

# *Mocking High Society as a Method of Balancing Class Inequality in the Early Republican Press: The Dolmabahçe Incident*

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Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

Geliş Tarihi / Received: 09.11.2025 Kabul Tarihi / Accepted: 22.05.2026

## **ABSTRACT**

SAYGIN, Duygu; GÜLLÜ, Ramazan Erhan, **Mocking High Society as a Method of Balancing Class Inequality in the Early Republican Press: The Dolmabahçe Incident**, CTAD, Year 22, Issue 44 (Spring 2026), pp. 261-285.

Although the residence of the ruling elite was the new capital city, İstanbul, which continued to be the social center of the young Republic as it had been during the Ottoman period, was shaken by a scandal in 1925 that was quite unfamiliar. The case in question involved Princess Şivekâr, a popular figure of

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the upper class in both Egypt and Türkiye, and Sidi Wirt, the first wife of Lieutenant General Mehmet Şakir Pasha's youngest son, Suat Şakir. Even though the family became known as the "Şakir Pasha Family" in later years, due to their artistic accomplishments, back then the princess' fame was much more widespread. As both parties belonged to the upper class the lawsuits stemming from the scandal received extensive coverage in the press. This article aims to examine the mentioned news, thus revealing the press' approach to an incident concerning high society. In fact, during this period when the young Republic was fighting for its existence, the press, which showed affinity for the lower and middle classes, adopted a distant attitude towards the elites who looked down on these groups, which were seen as the fundamental support of the regime under construction. The manner in which the events analyzed in the article and the related lawsuits were handled constitutes an example of this behavior pattern and represents a case that has been overlooked until now.

*Keywords:* Şakir Pasha Family, Princess Şivekâr, The Early Republican Press, Social-class Gap, Sexism.

### ÖZ

SAYGIN, Duygu; GÜLLÜ, Ramazan Erhan, **Erken Cumhuriyet Basınında Sınıf Eğıtsizliğini Dengeleme Yöntemi Olarak Yüksek Sosyeteyle Dalga Geçmek: Dolmabahçe Hadisesi**, CTAD, Yıl 22, Sayı 44 (Bahar 2026), s. 261-285.

İktidar elitinin ikametgâhı yeni başkent olmasına rağmen, Osmanlı Dönemi'nde olduğu gibi genç Cumhuriyetin de sosyal merkezi olmaya devam eden İstanbul, 1925 yılında pek de alışılmadık bir skandalla sarsılmıştır. Söz konusu skandal hem Mısır hem de Türkiye'de üst sınıfın popüler bir figürü olan Prenses Şivekâr ile Ferik Mehmet Şakir Paşa'nın en küçük oğlu Suat Şakir'in ilk eşi Sidi Wirt'i içermektedir. Aile sonraki yıllarda sanatsal başarıları nedeniyle "Şakir Paşa Ailesi" olarak tanınsa da ele alınan dönemde, prensesin şöhreti çok daha yaygındır. Her iki tarafın da üst sınıfa mensup oluşu nedeniyle bu skandaldan kaynaklanan davalar basında geniş yer bulmuştur. Makalede, söz konusu haberler ele alınarak basının, sosyetik kesime dair bir olaya yaklaşımını ortaya koymak amaçlanmaktadır. Zira genç Cumhuriyetin varoluş mücadelesi verdiği bu dönemde, alt ve orta kesime yakınlık gösteren basın, inşa sürecindeki rejimin temel dayanağı olarak gördüğü bu kesimlere üstten bakan elitlere mesafeli bir tutum sergilemiştir. Makalede analiz edilen olay ve uzantısı olan davaların işleniş biçimi, bu davranış tarzına örnek oluşturması açısından, bugüne kadar gözden kaçmış bir örnek mahiyeti taşımaktadır.

*Anahtar Kelimeler:* Şakir Paşa Ailesi, Prenses Şivekâr, Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Basını, sosyal sınıf farkı, cinsiyetçilik.

## **Introduction**

What distinguished the news about the “upper-class” cases from the others in the early Republican press is the “critical tone” that is impossible to conceal. The instinctive reaction towards the “upper-crust” of a society striving to escape poverty has been reflected through the subtext conveyed by the style used about them. In its most basic form, it is an extension of the distance placed by the press, as well as by society at large, against the elites who are believed to look down on the lower and middle classes, the fundamental founders of the Republic during its construction process. However, it should be noted that this attitude is not simply a matter of prejudice; it is a fact that the vast majority of the wealthy continued to live in prosperity without playing an active role in the transformation as other segments of society.

Indeed, the distinction between the elites and the middle class here is not solely based on economic origins. This is because among those who criticize this segment are members of the press who are not financially weaker than them. The elites referred to are considered to be individuals who do not conform to the Republic’s definition of citizenship, not only in terms of their economic power but also in terms of their definition of citizenship. For this reason, it would be wrong to view the source of the current attitude as jealousy of their wealth. This class consists of the children of the late Ottoman bureaucracy or the masses affiliated with them. Thus, this part of the population, which was considered incompatible with the Republic’s idea of citizenship, and was believed to represent the Ottoman Empire, became the target of criticism.

