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AN EVALUATION OF THE TULIP PERIOD AND THE PERIOD
OF SELIM III IN THE LIGHT OF CLOTHING REGULATIONS

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The eighteenth century has been evaluated as the most elusive century, one that witnessed both continuity and change in political, social and cultural realms. During the eighteenth century, the clothing habits of men and women, of Muslim and non-Muslim started to change compared to the relatively stable traditional forms that had been witnessed during previous centuries. The traditions of hundreds of years continued in the clothing habits to a certain extent, but some deviations from the accepted order were witnessed. Ottoman subjects were not wearing what they had been assigned in terms of color, style, fabric, and so on. Similar complaints had surfaced in previous centuries as well. But the eighteenth century witnessed an increase in the problems, as one can see from the frequently issued clothing laws that were supposed to control the situation.

The complaints and requests of the authorities stated in the edicts give some idea about their perception of eighteenth century Ottoman Empire. This paper is concerned with the contradictions of the eighteenth century. The first part of this paper attempts to reconstruct the eighteenth century by comparing the picture of the Ottoman Empire presented in the edicts and the general account of the era as reflected in secondary sources. The second part of the paper attempts to find out whether it is reasonable to identify such differences as contradictions. It is possible to say that one must be cautious when labeling these differences as contradictions. Some hidden reasons behind the promulgation of the laws and the elusive character of the eighteenth century might explain these dichotomies and contradictions.

Throughout the eighteenth century the same complaints and demands were repeated in the *firmans* that were issued, which indicates that the situation did not change over time. Though similar decrees were repeated during the reign of each sultan in the eighteenth century, this paper mainly focuses on the two at the beginning and end of the century, thus examining the periods of Ahmed III and Selim III; this is owing to the fact that more information concerning these reigns is available, as well as uniqueness of these periods.

As far as the information provided in the *firmans* is concerned, the problems regarding clothing were different for women and men. Even though women kept their traditional outside clothing of the *ferace* and the *yaşmak*, they altered their forms. Moreover, a passion for ostentation, adornment and extravagance started. Women changed the shapes and colors of the *ferace*, and their *yaşmaks* became thinner and transparent.[1] In the case of men, the problem seemed to be more concerned with the issue of resemblance. In other words, they started to break the rule of 'each person should wear the dress of his own group, determined by rank, status, occupation and so on.' They made efforts to dress like the upper class. It is stated that each group of people in the Empire was assigned different sorts of clothing, and they were asked not to wear valuable materials or accessories,[2] and not to emulate their superiors, but rather to observe the rules of pre-determined dress.[3] We see that on a large scale people grew fond of extravagance, ostentation, and wasteful and frivolous expenditure.[4]

In addition to all these, the clothing habits of non-Muslims were problematic throughout the eighteenth century. Non-Muslims were braver in violating the rules. They no longer dressed the way they had to in terms of color and fabric. They insisted on not wearing their humiliating predetermined dresses, as

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1   MD 133, p. 239; Küçük Çelebizade İsmail Asım Efendi, *Tarih* (İstanbul, 1287), p. 375.

2   Osman Ergin, I: 483.

3   "amme-i nas kendi hal ve kaderlerine münasib ve elyak ile olmak babında." Şanizade Tarihi, I: 287; İstanbul kadılığı Sicilli, no.106, p.53a-54b, in İ. Kurt.

4   "biraz müddetten beri tabiat-ı nasa arız olan sefahat ü israfata bakılmayarak herkez haddini tecavüz etmiş olub..."Osman Ergin, I: 483.; "eşya ve elbisede izhar alayiş ve nümayiş bir müddetten beri adet idib." *Şanizade Tarihi*, I: 287.

specified in terms of colors and fabrics. They donned valuable items and gave importance to dress like the Muslims and Franks.[5]

