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Posing for the Republic

Making the modern Turkish citizen in vernacular photographs from the 1920s and 1930s

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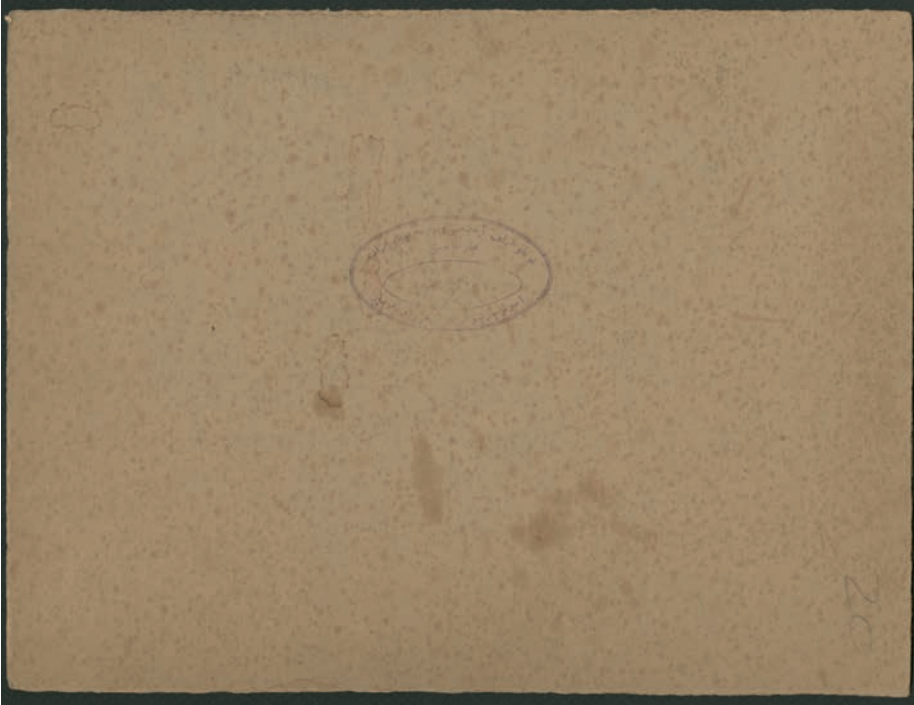
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PART III
PHOTOGRAPHY AND SPACE-MAKING

CHAPTER FIVE

Photography's Domestication





Figures 5.1 & 5.2 (recto & verso) A multigenerational family portrait.
19.4 x 24.9 cm. Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.

Among the thousands of pictures that I purchased for the Akkasah archive, this family photograph (Figure 5.1) has haunted me the most. Multiple generations of a modern Turkish family pose together in this studio photograph from the late 1920s. The elderly members are respectfully placed in the center with their children and grandchildren around them. Four generations seem to be represented, although the ages of the portrayed are hard to estimate due to significant retouching. The first generation could be seen as comprising the elderly couple (great-grandparents) seated in the middle, and the second as their middle-aged children (the couple standing in the middle). Here, I assume the woman to be the daughter of the elderly couple, given the similarities in her facial features and her prominent positioning within the frame. The younger men and women, presumably in their twenties, stand in the back as the third generation; some of them must be the grandchildren of the elderly couple. The men and women at both ends are likely to be husband and wife. The boys in scout costumes are most likely the fourth generation, the great-grandchildren of the elderly couple.

The majority of the family members look off camera, to the left. The elderly couple seated in the middle and the woman standing behind them look directly into the camera. This could be a stylistic choice, meant to create a dramatic effect, which was a common practice among photographers at the time. It could also indicate a sense of respect for the elderly and convey a sense of hierarchy within the family, making it more plausible that the woman standing in the middle is indeed the couple's daughter.

The family appears to be well-off, judging by the quality of their clothes and accessories. The boys are well-dressed in boy scout costumes that look new and expensive, which may indicate a special occasion, perhaps a religious holiday (bayram). The long posing times seem to have made it difficult for the photographer to achieve a sharp image of the boys in front, who apparently would not sit still. Perhaps the small flower bouquet was given to the seated boy as a way to distract him as much as being intended as a decorative object.

It is difficult to identify the parents of each child, although one could draw conclusions from the physical proximity of the people in the portrait. For instance, the woman in the dark coat on the left with her left hand on the shoulder of the boy wearing the necktie is likely to be that boy's mother. However, one cannot be certain, since the degree of kinship seems to have been as important as symmetry for the photographer, who appears to have carefully arranged the family members based on their gender and height.

More than its visual appeal, created by the symmetrical composition, and more than the elegance of the people and their fashionable flapper-era clothes, it is the gaze of the older woman sitting in the middle that has struck me ever since I bought this photograph in Istanbul in 2014. This detail, which has captivated my attention, could be what Barthes (1981: 27) calls the photograph's punctum: "that accident which pricks me (but also bruises me, is poignant to me)." The woman looks just like my great-grandmother, whose family emigrated from Prizren, Kosovo to Istanbul and Izmir during the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913,¹²¹ along with hundreds of thousands of *muhacirs*.¹²²

In a picture I have seen of my great-grandmother, she resembles this elderly woman in the way she covers her hair, the way she poses with an elevated posture and her head up, her fine facial features, and her serious and proud gaze, acknowledging the significance of the photographic portrait as a valuable part of building a family heritage. The woman's strong resemblance to my great-grandmother led me to imagine that this could have been my own family, and eventually, that perhaps, this *was* my family. After all, this is what my family members are likely to have looked like at the time in a family portrait like this, in an attempt to illustrate a belonging to a particular class and the new modern Turkish nation.

The studio name and address on the logo turned this speculation into a genuine possibility: the photograph was taken in the famous Hamza Rüstem¹²³ (1872–1971)

¹²¹ The Balkan Wars include two wars that took place in the Balkan Peninsula in 1912 and 1913. During the first Balkan War, four Balkan states, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Greece and Serbia, defeated the Ottoman Empire. In the second war, Bulgaria suffered defeat against its former allies Serbia, Greece and Montenegro, as well as the Ottoman Empire and Romania. The Balkan Wars caused the Ottoman Empire to lose most of its territory in Europe and set the stage for World War I. By 1914, an estimate of around 2.5 million Balkan Muslims had fled to Anatolia (Hall 2000; Pekesen 2012).

¹²² Muhacir (muhajir) is a term used to refer to the estimated 10 million Ottoman Muslim citizens from various ethnic backgrounds and their descendants who immigrated to present-day Turkey from the late eighteenth century until the end of the twentieth century, mainly to escape ongoing conflicts and persecution in their homelands. Today, "between a third and a quarter" of Turkey's population of over 80 million have an ancestor from among these muhacirs (Bosma, Lucassen and Oostindie 2012: 17).

¹²³ According to Rüstem's grandson, Mert Rüstem (2018), Hamza Rüstem was born between 1871 and 1876. Written sources predominantly quote 1872 as Rüstem's birth year (see Koçboğan 2014), although Ak (2004) quotes 1871.

studio, Turkey's oldest studio, located in Izmir and in business since 1925 (Ak 2004, 2001; Güzey 2012; Koçboğan 2014; Özel Sağlamtimur and Cabadak 2016; Orhon Targaç 1999; Özendes 2013).¹²⁴ The Ottoman stamp on the back was used approximately between 1925 and 1929, having been abandoned after the alphabet change in November 1928, which makes it easy to establish the time window within which this portrait was taken.¹²⁵

A Cretan Muslim who immigrated to Izmir in the mid-1920s, Hamza Rüstem's story is a striking example of the important role that photographers played in the making of modern secular Turkish middle-class identity as envisioned by the new Kemalist nation-state. From the death throes of a collapsing empire and its ever-changing demographics to the growing pains of a newly founded modern nation-state, the life of Hamza Rüstem and his family epitomizes the lives of hundreds of thousands of Muslim immigrants who went through the trauma of displacement. The trajectory of Hamza Rüstem's photography studio from Crete to Izmir, moreover, coincides with the remaking of Izmir as an exemplary modern Republican city and with the creation of a new Turkish Muslim bourgeoisie that Hamza Rüstem and his family were part of and contributed to with the thousands of portraits they produced between the 1920s and 1940s, including Figure 5.1.

In this chapter, I will focus on the relationship between space-making and photography in urban settings as well as in the countryside. I will start with the case study of the Hamza Rüstem studio to explore how it contributed to the process of "making social memory" (Kuhn 2002: 14), recording the newly forged urban middle-class Turkish identity in the first two decades of the Republic.¹²⁶ I juxtapose the exceptional history of Izmir with that of the studio, which, along with family portraits, produced some of the most iconic postcards of the city.

Completely destroyed in 1922, Izmir offers a fascinating case study that discloses the Kemalist agenda regarding building new urban spaces with a distinct Republican identity. Thus, the efforts of the Hamza Rüstem family to make a new home for themselves in Izmir is connected to the larger Republican project of reimagining Anatolia as a new Republican home for its citizens. In addition, the remaking of Izmir shows how the new regime tried to move away from the Ottoman heritage by peripheralizing an Ottoman metropolis in order to construct a new Turkish city.

I will discuss the making of Izmir as a modern Republican city through the lens of Koch and Latham's (2013) concept of domestication, which includes "the processes by which residents make the city into a home" (in Bialasiewicz and Wagner 2015: 3). As Bialasiewicz and Wagner suggest, rather than conceiving of the public and the private as

¹²⁴ Today, the Hamza Rüstem studio serves its clients in its original arcade of the same name, at the address of Emirler Çarşısı 150, Kemeraltı, Izmir. Hamza Rüstem's grandson Mert Rüstem (b.1968) manages it and keeps the legacy of his grandfather alive. He owns the archive of the studio as well as the family archive, including prints, negatives and original glass plates from the 1920s and 1930s. He claims that his archive includes one of the biggest glass plate collections in Turkey. The quotes I include in this section are from the interview I conducted with Mert Rüstem in the Hamza Rüstem studio in Izmir in June 2018.