When the leading actors of these kinds of incidents were women, sexism has been another element reflected in the tone of the news. In many examples, the problems of the wealthy females were considered to be trivial and they were presented more as characters in a melodrama than as individuals. This is based on the fact that the Republican ideology criticizes women belonging to the aforementioned social group. Although these women may have appeared to fit the female archetype envisioned by the Republic when viewed on the surface, they were not truly “Republican women” at their core, but rather “crooked” products of Ottoman modernization. Since, the new regime had certain standards not only in terms of image but also in terms of mindset.

One of the parties involved in the incident, Sidi Wirt (referred to by the press as Mme. Sayda), belonged to one of the prominent families of the time, the Şakir Pasha Family. Lieutenant General Kabağaçlızâde Mehmet Şakir Pasha, after whom the family is named, was the younger brother of Kabağaçlızâde Ahmet Cevat Pasha, a military-background statesman, who served as grand vizier to Sultan Abdülhamid II for four years. Mehmet Şakir Pasha, also a soldier, first

served as the aide-de-camp to his brother, then as military attaché in Cetinje and Rome and finally ambassador to Athens. In later years, his descendants from his second wife Ms. Sare İsmet became known to everyone as the “Şakir Pasha Family” for the fact that most of them were prominent figures in various fields of art. Mr. Suat Şakir (Kabağaçlı), Sidi Wirt’s husband at the time, was the fourth child of the mentioned union. Even though Mehmet Şakir Pasha was murdered by his elder son Musa Cevat Şakir (Kabağaçlı), in 1914, as the incident had never been reported in the papers,<sup>1</sup> At the time of the Dolmabahçe Incident the family was just another “upper-crust” family. Interestingly, another incident involving members of the social class in question, which took place during the early years of the Republic, was an assault case in 1929 in which Ms. Aliye (Berger), the youngest member of the Şakir Pasha Family, played the leading role. The news on this second incident and the subsequent legal process, which the press also turned into a “tefrika” (serial), had the same mocking and sexist tone.<sup>2</sup>

On the other hand, Princess Şivekâr was one of the leading subjects of gossip of her time due to her five marriages, four of which ended in divorce. So much so that, in 1925, a reader sent a letter to *Yeni Türk* complaining that they were tired of news about the princess.<sup>3</sup> An article that was published upon the death of her mother, Princess Nevcivan, in 1941 carried the headline “Princess Şivekâr is back in the spotlight” and referred to her as “well-known in our country”.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, according to *Son Telgraf*, she was famous not only in İstanbul, but also in Paris, Egypt, and London.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Whatever the reason may be, the newspapers reporting on his funeral contain no information regarding the murder. “Merhûm Şâkir Paşa”, *Sabah*, August 2, 1914, p. 3; “Merhûm Şâkir Paşa”, *Tasvîr-i Efşkâr*, August 3, 1914, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ms. Aliye, who was in an “open secret” relationship with violin teacher Karl Berger for the last few years, shot his pupil Mme. Mannik out of jealousy in 1929. For more information, see: Duygu Saygın, “An Incident in the Refined World: The “Gunwoman” Aliye Berger Case in the Early Republican Turkish Press in Terms of Representations of Female Criminality”, *Karadeniz Arařtırmaları*, Volume XXII, Issue 88, 2025, pp. 1692-1734.

<sup>3</sup> “Şivekâr Hanım Havadisinden Usandık”, *Yeni Türk*, April 6, 1925, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> “Prenses Şivekâr yine sahnede”, *Tasvîr-i Efşkâr*, November 18, 1941, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> “Şivekâr Hanımın Rakibesî Olan Amerikalıya Hücumu Yüzünden de mi İtham Altında Kalacağız?”, *Son Telgraf*, January 29, 1925, p. 1.