The most commonly criticized aspect of the change in the clothing habits of both men and women was the emergence of a passion for ostentation and extravagance. Women started to wear fine clothes with all sorts of embroideries, ribbons and other ornamentations. This situation continued throughout the eighteenth century.[6] People started to wear valuable materials like brocade, fine velvet and silver or gold threaded silks, as well as furs, like sable, ermine, fox, and lynx.[7] In a *firman* issued in the reign of Ahmet III, women were criticized for strolling in the streets while dressed in an adorned and ostentatious way.[8] Moreover, the authorities did not approve of this new clothing style due to a concern with economic reasons. The passion for extravagance by both men and women caused them to waste money, which was harmful to their budgets.[9] Both men and women tended to dress in a way they could not afford, hence causing many families to face bankruptcy.[10] Moreover, by dressing like the upper class, the servants and artisans went into debt; their salaries could not meet their expenses. The sumptuary laws tried to prevent OVER? consumption in society. At this point, they supported their claim by resorting to the teachings of Islam, which prohibits wasteful expenditure.[11] Apart from the personal damage this new style wreaked on the family budget, the state economy also suffered because of this new dress habit. It is recorded that the lack of silver caused the mint to become inefficient. Ahmet III prohibited the use of silvered thread in material in order to decrease the excessive

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5   HH 9482 (1204/1790).

6   Şanizade, *Şanizade Tarihi*, 4 vols. (İstanbul, 1223), I: 286.

7   Madeline Zilfi, "Goods in the Mahalle: Distributional Encounters in Eighteenth Century Istanbul," in *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922*, ed. Donald Quataert (New York, 2000), p. 297.

8   MD 125, pp. 6-7; Küçük Çelebizade İsmail Efendi, Tarih (İstanbul, 1287), p. 375.

9   In some cases, the difficulty of following the new clothing style ended up in social disorder. . Küçükçelebizade Asım, in the period of Ahmet III mentions the fact that the excessive consumption on the part of women had reached such a point that their husbands were no longer able to afford the demands of their wives, a situation that led to many divorces in Ottoman society.

10   Küçükçelebizade Asım.

11   MD 133, p. 239 (1138).

consumption of silver.[12] Moreover, the Tulip Period chronicler, Şemdanizade, notes that the use of expensive clothing increased other prices.[13] Hence, people were asked to dress modestly.

Conversely, the economic burden of the new clothing style was emphasized even during the Tulip Period, a period in which the consumption of the Sultan and the elite was extreme. Göçek notes that eighteenth century Ottoman archival sources portray a large accumulation of luxury goods of both domestic and foreign origin. She reaches this conclusion through the analysis of the inheritance registers of the elite. Even though the authorities issued sumptuary laws in order to curb the excessive consumption habits of the population, during the Tulip Period the elite imported consumer goods and changed the sumptuary standards.[14] Moreover, we see that even the sultan himself contributed to the circulation of Western goods in the capital. He confiscated valuable goods, giving these to officials as gifts.[15] Hence, the sultans' demand of modesty from their subjects contradicted their own fondness of ostentation and extravagance.[16] According to Zilfi, "the old Ottoman theatre of power and piety competed with a new theatre of leisure and consumption in the Tulip Period."[17] The period of Ahmed III, and the Tulip Period in particular, were famous for their fondness of ostentation and consumption, as well as for the imitation of Western style, especially in social

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[12] Oktay Aslanapa, *Türk Sanatı* (İstanbul, 1984), p. 360.

[13] Şemdanizade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi. *Şemdani-zade Fındıklılı Süleyman Efendi Tarihi. Müri'üt Tevarih*, ed. Münir Aktepe (İstanbul, 1967), II.A: 36.

[14] During the first quarter of the eighteenth century Damat Silahtar Şehit Ali Paşa tried to curb consumption in order to equalize the budget. However, his household's expenditure was great.

[15] Fatma Müge Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie, Demise of the Empire: Ottoman Westernization and Social Change* (New York, 1996), p. 99.

[16] An account of the Tulip Period by the famous poet of the time, Nedim, gives some idea about the contradictory picture of the Tulip Period. Obviously, he writes in the mundane atmosphere of the period and he mentions the emergence of a new style of dress, but does not criticize the new style. He likes the ornamented clothing of women and even encourages the consumption of these materials. Nedim, *Nedim Divanı*, trans. Abdulbaki Gölpınarlı (Istanbul, 1951), p. xx.

