Article

The New Religion-Based Work Ethic and Cultural Consumption Patterns of Religiously Conservative Groups in Turkey

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Abstract: This study discusses two religious elements of culture emerging within various religiously conservative groups in Turkey. The first is concerned with the building of a religious work ethic, framing work life with Islamic morals and norms. The second involves religiously oriented consumption patterns among these groups, which generate a faith-driven dimension of culture in capitalist consumer society. The study deals with how and why these two religious-cultural dimensions arose, and what forms they take in contemporary Turkey. These forms operate in the background of dress and fashion concerns of the aforementioned groups, influencing clothing styles and consumption patterns, as well as being linked to the capitalist-Islamic work ethic. The study demonstrates how consumption styles have changed in line with transformations in the class structure of the groups in question. It examines the extent to which, with the development of new religious ethic and consumption styles compatible with capitalist economic order, interpretations of Islam have shaped and organized the economic and cultural fields in Turkey. We argue that there is a mutually formative relationship between economy, religion, and culture. In that relationship, religion, which paves the way for forming a class-based religious perspective in keeping with a capitalist system, undertakes an active role in shaping an economic sphere and cultural activities in everyday life.

Keywords: class transformation; Islamic work ethic; cultural consumption patterns; religiously conservative social groups; Turkey

1. Introduction

The emergence of new, religiously grounded, work ethic and cultural consumption patterns has been a significant socioeconomic factor in contemporary Turkey. This involves cultural and economic forces molding devout and conservative individuals and groups—these forces recognized as a ‘social fact’ endowed with compelling and coercive power that exercise control over groups and individuals (Durkheim 1982, p. 55). This has been intimately linked to new social class(es) emerging within the religiously conservative social groups in Turkey: a new religiously oriented middle class with conservative values. These involve groups and individuals embracing a religion-based work ethic and developing cultural patterns with an entrepreneurial spirit, which direct their economic activities in light of religious and cultural backgrounds. These groups also frame their fashion concerns based on the Islamic work ethic, while their fashion and clothing consumption is religiously oriented, too. We can therefore see that there is a direct relationship between the economic developments, class formation, and the religious-cultural and ethical values and behaviors of these groups.

Thus, this study aims to explore the links between these two social variables, defined as economic and religious-cultural. In doing this, we highlight class transformation in the afore-said social groups in the economic sphere, as well as new religious-cultural forms, namely the Islamic work ethic and...
Weber 1978, pp. 477–80). Therefore, we question which historical and social conditions gave rise to this class has become more apparent as it carries out business in a number of areas, such as textile, leather, clothing, and food industries, and by undergoing a range of changes in habits of consumptions, there were strong organic links between Islamist political current and the religiously conservative small- and medium-sized entrepreneurs, located in the provinces of Turkey. These economic groups played an important role in the arising of an Islamist politics pioneered by Necmettin Erbakan, an Islamist-rightist political leader, as well as shaping Erbakan’s political career. Thus, it can be argued that a new economic group or class was formed, with economic, cultural, and political distinctive. This class has become more apparent as it carries out business in a number of areas, such as textile, leather, clothing, and food industries, and by undergoing a range of changes in habits of consumptions, as well as favoring spatial separation in areas such as cafes, restaurants, or hotels.

The foregoing economic development and class transformation, which paved the way for economic differentiations, separations between economic and political interests, and ideological divisions, have been the product of quite a long history since the 12 September military coup in 1980, which formed a basis for implementing neoliberal economic policies. With the rise of Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi

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1 The 1980s are commonly remembered as a significant historical threshold in Turkey. A military coup was carried out in 1980, and this coup led to far-reaching economic and political changes. These changes served the interests of religiously conservative social groups because they transformed the economic bases and political positions of the groups in question (Özcan and Turunç 2011, pp. 63–86; Heper 2013, pp. 141–56; Yılmaz 2009, pp. 113–36; Karakas 2007, pp. 19–22; Yıldız 2006, pp. 39–54; Göle 1997, pp. 46–58; Yavuz 2009).

2 Many Turkish scholars have been interested in Turkish Islamism in the 1990s and Turkish Islamism has been a subject for numerous academic studies and intellectual debates (Gülalp 1999, pp. 22–41; Yavuz 1997, pp. 63–82; Gülalp 2001, pp. 433–48; Dağı 2005, pp. 1–16; Yıldız 2003, pp. 187–209; Oniş 1997, pp. 345–66; Göle 1997, pp. 46–58; Dağı 1998).

3 Generally, when dealing with Islamist politics and their transformation in either an ideological, cultural or social sense, prominent Turkish and foreign scholars accept that the 12 September military coup in 1980 carried into effect a significant historical, political-ideological and social-cultural threshold which shaped the 1980s and 1990s Islamism in terms of political, ideological, economic, and cultural influences. (Züürcher 2004; Atasoy 2009; Evin 1998, pp. 201–13; Kaya 2004; Sakallıoğlu 1996, pp. 231–51; Lapidot 1996, pp. 62–74; Ahmad 1993; Toprak 1988, pp. 119–36).