The princess, a member of the Kavalalı dynasty, first married her cousin, the future King Fuat I of Egypt, before he ascended the throne. The three year-long marriage ended in 1898 when the bride's 17-year-old brother, Prince Seyfettin, shot his brother-in-law/cousin in the throat for making his sister unhappy. The king was forced to live with a scar on his neck which caused a change in his voice for the rest of his life, and eventually led to his death, while the princess settled in İstanbul, where she was born.<sup>6</sup> While still residing there, she married her fourth husband, Mr. Selim, in 1917. Her being 35, and him being 19 caused quite a stir in İstanbul society.<sup>7</sup> Despite the damage to her reputation, Princess Şivekâr did not care and continued to marry for love, which did not fit the mentality of the time. She did not hesitate to openly express this situation, saying, “*Why should I accept a man I don't want?*”<sup>8</sup> Her last marriage also made headlines due to the age difference, and sometimes even false marriage rumors circulated about her.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> “El-Havâdis’ül-Dâhiliyye”, *El-Ma’lumât*, June 15, 1898, p. 2; “Prince Worth Millions Helped Flee From Asylum”, *Bundaberg Daily News and Mail*, April 22, 1933, p. 9; “Prens Seyfeddin”, *Vatan*, October 28, 1924, p. 5; “Prens Seyfeddin’in Hayatı”, *Vakit*, October 28, 1924, p. 5; “Bu da Başka Türü Bir İngiliz Zulmü!”, *Tevhîd-i Efkâr*, October 28, 1924, p. 4; “Kral Fuad’ın ölümünde başlıca âmil olan kurşun yarası”, *Son Posta*, April 30, 1936, p. 7; “Ölen Prens Seyfettin Büyük Servet Bıraktı”, *Tan*, November 20, 1937, p. 9; “Prens Seyfeddinin cesedine otopsi yapıldı”, *Akşam*, November 21, 1937, p. 4; “Prens Seyfeddin 25 milyon miras bıraktı”, *Akşam*, November 26, 1937, p. 1; “Prens Seyfettinin Milyarları Kime Kaldı?”, *Tan*, January 29, 1930, p. 6; “Mısır kralının ölümü çok feci ve hazin oldu”, *Cumhuriyet*, April 30, 1936, p. 7; “Prens Seyfeddinin 30 yıl evvel attığı kurşun”, *Akşam*, April 29, 1936, p. 2; “Prens Seyfettinin bıraktığı 100 milyon”, *Kurun*, January 29, 1938, p. 3; “Prens Şivekâr Kahirede vefat etti”, *Akşam*, February 18, 1947, p. 2; Nahid Sırrı Örik, “Birinci Faruk’tan Evvelkiler II”, *Resimli Tarih*, Issue 38, 1953, p. 2037; Nurhan El-Kurdi, “Pleasure, Love, Betrayal... – The Turning Points in the Life of the Late Princess Şivekâr”, February 17, 2024, <https://www.elqareanews.com/83375>, Accessed: 01.11.2025; “Prens Seyfeddin”, *Millet*, September 2, 1925, p. 1; “Mısır Muhaberatının İç Yüzü”, *Son Saat*, June 28, 1928, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> *Haremde Sürgüne Bir Osmanlı Prensesi*, editör Nemika Deryal Marşanoğlu, İnkılap Publications, İstanbul, 2011, p. 204.

<sup>8</sup> *Haremde Sürgüne Bir Osmanlı Prensesi*, p. 203.

<sup>9</sup> “Kiminle Evleniyorlarmış?”, *Vakit*, November 29, 1926, p. 2; “Onlar Ermiş Muradına”, *Haftalık Mecma*, December 6, 1926, p. 2; “Prens Şivekâr Hanım”, *Vakit*, April 11, 1926, p. 2; “Prens Şivekârın İzdivacı Emrivakidir”, *Son Saat*, December 14, 1926, p. 3; *Haftada Bir Gün*, December 9, 1926, p. 1; “Dedikodu”, *Milliyet*, November 30, 1926, p. 3; “Prens Şivekârın İzdivacı”, *Vakit*, December 14, 1926, p. 2; “Maşaallah”, *Milliyet*, July 4, 1926, p. 1; “Rauf Bey Nerede?”, *Akşam*, July 10, 1926, p. 1; “Refet Paşa”, *Vakit*, November 28, 1928, p. 7; “Refet Paşa Mısra Gidiyormuş”, *Hâkimiyet-i Millîye*, November 29, 1926, p. 3; “Fıratilerin Cevabı”, *Milliyet*, July 16, 1926, p. 1.



*Image-1: Princess Şivekâr and her first husband (the future King Fuat I of Egypt)<sup>10</sup>*

In our opinion, it would be wrong to describe this multifaceted woman as a simple scandal queen, as the press did. As two years before her death, she founded a feminist magazine in Egypt called *El-Mar'a El-Cedide* (New Woman), becoming a pioneer in the field<sup>11</sup> and leaving a mark on Egyptian history with her philosophy of life. Also standing out for her philanthropy,<sup>12</sup> Princess Şivekâr continued to be the subject of gossip even after her death, this time because of the inheritance she left behind.<sup>13</sup>

One of the many scandals of Princess Şivekâr's life was the incident at Dolmabahçe. Upon learning that her husband, Mr. Selim, was having an affair with an American woman, the princess conducted an investigation for a while, and received news that the pair would be taking a motorboat trip on the