¹²⁵ As Mert Rüstem (2018) states, it is possible that the Ottoman stamp was still used in early 1929 until the stocks of printed material were finished. In Figure 5.2, the "20" on the bottom right corner refers to the price of the photograph, 20 Turkish Liras (TRY), and was added by the seller at a later date.

¹²⁶ Millar (2006: 119) defines social memory as "articulate memory: memory that is structured, framed, organized and used by and for the benefit of a community," created through the transition of memory from the personal to the communal.

distinct and discreet spheres, I will examine public life as “modes of doing private life in certain configurations of collectively inhabited spaces” (2015: 8). Accordingly, I will study how the city’s newly immigrated Muslim population came to domesticate Izmir and how it used photography to represent this domestication process in a “livable, emplaced, and dwelled in” new home, whether “as a private, familial zone lived behind walls, or as engagement with public spaces of routine, habit, and comfort” (Bialasiewicz and Wagner 2015: 3).

The case of the Hamza Rüstem Studio enables me to investigate how the process of “homemaking” (Ralph and Staeheli 2011) worked for a secular immigrant family at the time of the rapid Turkification and Islamization of a multiethnic and multireligious Ottoman city. While Hamza Rüstem’s story has been told by others before, those accounts have mostly focused on revealing the details of the family’s history. In order to go beyond what has already been written and to find out more about Hamza Rüstem’s artistic choices and business practices, I interviewed his grandson Mert Rüstem in June 2018 in their original Izmir studio. Using this first-hand, ethnographic material, as well as written sources, my case study aims to gain a better understanding of some of the processes through which modern Turkish middle-class citizens like Hamza Rüstem made sense of their identity in a new nation-state.

Continuing my exploration of the processes of space-making in the early Republic, in the second part of the chapter I will compare the work of itinerant (*alaminiüt*) photographers who operated in public places across Turkey with portraits produced in the studio as a semi-public/semi-private space. I will investigate the role that itinerant photographers played in documenting and domesticating the increasingly secularized public life designed and imposed by the modern Republican regime, in which modern men and women emerged as equal citizens. Thanks to their mobile nature, itinerant photographers were able to reach a large spectrum of society, including the lower classes in the countryside. Consequently, they contributed a more expansive depiction of Turkish society than urban studio photographers were able to capture. The second half of the chapter will thus explore the ways in which, in the 1920s and 1930s, itinerant photographers helped to reinforce the making of the modern Turkish nation in less surveilled, rural settings, where the penetration of photography was relatively low.

Photography, Urban Memory and Nation-Building: Izmir’s Hamza Rüstem Studio

As Strassler (2010: 4–5) argues, “through popular photographic practices the nation is not only ‘materialized’ but also personalized. Photographic practices help mediate ‘the personal’ as a distinct realm of experience saturated with intimate sentiment.” She continues by writing:

Popular photography thus offers a lens onto affective dimensions of national belonging that have remained elusive to scholarship – not (or not only) the strident emotions of nationalist fervor and patriotism but the subtler and often

ambivalent sentiments that attach to the nation as people live their lives within its frame and against its backdrop. (Strassler 2010: 4–5)

Strassler’s perspective is particularly relevant for early Republican-era photographs, which hint at some of the ways in which men and women personalized their belonging to the new Turkish nation through their representations in and outside the studio. The workings of this personalization might appear more clearly in some photographs than in others. Thus, the portrait of a soldier in Figure 2.3, in which the subject expresses his devotion to the military service as the “big duty” through the inscription, does not appear personalized. In family photographs such as Figure 2.11, or a wedding portrait like Figure 2.16, however, the affective dimension of national belonging to the modern Kemalist state comes to the surface in subtler ways, blended with aspirations to create a model modern middle-class family.

Featuring several generations in one frame, Figure 5.1 effectively embodies some of the “affective dimensions of national belonging” that Strassler refers to, performed in the studio space, where “the work of forging selves, social relationships, and personal memories” tied in with “broader projects of collective imagining” (Strassler 2010: 4–5). The changes in the Turkish social and political fabric of the 1920s are palpable in this portrait. Each member seems to have embraced Westernization, as is apparent in the way they dress, from the three-piece suits, pocket squares and pocket watches of the men to the elegant coats, hats and bags of the women. The transition from *çarşaf* to *manto* (overcoat) is visible in the appearance of the seated older woman in the middle. The younger generation dresses much more fashionably, with blouses with ribbons, fur jackets and elegant clutches.

Figure 5.1 also encapsulates the transition away from the veil, which can again be traced between the generations. The black head cover that the older woman wears is reminiscent of the modernized version of the black *çarşaf* in pictures from the late 1910s, such as Figures 1.7 and 1.11 discussed in Chapter One. In the generation of her children and grandchildren, however, the women wear the bonnet-style hat, which was characteristic of a transitory phase in the unveiling of women.¹²⁷ The bonnet-style head cover, used widely in the 1920s, disappears from family portraits by the mid-1930s. In the appearance of the men, the transition is less noticeable, except for the difference in mustache styles. The older man seated in the middle boasts a thick Ottoman-style mustache while the children are either clean-shaven or have a toothbrush-style mustache, popularized in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

The relative inconspicuousness of the transitions in appearance across the generations in this portrait suggests that, in a rapidly changing society, several generations were transformed simultaneously. The woman with glasses standing in the middle (part of the portrait’s second generation) and the younger women on both ends, who might be her daughters (belonging to the third generation), demonstrate a similar style in fashion.

¹²⁷ This trend appears to be a continuation of the headdress fashion known as *rusbaşı* (Russian head), introduced by Russian refugee women arriving in Istanbul. Mahir Metinsoy (2017) writes that *rusbaşı* became very popular among Ottoman Muslim women during the Armistice years (1918–1922).

Rather than major differences between the appearance of grandchildren and grandparents, we observe striking similarities, suggesting that their wardrobes changed concurrently as the Kemalist reforms were implemented and adopted by citizens across generations. Such adoptions, the photograph also shows, took different forms: from the black veil to the black manto in the old generation, and to the bonnet in the younger generation. This portrait thus stands out in the way it reveals generational differences and the cross-generational attempt to comply with the new modern secular Republican identity in a single frame.

The portrait was produced in Hamza Rüstem's famous studio, in its original location on the top floor at Emirler Çarşısı (later known as Hamza Rüstem Pasajı). Hamza Rüstem opened this studio soon after immigrating to Izmir in 1925 with the photographic equipment and furniture he had brought over from his Heraklion studio.¹²⁸ Hamza Rüstem gained a reputation as arguably the most notable Turkish Muslim photographer in Izmir, but is also repeatedly mentioned in association with his mentor Bahaeddin Rahmizade Bediz (1875–1951), who is often referred to as the first Muslim photographer of the Ottoman Empire.¹²⁹

Hamza Rüstem's turbulent life story captures some of the drastic political and social changes that swept through the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century. When he was only a child, his family immigrated to Western Anatolia¹³⁰ after Greek riots in Crete.¹³¹ During his studies at The Imperial School of Engineering (Mühendishane) in

¹²⁸ The top floor was chosen to maximize the amount of sunlight since electricity was still scarce in the studio at the time. The studio was moved downstairs with the arrival of electricity in the 1930s. Ak (2001) gives the year as 1938.

¹²⁹ A Cretan who immigrated to Turkey, Bahaeddin Rahmizade (or Bahaettin Rahmi Bediz after the 1934 surname law) was born in 1875 in Istanbul. After finishing primary school in Chania, he moved to Istanbul and, with his father's appointment, studied at the Galatasaray Lycée until 1895. Upon his father's death, he returned to Crete in 1895 to open a stationery store with the money he had inherited. Following advice from the painter İsmail Hakkı, he had also bought a camera for 455 piastres from Diradur, the only shop to sell photographic equipment in Istanbul. Against his family's wishes, he opened the stationary store in Heraklion, Crete, in 1895, placing the camera in the shop window (Ak 2004). The camera attracted the attention of the Italian occupation soldiers, who started to ask for their pictures to be taken (Evren 2004). Having gained popularity among the Italian soldiers, Bahaeddin Rahmizade opened a studio named Foto Baha Baritaki in 1897 in the courtyard of his store (Koçboğan 2014). As a politically active Young Turk, he moved back to Istanbul in 1909 after the Young Turk Revolution, which coincided with Crete's decision to join Greece. He sold his studio to Hamza Rüstem and opened his renowned Resna Fotoğrafhanesi in Istanbul in 1910 (Özendes 2013). Resna was located in the old peninsula rather than in the non-Muslim dominated Pera. The address was Babıali Street 15. He later opened three more branches in Babıali 59, Bahçekapı and Üsküdar. He closed down his Istanbul studios in 1926 due to financial difficulties (Ak 2004: 12). In 1927, he moved to Izmir, where he opened a studio with his son Rıza Bediz. This studio survived until 1936. In 1937, he joined the Turkish Historical Society. Bahaeddin Rahmizade died in 1951 soon after his retirement. Seyit Ali Ak and Burçak Evren write that Bediz was not the first Turkish Muslim photographer in the Ottoman Empire although he was the most prominent Turkish Muslim photographer of his time, paving the way for other studio photographers. Three other names are mentioned as preceding him. Bediz himself mentions Salih Zeki Salihzade from Chania and Üsküpzade Ali from Resmo in an article from 1945 published in *Foto* magazine (in Evren 2004; also in Ak 2004). Also, Ebüzziya Tevfik (1973) talks about a photographer named Raif Efendi working in a Çemberlitaş shop as photographer and watchmaker in 1854 (in Evren 2004: 48).