4 In Turkey, Islamist politics, which have led the establishment of many religious-conservative political parties, such as the National Order Party (NOP), National Salvation Party (NSP), Welfare Party (WP), Virtue Party (VP), and Felicity Party (FP), are argued to have represented poorer and lower income groups and disadvantageous economic sectors, such as agriculture, mainly located in rural regions. Such politics are known as Milli Görüş (National View) in Turkish. This is an independent and highly important Islamist movement in the history of Turkey, led by Necmettin Erbakan, the founder of the movement in question. Its ideological bases were established by the end of the 1960s (Eliçlik 2010, pp. 88–230; Rastas and Larrabee 2008, p. 40; Çakır 2011, pp. 544–75; Akdoğan 2004, pp. 91–103; Yıldız 2003, pp. 187–90; Dağı 2005, pp. 1–16; Yavuz 2009, pp. 45–50; Karpat 2004; Toprak 1988, pp. 119–36).

5 Most Turkish and foreign scholars have shared the same view regarding a number of transformations in Turkish economic conditions and political positions after the 1980 military coup (Atasoy 2009; Ahmad 1993; Demirel 2005, pp. 253–80; Tachau and Heper 1983, pp. 17–33; Sayar 1992, pp. 26–43).
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(AKP), known as JDP in English, to power in 2002, new social classes, as a result of the abovementioned economic development and class transformation, obtained even broader economic opportunities and resources. They have made great economic progress by privatization and marketisation on the one hand, and benefited from ‘neoliberal populist’ hegemony created by municipalities on the other.

What lies behind such a change is a far-reaching economic transformation carried out in Turkey, but particularly after the coup, which accelerated class change in Islamic groups. This transformation has affected almost everything, ranging from political power structures and relations and a variety of state institutions—such as juridical, military and the like—to ideological changes and political antagonism and struggles.

Taking into account all of the abovementioned, we will focus on class change taking place in social groups with devout and conservative dispositions. Accordingly, we will first discuss how precisely this new Islamic-conservative class has emerged and developed. Based on the claim that such class change has occurred, this study then aims at underlining two significant points. One is the emergence of the Islamic work ethic (IWE), building a work life by relying on Islamic morals and norms. The other is the transformation of religious cultural-consumption patterns, giving a new shape to the consumption styles of the religiously conservative groups. Starting from these two points, the study attempts at analyzing two religious elements of culture, arising as a result of reinterpretation of Islam by new social classes with pious-conservative dispositions.

2. The Formation of New Devout-Conservative Social Classes

Starting from the foundation of the National Order Party until the 1980s and the post-1990s, the discussions with regard to the religiously conservative groups have expressed the argument that a capitalist class, developing within these groups, emerged during this time. One of the most important indicators of establishment of this class was the organization of MÜSİAD (Müştakil Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği, Independent Industrialists’ and Businessmen’s Association), representing the Islamic capitalist class, in the 1990s. Özdemir (2010) points out that while MÜSİAD is an institution of businessmen operating within the capitalist order, it also was against capitalism and its system of exploitation in its early years, when it was a supporter of the Islamist Welfare Party, whose political views were grounded on social justice and an egalitarian social order (Çakır 1994 and Yavuz 2003).

However, by fundamentally excluding working classes, this organization can in fact be seen to contradict requirements of the Islamic economy. From that viewpoint, it can be claimed that Islamic milieus have adopted and internalized an exclusionist and inegalitarian class structure serving the needs of a Western-capitalist type of organization. Or, to put it another way, Islamic groups, facing the need to carry out business in a capitalist system, have perceived a necessity to use organizations fitting in this system as provisional-adaptable mechanisms (Özdemir 2010, pp. 38–39). What happened as a consequence was that a new and strong Islamic-conservative class, organizing under the name of MÜSİAD, began to be established. This class, and thus its organization, has had many close connections with the political parties advocating Islamic values and thought systems. For, as Şen (2010) has stated,

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6 Yavuz broadly explains the model laying the base for the organizational structure of the Welfare party. He states that this organizational structure is “known as the tesbih model (that is, the provincial organizational committee has thirty-three members modeled after the thirty-three beads of the traditional Muslim rosary). Each neighborhood has an organizer who in turn appoints a street representative to collect information about the age, ethnicity, religious origin, and place of birth of the inhabitants on each street. At the district level, inspectors review the work of the neighborhood organizers every week. Each district also has a party divan (committee) consisting of thirty-three members. None of the other Turkish political parties is organized to communicate in this way with the neighborhoods, the most crucial and vital units of Turkish society. By establishing hegemony over the symbolic structure of Turkish society, the WP seeks to become the hegemonic political force (Yavuz [1997], “Political Islam and the Welfare (Refah) Party in Turkey”, Comparative Politics, pp. 72, 77).