<sup>10</sup> El-Kurdi, *op. cit.*

<sup>11</sup> *op. cit.*

<sup>12</sup> The princess, who was frequently reported for attending balls held to raise funds for the Himâye-i Etfâl Society, had the streets of her neighborhood repaired in 1925; she also donated 600 Egyptian pounds, equivalent to approximately 4,800 Turkish liras, following the 1939 earthquake in Erzincan. "Şivekâr Hanım", *Vakit*, September 2, 1925, p. 3; "Kızılaya Teberrüleri 600.000 lirayı geçti", *Yeni Sabah*, January 7, 1940, p. 7; "Prens Şivekâr 600 Mısır lirası teberrü etti", *Akşam*, January 4, 1940, p. 2; "Prens Şivekârın teberruu", *Cumhuriyet*, January 4, 1940, p. 6; "Prens Şivekâr 600 Mısır Lirası verdi", *Vakit*, January 4, 1940, p. 5; "Prens Şivekâr felâketzedelere 600 Mısır lirası gönderdi", *Son Posta*, January 4, 1940, p. 3; "Prens Şivekârın yardımı...", *Yeni Asır*, January 4, 1940, p. 3; "Prens Şivekârın Teberrüleri", *Yeni Sabah*, January 4, 1940, p. 7; "Hariçten yardımlar", *Son Dakika*, January 4, 1940, p. 4.

<sup>13</sup> "Prens Şivekâr 100 milyon lira bıraktı", *Cumhuriyet*, February 27, 1947, pp. 1, 3; "Prens Şivekârın mirası", *Akşam*, March 4, 1947, p. 2.

Bosphorus. Wanting to see the situation for herself, she hid on the Dolmabahçe pier and waited. When she saw them disembarking from the motorboat, she beat the woman, pulled her hair, scratched her face, insulted her, and forcibly pulled her expensive coat off her back. After she returned home, she ordered her servants not to open the door when her husband, who had fled the scene, arrived. Indeed, when he started knocking insistently on the door, she sent a telegram to the police station, requesting help on the grounds that her home had been raided.<sup>14</sup>

### The First Round: Contentious Divorce

The scandal cost the couple their marriage, and the princess filed a lawsuit against her husband for deferred dowry and alimony. Neither party attended any of the hearings in person, and as told before, the case was widely reported in the newspapers, becoming a source of entertainment. It was noted that the majority of those filling the courtroom on hearing days were “*ladies and gentlemen with impeccable toilets*”;<sup>15</sup> and again as said before, the details of the hearings adorned the columns. The news even spread from daily newspapers to satirical publications. For example, *Akbaba* reported that the two women met at the Himâye-i Etfâl ball, and Princess Şivekâr once again attacked Sidi Wirt, “*wanting to knock out her thirty-two teeth, but gave up when she realized they were false*”, then continued dancing.<sup>16</sup> The incident’s impact was not limited to Türkiye. Since statements were given by Mr. Suat to the *Daily Telegraph* and by Sidi Wirt to the *Chicago Tribune*,<sup>17</sup> it was also reported in the French, British, and American press.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımefendi ile Zevci Selim Bey Arasında Bir Hadise”, *Son Telgraf*, January 6, 1925, p. 2; “Prenses Şivekâr”, *Vakit*, January 7, 1925, p. 4; “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Davası”, *Cumhuriyet*, January 15, 1925, p. 3; “Prenses Şivekâr”, *Vakit*, January 15, 1925, p. 4; “Prenses Şivekâr H. MM. Sayda için ‘10’ lira ceza verecek”, *Son Saat*, September 3, 1929, p. 1; “Prs. Şivekâr”, *Vakit*, September 3, 1929, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Meraklı Davası”, *Cumhuriyet*, February 18, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> “Himâye-i Etfâl Balosu”, *Akbaba*, February 9, 1925, p. 1. Similarly, two days later, *Karagöz* recounted the events in a mocking tone. “Bu Rezalet Ne Yahu!”, *Karagöz*, February 11, 1925, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> “Prenses Şivekârı Dava”, *Vatan*, January 26, 1925, p. 2; “Amerikalı Kadın Başına Gelenleri Anlatıyor”, *Vakit*, January 29, 1925, p. 2; “Prenses Şivekâr ile Amerikalı Madam”, *Vakit*, January 29, 1925, p. 1; “Prenses Şivekâr Meselesi”, *Vakit*, January 30, 1925, p. 4.

<sup>18</sup> “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımla Bir Mülakat”, *Akşam*, February 9, 1925, p. 1; “Şivekâr Hanımın Rakibesi Olan Amerikalıya Hücumu Yüzünden de mi İtham Altında Kalacağız?”, *Son Telgraf*, January 29, 1925, p. 1. As can be understood from the headline, *Son Telgraf* claimed that false news about Türkiye could appear in the American press since the attacked party was an American; it also took precautions against the potential danger it perceived by saying that Princess Şivekâr had an English or American mentality rather than that of a Turkish woman. In fact, this concern is not entirely unjustified, as Sidi Wirt’s interview with the *Chicago Tribune* contains quite provocative

On the other hand, Princess Şivekâr's self-confidence was compared to that of American women.<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that she filed for divorce more than a year before the Turkish Civil Code, which grants women the right to divorce, was passed into law on February 17, 1926.