¹³⁰ His family moved to Uşak. He finished high school in Bursa (Rüstem 2018).

¹³¹ Crete came under Ottoman rule in 1669 after the Venetians surrendered. It is estimated that before the Greek War of Independence (1821–1832) as much as 45% of the population may have been Muslim. After the Greek War of Independence, Crete witnessed a series of uprisings by Christians against Ottoman rule,

Istanbul, he was arrested for promoting pro-Young Turk publications, and then tried and imprisoned for several months during Abdülhamid's rule. As he was about to be exiled, he managed to escape by boat, ending up in Crete by "chance" in 1896 as he thought he was heading to Lesbos (Ak 2001: 118).¹³²

Upon his arrival on Crete, instead of working as an engineer, he joined Bahaeddin Rahmizade's studio as an apprentice for almost no money since, in his words, he "saw a future in this business" (1941 in Koçboğan 2014). Bediz and Rüstem worked together for several years in Heraklion, and rose to fame across Crete as successful photographers until Bediz left for Istanbul following the 1909 Young Turk Revolution (Ak 2004).¹³³ Having bought Rahmizade's studio, Rüstem effectively carried on his mentor's legacy on the island, catering to both Muslim and non-Muslim residents (Koçboğan 2014; Özel Sağlamtimur and Cabadak 2016).¹³⁴

Mert Rüstem (2018) explains that his grandfather was raised in a Turkish Muslim family but opted for Italian citizenship to avoid having to enroll in the Greek military after Crete became part of Greece in 1908.¹³⁵ As a result, his family was not included in the 1923 population exchange between Turkey and Greece, commonly referred to as *mübadele*. They did not immigrate to Turkey until 1925 (Rüstem 2018; Koçboğan 2014).¹³⁶ Despite losing property, Rüstem's family remained well off because

culminating in the Great Cretan Revolt (1866–1869). While Ottomans retained control of the island for another two decades, Christians maintained their aim to unite with Greece. Tensions between Christian and Muslim communities remained high, with further insurgencies in the 1880s and 1890s. After the expulsion of the Ottoman forces, the autonomous Cretan State, headed by Prince George of Greece and Denmark, was founded under Ottoman suzerainty in December 1898. By the last Ottoman census in 1881, Christians made up 76% of the population, and Muslims (usually called "Turks" regardless of language, culture and ancestry) 24%. Crete declared a union with Greece in 1908. The Muslim minority of Crete initially remained on the island but was relocated to Turkey during the 1923 Turkey-Greece population exchange (Şenışık 2011).

¹³² Mert Rüstem (2018) says that he was about to be exiled to Fezzan, Libya. See Ak 2001; Koçboğan 2014; and Özel Sağlamtimur and Cabadak 2016 for a different account mentioning Yemen.

¹³³ After Bahaeddin Rahmizade hired Hamza Rüstem, they traveled across Crete to prepare a series of postcards that became widely popular (Ak 2004: 79–83; Evren 2004; Rüstem 2018).

¹³⁴ Mert Rüstem (2018) says that Bediz and Rüstem corresponded over the years. Aware of Bediz's declining business in Istanbul, Hamza Rüstem suggested that he come to Izmir so they could work as partners. According to Rüstem (2018), "given the scarcity of photographers after the population exchange, Hamza Rüstem could have established a monopoly in the market but chose to invite his master to Izmir." The partnership did not work out and Bediz eventually opened a studio (the Izmir branch of Foto Resne) on 2. Beyler Street (Rüstem 2018). This studio was not successful and closed down in 1936. According to Mert Rüstem (2018), "if they had worked together they would have been richer."

¹³⁵ After Crete joined Greece, all island residents, including Muslims, were considered Greek citizens and all men, regardless of their religion, were enlisted in the army (Rüstem 2018; Koçboğan 2014).

¹³⁶ Yet, Ak (2001) and Özel Sağlamtimur and Cabadak (2016) write that Rüstem moved to Izmir as part of the population exchange. Koçboğan (2014: 43) writes that, given his Italian nationality, Rüstem did not need to move to Turkey; however, following the population exchange it had become clear that only Muslims who had married Greeks or converted to Christianity would be able to stay on the island and that even for them, "the future was uncertain." The Muslims that came as part of the exchange were predominantly Turkish Muslims, although other communities such as Muslim Roma, Albanians and Dönmeh (crypto-Jews or Sabbateans) were also included. The "exchangees" were settled primarily along the coast, in the cities and villages abandoned after the disappearance of their former Christian residents. Those who came as exchangees had the right to claim property in exchange for the property they had owned in their homelands. However, the distribution of the available property came to be a major problem, involving a lot of corruption and chaos. In many cases, before the government could seize and assign them to exchangees, abandoned properties had already been occupied by others who had been displaced by war, by the local population who

“photographs were extremely valuable back then” and studio photographers made a good living (Rüstem 2018).

The Hamza Rüstem studio opened in Kemeraltı, the traditional bazaar area that emerged as the sole commercial hub in Izmir after the Great Fire of 1922. Before the Fire, in the late Ottoman era, the ancient port city of Smyrna (the city was renamed Izmir in 1930) served as one of the key financial and cultural hubs of the Empire. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Greek influence remained strong (Kitromilides and Alexis Alexandris 1984; Sürgevil 2009).¹³⁷ Various sources state that, by 1919, Greeks made up around half of the population in Izmir, dominating factories, as well as the banking and educational sectors. Apart from Greeks, Jews, Armenians and foreigners, including Italian, French, German, Dutch, British and American communities, turned Izmir into “an excellent site to investigate the complex interrelatedness of urban space, institutional practices, and civic culture in the context of multiethnic and multinational imperial polities” (Zandi-Sayek 2012: 3).¹³⁸ Izmir was often likened to other Ottoman key port cities like Istanbul, Thessaloniki, Alexandria and Beirut.

Until the Greco-Turkish War (1919–1922), which resulted in the defeat of the Greek army, marking the end of the Turkish War of Independence, Izmir enjoyed a lively photography studio culture with primarily Greek, Armenian and Levantine¹³⁹ (particularly Italian) studio photographers, including Antoine Zilpoche, El-Beder & Cie, Andromeneos, Langelo, Garabed Doumainian, Athanassiades and Carlo Bukmedjian, as well as branches of prominent Istanbul studios such as the ones run by Abdullah Frères and Rubellin.¹⁴⁰ The studios were mostly located around Frank Street, which can be

took advantage of the situation or by immigrants who had arrived before the population exchange (see Ari 2008; Clark 2006; Yıldırım 2006).

¹³⁷ Here, I deliberately avoid the term “cosmopolitan,” which has been used too loosely to describe Ottoman port cities. As Eldem argues, “if what we are studying can still be described and defined by resorting to less ‘loaded’ terms, such as pluralism, diversity, or even multiculturalism, then there probably is no justification to bring into the discussion a concept harking back to a number of philosophical and political issues exceeding by far the scope of an Ottoman *convivenza* of sorts” (2013: 216–17). For further discussions of “cosmopolitanism” in the Ottoman Empire, see Eldem 2013; also Freitag 2014.

¹³⁸ The population statistics vary considerably. For the Ottoman census data, see Karpat 1985. For accounts of Izmir’s multi-ethnic and multi-religious makeup at the turn of the twentieth century, see Eldem, Goffman and Masters 2001; Morgenthau 1918; Smyrnelis 2008; and Sürgevil 2009.

¹³⁹ “Levantine” is an ambiguous term the definition of which has evolved over time. It was traditionally used for members of the Latin Catholic church in the Middle East, and more specifically for the descendants of Italian (especially Venetian and Genoese) or French merchants who had lived on the eastern Mediterranean coast of Lebanon, Syria and Palestine since the middle Byzantine or the Ottoman era, as well as in Constantinople, Smyrna and other port cities of Anatolia (Braudel 1996). As Eldem (2013: 222) notes, by the mid-nineteenth century, “the meaning attached to this term had greatly changed: from an initially neutral and inclusive term, it had gradually moved in the direction of a derogatory label used to describe the hybrid identities of half-Westernized local non-Muslims and of Westerners who had ‘gone native’ as a result of several generations of residence in the Ottoman lands.” This explains the Turkish term *tatlı su Frengi* (sweet-water Franks), used for the Levantine communities. Kaner (2008: 12) describes the Levantines of Izmir as Catholic or Protestant residents who came to the city mostly after the seventeenth century and “claim descent from European ancestors.” This definition potentially includes the merchant Dutch, German and English communities that resided in Smyrna. The families featured on the Levantine Heritage Foundation website include a great diversity in terms of ethnicity and religion, including “Italians, French, British, many other Europeans and Americans” (Accessed August 16, 2020. levantineheritage.com/about-us.html).

¹⁴⁰ The Levantine Heritage project includes an exhaustive list of pre-1922 Smyrna studios (Accessed August 16, 2020. levantineheritage.com/data9.htm). Jewish photographers were rather few. Unlike Greeks and

regarded as the “Grand Rue de Pera of Izmir,” a bustling commercial area once dominated by Greek and Levantine merchants (Alpaslan 2012: 32).¹⁴¹

The Great Fire of Smyrna, as it is commonly referred to, broke out on 13 September 1922 four days after the end of the war.¹⁴² It lasted for five days, burning the heart of the city, including the Greek, Armenian and Frank quarters, to the ground (Kolluoğlu-Kırlı 2007). Most of the city’s religious and civil landmark buildings, such as major banks, schools, hospitals, churches, theaters, sports clubs, hotels, consulates, shopping areas and libraries, as well as most of its photography studios were destroyed (Kasaba 1993). Kolluoğlu-Kırlı (2007: 226) writes that “[t]he post-1922 city, an enormous black hole encircled by a thin line of surviving quarters, presented an ideal opportunity for envisioning grandiose urban schemes.”