7 Many studies examine and discuss a new capitalist class arising with religious and conservative orientations following the 1980s and the 1990s (Özcan and Turunç 2011, pp. 63–86; Yılmaz 2009, pp. 113–36; Yavuz 2009; Yavuz 1997, pp. 63–82; Gülalp 1999, pp. 22–41; Gülalp 2001, pp. 433–48; Öniş 1997, pp. 743–66; Högör 2011, pp. 343–60; Doğan 2006, pp. 47–65; Bulut 1997; Nasr 2002).
MÜSİAD was in close relations with the Welfare Party (WP) since it was founded in 1990. Furthermore, there have been organic ties between the association and the AKP. For instance, about ten MÜSİAD members were founding members of the AKP, and about 20 members became AKP deputies in the 2002 elections (Şen 2010, p. 71). Apart from such political connections, religiously conservative groups and religious brotherhoods have always had culturally and economically tied links with small- and medium-sized businesses, and they have also been much interested in economic activities, in order to enlarge their social base and to finance their religiously oriented activities.  

Considering all these factors, the critical threshold for Turkey was the 1980s, during which the far-reaching political, economic, and ideological changes were carried out. In this period, Turkey witnessed a remarkable rise of a new business class adhered, albeit in different ways and degrees, to the social project that Turkish Islamist-conservative groups promoted. This project has ideologically and politically made Islam as a religion one of the most legitimate sources for the existing political-economic order under the name of Turkish-Islamic Synthesis (TIS), which was constituted and framed by the ultra-right-wing and Turkish nationalist intellectuals (Atasoy 2009, p. 91). Increased in strength and influence since the 1980s, the overwhelming majority within these groups transformed from the ranks of traditional provincial petty bourgeoisie into medium- and large-sized entrepreneurs. With the establishment of a new Islamic middle class, Islamic values and norms have been striving to be incorporated into economic processes by articulating the Islamic religion into capitalism (or neoliberalism economic restructuring in the political sense).

In this context, one of the most salient features of the post-coup societal transformations was that Turkish Islamism embraced neoliberalism and/or neoliberal economic order, and that in many areas, its articulation into the economic system or order in question has been strongly established. However, in order to grasp the dimensions of this articulation, one should also examine the increasing involvement of the religiously conservative groups in the economic activities since the 1980s. The reason for this was that these groups have had powerful social bases among the traditional middle classes composed of artisans, small craftsmen, and shopkeepers, rather than the working class and the poor. Many members of these groups have been subsequently the main agents of religious piety and conservatism, especially in the provincial towns and cities of Turkey (Şen 2010, p. 70).

In sum, as Şen demonstrated, the class structures and positions of the aforesaid groups underwent a great change. Thus, after coming to power by winning general elections in 2001, the AKP has presented opportunities of seizing (political) power for these groups, for further empowering Islamic or conservative bourgeoisie (Yıldırım 2010, p. 22; Thumann 2010; Yavuz 2003). In light of these analyses, it is impossible to ignore the significance of a capitalist class among Islamic groups in Turkey. It seems that the formation of such a class has been associated with a great deal of factors, including political, economic, and cultural advantages. Culturally, it has become increasingly meaningful to create and accumulate Islamic capital in them by using Islamic values and norms as points of reference, and thereby benefiting economically the groups mentioned above. Politically, the AKP government has abundantly supported the growth and strength of a religiously conservative capital accumulation by using all advantages and opportunities provided by being in power.

3. The Work Ethic of the Religiously Conservative New Social Classes

The work ethic constitutes an aspect of culture, reflecting upon how work and money are morally organized in economic life, within the aforesaid social groups with devout and conservative dispositions. Since it reflects an important cultural change from a religious perspective, it is extremely important to understand and disclose what religious-Islamic aspects the culture of this social class has

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8 The economic bases and activities of the religiously conservative groups have been addressed and discussed in many different ways. There has been a strong scholarly interest in economic analyses of Turkish Islamism, driven by these social groups (Atasoy 2005; Öniş 1997, pp. 743–66; Yavuz 2003; Şen 2010, pp. 59–84; Yılmaz 2009, pp. 113–36; Buğra 1998, pp. 521–39; Gülalp 2001, pp. 433–48; Demiralp 2009, pp. 315–35; Yavuz 2010, pp. 7–27; Göle 1997, pp. 46–58).
had and whether this culture is entirely embedded in Islamic norms and values or not. Nevertheless, when carrying out this, our aim is to indicate how this cultural aspect has been produced in light of Islamic norms and beliefs. It has been one of the key matters addressed by many scholars to examine this new class emerging.\(^9\) As stated, one of the fundamental discussion points with which most scholars\(^10\) have been concerned is whether this new cultural form, namely the Islamic work ethic, has formed a significant dimension of religious-cultural distinctives of new religiously conservative middle classes.

