslaved people treat their masters well while alive, they can feel great happiness when they die and express their hatred. In other words, it shows itself involuntarily in the emotions that have been suppressed for a long time, sometimes in moments of anger and sometimes in moments of comfort, people reveal their actual ideas. The spiritual revolution consists essentially of such events in widespread protests and changes. For example, if Rosa Parks had not defended her rights on the bus in the USA, the pursuit of human rights for blacks would perhaps be late. Just like in Parks' case, no matter how suppressed people are, the hidden scenario within them, their real thoughts, emerges in situations where they are in danger and can cause changes. In this way, social movements can occur. Although the public scenario tries to standardize people, the hidden scenario begins when the wall between the public and the secret discourse is broken.

The content of the book, as it is understood, tries to portray the processes that remain in the background of the existing order in social life. Public and hidden transcript descriptions successfully explain why we sometimes hide our feelings in daily life and why our true feelings emerge in intense emotional moments such as anger. The relations of domination analyzed in the book are limited to certain examples; for example, the situations experienced in the examined village, such as the slave-master relationship, are analyzed. However, this public-hidden transcript concept and domination relations, in fact, also exist in broader and deeper relations. Even a seemingly small group relationship, such as mother, father, and child relationships, includes such hiding of feelings. For example, a child may hide his feelings even when he disagrees with his ideas to be respectful towards his parents and may sometimes rebel with anger against those he sees as an authority. This situation is reflected in relationships where emotions are hidden because they feel they must obey the authority. Real emotions are reflected only when they cannot stand the pressure, which can be encountered in all areas of life. Although the book seems weak in this aspect, explaining with narrow examples gives us a broad perspective by giving us the opportunity to make this comprehensive analysis in essence.

To conclude, the book is of great interest to the readers of political sociology who examine the mystery of social relations. The perspective put forward by the author seems to be a narrow analysis in terms of the examples on which it is based. In general, Scott's work is very detailed and encompasses broad areas, defining classes in social domination and obedience conditions through critical social research. He intends to reveal public transcripts with hidden transcripts, and for us, these two concepts are one of the most important distinctions that occur in human life, even though they are overlooked. People often cannot tell their real feelings to their families, even their closest circles, and accompany the public scenario by keeping pace with society from within. Therefore, Scott's work appears to encompass a small class but is more expansive. Its main intention is to represent how secret texts are revealed and allow us to rethink our lives and social relations by creating an inspiring perspective.

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