News of the first hearing of the case was limited, reporting only that Mr. Selim's lawyer requested that the case be dismissed because the princess was still legally married to his client. In response, the opposing side claimed that the divorce had already taken place and stated they were prepared to prove it.<sup>20</sup> However, starting with the second hearing, newspapers published quite detailed information. At this point, as Sidi Wirt's name had not been revealed at the first hearing on January 14, 1925, she was referred to in the Turkish press as "*the American lady*" or "*miss*".<sup>21</sup> Similarly, her husband's name was rarely mentioned; only the January 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> issues of *Vatan* and the January 30<sup>th</sup> issue of *Vakit* referred to Mr. Suat.<sup>22</sup> In his statement to the foreign press, Mr. Suat explained the reason for this behavior, which he described as cowardice, and as bribery to the newspapers, but the press responded that their aim was to protect his honor.<sup>23</sup> However, at the second hearing on February 7, Mr. Selim's lawyer, Mr. Ziyaettin, had to reveal the names of both Sidi Wirt, whom he referred to as "*Mme. Sayda*", and her husband, Suat Şakir. The lawyer, stating that he was ashamed to mention the names of the woman he described as "*honorable, married, and noble*" and her husband before the court out of respect for them, explained that he was forced to reveal the names due to Princess Şivekâr's disclosure of the matter between

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statements: "*At that moment, a group of Turkish soldiers who were there, came to intervene. But the princess shouted that she was a Muslim woman who had nursed wounded soldiers during the war, while I was a Christian who had stolen her husband. After that, the princess encouraged the soldiers to attack me. If I hadn't defended myself a little and aroused their mercy, these soldiers would certainly have lynched me*". "Amerikalı Kadın Başına Gelenleri Anlatıyor", *Vakit*, January 29, 1925, p. 2. Princess Şivekâr also confirmed this story in her own interview published in *İstiklal*. "Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Anlattıkları", *Vatan*, January 18, 1925, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> "Şehrimizdeki Prensesler Bu Usulü Tutmuşlar", *Son Telgraf*, February 9, 1925, p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> "Prenses Şivekâr", *Vakit*, January 15, 1925, p. 4; "Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Bir Davası", *Tevhîd-i Efkâr*, January 15, 1925, p. 3; "Prenses Şivekâr", *Vatan*, January 15, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>21</sup> "Prenses Şivekâr Hanımefendi ile Zevci Selim Bey Arasında Bir Hadise", *Son Telgraf*, January 6, 1925, p. 2; "Prenses Şivekâr", *Vakit*, January 7, 1925, p. 4; "Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Davası", *Cumhuriyet*, January 15, 1925, p. 3; "Şivekâr Hanımın Rakibesi Olan Amerikalıya Hücumu Yüzünden de mi İtham Altında Kalacağız?", *Son Telgraf*, January 29, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>22</sup> "Prenses Şivekârî Dava", *Vatan*, January 26, 1925, p. 2; "Prenses Şivekâr ile Amerikalı Madam", *Vatan*, January 29, 1925, p. 1; "Prenses Şivekâr Meselesi", *Vakit*, January 30, 1925, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> "Prenses Şivekârî Dava", *Vatan*, January 26, 1925, p. 2.

the two families to the press.<sup>24</sup> From that moment on, she began to be referred to both in the court and the press as “*Mme. Sayda*”. Her surname was only mentioned in the February 28<sup>th</sup> issue of *Tevhîd-i Efkâr*, the same day’s interview with Princess Şivekâr’s cousin Princess Mediha in *Papağan*, and in the January 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> issues of *Vatan*.<sup>25</sup>

Princess Şivekâr, who accused her husband of adultery, was determined to obtain a divorce with both a 500-lira dowry and alimony, while Mr. Selim both denied the accusation and did not want a divorce. Princess Şivekâr’s lawyer, Mr. Ömer Lütfi, based on a promissory note given by Mr. Selim to his wife on April 23, 1923, stating that their marriage would be annulled if his relationship with another woman, whether legitimate or illegitimate, was proven, claimed that the divorce had now taken place due to the relationship with the American woman and the incident at Dolmabahçe.<sup>26</sup> When the text of the deed in question was read out at the third hearing on February 17, the court requested an explanation as to why this deed with its strange content was deemed necessary. According to Mr. Ömer Lütfi, Mr. Selim had previously taken a mistress named Mme. Granski in Paris; however, the princess had forgiven her husband for this first betrayal. The need for the document was the possibility of Mr. Selim cheating on his wife again.<sup>27</sup> Princess Mediha also stated in an interview published in *Papağan* that the couple had been separated for a while after the princess discovered that she had been cheated on in her luxurious mansion in Paris; however, they reconciled after Mr. Selim’s persistent pleas and signing a promissory note.<sup>28</sup> This betrayal was proven in subsequent hearings when Mr. Selim’s April 2, 1923, breakup letter to his mistress was presented to the court. It was also clear from his own words that

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<sup>24</sup> “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Davası”, *Tanin*, February 8, 1925, p. 4; “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Talak Davası”, *Vatan*, February 8, 1925, p. 2; “Prenses Şivekârın Açtığı Dava”, *Vakit*, February 8, 1925, pp. 1-2.