Izmir thus presents an exemplary case for the construction of a modern and monolithic Republican urban center with its newly arrived Muslim citizens, built on the ashes of a multiethnic, multireligious and multicultural Ottoman past. It is also an example of how urbanism as “a new science” was used by the Kemalist regime “for the creation of a physical urban frame, the setting of a network, equipment and symbols, and an urban image that would support the modern society that the Republic aimed to achieve” (Bilsel 2009: 13).

The reconstruction of Izmir entailed “building a new and drastically different city” (Kolluoğlu-Kırlı 2007: 227), which reflected a new understanding of modernity. As Bilsel (2009: 13) points out, while studies of the ideological dimensions of urban planning practices in the early Republican period have often focused on Ankara as a modern capital, “the reconstruction of Izmir constituted an issue of primary political importance for the Turkish Republic.” In 1924, a “holistic” urban plan was developed for Izmir, the second most populated city in Turkey at the time, by engineer-urbanists René and Raymond Danger in collaboration with architect-urbanist Henri Prost.¹⁴³

Izmir’s post-fire urban development was part of an early Republican pattern that attempted to reorganize the geography of Anatolian cities and produce national spaces with squares and parks/gardens around or adjacent to them (Kolluoğlu-Kırlı 2007; Bilsel 2009; Kayın 2013). These spaces were typically named Republic Squares (e.g. Izmir’s Cumhuriyet Meydanı) and marked by a statue or bust of Atatürk (e.g. the Atatürk

Armenians, Jews were not able to develop into a large bourgeois class, with the community remaining impoverished in the nineteenth century (Nahum 2000). Jewish photographers became prominent only after the Republic, with Foto Gagın emerging as a leading Jewish studio in the 1930s in the neighborhood of Karataş, where the majority of the remaining Jewish population resided for many decades (Gagin 2008).

¹⁴¹ The exact location of Frank Street is hard to trace given that it was in the heart of the city, which burned down completely during the Great Fire of Smyrna. A bustling shopping area, it presumably stretched across the Punta, Bellavista and Fassoula Districts (between Alsancak and Konak today) up to the Central Market/Bazar area (Kemeraltı today).

¹⁴² The Great Fire of Smyrna is referred to as “the Catastrophe of Smyrna” in Greek. The cause and origin of the Fire remain a major political controversy today among Turks, Armenians and Greeks. The Muslim and Jewish quarters survived the fire.

¹⁴³ Bilsel (2009: 14) writes that this classical Beaux-Arts plan remained in force throughout the 1930s, “shaping the morphology of an important portion of the central districts of Izmir.” In 1938, the Municipality took a different direction by asking Le Corbusier to construct a new plan for Izmir, which he was only able to propose ten years later due to the interruption of World War II. According to Bilsel (2009: 14), Le Corbusier’s plan was immediately rejected because of its radical functionalist approach.

Monument on Izmir's Cumhuriyet Meydanı). Main streets were frequently renamed after the Republic or its founder (e.g. the famous Izmir corniche, commonly known as Kordon, is officially called Atatürk Boulevard, while the one parallel to it is Cumhuriyet Boulevard). As Kolluoğlu-Kırlı (2007: 227) writes, "every single urban formation, small or large, shared these features and this repetitive pattern emphasized (especially in the small towns of Anatolia) that all were one and the same territory, all of them intrinsically Turkish."

Beyond the physical destruction, the War (1919–1923), the Great Fire (1922) and the Population Exchange (1923) led to the disappearance of the multicultural social fabric of Izmir along with its wealth, and transformed its demographics, resulting in a massive Turkification and Islamization of the city.¹⁴⁴ The population exchange between Greece and Turkey, displacing around 1,200,000 Orthodox Christians living in Asia Minor or Eastern Thrace, and 500,000 Muslims from Greece, would wipe out Izmir's Greek population, which had already largely disappeared after the Fire, completely (Özkırımlı and Sofos 2008). As Bilsel (2009: 15) notes: "The problem of reconstruction did not only concern rebuilding the burnt districts of the town, but included also the question of revitalizing the economy as well as reconstructing the disrupted social structure."

It was in this historical context that Hamza Rüstem sought to establish what would soon become the foremost Turkish Muslim photography studio in Izmir, photographing the lives of a large segment of society, but primarily those of the emerging Turkish middle class in a newly reconstructed city that he now called home. The Hamza Rüstem studio is considered to have been the first of a handful of studios that were established after the Great Fire. Through photography, Hamza Rüstem and later his sons documented the history of Izmir as a modern Republican city until today. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Hamza Rüstem not only revived the studio culture in the city but also raised a generation of photographers who went on to open their own studios, shaping the local photography scene for decades to come.¹⁴⁵

Referring to the classed nature of studio photography, which was still quite costly at the time, Mert Rüstem (2018) explains that anyone who could afford it would come to the Hamza Rüstem studio to have their picture taken, regardless of their ethnicity or religion.

¹⁴⁴ Estimates of the death toll of the Fire for Greeks and Armenians have varied between 10,000 and 100,000. Up to 400,000 Greeks and Armenians are said to have been evacuated. For varying accounts on the war period and the impact of the Great Fire on the city, see Arı 1992, 2008; Berber 1997; Clark 2006; Clogg 1992; Dobkin 1971; Hirschon 2003; and Kitromilides and Alexandris 1984.

¹⁴⁵ In the 1920s and 1930s, Hamza Rüstem emerged as Izmir's leading studio photographer. As such, he often accompanied leaders during their visits to Izmir, including Atatürk and the Shah of Iran. He was followed by other Balkan immigrants like Cemal Yalkış (Studio Foto Cemal, est. 1938–1981) and Ethem Ruhi Tağa, both of whom were also based in the Kemeraltı bazaar area. Foto Cemal and Ethem Ruhi are more known for the postcards featuring iconic panoramas of Izmir they produced than for their studio portraits (Tatlıbal 2015; Sezer 2018). The 1930 *Annuaire Oriental* (Oriental Directory) lists 4 photography studios in Izmir: Çulu Zade Kemal Bey, Gagın, Halk and Zind (Accessed May 25, 2020. <https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/2913>). The Karataş-based Jewish photographer Alejandro Gagın (Foto Gagın) was a prominent studio photographer, whose family portraits from the 1920s and 1930s survive until today. According to his great-grandson, Gagın opened his studio in 1902 and remained active until the 1950s (Gagın 2018). Foto Gagın was one of the few non-Muslim studios that survived the Great Fire. Mert Rüstem explains that photographers of other popular studios of the 1950s and 1960s, including Foto Işık, Ali Balım (Foto Balım), Mustafa Kapkın, Fikri Göksay (1909–1994), Naci Orcaner (Yafoto Fotoğrafçılık) and Esat Suyolcu, all learned the craft at the Hamza Rüstem studio.

Indeed, despite changes in fashion trends, logos and studio backgrounds, the classed nature of the clientele is clearly visible in Hamza Rüstem's portraits, which, through the decades, show urbanized, Westernized and secular middle-class citizens projecting their best selves in front of the camera.

The fact that the Rüstem family carried a multicultural bourgeois lifestyle with them from Crete to Izmir, speaking several languages, wearing Western clothes and using Western furniture, facilitated their integration into the emergent Turkish middle classes. When they first arrived in Izmir, they spoke Greek at home (Koçboğan 2014: 47), but they rapidly assimilated, embracing the Turkish language, like many other emigrants from the Balkans. As the cities of the Republic rapidly became culturally and linguistically monolithic, for the new inhabitants of Izmir, including my own Kosovar family, domesticating meant homogenization and assimilation.

Although Turkified, the cross-cultural influences Hamza Rüstem and his family brought with them from their multiethnic and multireligious Cretan life arguably survive in the secular and Westernized outlook of the Rüstem family today. It is no coincidence that, having gone to a French lycée like Bahaeddin Rahmizade Bediz and having studied Engineering like his grandfather Hamza Rüstem, Mert Rüstem is as proud of his secular Turkish identity as of his family's liberal Bektashi roots, which promoted "respect for women and the value of science" (Rüstem 2018).¹⁴⁶ In the same way, he is proud of his grandfather's ability to speak multiple languages, including Greek, French, Arabic, Farsi and English. He talks about his grandmother Zehra, who appears unveiled in family portraits, including her wedding portrait from 1911 (see Koçboğan 2014), as a modern, open-minded, intelligent and strong-willed "true Cretan" woman.¹⁴⁷ Hamza Rüstem's progressive mindset may have been the motivation for his employing women photographers and staff from early on.¹⁴⁸

In the early years of the studio, Hamza Rüstem had to overcome numerous hardships in a war-torn, impoverished country. The delayed introduction of photographic technologies to Turkey due to the lack of resources was further complicated by restrictions on imports. Photographic material was scarce. Consequently, Hamza Rüstem was forced to use 6x9 glass plates with up to five or six minutes of posing time until the 1930s (Rüstem 2018; Koçboğan 2014: 45).

¹⁴⁶ The Rüstem family was part of the Bektashi Order, a Sufi order named after the thirteenth-century Alevi saint Haji Bektash Veli from Khorasan. In Ottoman times, the order was particularly strong in Albania, Bulgaria and among Greek-speaking Muslims from regions including Crete and Macedonia (Accessed August 16, 2020. <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/bektasilik>).