[17] M. Zilfi, Women and Society in the Tulip Era, 1718-1730," in *Women the Family and Divorce Laws in Islamic History*, ed. Amira Sonbol (Syracuse, 1996), p. 295.

life.[18] The eighteenth-century Ottoman ruling elite and their noble wives lived in ostentatious palaces on both side of the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn. Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmet Efendi, who was sent to Paris to study civilization and education, admired the gardens and palaces as well. Thus, he brought the plans and pictures of gardens and palaces back to his country.[19] During the period of Damat İbrahim Paşa, a craze for building summer palaces, *köşks* and *kasırs*, grew among the members of the court, later spreading to the Ottoman elite and the people of Istanbul.[20] They constructed kiosks and palaces in the Western style on both sides of the Golden Horn, and in the Kağıdhane district. The Sultan and the upper class elite entertained themselves in these beautifully decorated houses and gardens. These entertainments, the construction of the buildings, and the organization of the festivals caused a great deal of expense.[21] Lady Montagu mentions the details of a vizier's villa that included imported commodities, like the finest crystalline glass from England.[22] Moreover, imported flowers formed part of the conspicuous consumption of the elite.[23] The French impact was most obvious in the adoption of the French consumption pattern.[24] Contradicting their own emphasis on modesty, the authorities during the Tulip Period did not refrain from publicly displaying their

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[18] These factors were considered to be some of the reasons that caused the Patrona Halil Rebellion in 1730. See, Münir Aktepe, *Patrona İsyanı* (Istanbul, 1958)

[19] Fatma Müge Göçek, *East Encounters West* (New York, 1987)

[20] Tülay Artan, "Architecture as a Theatre of Life: Profile of the 18th Century Bosphorus," Ph.D. Dissertation (MIT, 1989), p.8.

[21] Zilfi notes that most of the accounts of the Tulip Period use the vocabulary of waste and profligacy to describe the regime's spending habits. See, Zilfi, Women and Society in the Tulip Era, 1718-1730," in *Women the Family and Divorce Laws in Islamic History*, ed. Amira Sonbol (Syracuse, 1996), p. 291.

[22] Lady Wortley Montagu, *The Letters and Works of Lady Wortley Montagu*, ed. Lord Wharncliffe (Philadelphia, 1837), 315-16. Quoted in Ariel Salzmann, "The Age of Tulips: Confluence and Conflict in Early Modern Consumer Culture (1550-1730)," in *Consumption Studies and the History of the Ottoman Empire, 1550-1922*, ed. Donald Quataert (New York, 2000), p.92.

[23] Ariel Salzmann, "The Age of Tulips: Confluence and Conflict in Early Modern Consumer Culture (1550-1730)," p 84.

[24] Fatma Müge Göçek, *East Encounters West: France and the Ottoman Empire in the 18th Century* (Oxford, 1987), p. 80.

extravagance and consumption.[25] Artan notes that the Sultan let the ruling elite openly display their wealth. In addition, in the eighteenth century, the elite women, especially princesses, attained both political power and increased their consumption. Sultans delegated the sultanic prerogative of constructing palaces in the capital to the princesses. Palace building by princesses contributed to a picture of extravagance and profligacy.[26]

We see that the same situation continued during the period of Selim III. Selim III criticized the wasteful expenditure of both statesmen and the artisans and common people who were imitating them.[27] Their demands were reasonable in the context of late eighteenth century economy. Considering the economic problems that were witnessed in the period of Selim III in particular, the demands of the people are understandable. Towards the end of the century, economic deterioration, caused mainly by wars and rebellions, led to taxation, sharp inflation, currency devaluation and so on. It is certain that from the 1770s to 1800 the economy became stagnant or even worse. The level of production decreased, prices increased, and the rate of the inflation reached its highest point. The level of exports that had increased in the first half of the eighteenth century decreased in the second half of the century.[28] Genç adds that between the years 1761-1785, state expenditure also increased, especially during wars. This situation got worse when the state income stopped flowing in. However, Artan notes that the reign of Sultan Selim III was marked by similar construction activities. He reconstructed magnificent palaces and kiosks along the Bosphorus.[29] This picture of late eighteenth century is quite contrary to the one depicted by the edicts on clothing that emphasized the economic concerns of the regime.

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25 Tülay Artan, " 18. Yüzyılda Yönetici Elitin Saltanatın Meşruiyet Arayışına Katılımı," *Toplum ve Bilim* 83 (1999): 292-321.

26 Tülay Artan, "From Charismatic Leadership to Collective Rule," *Dünü ve Bugünüyle Toplum ve Ekonomi* 4 (1993):. p. 92.