First and foremost, prior to conceptually defining this Islamic-religious work ethic, it is necessary to note that such a work ethic has a religious characterization, and thus consists of religious morality. Within a religious-moral framework, it expresses a belief in work as a moral good. In a Weberian sense, such moral attitude has a significant outcome. It is indicating that we are liable to pursue work, that is to say, we have a duty to work. In a Protestant Work Ethic (PWE), ‘work is valued in and of itself.’ In a sense, it glorifies work as a moral attribute, and work is seen as an end in itself, rather than a means to an end. Honesty and justice are the leading components of work as a basic moral principle (Weber 2005, pp. 15, 17–19; Allan 2005, p. 161). In a similar vein, an Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) refers to the same principles. Yusef argues that on the basis of the holy book, the Quran, and sayings of the prophet Muhammad, Hadith, the major principles of such work ethic (IWE) consist of ‘hard work, honesty and justice in trade, and dedication to work as virtue’ (Yousef 2001, p. 154). Generally speaking, the IWE asserts that life without work has no meaning, and that engagement in economic activities is an obligation (Uygur 2009, p. 218). On this point, it has principally objected to a major assumption that Islam as a religion forms an obstacle to economic development and entrepreneurship. Islam, in this framework, is an entrepreneurial religion, in the sense of being modern, active, broadminded, and progressive. It has an entrepreneurial spirit that provides a basic for hardworkingness and the acquisition of wealth (Adas 2006, pp. 124–25).

The IWE has been also grounded on the need for high technical educational attainment. It has aimed at creating disciplined and responsible individuals by embarking on a quest for constructing a culture of accumulation directly combined with high morality and ethical values in favor of modern technology (Atasoy 2008, p. 128). With devout and conservative backgrounds, these entrepreneurial individuals, who would lay the bases of an Islamic work ethic, make the assertion regarding Islam being above decay. They are the product of a new Islamic subject or actor constituted through interpreted Islamic beliefs and values made compatible with capitalism. Some Turkish scholars have conveyed views from these entrepreneurs termed as pious and conservative in the matter of Islamic Work Ethic (IWE). Amongst those entrepreneurs, the common view usually is that religion is not directly interested in business, but it organizes and supervises business life, including trade and industrial activities. In business life, how employers approach both customers and actual goods must remain continuous, as religion commands this. Many religions, such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, have similar principles. On this point, Islam has a call for ‘an economic Jihad.’ It dictates that Muslim entrepreneurs should work hard and become richer. It declares that they should take the treasures of God from the ‘infidel’ hand and possess them themselves. Upon achieving this, they obtain a status of Şehit (a name given to those who die in battle for the sake of Islam), by getting richer (Uygur 2009, p. 218; Adas 2006, p. 131; Buğra 1998).

The formation of the abovementioned Islamic actor is substantially a product of criticizing the traditional understanding of Islam and strongly being objected to a homo-economicus mindset, mostly

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\(^9\) Many studies have been closely concerned with the formation of new social classes in the religiously conservative groups in Turkey. (Buğra 2002, pp. 187–204; Demiralp 2009, pp. 315–35; Önü 1997, pp. 743–66; Gulałp 2001, pp. 433–48; Yılmaz 2009, pp. 113–36; Hısogol 2011, pp. 343–60; Ozcan and Turunç 2011, pp. 63–86; Yavuz 2010, pp. 7–27; Doğan 2006, pp. 47–65; Thumann 2010, pp. 45–51; Atasoy 2005).

\(^10\) Islamic Work Ethic (IWE) has been detailedly analyzed and debated in several studies. (Uygur 2009, pp. 211–25; Adas 2006, pp. 113–37; Buğra 1998, pp. 521–39; Kirkbesoğlu and Sargut 2016, pp. 313–31; Hısogol 2011, pp. 343–60; Atasoy 2008, pp. 121–40).
expressed as the heroic actor of the classical political economy. Traditional Islam comes in prominence with the strong faith in the other-worldly, and attaches no importance to activities in this world by emphasizing the pious and conservative aspects of its followers. The actors of such an understanding of Islam are described as “traditional businessmen,” so-called Esnaf in Turkish. They engage in small-sized business economic activities as artisans, shopkeepers, and craftsmen, relying on family labor in a company with maybe two or three wage labors. They are exceedingly devout in their religious orientations and reject the institutional structures and relationships of modern capitalism. Primarily characterized as pious, they lack the motivation and passion to expand their business and become large-scale capitalists. They are rather passive and traditional, with privileged other-worldly faiths, and definitely refuse all this-worldly oriented motivations and goals. Most importantly, they, though moral and virtuous, have no entrepreneurial spirit that is considered to be inherent in ‘true Islam,’ which the Islamic entrepreneurs advocate to be compatible with a capitalist economic system (Adas 2006, p. 126).

On the other hand, the IWE also criticizes the homo-economicus that it describes as rational, calculating, self-maximizing, and utilitarian businessmen. According to it, a homo-economic individual tries to avoid all moral principles and values with his/her greedy, materialist, and egoist dispositions and love of the wealth for the sake of wealth. Unlike both homo-economicus and traditional businessmen, homo-Islamicus, defined as the economic actor of the Islamic work ethic, has become the most prominent supporter and moral pioneer of modern capitalism, with Islamic-moral values and norms (Adas 2006, p. 127). Further, it is often argued that Muhammed, the prophet of the Islamic religion, pioneered exchange activities in the Medina Market, according to rules which were grounded on a competitive system with minimum state intervention (Buğra 1998, p. 531). Composed of both entrepreneurial and moral elements, this actor is an Islamic personality created by uniting public and private life and religious and economic activities through its Islamic moral values and norms. In an Islamic work ethic (IWE), what makes Islamist entrepreneurs distinct from others is their loyalty to a religious-political identity based on a certain interpretation of Islam. This provides “a special meaning to their economic activities, and in return redefines their identity in relation to economic activities” (Adas 2006, p. 124). For instance, in this context we see that “MÜSİAD has largely used a certain interpretation of Islam as a resource to tie the businessmen together whom it turns into a coherent community and enables to advocate their economic interest as an integral component of an ideological mission”11 (Buğra 1998, p. 522).