¹⁴⁷ Zehra Rüstem appears in some pictures from the 1920s and early 1930s in a bonnet-style head cover (see Koçboğan 2014), which suggests that the bonnet was also used as a fashion accessory rather than just as a way to transition from the Islamic veil. It is possible that she accepted the bonnet as a way to emphasize her family's Muslim identity, particularly because she and her family, as recently immigrated Cretans, might have been considered "foreigners" or more explicitly "Rum" (Greeks).

¹⁴⁸ Women photographers were especially needed to take photographs in women-only spaces for events like henna nights, weddings or childbed pictures (Rüstem 2018). In an early example, İkbâl İlkbahar, the daughter of Hamza Rüstem's friend from Crete, joined the studio in 1938 (Özel Sağlamtimur and Cabadak 2016: 2606). Rüstem's mentor Bediz had also employed women "helpers" in his studio from the early days (Koçboğan 2014: 35).

Mert Rüstem (2018) explains that “back then, the photographs a family possessed barely filled an album. On average, a family would own one, perhaps two albums.” Indeed, given the tough post-war conditions, a large family picture like Figure 5.1, portraying four generations, is particularly rare in Turkish vernacular photography from the 1920s and 1930s. While it is not entirely unlikely that Figure 5.1 belonged to a local Turkish family that had lived in the traditional Turkish quarter before the Great Fire, the clothing and accessories of the family members make it more likely that it belonged to a Westernized bourgeois family that came to Izmir between the late nineteenth century and the mid-1920s, perhaps as part of the population exchange. The elderly couple might have had more children whom they had left behind or lost in the war. They might have moved to Izmir together with their daughter and her family, and lived with them in the same household.

It is likely that this portrait was taken on the occasion of a religious holiday (bayram), a popular time for family portraits. However, Mert Rüstem (2018) explains that families did not necessarily need a special occasion to have their pictures taken. They could go to the studio anytime to produce a souvenir. While each couple in Figure 5.1 demonstrates the characteristics of a modern nuclear family, together they pose as a large multigenerational familial unit, signaling their strong ties to each other. Simultaneously, the act of posing for this portrait served to strengthen these ties. As Bourdieu (1996: 19) suggests:

Photographic practice only exists and subsists for most of the time by virtue of its family function or rather by the function conferred upon it by the family group, namely that of solemnizing and immortalizing the high points of family life, in short of reinforcing the integration of the family group by reasserting the sense that it has both of itself and of its unity.

It is no coincidence that Figure 5.1 was enlarged and mounted, presumably to be displayed prominently on a wall in one or more of the family homes. Beyond photography’s function as a memory aid or “surrogate memory” (Edwards 1999) or as expressing the desire to achieve immortality (Sontag 1977; Silverman 1996; Barthes 1981; Batchen 2004), Figure 5.1 epitomizes the attempt to cement the construction of a proud, respectable family that presents itself as an integrated unit, part of the new Turkish nation. More than just a souvenir, Figure 5.1 is a manifestation of the family’s newly forged identity as middle-class citizens of the Turkish Republic, in which they may not have grown up but which they nevertheless adopted as their homeland.

In this section, through the case study of Hamza Rüstem’s photography studio in Izmir, I have explored the role of photography studios in domesticating urban spaces in-the-making during the formative years of the Turkish Republic. In an era in which mass media outlets were scarce and the local cinema industry small and tightly governed by the Kemalist regime, family photographs played a key role in displaying the ways in which long-term and new residents of the country remade themselves as modern Turkish citizens. In Izmir, a city that had to reimagine its urban identity entirely after losing most of its social, cultural and material infrastructure in the post-war era, Hamza Rüstem’s

photography studio played a pioneering role in generating and reinforcing an ideal image for these citizens. The modern, westernized Turkish identity performed in the portraits he took indicates that the city's new bourgeois class enthusiastically embraced the guiding principles of RPP rule, in the knowledge that this would help them adapt to a new domesticated space. Soon after he himself immigrated to Izmir, Hamza Rüstem became pivotal in disseminating a classed Republican identity, not only among those he photographed but also among the photographers he trained, many of whom eventually opened their own studios, perpetuating the techniques they had learned from him.

Referring to the high social status of his grandfather as a well-off urban middle-class studio photographer, Mert Rüstem notes that his grandfather's business was doing well enough that Hamza Rüstem did not feel the need to "go out" to photograph events or people outside his studio (Rüstem 2018). At the time, those who worked outside were primarily itinerant photographers, commonly known as *alaminütçü* or *dakikalıkçı*.¹⁴⁹ These itinerant photographers contributed to a varied representation of the newly established Turkish nation in diverse urban and rural settings. Yet, the makeshift studio space they created came with its own limitations. In the next section, I will look at the ways in which itinerant photographers went beyond what was typically captured by studio photographers and how their work negotiated the consolidation of the image desired by the Kemalist regime outside the main cities of the Turkish Republic. In addition, I will study how a public studio space was created in the context of itinerant photography and how alaminüt photography's domestication of public life contributed to the identity-building practices of modern Turkish citizens.

Democratizing the Studio Space: Alaminüt Photography

From the mid-nineteenth century, itinerant photographers in the West regularly brought cameras to various sites of leisure such as parks and the seaside (About 2015; Dominici 2018; Linkman 1990). They "set up tents at small fairs and markets, knocked on doors in working class neighborhoods, and visited far-flung villages" in different parts of the world, fostering "a global culture of frequent, anonymous, public photography" (Clark 2017: 227–29). They would print the resulting photographs "on the cheapest available type of paper – the postcard, which their subjects tucked into albums and mailed to friends and family" (Chéroux 2005: 100 in Clark 2017: 229). Rather than being an "elaborate or accomplished form of creation," itinerant photography was distinguished as "great precariousness, conducive to the miracles of everyday life but also, more often, to an infinity of mishaps" (About 2015: 14).

¹⁴⁹ Other names used for alaminütçü include *alaminüt fotoğrafçı*, *seyyar fotoğrafçı*, *sokak fotoğrafçısı* and *şipşakçı* (see "Seyyar Fotoğrafçılar ve Müşterileri Bir Saat," *Son Posta*, 22 August 1936). According to Şen (2002a), alaminüt photographers mostly referred to themselves as alaminütçü. In Pakistan, too, the wooden camera boxes were known as *minute* cameras, pronounced as *min't* (Accessed August 16, 2020. afghanboxcamera.com). Similarly, in Spanish, the term *fotografía minuteru* is used for ambulant photography.

The itinerant photographer typically followed the paths already established by travelling vendors and traders (About 2015). The profession was attractive due to its flexibility and opportunity for travel. Even though it was specialized, it required only simple technical training, which included framing, focusing and developing prints. It tended to attract artists in the early stages of their career or “in search of inspiration,” as well as young men who were unemployed, making it a male-dominated profession (Werner 1997 in About 2015: 5).¹⁵⁰

As Holland (2015: 135) points out, in the West, photography was democratized by the revolutionary hand-held Kodak Box Brownie, launched in 1901 with the slogan “You press the button, we do the rest.” Kodak brought “a revolution in ways of perceiving the immediate domestic world, and in redefining who had the right to record that world” (Holland 2015: 135). For Sarvas and Frohlich (2011: 20–21), the introduction of this Kodak camera as a “disruptive technology” moved domestic photography from the “portrait path,” largely characterized by studio photography, onto the “Kodak path,” marked by snapshot photography, until the emergence of digital image capture in the 1990s. By 1910, one-third of American households owned a Kodak camera, which introduced mobility and simplicity to vernacular photography practices (West 2000: 75; Chalfen 1987).

Because of its post-war impoverishment, it would take Turkey several decades to fully join the Kodak path. Snapshot photography spread more slowly than in Western countries throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and was primarily promoted for travel; summer holidays in the countryside/at the seaside (*sayfiye*); outings (*tenezzüh*) and gatherings/parties (*eğlenti*), as illustrated by Figures 5.3 and 5.4. It would be common to use the entire film roll on one such occasion.¹⁵¹ Ads like Figure 5.3 urged people to use a Kodak camera to record “a sweet and vivid souvenir of the happy moments you spent in your fleeting vacation,” claiming that “holidays without Kodak are fast forgotten.” Indeed, the common patterns in terms of location and composition we observe in snapshot photographs from the 1920s and 1930s suggest that such ads successfully generated an appeal for photography as a fun activity. However, due to the technical and financial implications of having prints developed and replenishing film, the use of snapshot cameras remained limited until the 1940s.

¹⁵⁰ Despite the rapid secularization and modernization of the public sphere, it would still be considered inappropriate for women to work on the streets in the 1920s and 1930s, catering to customers from different walks of life. Also, the heavy camera equipment was considered too cumbersome for women to handle. In this context, Karakışla (2000) talks about the exceptional case of Muzaffer Hanım. In a 1923 article published in the *Süs* magazine, the latter is praised for the quality of her work as an ambulant photographer (*seyyar fotoğrafçı*), who would visit the homes of her customers to take their portraits, as well as for the reasonable prices she charged. Also, in the *Milliyet* newspaper from 11 October 1929 I came across a rare photograph of a woman *alaminütçü*, revealing how women were starting to take up male-dominated professions including photography.

¹⁵¹ 120 film was a popular medium film format at the time, introduced by Kodak for their Brownie No. 2 in 1901. A roll of 120 film would typically have between 8 (6 x 9 cm) and 15 (6 x 4.5 cm) shots, depending on the size.



Figure 5.3 An advertisement for Kodak cameras, Kodak film and Velox print paper, as well as Minoteros carte postale paper for alaminüt photography, “sold everywhere.” The text reads: “If you do not record the sweet and happy moments you spent in your vacation with a Kodak camera, your beautiful holiday will disappear. Holidays without Kodak are forgotten fast.” 15 July 1929, *Son Saat*. Istanbul University Libraries.