27 Enver Ziya Karal, *Selim III'ün Hatt-ı Hümayunları- Nizam-ı Cedid (1789-1807)* (Ankara, 1988), pp.100-102.

28 Mehmet Genç, "18th Yüzyılda Osmanlı Sanayiinde Değişmeler ve Devletin Rolü," in Osmanlı İmparatorluğunda Devlet ve Ekonomi (İstanbul, 2000), p. 260.

29 Tülay Artan, "Architecture as a Theatre of Life: Profile of the 18th Century Bosphorus," Ph.D. Dissertation (MIT, 1989), p. 65.

The authorities did not approve of these new habits and the *firmans* always had negative connotations. In the *firmans*, the reactions of the authorities to the changes in clothing habits give us an idea of eighteenth century mentality. In the *firmans*, the 'newly emerged character' of these new clothing habits was emphasized. Women were accused of creating a new style.[30] In an edict promulgated during the reign of Ahmet III, this new style was evaluated as a novelty (*bid'at*).[31] In Islamic terminology, this term bears a negative meaning that refers to later innovations. In a *hadith*, it is stated that each *bid'at* is a diversion or a perversion. Muslims were asked to be careful with respect to innovations.[32] Another term appearing in the edicts denoting the novelty in the clothing is *nev-zuhur*, meaning newly appeared.[33]

Moreover, related to the issue of *nev-zuhur*, the authorities criticized these new clothing habits as being contrary to the pleasant old habits of the past. When talking about this aspect of the change in clothing habits, they preferred to use the terms *kadim*, as well as *dirin*, meaning "old, ancient, bygone days of yore." These terms show that the authorities of the eighteenth century did not appreciate the break away from the traditional style and the emergence of a new style . We see that the criticisms directed at the new clothing style that disapproved of the changes emerged because the change in the clothing habit was considered to be against the old and pleasant traditions, even in the period of Ahmet III;[34] these criticisms were repeated in the reigns of Mahmud I[35] and Selim III.[36]

However, when we consider the eighteenth century as a whole, there were many attempts to make innovations - especially in the period of Ahmed III and Selim III - that can be evaluated as *nev-zuhur* and *bid'at*. In the eighteenth century - starting with the Tulip Period - the Ottomans embarked upon many

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30 "..kıyafette ihtira ettikleri na matbu müstenkir haletler.." In Küçükçelebizade Asım, p. 376.

31 MD 133, p. 239.

32 Tirmizi, İlim 16, 2678; Ebu Davud, Sünne 6, (4607).

33 İstanbul Kadılığı Sicili, no. 39.

34 MD 133, p. 239 (Evail 1138)

35 Bab Mahkemesi 159, p. 1.

36 İstanbul Kadılığı Sicili, no. 37, quoted in Osman Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umur-ı Belediyye*, II: 850.

innovations and novelties. Fatma Müge Göçek evaluates the eighteenth century as a period in which Western influence diffused into society.[37] Opinions about the reasons for the 1730 Rebellion suggest that a cause may have been the novelties and reforms undertaken during the reign of Ahmed III. Most of the scholars who study Ottoman history have evaluated the 1730 rebellion and concluded that it was not only a reaction against westernization attempts, but it was also a criticism of the trend to imitate the West.[38] Şerif Mardin considers the causes of the 1730 Rebellion to be the efforts to westernize the military and the administrative organization by the official elite, together with the adoption of some Western manners.[39] According to Naff, in the eighteenth century the bonds of tradition were permanently loosened, the older institutions being shaken to their foundation, with the idea of reform acquiring momentum. They started to admire Europeans things.[40] Therefore, it can be said that the term 'westernization' was used to refer to those things that were the opposite of tradition, in other words *kadim*.

These reforms, innovations and westernization attempts continued in the reign of Selim III. During this period, a series of reform proposals were written at the sultan's request. During his reign, military, technical, economic, and administrative reforms were carried out[41] and "an army of the new order," *Nizam-ı Cedid* was established, based on Western models.[42] Through the technical schools, western military sciences and techniques were introduced and Sultan Selim took the advice of D'ohsson on issues of science and military skills/techniques???. Moreover, Selim III personally enjoyed novelties and

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37 Göçek, *East Encounters West*, p. 3. Lewis notes that the European influence can be discerned at an earlier date. However, he points out that in the eighteenth century "a faltering of the self confidence which had hitherto survived all the defeats and retreats which the Christian enemy had inflicted on the Ottoman state." Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (London, 1982), p. 239.