This business organization and its members employ a certain interpretation of Islam on both the domestic and international level “as a basic for cooperation and solidarity between producers; as a device to create secure market niches or sources of investment finance; and as a means of containing social unrest and labour militancy” (Şen 2010, p. 72). Within the hegemonic project of devout-conservative bourgeoisie, based on re-interpretation of Islam, a new ‘Islamic’ language has been politically and ideologically on the rise through the forms of flexible, unsecured and non-union employment, and its aim has been mostly to transform labour relations. This language has come to a hegemonic position easily, by the virtue of justifying and reproducing the existing political-economic neoliberal restructuring in Turkey (Atasoy 2009, pp. 1–27, 70–106). In recent times, this language has gradually become stronger and made itself dominant. At the same time, increasingly, academic studies link up the work ethic of Islamic bourgeoisie and Weberian views on Calvinism and Protestant work ethic.12 Based on IWE, this linguistic domination has reshaped relationships between employer and employee, and labour has been begun to be seen as something to be sacrificed under the name of

11 The MÜSİAD and its members attempt at making a different interpretation of Islam. (Şen 2010, pp. 59–84; Atasoy 2008, pp. 121–40; Adas 2006, pp. 113–37).
12 In Turkey, many studies have discussed whether there is a link between Islamic work ethic (IWE) and Weber’s Protestant work ethic (PWE). (Ozdemir 2006; Arslan 2001, pp. 321–39; Türkdoğan 2002; Özdalga 2003, pp. 61–73; Adas 2006, pp. 113–37).
'development' at the expense of capital accumulation relied on Islamic labor relations (Yıldırım 2010, p. 24).

This work ethic has needed a new kind of actor to maintain and develop itself in relation to Islamic religion. It is homo-Islamicus, based on a free market modeled on the Medina market. In contrast with homo-economicus, Islamists are convinced that the homo-Islamicus is endowed with religious morality and values, and that the state, which regulates society and economy according to these values and rules, “would together guarantee smooth operation of market and institute a beneficial economy for the maximum good of society.” In other words, this system has been differentiated from “a pure market economy in that it is clearly embedded in social relations mediated by a religious morality” (¸Sen 2010, pp. 73–74). As would be seen here, this work ethic is based on Islamic norms and values, rather than pure rules immanent to a capitalist-competitive system, and the homo-Islamicus and its economic order is to operate according to Islamic principles. This is not something new, since such work ethic has already been formulated to provide a basis for a neoliberal capital accumulation model under the leadership of Islamic entrepreneurs. In the context of new labor-capital relationships, whereby labor organizations have fallen into decline and been neutralized, the situation makes itself clearer by strengthening community-religious-centered relationships. What enables this is that economic spheres and relations have been reorganized within a new work ethic based on Islamic values and norms to rule over working classes.

4. New Religiously Conservative Capitalist Class and Its Cultural Patterns of Consumption

The formation of an Islamic capitalist class and its work ethic, that it has created with devout-conservative Islamic dispositions, have laid the bases of a new cultural forms emerging around consumption based on certain Islamic beliefs, values and norms. This consumption-oriented cultural form has strong religious appearances. We can see these appearances in the consumption patterns compatible with the lifestyle and work ethic of a new capitalist class interwoven with religious-Islamic values and norms. We can mention an ‘Islamic marketing’ having become more visible, surrounded by deeply religious-conservative values and norms exactly like in the work ethic outlined above. As Sandikci and Ger (2011) have pointed out, it seems that the gradually changing demographic structure, the increasing purchasing power of Muslim consumers, and also the success of Muslim entrepreneurs, have rendered Islamic marketing a scholarly and managerially attractive sphere. However, according to Sandikci and Ger (2011), there is also some unease that the term ‘Islamic marketing’ has generated. They assert that the reason is that ‘Islamic’ accent has brought with it the potential of reifying differences rather than interaction. As a matter of fact, this situation fundamentally implies that composed of only Muslim consumers, a practice of marketing has been embedded in a kind of Islamic character. Such marketing has differentiated from a general-familiar marketing. It targets Muslim consumers, assumed to be completely different on account of religious identity and lifestyle from other consumers, and utilizes from specific resources, skills, and tools peculiar to this consumer segment. Also, it assumes that there is a preexisting and uniform Muslim consumer segment, which is targeted, reached and, to a certain extent, predicted by marketers (Sandikci and Ger 2011, p. 486).