Figure 5.4 An advertisement for Kodak, Velox and Minoteros. The advertisement urges people to use Kodak film “for the success and excellence of your photographs.” It also promotes Kodak cameras and Velox print paper, along with Minoteros cartes-postales designed for alaminüt photography, all of which are “sold everywhere.” 21 June 1929, *Milliyet*. Istanbul University Libraries.

Turkey's alaminüt photographers flourished in the 1920s and 1930s, partly thanks to a government regulation that required the inclusion of passport photos in all official paperwork, and continued to operate, mostly anonymously, without any name or logo on their prints, in their thousands across Turkey up until the mid-1980s (Şen 2002a). The mobile camera set-up, which included a tripod and a wooden box that served as a dark room, accompanied by a black, painted or embroidered backdrop defined alaminüt photography. The wooden box contained the necessary equipment to process paper negatives. The prints were made within minutes, sold for affordable prices and handed over to the customer on the spot.¹⁵² With the equipment, chemicals and colorful backdrops that they carried with them, alaminüt photographers were able to instantly create a studio atmosphere in the street, replicating many common studio practices including poses and compositions. Overexposed, blurry and poorly framed prints, as well as images with tears, creases, black spots or stains, frequently appeared among the pictures taken by itinerant photographers. In contrast to the relatively high social status of studio photographers, the work of Turkish itinerant photographers was often dismissed as “naïve” or “practical” (Bölük 2014: 53–66).

Throughout the 1940s, with the spread of amateur cameras from brands like Kodak, Ihagee, Voigtländer and Zeiss, the alaminüt photographers increasingly relied on the demand for passport photos, which changed the nature of alaminüt photography. Photographers positioned themselves in front of government offices, or main public squares where they could cater to a clientele in need of urgent ID photos. Pictures of people walking on the street in central spots like the Taksim area of Istanbul, taken as snapshots by itinerant photographers (specifically referred to as *şıpşakçı*), also started to appear in the 1940s (Ak 2001: 145). The intricately woven or painted backdrops gradually fell out of favor. By 1985, the number of alaminütçü had declined to around twenty photographers in Istanbul (Ak 2001) and by the 2000s only a handful remained (Şen 2002a).¹⁵³

Alaminüt photographs were developed in two stages. The first print would be a negative image. It was developed in the stop bath tray in the wooden box with the aid of an eye-hole on top of the box, helping the photographer to follow the development process. Once developed, the wet negative print would be taken out through a drawer on the right side of the wooden box, rinsed in a bucket of water and dried. The negative would

¹⁵² Some alaminüt photographers offered higher quality pictures that were printed, colored or retouched more carefully, and sometimes paper negatives were cut for a photomontage (Şen 2002a; Bölük 2014). Such specially prepared prints, which took a week to deliver, were called *haftalık* (weekly) (Şen 2002a). Customers would collect them from a studio in the vicinity that the photographer had an agreement with (Ak 2001: 145).

¹⁵³ While the end of alaminüt photography is often attributed to the introduction of the Polaroid in the 1980s, Ak (2001: 145) writes that it was, in fact, a government regulation from 1983/1984 requiring color photographs for all official documents that caused alaminüt photographers to lose their only reliable source of income: passport pictures. On the other hand, in countries like Cuba, Kenya (Behrend 2013), India (*vageeswari*), Bangladesh and Afghanistan (*kamra-e-faoree*), the wooden box cameras were still used recently. In Afghanistan, in the years after the country's invasion by the US army in 2001, “kamra-e-faoree photography actually flourished” due to a demand for personal and family portraits, particularly when the United Nations High Commission for Refugees began requiring identity photographs of Afghan refugees as part of a repatriation scheme in Pakistan (Meltzer 2012).

then be placed in front of the lens in a flip up, L-shaped wooden arm called the antigraph (*antigraf*), which functioned as an aggrandizer, and rephotographed to make a positive print on another sheet of gelatin silver paper (Çetin 2019; Şen 2002a).¹⁵⁴ Photographs printed with this technique produced mostly olive and yellow tones, creating a distinct aesthetic quality. The reproduction of the negative to produce a positive paper meant that the final print had very high levels of contrast. Since the rinsing was done in the bucket rather than in running water, there would be remnants of chemicals on the paper, which caused stains on the prints, eventually causing them to turn yellow and fade away (Çetin 2019).

Along with plain backdrops, alaminüt photographs featured a great variety of painted or embroidered backgrounds, which presented a rich and dynamic imagination. It was not uncommon to see luscious urban landmarks, gazebos, fountains, birds, stars and flags, painted in vivid colors and mostly in the style of two-dimensional naïve paintings (Ak 2001: 141–46; Bölük 2014: 53–66; Özendes 1994; Şen 2002a, 2002b, 2019). At times, the backdrops would take the form of carpets, rugs or cutout decors such as airplanes, and occasionally the name of the photographer would be embroidered onto it. In many alaminüt portraits, we also see accessories and furniture items, including bicycles, side tables, chairs, flowerpots and toys for children.

Depending on the purpose of the photograph, alaminüt photographers would sometimes add banners reading “Souvenir” (*Hatıra*), “Soldier’s Souvenir” (*Askerlik Hatırası*), “Youth’s Souvenir” (*Gençlik Hatırası*) or “A Souvenir from Istanbul” (*Istanbul Hatırası*) or a particular Istanbul neighborhood (e.g. *Çemberlitaş Hatırası*). Some Soldier’s Souvenir backdrops were accompanied by depictions of fortresses and cannons. In some of these portraits, soldiers would pose holding guns or with cartridge strips draped over their shoulders. In general, the backdrops provided elaborate sceneries for the subjects being photographed, stories in which they could insert themselves, as suggested by backgrounds featuring fairytale silhouettes of Istanbul, in which famous landmarks like the Galata Bridge, the Rumeli Fortress, the Maiden’s Tower, mosques and palaces are mixed together (Ak 2001; Şen 2002a).¹⁵⁵

Alaminüt photography played a major role in propagating and democratizing photography in the early Republican era, as itinerant photography did in North America

¹⁵⁴ Until the 1920s, alaminüt photographers used glass plate negatives (Şen 2002a, 2019). The glass plate or photographic paper would be inserted into the box through a black sleeve called *kolçak*, which was attached to the camera box. Thanks to the *kolçak*, which prevented sunlight from entering the box, the photographers would be able to put their arms into the box and develop the print safely. The red glass on the side of the box would allow sunlight to enter, acting as a safelight in a dark room (Bölük 2014). The positive and final print, usually 10x15 cm or 9x12 cm, would be trimmed and delivered to the client. To make a positive print, the plate and the photo paper would be placed together in a printing frame (*kontak şasesi*) and exposed to the sunlight for a short while. The frame would then be put back in the box, and the paper taken out of the printing frame and processed in the trays (Şen 2019).

¹⁵⁵ The production history of studio and alaminüt backdrops in Turkey is little known and deserves to be studied in more detail. In the 1980s, Seyit Ali Ak interviewed Kadri Akgülle, “the last master” to produce embroidered *Istanbul Hatırası* backdrops. In 1985, Ak also talked to Muharrem Sağır, the “last master” to make wooden boxes for alaminüt photography (2001: 141–146). Apart from the research done by Ak and Yusuf Murat Şen (2002a, b) hardly any ethnography was done on Turkish alaminüt photographers and their equipment.

(Eltzroth 2008; Finefield 2016; Kailbourn and Palmquist 2000; Miller 1987), Western Europe (Clark 2017; Dominici 2018; Linkman 1990); South Asia (Birk and Foley 2013; Pinney 1997), Sub-Saharan Africa (Behrend 2013; Nimis 2017; Viditz-Ward 1987; Werner 1997) and South America (Coronado 2018; Neal and Parker 1982), throughout the twentieth century. Specifically, alaminüt photographers in modern Turkey filled an important vacuum by permeating remote towns and villages, and reaching out and giving agency to the lower classes who might have been intimidated by the photography studio, which they saw as a space of luxury reserved for upper and middle classes (Şen 2019). Itinerant photography arguably served as “a vehicle that allowed the negotiation and even optimization of the inequalities and hierarchies” for the lower classes (Coronado 2018: 152). They enabled “horizontal” relationships and transactions between photographers and subjects (Coronado 2018: 180), contributing to a more heterogeneous, democratic photographic production in the early years of the Turkish Republic.

Giving the example of Britain, Patricia Holland (2015: 157–58) writes that in the early 1900s travelling photographers were instrumental in documenting the working classes. Because they came from a class background similar to their customers, their photography acted as “a medium in which working-class people could present themselves to each other, creating a confident working-class identity” (Holland 2015: 158). Turkish alaminüt photographers, too, generally came from a lower-class background, but besides documenting the working class they also documented the upper and middle classes, particularly when they worked in popular urban spots. Şen (2019) explains that, unlike studio photographers, alaminüt photographers were not trained within the framework of a long-lasting master-apprentice relationship. Instead, they would learn the basics of the profession from another alaminüt photographer in their social circle, perhaps a relative. Oftentimes, alaminüt photography would be taken up by those who did not have a large number of professional prospects, including ex-convicts who learned alaminüt photography from other prisoners while serving in prison. After a short training they would start working, mostly sticking to the rudimentary technical knowledge and equipment they had acquired, without feeling the need to improve their skills.

In terms of its customers, alaminüt photography helped the less well-to-do to document and perform their classed and gendered selves in the various social and familial roles they took on, compensating for the absence of access to photography studios in rural areas. Bölük (2014) writes that alaminüt photographers served to introduce photography as an act of modernity to conservative communities that may have hesitated to go to a studio even if there had been one near them.