38 For a concise summary of opinions on the reasons of 1730 rebellion see, Robert Olson, "The Esnaf and the Patrona Halil Rebellion of 1730: A Realignment in Ottoman Politics," *JESHO* XVII (1974): 324-44.

39 Ibid., p.331.

40 Thomas Naff, "Introduction," in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, eds. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen (Illinois, 1977), p. 15.

41 See: Stanford Shaw, *Between Old and New. The Ottoman Empire under Sultan Selim III* (Harvard, 1971) for more information.

42 Ibid., p. 75.

Western imitations. He invited European actors to perform in his palace, attempted imitations of Western music and poetry, and imported Western flowers and miniature pictures for personal use.[43] It is reported that upper class Ottomans began to imitate the practices of European society and held parties in their homes in which Selim III participated. Hence, in some cases Selim himself pursued a life that contradicted *kadim*.

Eighteenth century Ottoman architecture showed some deviations from the classical period and experienced some novelties. Damat Ibrahim Paşa appears to be the first of a new breed of Ottoman reformers who were willing to part ways with traditional precepts.[44] Kuran notes that in the eighteenth century classical architecture continued along with features that were inspired by Europe.[45] Moreover, the European influence also appeared in public buildings. In the architectural details of the Nuruosmaniye Mosque, there was a significant change, clearly reflecting the influence of Italian baroque ornamentation.[46] Moreover, we see that the sultans themselves enjoyed these novelties. The kiosk of Osman III in Topkapı Palace deviated from the conventional style and its rooms were decorated according to the European style. However, Selim III's room was even more ornate; the outside of the room appears to be very Turkish yet inside is decorated with rococo motifs and designs, which are very French in appearance.[47] Kuran gives some idea about the changing perception of the Ottomans. He says 'The Ottomans wanted to resemble the West, not to become European.'

Another development contributing to the idea that the eighteenth century was an era of reforms is that the Ottoman sultans introduced Western style schools in order to train administrators. The first Ottoman school was founded in 1738 upon the Western model. In 1776 a naval school was started with

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[43] Ibid. p. 195.

[44] Ahmet Evin, "Tulip Age and Definitions of Westernization," in *Social and Economic History of Turkey (1071-1920)*, eds. H. İnalcık and Osman Okyar (Ankara, 1980), p. 134.

[45] Aptullah Kuran, "Eighteenth Century Ottoman Architecture," in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, eds. Thomas Naff and Roger Owen (NY, 1977), p. 315.

[46] Bernard Lewis, *The Muslim Discovery of Europe* (New York, 1982), p. 239.

[47] Ibid., p. 325.

military engineering schools being established in 1793.[48] Therefore, in contrast to the emphasis on *kadim* in the *firmans*, the Tulip Period sponsored innovations based on non-Ottoman and non-Islamic sources of inspiration. All these attempts to innovate, reform and westernize can be evaluated as *nev-zuhur* and as being against *kadim*. We see that the Ottomans were open to novelties, but were opposed to novelties in some segments of everyday life, for example in clothing.

In some of the *firmans*, the new clothing style was evaluated in the context of religion. In many cases, Ottomans referred to Islam when they decided to intervene in the clothing habits of the people.[49] Both in the Tulip Period and in the reign of Selim III, the new clothing style of Muslim men and women was regarded as being against Islam[50] and the prevention of this undesirable situation was evaluated as a requirement of the religion.[51] However, the Tulip Period, initiated by the regime, was criticized by the *ulema*. As Olson notes, after 1730 the military elite, who opposed the introduction of European military techniques, and the *ulema*, who opposed the infiltration of European customs and ideas into Ottoman society, began to collaborate with forces that were opposed to the Sultan.[52] Moreover, Berkes also draws a picture of the mundane environment of the period of Ahmed III stating, "The Tulip Period gave a religious coloring to the anti-reform movement."[53] In addition to this, Mahmud I's desire to construct his great mosque on the models of European churches was strictly opposed by the *ulema*.[54]

In the *firmans* the newly emerging dress style is evaluated from a moral perspective. This new clothing for women was not approved of because women functioned as an instrument of concupiscence. Hence, the creation of a

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[48] Göçek, *Rise of the Bourgeoisie*, p. 72.

