

FORMATION OF AUTHORITARIAN SECULARISM IN TURKEY:
RAMADANS IN THE EARLY REPUBLICAN ERA (1923-1938)

by
SEVGİ ADAK TURAN

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Approval of the Institute of Social Sciences

Prof. Dr. Nakiye Boyacıgiller
Director

I certify that thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts

Prof. Dr. Ahmet Alkan
Dean

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts

Asso. Prof. Dr. Cemil Koçak
Supervisor

Examining committee Members

Name

Asst. Prof. Dr. Selçuk Akşin Somel

Name

Asst. Prof. Dr. Ayşe Gül Altınay

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To my sister, *Ezgi Adak*.

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Abstract

The aim of this study, which was inspired by François Georgeon's study of Ramadans in the late Ottoman Empire, is to analyze Ramadans in the early Republican era. By decoding the official attitude towards Ramadans, this research tries to discover to what extent the Kemalist regime regulated and transformed Ramadan, with which purposes and mechanisms it did so, and whether or not this process entailed a significant change in the publicness and socialness of Ramadan. Based on these analyses, this study attempts to answer the following question: What can be derived from the particular case of Republican Ramadans about the broader project of Kemalist secularization and about the conceptual framework of Kemalist authoritarian secularism? In addition, from a comparative perspective, it also aims to supplement the discussion on continuity and/or change between Ottoman and Republican periods. Lastly, this study tries to make a contribution to the debate on whether Republican secularization was a solid, determined project or a gradual process. The primary source of this study is the content and discourse analysis of the newspaper *Hakimiyeti Milliye*. In addition, the Prime Ministry Republican Archives (*Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi*) were also scrutinized. The main texts of Ottoman/Republican history were reviewed and some recent analyses, both theoretical and historical, also included to reflect the contemporary discussions on Republican secularism.

Based on the study of Republican Ramadans, it can be argued that the Kemalist regime regulated Ramadan and tried to transform its crucial position in the social and religious life of society. At the same time, it used the functional aspects of the Ramadan atmosphere and kept it under control in order to prevent it from being used as a possible means of social opposition or religious revival. While the Republican period exhibits similarities with the 1908 era in this sense, the former became much more authoritarian in its policies. The official attitude towards Ramadan changed gradually in response to particular problems that the new regime faced. Through an examination of Republican Ramadans, this thesis offers four main pillars in the way to conceptualize Kemalist authoritarian secularism: Diminishing the visibility of Islam; total control over the religious sphere, including limiting people's religiosity; a claim to true Islam; and nationalization of Islam.

Özet

Bu çalışmanın amacı, François Georgeon'un geç dönem Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki Ramazanları konu alan araştırmasından esinlenerek, erken Cumhuriyet dönemi Ramazanlarını incelemektir. Ramazan karşısında siyasi otoritenin takındığı resmi tutum ve söylemi ele alarak, Ramazanın ne ölçüde dönüştürüldüğü ve düzenlediği, hangi amaçlar ve araçlarla kontrol edildiği ve Ramazanın kamusal görünürlüğünde ve toplumsallığında bir değişim olup olmadığı sergilenmeye çalışılmaktadır. Temel olarak bu çalışma şu soruya yanıt aramaktadır: Erken dönem Cumhuriyet Ramazanları incelendiğinde, Kemalist sekülerizasyon süreci ve Kemalist otoriter sekülerizmin kavramsal çerçevesi hakkında neler söylenebilir? Buna ek olarak, karşılaştırmalı bir analizle, Osmanlı ve Cumhuriyet dönemleri arasındaki süreklilikleri ve kırılmaları konu alan tartışmalara katkıda bulunmak amaçlanmış, böylelikle Kemalist sekülerizasyon sürecinin, önceden planlanmış ve stratejik olarak uygulanmış bir proje mi, yoksa koşullara göre şekillenen bir süreç mi olduğu sorusu da tartışılmıştır. Çalışmanın temel kaynağını Hakimiyeti Milliye gazetesinin içerik ve söylem analizi oluşturmaktadır. Bunun yanında Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi'nin ilgili katalogları taranmış, mevcut kaynaklardaki teorik ve tarihsel tartışmalardan da yararlanılmıştır.

Erken Cumhuriyet dönemi Ramazanları incelendiğinde görülmektedir ki, Kemalist rejim Ramazanı düzenlemeye ve denetlemeye çalışmış ve bu yolla onun toplumsal ve dini hayattaki etkisini azaltmayı amaçlamıştır. Bunun yanında, Ramazanın sağladığı kimi olanaklar kullanılmış, Ramazana özgü iletişim araçları olası bir muhalefetin ortaya çıkması ihtimaline karşı kontrol altında tutulmuştur. Bu anlamda, erken Cumhuriyet döneminin 1908 sonrası Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile benzerlikleri varsa da otoriter karakterinin sınırları bakımından farklılıklar göstermektedir. Ramazan karşısında tutunulan resmi tutum zaman içerisinde, siyasi iktidarın karşılaştığı sorunlara bağlı olarak değişmiştir. Çalışmanın vardığı sonuç, erken Cumhuriyet dönemi Ramazanlarının uğradığı değişimin, Kemalist otoriter sekülerizmin şu dört özelliğini belirgin kıldığıdır: İslam'ın kamusal görünürlüğünü azaltılması, dini alanın kontrol altına alınması, "doğru" İslam iddiası ve İslam'ın millileştirilmesi.

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