Alaminüt photography contributed to an expansive survey of the rapidly changing political and social landscape of modern Turkey, and served as a democratizing instrument in creating a photographic culture for family portraiture outside the realm of the urban middle classes. At the same time, alaminüt photographers who operated in cities strategically positioned themselves at busy sites, creating an opportunity for the middle classes to document their public selves in the spaces they dwelled in or traveled to. In metropolises like Istanbul, alaminüt photographers would place their cameras in main city squares like the Taksim Square, around major mosques and in front of government buildings, schools, courthouses and notaries, particularly on weekdays, serving customers

who needed passport pictures for paperwork. On weekends and holidays, they would work in parks, gardens and at the seaside, where city dwellers typically went for relaxation and recreation (Ak 2001; Bölük 2014; Şen 2002a, b, 2019).¹⁵⁶ In such recreational spots, alaminüt photographers catered to clients who wanted an instant souvenir of a special family outing.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the change towards a nuclear, more inward-looking family structure and increased access to public transportation meant that families were becoming more mobile (Slater 1995: 132). With the modernization and secularization of public life, mixed couples and young families increasingly enjoyed holidays and days out in various recreational spots as well as on public beaches, which served as sites of making of the modern body (Löfgren 1999). Having a group picture taken for a souvenir became a fun part of outings by the 1930s, accentuating a sense of unity among family members or friends. The presence of alaminüt photographers at specific sites might have contributed to creating an appetite for “doing” such sites among families from all classes, popularizing certain forms of leisure activities and locations (Löfgren 1999: 38; Bærenholdt et al., 2004).



Figure 5.5 A negative print of a group at a picnic spot, circa 1930s. 9 x 13.9 cm. Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.

¹⁵⁶ Şen (2002a, b) also mentions prisons as venues that alaminüt photographers worked in.



Figure 5.6 A positive print of Figure 5.5, circa 1930s. 9 x 13.9 cm.
Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.

In the 1920s and 1930s, a very popular form of entertainment was visiting a *mesire yeri* (a public garden or a picnic ground), which would typically include a teahouse, a club or a restaurant. A great number of family pictures taken outdoors at the time feature various *mesire* spots, such as the parks and tea houses in Çamlıca and on the Princess Islands in Istanbul; riverside restaurants like Hünkar Suyu and Çırçır Suyu in Istanbul; and the hot springs in Yalova.

Figures 5.5 and 5.6 epitomize a typical *mesire yeri* photograph taken by an *alaminüt* photographer from the 1930s, with a family group sitting around a steel picnic table outdoors. The trees in the background indicate a large recreation spot, possibly a park on the Princess Islands that had a teahouse, as the table and chairs suggest. It is not clear if the bottles underneath the table were brought along by the family or ordered from the teahouse. They could have been placed on the floor because the table was too unstable to keep them from falling off, or they could have been removed for the purpose of the portrait, to avoid blocking any of the people around the table visually.

The negative print, as seen in Figure 5.5, is colloquially called *Arap* (Arab),¹⁵⁷ in a reference to the common stereotyping of Black Africans as “Arabs” (Zilfi 2010; Karabat 2014).¹⁵⁸ The existence of *arap* prints indicates that the negatives might have been given

¹⁵⁷ It is unlikely that the negative prints that survived came from the archives of *alaminüt* photographers since it would have been a burden for them to keep the prints given their mobility. Figures 5.5 and 5.6 present an exception in that a negative and positive print of the same image made it onto the market together: the family must have kept both. Generally, either photographers or customers who were given both prints seem to have discarded the negative prints, perhaps even on the spot, presumably considering them worthless.

¹⁵⁸ Even today, Afro-Turks are at times called “Arabs” in Turkey. Afro-Turks are the descendants of those brought over to Ottoman territories as part of the slave trade as early as the fifteenth century (afroturc.org). Ahmet Yürür (in Karabat 2014: 174) explains that “for the Turks, Africa was only the northern part of the

to customers along with the positive prints. The negative prints give us great insight into the locations alaminüt photographers operated in and the types of images they produced, from pictures taken on public ferries to portraits of boys at circumcision ceremonies. These prints help us establish the range of social topographies covered by alaminüt photography and discern common patterns among alaminüt photographers in the 1920s and 1930s.

As this section has shown, alaminüt photography expedited the democratization of photography in the founding years of the Republic, as people explored the sociability of the medium before public life was fully “kodakised” (Urry and Larsen 2011: 167). Alaminüt photography helped people document “intermittent moments of physical proximity” in public spaces, negotiating being in the same space with strangers while performing togetherness and intimacy with their loved ones (Urry and Larsen 2011: 21). In this process, the popular urban and rural landscapes that were used as backgrounds for alaminüt photographs were commodified and nationalized (Löfgren 1999).

Beyond documenting the way Turkish citizens domesticated public life, the alaminüt camera also gave agency to people from different classes, who took the opportunity to claim ownership of their body and to perform their desired public selves as modern citizens in a great variety of public spaces. In the next section, I will explore how alaminüt photographs helped to multiply and diversify classed and gendered representations of Turkish citizens, as they negotiated the Kemalist reforms and the regime’s surveillance across the country.

continent: from Egypt to Morocco. This part was of course under Arab influence. Turks were never really interested in the south of the continent. This is why this community has come to be called Arab.”

Domesticating the Street: Agency and Surveillance



Figure 5.7 An alaminüt photograph of a family group outdoors. 13.8 x 8.7 cm. Courtesy of the Akkasah Center for Photography.

The alaminüt photograph in Figure 5.7 demonstrates a sharp contrast to Figure 5.1 in terms of the quality of the print as well as the classed and gendered identities of those portrayed. A family group of four is photographed in the open air, in a makeshift studio created by using a curtain as a backdrop. As is typical in alaminüt photographs, the printing of Figure 5.7 is of relatively poor quality and the framing in front of an asymmetrically hung curtain that fails to fully cover the background is uneven. With slightly off-white notches on the image, the print is cut unequally, leaving more white space around some parts than others. In contrast, the large print in Figure 5.1 is marked by perfect symmetry, masterful retouching, careful enlargement, precise cutting and delicate mounting. Despite its “flaws,” however, Figure 5.7 succeeds in creating a space for these family members in which to represent themselves as a proud, affectionate and happy familial unit, just like we observe in Figure 5.1.

Unlike the formality of Figure 5.1, which seems to have been taken on a special occasion, Figure 5.7 captures a more casual moment. From their clothing to their hairdos,

the appearance of the family members in Figure 5.7 greatly differs from those in Figure 5.1. The people in Figure 5.7 appear to belong to a traditional family from the countryside. However, they seem to have embraced Kemalist secularism in the younger generation, given that the two younger women have not covered their hair like their mother.

The mother, sitting in front, covers her hair with a light-colored scarf worn in a traditional way, as opposed to the modernized black cover of the seated woman in Figure 5.1. The man in Figure 5.7 wears a suit with a tie, which by this time seems to have become common attire for Turkish men across class and geography. Still, his suit looks slightly frayed, showing that he wore it regularly and had done so for a long time, unlike the well-ironed, new-looking suits of the men in Figure 5.1. The couple wears identical shoes, which look bulky and worn-out, and are partly covered by dirt from the muddy ground, as opposed to the perfectly polished boots in Figure 5.1. The unassuming blouses and cardigans worn by the younger women in the back similarly contrast with the fancy dresses and coats worn by the young women in Figure 5.1, yet they still show a self that is presentable enough to appear in public, as well as one that accords with the desired image of the new Republican woman.

The seating order is similar between the two portraits, with the elder generation sitting in front and the younger one standing behind them. This suggests that respect for the elderly was a shared value across Turkish society. The seated couple seems to be the parents of the two young women (who have similar features). The daughters, through the way they embrace the seated couple, display the familial love and care they feel towards them. As in Figure 5.1, the seated couple looks into the camera while the two women standing behind look off camera. This appears to be a stylistic choice, perhaps meant to add a dreamy touch to the portrait.

Figure 5.7 is an intriguing example of a hand-colored *alaminüt* photograph.¹⁵⁹ As Bölük (2014) argues, considering their limited financial means, *alaminüt* photographers were quite resourceful in finding creative ways to retouch and color the prints. What appears to be a golden necklace, worn by the young woman in the checkered cardigan, has been colored yellow. We can detect two yellow spots on the left side of her collar; the rest of the necklace might be hidden under her cardigan. The coloring might have been done at the photographer's discretion or the family's request, in order to emphasize the value of the jewelry, and thus to underscore the family's financial status (see Koçu 1969: 13). In the absence of a clearly identifiable wedding ring, it is hard to judge if this necklace was a wedding gift.

The transient nature of itinerant photography is embodied in the ambiguity of Figure 5.7 in terms of its spatial and temporal setting. There are few cultural and social signifiers to suggest where (In the suburbs of a city? A small town? A village?) and when the image was taken. Unlike in Figure 5.1, it is hard to recognize fashion styles that would help to place Figure 5.7 in a specific spatial and temporal context. One clue could be the man's

¹⁵⁹ Among *alaminüt* photographers, who largely remain anonymous, the Armenian photographer Parunag Topalyan, self-proclaimed "King of the Itinerants" (*Seyyarlar Kralı*) per his logo, stands out for his distinct style of hand coloring.

toothbrush mustache, which has been identified as a trend from the late 1920s to the early 1940s across the country.