[49] MD 133

[50] "mesağ-i şer'i olmayan kıyafet..." Istanbul Kadılığı Sicili no.39.,

[51] In Ahmet Refik, *Hicri Onikinci Asırda İstanbul Hayatı (1100-1200)* (İstanbul, 1930), p. 103; Istanbul Kadılığı Sicili, no.39.

[52] Robert Olson, "The Ottoman Empire in the Middle of the Eighteenth Century and the Fragmentation of Tradition," *Die Welt des Islams*, XVII, 1-4 (1977): 73.

[53] Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (Montreal, 1964), p. 52.

[54] Tülay Artan, "Architecture as a Theatre of Life: Profile of the 18th Century Bosphorus," Ph.D. Dissertation (MIT, 1989), pp. 55-59.

new style was perceived as being a shameless creation.[55] The authorities criticized both the clothing and the women, saying these clothes corrupted the virtues of women and they were depicted as lacking in moral values.[56]

The edicts on clothing give some idea about other changing habits of the people. For instance, women were criticized for promenading (*geşt ü güzar*) in public areas in these newly created clothes and of engaging in immoral behavior.[57] Three factors, those of the idea of a promenade - in other words the fact that women were dressed presentably in the streets -, the immoral acts of women, as well as the creation of a new, embellished clothing style all disturbed the authorities. In a decree promulgated during the reign of Ahmet III, women were accused of showing off and being ostentatious in public places[58] and it was also claimed that it was not appropriate for women to show themselves to men.[59] This warning to women continued all throughout the eighteenth century and, in contrast to the festival atmosphere of the era, women were asked not to go on promenades in order to avoid engaging in immoral behavior.[60] Such warnings were backed up with reference to Islam, saying that women's being in the proximity of men was against the *shari'a*.[61] Even though they criticized women mixing with men, the authorities ignored the fact that Ibrahim Paşa had invited the public to mix with one another in public places during their leisure time; in other words, the regime had already laid down the foundation for such an environment. They created a worldliness, mostly during the Tulip Period, which created a relaxed attitude towards moral constraints. Consumption went hand in hand with happiness and worldliness. In such an immoral and mundane age, the authorities were concerned with morality and acted as the guardians of moral values by asking women to be virtuous and

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55 Küçükçelebizade Asım, p. 375 (1138/1726).

56 MD 133, p. 239.

57 Istanbul Kadılığı Sicili, no. 39, quoted in Osman Ergin, *Mecelle-i Umur-ı Belediyye*, II:851.

58 MD 133.

59 Küçükçelebizade Asım, p. 375.

60 Ahmet Rasim, Resimli ve Haritalı Osmanlı Tarihi, 4 vols. (İstanbul, 1325), II: 905; Istanbul Kadılığı Sicili, no. 39 (1222/1807).

61 Bab Mahkemesi 154, p. 98 (3 Ramazan 1143/12.3.1731), quoted in Suha Umur, "Kadınlara Buyruklar," *Tarih ve Toplum* 57 (1988): 205-207.

chaste, as well as observing modesty in order to maintain the social order of the society.

So far, we have evaluated the complaints and demands of the authorities stated in the *firmans* in relation to eighteenth century conditions - as reflected in the secondary sources - and we have arrived at some contradictory situations and statements. However, it might be misleading to evaluate these as contradictions; rather we should assume there were some hidden reasons behind the promulgation of the *firmans*. In some cases, the characteristics of the period in which the decrees were promulgated may tell us something about these hidden reasons. Donald Quataert mentions these possible hidden reasons behind the laws, and notes that the state used clothing laws as a tool to legitimize itself. According to his analysis, in the eighteenth century the state was under extreme military pressure and in the second half of the period suffered from fiscal crises. These were days of military defeats, territorial withdrawals, and economic problems. According to Quataret, in such precarious political and economic circumstances the clothing laws might have been an attempt to assure Ottoman subjects that the world was an orderly place. Quataert claims that the regulations appeared particularly in the context of the unsuccessful wars waged between the years 1723-1727. For him, the clothing laws after the 1720's were the aftermath of the 1699 treaty of Karlowitz that shook the legitimacy of the Ottoman state, as well as being subsequent to the Tulip Period that was an era of leisure and pleasure. The laws sought to legitimize a government that had been shaken by failed foreign wars, as well as being an attempt to try to regulate the spread of a new consumption and a mundane life style.[62] Quataert adds that during the eighteenth century, the clothing laws can be evaluated as tools used to concentrate political power around the sultan in order to struggle with elite rivals.[63] During the eighteenth century the power of the sultan declined as compared to previous centuries.[64]

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[62] Quataert, "Clothing Laws, State, and Society in the Ottoman Empire, 1720-1829," *IJMES* 29 (1997): pp.407-411.