<sup>25</sup> “Bir Davanın Garabetlerinden”, *Tevhîd-i Efkâr*, February 28, 1925, p. 3; “Prenses Mediha Hanım Efendiyle Mülakat”, *Papağan*, January 28, 1925, p. 4; “Prenses Şivekârı Dava”, *Vatan*, January 26, 1925, p. 1; “Prenses Şivekâr ile Amerikalı Madam”, *Vatan*, January 29, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>26</sup> “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Davası”, *Tanin*, February 8, 1925, p. 4; “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Davası”, *Cumhuriyet*, February 8, 1925, p. 4; “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Talak Davası”, *Vatan*, February 8, 1925, p. 2; “Prenses Şivekârın Açtığı Dava”, *Vakit*, February 8, 1925, pp. 1-2.

<sup>27</sup> “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Meraklı Davası”, *Cumhuriyet*, February 18, 1925, p. 4; “Selim Bey Prenses Niçin Sened Verdi?”, *Vakit*, February 18, 1925, p. 2; “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Talak Davası”, *Vatan*, February 18, 1925, 2; “Şivekâr Hanım Davası”, *Tevhîd-i Efkâr*, February 18, 1925, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> “Prenses Mediha Hanım Efendiyle Mülakat”, *Papağan*, January 28, 1925, p. 4.

the princess discovered the affair and that the situation caused unrestness in their family life.<sup>29</sup> However, Mr. Selim claimed that the letter was forged.<sup>30</sup>

The opposing counsel, Mr. Ziyaettin, first pointed out that the termination of the marriage depended on proving that the husband entered into a relationship with another woman, whether legitimate or illegitimate, and legitimate relations referred to marrying another woman, while illegitimate relations referred to committing adultery. According to Princess Őivekâr's claim, there was an illegitimate relationship with an American woman. However, since adultery must be proven by four witnesses according to Sharia law, Mr. Selim did not accept the divorce. This was because the only evidence she had was that Mr. Selim had gone to the Bosphorus with a woman and the princess had seen them at the pier on their return. He also stated that by giving the promissory note to the princess, his client had granted her with a "tâlik-i talak" (pending divorce), and since the grounds for this could not be proven, even if the divorce in question was valid, it was counted as a "ric'î talâk" (reversible divorce). Mr. Ziyaettin also highlighted the close friendship between Messrs. Suat and Selim, saying that the same closeness had continued between their wives until the last incident. The couples, who visited each other's homes, went on boat trips, and organized parties, had maintained such a close relationship that the princess and Mr. Suat were able to accompany each other, even in Mr. Selim's absence. He also stated that Princess Őivekâr and Mr. Selim had lived in Europe for a long time and had adopted Western customs, becoming a modern aristocratic family. Similarly, Sidi Wirt, who left her country to marry Mr. Suat, was born and raised in America and came from a noble family. On the other hand Mr. Suat, who, like his wife, was accustomed to the American way of life, asked Mr. Selim to occasionally accompany his wife during his trips to Europe. Some time later, on New Year's Eve, Sidi Wirt, a Christian who valued this day, invited Mr. Selim to spend some time together on this special day since her husband was not in İstanbul. Since it would have been rude to decline such an invitation, they boarded a motorboat together and, after picking up a friend from Bostancı, went to Büyükkada. Following a meal under the pine trees there, they dropped off the third party in Bostancı and headed for Dolmabahçe. According to the lawyer, Sidi Wirt, who had received an American education, considered such an outing perfectly natural, and Princess Őivekâr, who was her friend, should not have found the situation

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<sup>29</sup> "Prensesin Davası", *Tevhîd-i Efkâr*, March 4, 1925, p. 4; "Prenses Őivekâr", *Vatan*, March 4, 1925, p. 4; "Őivekâr Hanım Niçin Boşanmak İstiyor?", *Cumhuriyet*, March 4, 1925, p. 4; "Pariste Vukuu İddia Edilen Rabta", *Vakit*, March 4, 1925, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> "Prenses Őivekâr Hanımın Davası", *Cumhuriyet*, March 15, 1925, p. 4; "Madam Sayda Hakkında Neler Diyorlar", *Vakit*, March 15, 1925, p. 3; "Bugünkü Muhakeme", *Akşam*, March 15, 1925, p. 1; "Prenses Őivekâr Hanımın Talak Davası", *Vatan*, March 15, 1925, p. 2.

unnatural either. Mr. Ziyaettin also emphasized that to claim otherwise would be disrespectful to the princess by implying that she was “*unfamiliar with Western customs*”. Given this situation, the lawyer argued that creating a problem out of this simple situation stemmed from Princess Şivekâr’s desire to separate from her husband, no matter the excuse, and she wanted to achieve her goal even at the expense of the other party’s honor and reputation.<sup>31</sup>