These three points show that it is misleading to claim that there has been a specific form of ‘Islamic marketing’ after the 1990s. Since the early 1990s, local bourgeoisie and religious sects have gained an opportunity to intervene in the established meanings and positions of the center and the periphery. This has been a result of the development of an Islamic bourgeoisie with the middle-sized investment, ranging from textiles to automotive industries and from the food sector to the media industry (Kılıçbay and Binark 2002, pp. 496–97). In parallel with this, since the mid-1990s, there has been a rather fragmented and vocal public sphere with identity claims increasingly separated from one another (Yavuz 2005, pp. 109, 110–11; Çayır 2008, pp. 68–71; Da˘gı 2005, pp. 7–10; Duran 2013, pp. 93–95). The struggle to differentiate and legitimize identity for each of the different groups has found its symbolic expression in the field of consumption. It has been a result of struggles among different
Islamic identities within the religiously conservative groups. Though a mythical “Turkishness” is one significant source of the building of an identity, another has been Islam. Even if Turkey has a secular legal system, Islam has played a prominent role in the political, sociocultural, and economic domains of Turkey from the 1980s onwards.

Especially, the liberalization and privatization of the economy during the 1980s has changed not only the lifestyle of urban secular population, but also created Islamic businesses and an Islamic bourgeoisie in Turkey. This Islamic bourgeoisie has been conservative in values but avant-garde, in sense of being innovative and pioneer, in consumption practices. Accordingly, similar to secular media’s dissemination of consumption values, television and radio channels backed by Islamic capital have undertaken an active role in communicating a religious lifestyle. A rich and prolific Islamic media, ranging from Islamic pop music to romance novels, women’s magazines, bestsellers, and movies have transmitted popular Islamic culture (Sandikci and Ger 2007a, p. 148). It would not suffice for cultural change of a capitalist class with Islamic dispositions arising based on wealth from the textile, construction, clothing and food industries. Besides that, there need to be religious-Islamic cultural consumption patterns, created under the leadership of those classes, and propagated by many media tools, like television, printed press (newspaper, magazines), and radio. Media institutions, by promoting and spreading such an understanding of culture that is centered on consumption, have, too, attributed public visibility and legitimacy to it. In the public sphere, one of the most debated issues has been the headscarf issue, attempting to obtain public visibility and legitimacy, reflecting the cultural lifestyle of a certain social group defined as devout and conservative.

Seemingly, this issue has been one of the most important indicators of cultural consumption patterns within Islamic groups. In fact, the creation of a clothing fashion has been centred around that kind of an issue. Having provided a basis for a clothing style known as Tessettür, veiling fashion has been one of the first practices appearing as a consumption form produced in the upper middle classes with Islamic-conservative disposition. Becoming a veiled woman has created a different consumer identity, but her evolving representation in marketing refers to an identity formation as well as a number of economic and social changes, involving Islamic work ethic and cultural consumption patterns, taking place in Turkey since the 1980s. Given the discourses and practices of companies and designers that manufacture and sell the clothes preferred by the veiled women in Turkey, we can clearly see how much of an active role the Islamic fashion industry has played on cultural difference and similarity, and that it has also fabricated the image of a “modern” covered woman easily accessible as a consumption form (Sandikci and Ger 2007b, p. 190). Kılıçbay and Binark (2002) argue that veiling practice came to acquire a new meaning, articulating religious clothing within a certain form of cultural consumption. In Turkey, since the early 1990s, the rise of what could be called a ‘fashion for veiling’ has been a result of such an articulation process. Also, they have asserted that the practice of veiling is inseparable from consumption, commodity, even pleasure patterns. Moreover, it has been stimulated by global and local trends of the market economy. Following these trends, in Turkey, some clothing companies have offered various veiling models and styles to women belonging to urban middle and upper classes (Kılıçbay and Binark 2002, pp. 498–99). Thus, this new kind of covering has turned into a fashion from a stigma.

At one time, veiling was being perceived as a threat to the secular-republican regime, whose foundations had been laid in the 1920s and the 1930s. It was stigmatized as a political symbol of reactionism, religious insurrection and an anti-secular political movement that threatened the founder principles of the secular-Turkish republican, which came into being in an image of an unveiling woman adhered to Turkish republican reforms and particularly its new secular regime, communicating the