[63] Tulay Artan notes that the ruling elite joined in the power and this is obvious in the Surname-i Vehbi in which the sultan and the ruling elite are depicted together. Tülay Artan, "18. Yüzyılda Yönetici Elitin Saltanatın Meşruiyet Arayışına Katılımı," *Toplum ve Bilim* 83 (1999), p. 313.

[64] Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire, 1700-1922* (Cambridge, 2000), pp.43-46.

A similar reasoning can be applied to the analysis of the reign of Selim III. During his reign, the military novelties and Westernization reached their peak. The authorities might have issued clothing laws in order to reduce the reaction of some groups who had criticized the Westernization movement that marked the whole century. Hence, by renewing the clothing regulations, sultans once again were able to legitimize their position, showing that the Ottoman Empire continued to be loyal to the traditions and that it was the protector of morality and justice.

However, these contradictions, which appear for instance between the characteristics of the Tulip Period and the edicts of Ahmet III, concerning clothing, can be evaluated not as being contradictory, but rather as serving the same function. Developments during the Tulip Period illustrate the means that the sultans used to emphasis their legitimacy.[65] It is argued that Ahmet III and Grand Vizier Ibrahim Paşa, as part of their efforts to negotiate power, employed the tool of consumption to dominate the Istanbul elite. Through the consumption of goods, the sultan and grand vizier sought to control the households of the viziers and pashas. Sultan Ahmet and Ibrahim Paşa tried to lead the Istanbul elite in consumption, establishing themselves as models. Moreover, by leading consumption, they might have sought to enhance their political status and legitimacy.[66] With the building of their *yalıs*, as they were open to public view, even from the opposite site, they were able to show the glory of the Ottoman Empire to the public. Artan notes that ostentation and expenditure were tools of exhibiting new power (*iktidar*) symbols that replaced old values of chivalry. Members of the sultanate exhibited their wealth in order to demonstrate the wealth of the Ottomans. The Sultanate and the ruling elite exhibited their power (*iktidar*) symbols in the public circumcision and wedding

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[65] The real economic situation of the era can be considered as evidence for the claim that the Tulip Period was a way of demonstrating the legitimacy of the Ottomans. During the period of Ahmed III, extraordinary campaign taxes were imposed, especially after the reopening of the Persian front in 1723. The reopening of the eastern front caused an influx of refugees to Istanbul. And the abandonment of land by the peasants aggravated the financial situation of the Porte, which in turn resulted in an economic crisis. Economic measures, like the debasement of money and extra taxes, placed an increasing burden on the population. See, M. Aktepe, *Patrona İsyanı* (Istanbul, 1958).

[66] Donald Quataert, *The Ottoman Empire: 1700-1922* (Cambridge, 2000)- p. 44.

ceremonies.[67] Clothing regulations, though containing contradictory statements regarding the practices of the Tulip Period, can be evaluated as serving the same purpose of enhancing the legitimacy and power of the state as mentioned above. Besides, Zilfi notes, "Because the implementation of the Islamic law was one of the pillars of Ottoman legitimacy, the control on women was critical for Ottoman and Islamic identity."[68] She also adds that Ottoman Islamic society viewed the restrictions on women as vital components of Islamic law during times of peace. The Ottoman's inability after the eighteenth century to regain their power as conquerors made the control of women critical for the Islamic identity. Therefore, it is possible to say that by controlling women, the authorities intended to show that they still possessed their legitimacy by reference to Islam, in spite of attempts to westernize and some other innovations.

Moreover, Selim III's procession to the summer palaces and kiosks was as glorious as the procession to Eyub to gird the holy sword. Therefore, it is possible to claim that, as in the Tulip Period, Selim III performed all these actions as a bid to legitimacy.[69] If we accept this evaluation, it is still feasible to conclude that such practices were contradictory, as they reconstructed their legitimacy in ways that were opposed to one another. They not only attempted to legitimize their power with secular activities, like consumption and ostentation, but also through presenting themselves as the protectors of Islam and morality.