In response, Mr. Ömer Lütfi argued that the opposing party had admitted that there was a “relationship” and that the word itself implied a connection that had reached the level of intimacy. Another claim he made was that Mr. Selim’s act of leaving his wife at home and secretly meeting alone with another woman would be considered an illegitimate act; and that just as a man could forbid his wife from seeing others, a woman also had the right to demand her husband’s loyalty. Another point the lawyer drew attention to was that in Turkish culture, not only adultery but also sitting with a non-mahram was forbidden.<sup>32</sup> According to Mr. Ömer Lütfi, the implication was that since the princess was a person with a Western mindset, she should have turned a blind eye to this relationship. He claimed that it was wrong to expect this from the princess, given that even in America, women did not accept their husbands having affairs. Mr. Ömer Lütfi also pointed out that the nature of the meeting was for the purpose of an illicit relationship, as Mr. Selim picked up Sidi Wirt from her apartment in Galatasaray, and to avoid being seen, he took empty streets and back roads to the shore. Furthermore, in Büyükkada, the pair wandered among the pine trees despite the rainy weather. On their return, while coming out onto the pier, they scanned the area, hid behind a railing, and tried to get into the car in a hurry. Moreover, although Sidi Wirt claimed she had been assaulted, she did not go to the police, and Mr. Selim hastily fled to Europe; in other words, both acted out of guilt. In response, Mr. Ziyaettin stated that the claim of walking under the pine trees was based on his testimony at the previous hearing. However, he denied his previous statement, saying that in the testimony in question, he had stated that the couple had eaten at the hotel and that there was someone else with them. He explained Mr. Selim’s route to the pier via the back streets by pointing out that Sidi Wirt’s apartment had two doors, one opening onto the main street and the other onto

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<sup>31</sup> “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Davası”, *Tanin*, February 8, 1925, p. 4; “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Davası”, *Cumhuriyet*, February 8, 1925, p. 4; “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Talak Davası”, *Vatan*, February 8, 1925, p. 2; “Prenses Şivekârın Açtığı Dava”, *Vakit*, February 8, 1925, pp. 1-2.

<sup>32</sup> “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Davası”, *Tanin*, February 8, 1925, p. 4; “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Davası”, *Cumhuriyet*, February 8, 1925, p. 4; “Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Talak Davası”, *Vatan*, February 8, 1925, p. 2; “Prenses Şivekârın Açtığı Dava”, *Vakit*, February 8, 1925, pp. 1-2.

the street leading down to Tophane.<sup>33</sup> It should be noted that, it is illogical that the frequently mentioned third party was not summoned to the court to testify in favor of the defendant. Given the fact that Mr. Selim's previous infidelity is proven, there was probably no such friend.

The defendant also presented various physical evidence to the court to prove the long-standing intimacy between the couple. First of them were numerous photographs of the couple together.<sup>34</sup> The second piece of evidence was a postcard sent by Princess Şivekâr to Sidi Wirt, whom she claimed not to know very well, referring to Mr. Suat by his first name.<sup>35</sup> It also mentioned the name of Mr. Suat's younger sister, Ms. Fahrünnisa,<sup>36</sup> which indicates that the friendship between the two parties was in a term containing extended family members. Also the fact that the postcard was in the possession of Mr. Ziyaettin, proves a collaboration between Ms. Selim and Sidi Wirt against the princess.

While the couple finally divorced at the hearing on March 21,<sup>37</sup> Princess Şivekâr, who seemed pleased that the scandal had become widely known, had statements published in *Vatan* and *Akşam* on January 18<sup>th</sup> and February 9<sup>th</sup>, respectively, while the case was ongoing. The first of these interviews, published

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<sup>33</sup> "Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Meraklı Davası", *Cumhuriyet*, February 18, 1925, pp. 1, 4; "Selim Bey Prenses Niçin Sened Verdi?", *Vakit*, February 18, 1925, p. 2; "Şivekâr Hanım Davası", *Tevhid-i Efkâr*, February 18, 1925, p. 5; "Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Talak Davası", *Vatan*, February 18, 1925, p. 2.

<sup>34</sup> "Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Davası", *Tanin*, February 8, 1925, p. 4; "Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Davası", *Cumhuriyet*, February 8, 1925, p. 4; "Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Talak Davası", *Vatan*, February 8, 1925, p. 2; "Prenses Şivekârın Açtığı Dava", *Vakit*, February 8, 1925, pp. 1-2.

<sup>35</sup> "Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Meraklı Davası", *Cumhuriyet*, February 18, 1925, pp. 1, 4; "Selim Bey Prenses Niçin Sened Verdi?", *Vakit*, February 18, 1925, p. 2; "Şivekâr Hanım Davası", *Tevhid-i Efkâr*, February 18, 1925, p. 5; "Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Talak Davası", *Vatan*, February 18, 1925, p. 2; "Prenses Şivekâr", *Son Telgraf*, February 17, 1925, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> After her second marriage, to Prince Zaid bin Hussein of Iraq in 1934, she legally changed her name to Fahrünnisa. In later years she became an internationally famed painter under the name "Fahrünnisa Zaid".