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13 “Mythical Turkishness mostly refers to a pre-Islamic history. It has been associated with manly and virile qualities. It means to be sturdy, gallant and stubborn but also virtuous, truthful and inherently gullible. It is inherently righteous, endowed with divine blessing. All these qualities constitute the essence of ‘Turkish character,’ namely Turkishness.” (Kurt and Gurpinar 2016, p. 2).
principles of gender equality and development (Saktanber and Çorbacıoğlu 2008, p. 519). However, the veil no longer symbolizes something stigmatized. It has become a fashionable and ordinary consumption object, which young, urban, and educated middle-class women prefer (Sandikçi and Ger 2010, pp. 15–16). The growing importance of consumption developed as a lifestyle between the religiously conservative middle/upper classes actually expresses a new phase of the formation of an Islamic identity, without being confined to a political belonging identified with only radical or revolutionary politics. Islamic consumers and marketers, by obtaining more money and power, experiencing urban life and participating in the public sphere, have internalized modern capitalist life and continuously reproduced it in their own cultural world. The acquisition of consumption and marketing skills, and the increasing interaction between religious and secular markets, are no better exemplified than in the domain of tesettür fashion (Sandikçi and Ger 2007b, p. 194). At the outset, mostly shaped on women and transformed into a tool of political struggle, this clothing has taken an important place in the consumption styles of Islamic middle and upper classes. This struggle originated from a political antagonism taking place between secular and religious-conservative identities. As an outcome of this antagonism, the clothing style has become a fundamental element of political identity of the aforesaid social classes (Saktanber and Çorbacıoğlu 2008).

On the other hand, these new Islamic-conservative middle and upper classes have at the same time strived to exhibit their wealth through female clothing designed according to Islamic norms and values. In order to increase market share of this commodity, and to provide it as accessible to a great deal of people, more business opportunities have been created. In this way, as the market for covered clothing fashion expanded, the developed fashion industry from small ateliers to national and international companies has launched turbans and headscarves made out of a range of fabrics in various cuts, shapes, colors, and price ranges. The initial uniformity of the dressing style has gradually been replaced by heterogeneous styles, thereby expressing a rising fashion consciousness especially among middle/upper class, urban, well-educated, younger religious women. Thus, the veiled (tesettürlü) women, wearing higher-quality, elegant headscarves, tighter and shorter coats, and skirts, pants, and jackets in brighter, trendy colors, have begun to populate the streets (Sandikçi and Ger 2007b, p. 195). A sign of consumption in a cultural sense and a product of an upwards class mobility through economic means, this way of dressing has started to be more and more popular in the clothing market, and has turned into one of the prevailing indicators of getting rich.

Consequently, there has been a strong demand for such a way of clothing. Many companies were founded, which have started producing colourful and stylish clothes and headscarves, and working these into fashion objects. One of them is 'Tekbir Giyim,' a religious-Arabic concept whose name refers to the glory and supremacy of God. In 1992, Tekbir Giyim clothing, a prominent Tesettür company continuing its economic activities since 1982, organized the first ever tesettür fashion show in Turkey. The show featured famous Turkish models that normally showcased underwear, swimwear, and Western-style clothes to the secular upper classes (Sandikçi and Ger 2007b, p. 195). Also, various women’s fashion magazines have been issued, and many other fashion shows have been organized, in order to provide women with increasing access to this way of clothing, and for the clothing styles to gain popularity. For example, Alä Dergisi14 magazine came into prominence by organizing fashion shows regarding religious-conservative clothing style in accordance with Islamic principles and values.

As a consumption object, such cultural patterns have transformed the veil into an important indicator of displaying religious-cultural identity for the veiled women, since it is a fundamental way of presenting the changing consumption forms of the abovementioned new social classes. Since the female body is considered as a fundamental object that represents and exhibits the religiously conservative classes’ wealth, in order to demonstrate the changes in consumption patterns, in everyday life, woman’s changing status and role has been a crucial cultural signifier. It is quite a familiar

14 For more information about this fashion magazine, see http://aladergi.com/.
historical-social condition that a woman and her body are indicative of a social class’s wealth. This situation indeed has been one of the most fundamental signs demonstrating the transformation of the consumption forms of the religiously conservative new social classes.

In effect, and obviously since the 1980s, a new style of “Islamic” consumption appeared in many fields, from decoration and leisure to fashion. Interestingly, for example, many families shop in malls as well as in department stores built inside mosques and in a big supermarkets set up on mosques’ ground floors. Most stores in these venues have been opened to sell Islamic gifts and goods. Amongst these have been copies of the Quran, prayer beads and religious books, as well as Islamic pop music tapes, CDs and romance novels, bright colored clocks with lights and pictures of the Kaba in Mecca, landscape paintings or impressionistic reproductions—book covers, diaries, notebooks, or bags—framed with Koranic calligraphy, and many other items including stickers, posters, key chains, coloring books, calendars, greeting cards, and decorative items, all decorated with Islamic symbols, pictures, or calligraphy. Also, several holiday resorts, run by Islamic companies, have started to serve the religiously sensitive people with their gender-segregated swimming pools and beaches, separate entertainment and recreation activities, such as religious talks, or theaters and concerts pertinent to Islamic understanding (Sandikci and Ger 2007a, p. 148). Ultimately, all these have been possible through the companies and commercial activities created by Islamic business groups, developing a religious market.