Another factor that causes doubts to arise when using the word contradiction to describe these circumstances is that in some cases the authorities might have used *firmans* as a tool to change an undesirable situation for themselves. For instance, according to Zilfi,[70] "the renewed emphasis on women's seclusion and invisibility was due to the fact that, beginning with the Tulip period, upper class women, and princess in particular, had acquired

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67 Tülay Artan, " 18. Yüzyılda Yönetici Elitin Saltanatın Meşruiyet Arayışına Katılımı," *Toplum ve Bilim* 83 (1999): 292-321.

68 M. Zilfi, Women and Society in the Tulip Era, 1718-1730," in *Women the Family and Divorce Laws in Islamic History*, ed. Amira Sonbol (Syracuse, 1996), p. 303.

69 Tülay Artan, "Architecture as a Theatre of Life, p. 65

70 Madeline Zilfi, "IbrahimPaşa and the Women," in *Histoire économique et Sociale de l'Empire ottoman et de la Turquie (1326-1960)*, ed. Daniel Panzac (Paris, 1995), p.

semiofficial roles and a new type of stature."[71] However even in Zilfi's statement, we can see the traces of contradiction. The Sultan himself gave this political right to women, yet he tried to curb the visibility of his female subjects.

As far as the philosophy of the reforms is concerned, the contradiction appearing in the edicts and the accounts of the eighteenth century seems to be weakened. It is a widely accepted fact that the cleavage between the reformist and traditionalist members of the ruling elite widened during the eighteenth century. While secular in nature, the reforms were usually undertaken based on traditional Muslim principles. They were perceived as measures necessary to improve the welfare of the Islamic community.[72] Moreover, we can see that the authorities fluctuated between two ideologies. This is clear from the fact that in the Tulip Period the interest in European institutions was accompanied by a growing interest in Turkish and Islamic elements.[73] Evin believes that flexibility rather than transformation describes the behavior of the elite in the eighteenth century; however, westernization required the opposite.[74] Hence, it is possible to say that the authorities were not strict in their attempts at westernization when compared to those in the nineteenth century.[75] Therefore, it is acceptable that there are some contradictions in different writings if one keeps in mind the elusive nature of the 18th century.

According to Shaw, the reforms of the seventeenth and eighteenth century were introduced in order to restore the past. Perhaps, this perception makes the

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[71] The women members of the sultanate joined in power. Royal Princesses took on roles within a shifting system of political alliances and they shared real power with the sultan in the eighteenth century. Ottoman princesses gained an increasing degree of independence from the center. Ahmed III allowed royal women to engage in public manifestations of dynastic sovereignty.

[72] Thomas Naff, "Introduction," in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Islamic History*, eds., Thomas Naff and Roger Owen (Illinois, 1977), p. 13.

[73] Ahmet Evin, "Tulip Age and Definitions of Westernization," in *Social and Economic History of Turkey (1071-1920)*, eds. H. İnalcık and Osman Okyar (Ankara, 1980), p. 143.

[74] Ahmet Evin, " Tulip Age and Definitions of Westernization," p. 143.

[75] According to Evin, even though some reforms took place in the eighteenth century, Ottoman reform did not develop well until the Tanzimat, a time in which they were able to understood the infrastructure of Western institutions. p. 143.

idea of contradictions more understandable.[76] Moreover, Shaw notes, "Though Selim and those around him tried to imitate Europe, the Sultan himself tried to retain in essence the spirit and mentality of the past." The fact that Selim supported those poets who reflected themes and values of the past might explain the emphasis on *kadim* in the edicts.

Conclusion

The picture of the Ottoman Empire presented in the edicts and in secondary sources appears to be contradictory. The contradictions verify the statement of Thomas Naff, "...the eighteenth century was marked by the tension between the Ottoman reformers and the conservative traditionalist. During the eighteenth century, the society experienced a conflict between the traditional religious ideal of government and a growing secularism that encroached on the conduct of affairs and extended into the institutions of government."[77] The contradictory picture of the Ottoman Empire based on the information in the *firmans* and in secondary sources might be a reflection of the same dichotomy.

However, labeling these differences as contradictions might be misleading. Some hidden reasons behind the promulgation of the laws and the elusive character of the eighteenth century might explain the dichotomies and contradictions. All these contradictions and dichotomies make the eighteenth century a unique transitory period, which acts as a bridge between the classical period and the nineteenth century. We can see the interaction between innovation and tradition that marks this period.

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