The casual postures and uneven poses of the family members, along with the inclusion of a cat in the man's lap, add another layer to the making of this studio space in which the family can enjoy a sense of unity, pride, delight and candidness without having to fully adhere to the formalities of being in a studio. The addition of a pet helps to strengthen the sense of familial unity, even though this could have been a street cat that was used in the portrait as an endearing last-minute addition. In the Islamic tradition, cats are revered for their cleanliness and taking care of cats is encouraged (Glassé 2003). Thus, the general love for cats in Turkey may have contributed to the decision to include one in the portrait. Regardless of the reason, the inclusion of this animal in the family portrait shows the sense of spontaneity and flexibility that *alaminüt* photography was able to create thanks to its situatedness in outdoor spaces.

This sense of flexibility, in terms of being able to include impromptu elements, does not, however, lessen *alaminüt* photography's embedding in a space that was public and surveilled. Unlike the semi-private character of the photography studio, *alaminüt* photography displays a public character. In Figure 5.7, the backdrop and the framing set the contours of the makeshift studio, designating a shielded space within the public sphere. The makeshift studio provides a suggestion of privacy and intimacy; however, the photographed subjects are visible to the public and the public is visible to them beyond the camera and the photographer, making it more likely for them to perform socially desirable selves. In contrast, as I have shown in previous chapters, the semi-private nature of a photography studio could allow an escape from social surveillance, leaving room for more experimental representations of the self, particularly if the photographer was trusted or if the photographic apparatus could be controlled by the photographed subject herself. In *alaminüt* photography, the direct surveillance from the public – of both the photographed subjects and the photographer – arguably made creative performative interplays like the ones in Figures 2.20 and 3.7 less likely.

In the context of the early Republican era, *alaminüt* photographs functioned on multiple levels with regard to representing and negotiating public life and surveillance. Ömer Çaha (2005: 19) argues that the statist elites within the one-party regime aimed to fully control public life in the founding years of the Republic, particularly through the mid-1930s, “organizing all cultural and artistic activities and conducting economic and technological development.” However, as my research has shown, the regime's degree of surveillance varied between urban settings and in the countryside. *Alaminüt* photography helps to explore how such manipulations on the part of the single-party regime may have been negotiated by Turkish citizens in urban and rural areas, as implied through the differences between the generations in Figure 5.7. The images taken in cities chart public life in urban spaces, which were closely surveilled by the regime, such as ferries on the Bosphorus, main shopping areas or the public gardens of Istanbul or Izmir, indicating that the desired image of a modern Turkish citizen was also performed as part of daily life and not necessarily only for the occasion of having one's picture taken.

Alaminüt photographs taken in rural settings, on the other hand, offer an opportunity to examine how Turkish citizens may have evaded or tried to negotiate the surveillance

imposed by the regime in more peripheral areas. In Figure 5.7, the photographed subjects expose themselves by posing as a family unit in public, which may have been a rare occasion for them. Yet, despite being taken in a peripheral and possibly rural area, this photograph does not present an “anachronistic space” that is “prehistoric, atavistic and irrational, inherently out of place in the historical time of modernity” (McClintock 1995: 52). Instead, the family in Figure 5.7 demonstrates the characteristics of a modern Republican family, albeit with more contrast between the generations than in Figure 5.1. This evinces the regime’s accomplishment in spreading Kemalist reforms among different social strata, but also indicates that the spreading of these reforms did not extend evenly to all Turkish citizens.

The generational differences in Figures 5.1 and 5.7 make clear that the modernization of the Turkish Muslim population also took place outside urban centers, but may have taken more time, with older generations holding on to traditions and younger generations adapting more quickly. “The work of forging selves” (Strassler 2010: 4), then, did not only take place among the urban middle classes who went to the studio; rural people of lower classes too resorted to photography to make themselves into modern Turkish citizens in varied degrees.

As this section has demonstrated, *alaminüt* photography was instrumental in domesticating the street and public life in the 1920s and 1930s, allowing citizens in the cities and the countryside to generate and perform their desired selves in front of the camera, at times for the first time. In urban areas, *alaminüt* photographers could also be seen as part of a system of social surveillance, operating largely in the form of social pressure, that sought to enforce the modern self propagated by the regime, more than studio photographers, who could be more experimental out of the public eye. In rural areas, where the regime’s surveillance was arguably more relaxed or intermittent, partly due to the difficulty of employing the instruments of the state apparatus in remote areas, performances in *alaminüt* photography also had to negotiate the strong local and communal pressure on citizens, particularly women, to conform to conservative norms along with the secularist reforms imposed by the Kemalists (Yılmaz 2013: 122–25).

Furthermore, looking at representations in *alaminüt* photography contributes to a better understanding of the social tensions produced “as a result of the fluid boundary management between East and West” (Ahıska 2010: 81), between those who advocated Occidentalism and a rapid adoption of Western etiquette, and those who were anxious to preserve traditions in the early years of the Republic. This boundary management also came to the fore in my analyses in the previous chapters with regard to the role of women role in society (Chapter One), the man’s shifting position in the family (Chapter Two) and the integration of older traditions into Republican imagery (Chapter Four).¹⁶⁰

¹⁶⁰ Besides in photography, the East/West (*alaturka/alafıranga*) dichotomies also appeared in music and cinema. Meltem Ahıska (2010: 81-82) writes that after *alaturka* music, “which was used as a synonym for the ambiguous category of Turkish music,” was banned from radio broadcasts in 1934, people turned to Arabic radio stations. This urged prominent writer Peyami Safa to ask radio directors to allow more space for Turkish folk songs on the radio, so that the Turkish people “do not take the Arabic voice of the Egyptian Radio as [their] own.” Indeed, the ban on *alaturka* was reversed in 1936 (Ahıska 2010: 82). Similarly, Egyptian films became hugely popular in the 1930s and 1940s (Özön 2010; Cantek 2000). During this time, the Turkish film industry was largely neglected by the regime, which arguably “considered American and

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have looked at the relations between photography and space-making in studio and itinerant photography in the founding years of modern Turkey. The first part of the chapter focused on the photography studio of Hamza Rüstem, whose story is delicately intertwined with the story of the city of Izmir in which the studio continues to operate today. Through the thousands of portraits and postcards Hamza Rüstem and his sons produced over the decades, the studio bore witness to the making of a modern Republican city and played an active role in shaping the image of its emerging middle class. The success story of Hamza Rüstem himself, of an immigrant becoming a prominent photographer, also constitutes a striking example of the making of the modern secular intellectual Turkish middle-class identity as imagined by the new Kemalist nation-state. In the 1920s, Rüstem effectively shaped himself into a successful modern Turkish citizen who actively participated in the making of a new bourgeoisie class as a leading studio photographer and modern businessman.

By the mid-1940s, following World War II, studio photography had largely been democratized, which led to the expansion of the clientele of the Hamza Rüstem studio to the lower-middle classes. Until then, it had been the itinerant (*alaminüt*) photographers who filled the vacuum in the countryside, documenting large segments of rural society in smaller towns and remote villages. The *alaminüt* camera and colorful backdrops used attracted a curious audience, some of whom may not have had access to photography before. The second part of this chapter focused on the work of these *alaminüt* photographers, who were able to penetrate less surveilled geographies of the Turkish countryside, while also taking into account how *alaminüt* photography contributed to the domestication of public life in cities in the early years of the Republic. The choice of locations where *alaminüt* photographers set up their cameras, from a hillside spot overlooking the Bosphorus to a tea garden on the Princess Islands, offers clues as to how inhabitants domesticated their cities and shaped their daily life in a tightly controlled nation-state. Itinerant photography played an important role in reimagining modern Turkey as a Republican home for its newly minted citizens. In this regard, it is relevant to stress that the public nature of the studio space created by itinerant photographers contrasts with the semi-private space of studio photography, in which non-normative performative interplays might have been more permissible.

The differences identified in this chapter between studio photographs and *alaminüt* pictures indicate that the Kemalist revolution was more successful in penetrating urban middle-class populations than those of the countryside. In rural Turkey, ethnic, tribal and regional identities co-existed with the officially promoted Republican one, indicating the inability of the regime to fully dominate these peripheral social spaces (Yılmaz 2013). *Alaminüt* photographs taken in the rural areas suggest that the Westernization and

European films very much in line with its Westernization policies, and did not feel the need for any other means of propaganda” (Gürata 2004: 77). Indigenized through dubbing and local soundtracks, Egyptian films worked as substitutes for Turkish films and were “marketed as local products” (Gürata 2004: 77). The popularity of Egyptian movies led to a change in the regime’s attitude towards the local film industry, finally bringing much-needed support.

secularization attempts of the regime only partially reached the more conservative and lower class communities living there, especially when it came to the older generations; yet, at the same time the photographs also show that the regime was successful in imposing a degree of modernizing across the countryside.

Photo historians have only recently begun to acknowledge the contribution of alaminüt photography to the history of photography in Turkey. The handful of authors who have written about alaminüt photography include Aksel (1977), Engin Özendes (1994), Gökhan Akçura (2003, 2020a, b), Gülderen Bölük (2014) and Seyit Ali Ak (2001) whose work primarily discusses the history of alaminüt photography as a social practice. This chapter is the first to specifically focus on alaminüt photography's relation to the making of the modern Turkish citizen, and has aimed to emphasize the significance of itinerant photography not only in Turkey, but for global photographic history and heritage.

In Part IV of this study, I will move from considering the circulation of photographers beyond the studio to considering the circulation of photographs themselves. In both cases, what is at stake is the dissemination of the image of the new Turkish subject across the country and across different classes. In Chapter Six, I examine how the circulation of photographs “as objects with a social function,” “enmeshed in a whole series of cultural behaviors related to swapping, gifting, keeping, displaying and viewing” (Edwards 2014: 34), contributed to the making of the modern Turkish nation and its collective memory in the formative years of the Republic, paying special attention to the role played in this by photographic inscriptions.