On the other hand, they have created an Islamic consumption market for the purposes of consuming commodities which are claimed to be produced according to Islamic principles. In parallel with that, Gökarıksel and McLarney (2010) argue that the capitalist forms of economic development have long been a part of Muslim societies in various (and often contested) forms. In the recent decade, according to them, there has been a marked change in both the relation between Islam and capitalism, and its forms. As a result, Islamic movements and neoliberal consumer capitalism have arisen simultaneously in many settings, thereby leading to newly articulated and contextually different manifestations of “Islamic capitalism,” and to a new market for commodities, media, advertising, businesses, and consumer segments based on the creation of a new culture industry (Gökarıksel and McLarney 2010, p. 1). Thus, with reference to a new Islamic culture industry since the 1990s, with the aim of presenting consumption strategies alternative to the westernized and dominant ones, new consumption practices have been developed by new religiously conservative social classes, ranging from Islamic fashion to the Islamization of urban ways of life with the aid of several economic sectors like restaurant, supermarkets, and hotels. In this context, according to Kılıçbay and Binark (2002), even luxury hotels have been constructed, serving devout-conservative consumer groups, for example, the Caprice hotel, which has been very popular among those groups with Islamic codes. The name is in French and the word itself is not in line with Islamic ethics and aesthetics. But the hotel is located on the western coast of Turkey and offers a summer holiday in keeping with Islamic principles, such as separate beaches for men and women, and respect for the praying times. So, leisure has been “Islamicized” in line with the market system, and as a consequence of that, the lifestyles of Muslim subjects have changed (Kılıçbay and Binark 2002, p. 499). Having created many commodities produced in accordance with Islamic norms including religious content, Islamic business groups have thus accomplished to build an Islamic consumption market shaped according to Islamic principles. This market has broadened with the increasingly growing, and increasingly wealthy, Islamic entrepreneur classes producing commodities for that market.

5. Conclusions

In this paper, we have discussed two faces of the religious-based culture of the devout-conservative social groups in Turkey. Above all, before a religious-cultural transformation, these groups have gone through an important change in their class positions as an outcome of economic restructuration of Turkey in the early 1980s. This change has had two crucial results: Islamic work ethic (IWE) and religious-cultural consumption patterns. It provides a basis for new religious-cultural forms
of behaviour, namely an Islamic work ethic and religion-based consumption patterns, of the social
groups discussed here. IWE is a work ethic religiously being shaped around Islamic principles and
norms. It has been usually used to make reference to a new business class that successfully synthesizes
Islamic moral norms and values with capitalist business actions (Adas 2006; Sandikci 2011; Kirkbesoğlu
and Sargut 2016). The change of consumption patterns in the religious-cultural sense includes many
elements, such as clothing, entertainment, architecture, art, literature, music, and fashion. As an
expression of the opening of new market spheres, these cultural patterns have played an important
role in the growth and spread of a lifestyle compatible with Islamic ethical principles and values. In
addition to offering new “opportunity spaces” for an Islamic lifestyle and business markets (Yavuz
2003, 2004), they have been instrumental both in promoting an Islamic lifestyle and values, and in
contributing to the increasing visibility, spread and growth of a new Islamic collectivity. This is the
case for the meanings and practices of tesettür-veiling, modest dressing, in Turkey (Sandikci 2011; Sandikci
and Ger 2010). Amongst all these structures, within which are economy, culture, and religion,
there is a relational situation, or relationality, in a Bourdieusian sense\(^\text{15}\) (Mohr 2013). In other words,
economy, religion and culture are mutually closely associated with one another. Undoubtedly, this
form of relationship is not onesided. Despite the fact that a number of economic transformations,
like change in class positions, are asserted to have had significant influence on other structures, such
as culture and religion, it seems that religious structures, involving a variety of values, beliefs, and
morals, have formed a basis for the rise of an Islamic work ethic in economic life and the change
of certain consumption patterns in the cultural field, by presenting a new perspective concerning

This study has presented two fundamental arguments. One is that Islamic work ethic has come
to exist and symbolize a religious face of culture, developed in a religious perspective. The other
is that new religious-cultural consumption patterns have emerged and developed, too. These have
fundamentally provided a basis for forming new fashion concerns among the groups in question,
depending upon the economically changing social positions of the religiously conservative groups in
Turkey. Particularly, as result of a class transformation within these groups, the study has argued that
an Islamic work ethic has been built by new entrepreneurial classes of the religiously conservative
group in conformity with Islamic ethical principles and values. Besides an Islamic work ethic, it
suggests that there have been the religious-cultural consumption patterns framed around Islamic
symbols, values, and norms. These new consumption patterns, ranging from fashion, clothing, fashion
shows, summer holidays, and luxury hotels to restaurants and top model cars, have given birth to
important changes in the cultural activities of the religiously conservative social groups, and laid the
basis for a new Islamic collectivity and identity. In a nutshell, this study, by pointing out that religion
has been a dominant element in shifting the work ethic and cultural patterns of the mentioned social
groups in a cultural field, has focused on the religious faces of culture taking shape around religious
beliefs, symbols, and values. It has addressed and discussed the religious-cultural changes appearing
in work ethic and consumption patterns in these groups in order to clearly show how a shaping of the
lifestyles of the religious-conservative social groups has taken place in the cultural field.

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\(^{15}\) Bourdieusian sense here refers to a form of relational thinking that Bourdieu extracts from structuralism.
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