<sup>37</sup> "Prenses Şivekâr Hanım Boşandı", *Cumhuriyet*, March 22, 1925, p. 4; "Prenses Şivekâr Hanım Boşandı", *Vakit*, March 22, 1925, p. 2; "Prenses 'Şivekâr' Muradına Erdi", *Akşam*, March 22, 1925, p. 1; "Şivekâr Davası", *Son Saat*, March 21, 1925, p. 4; "Şivekâr Hanım Parise Niçin Gitti?", *Son Saat*, March 29, 1925, p. 1. Mr. Selim appealed the decision, but could not change the outcome. "Prenses Şivekâr Hanım Davasının Sonu", *Son Saat*, October 12, 1924, p. 1; "Prenses Şivekâr Temyizde Kazandı", *Akşam*, September 10, 1925, p. 2; "Talak Tasdik Edilecek Mi?", *Son Saat*, August 19, 1925, p. 3. This eventful divorce even became the subject of poems in some magazines and was read out at banquets held by the princess' friends to celebrate the divorce. "Prenses Şivekâr ile Zevce-i Sâbıkı Selim Efendi Arasında Vuk'ûbulan Talâk Keyfiyetini Mesur Manzumedir", *Meftun Gönül*, 1927, p. 37; "Dedikodu", *Türk Hayatı*, April 1, 1925, p. 13.

immediately after the first and second hearings, is significant, as is the *İstiklâl* interview, which will be discussed later. According to the princess, the couple's marriage of six years had been going well, but recently she had begun to suspect her husband. She then began to have him followed, but to no avail. Sometime later, she heard about the American woman. One day, upon hearing that her husband had gone on a boat trip with her, she visited every single nightclub along the Bosphorus. On her way back, seeing the car on the side of the road increased her suspicions. She then hid and waited. As soon as they came ashore and headed for the car, she jumped out and attacked the other woman. She made no secret of the fact that she first cursed at her and then slapped and punched the woman who looked around in shock, knocked her opponent's hat off with her first blow and pulled her hair and scratched her face and eyes with her second. When a helpless Mr. Selim told her to stop, she became even angrier, grabbed the woman by the collar of her fur coat. Mr. Selim, realizing that a second beating was about to begin, shouted, "Don't stop, run!" When the woman made a move to escape, her fur coat remained in the princess' hands. Princess Şivekâr ended by saying that she had saved her feminine pride and that the rest was a matter for the courts.<sup>38</sup>

Moreover, Princess Mediha bullied Sidi Wirt through the press by saying that "the woman", described by newspapers as being 20-25 years old, was actually 45 years old, and was not at all beautiful. According to her, the reason Mr. Selim was with "this woman" was the \$300 in child support from her "lover" in America, as he was "devouring her money".<sup>39</sup> In reality, Sidi Wirt was only 31 years old at the time of the incident, and the source of the child support was not her "lover" but her deceased ex-husband.

Another move against Sidi Wirt was made at the third hearing, when Mr. Ömer Lütfi claimed she was a woman who had married her first husband in San Francisco after working as a dancer in "certain places", and then quickly divorced him to marry another American man "by divorcing his wife". He argued that Princess Şivekâr was right to suspect this woman, who had divorced two men.<sup>40</sup> Meanwhile it is ironic that Mr. Selim was the princess' fourth husband. Another crucial point is the princess' arrogant attitude, as evidenced by her emphasis on

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<sup>38</sup> "Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Anlattıkları", *Vatan*, January 18, 1925, p. 2. The princess' decision to give this interview and her inability to remain silent were criticized in other newspapers. "Bastırılan Taş!", *Tevhîd-i Eşkâr*, January 18, 1925, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> "Prenses Mediha Hanım Efendiyle Mülakat", *Papağan*, January 28, 1925, p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> "Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Davası", *Cumhuriyet*, March 15, 1925, p. 4; "Madam Sayda Hakkında Neler Diyolar", *Vakit*, March 15, 1925, p. 3; "Bugünkü Muhakeme", *Akşam*, March 15, 1925, p. 1; "Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Talak Davası", *Vatan*, March 15, 1925, p. 2.

the word “servant” while beating Sidi Wirt, which will be confirmed by the witnesses’ statements later on, whereby she looked down on her rival as inferior to herself because of her “filthy” past and social status. The princess and her lawyer chose to take the matter to court, believing that either the court would find her actions justified or, as mentioned earlier, the press, which pressured women to uphold their honor, would discredit Sidi Wirt. However, the reaction they expected did not come from the court or society; on the contrary, it prevented the scandal from ending there.

### **The Second Round: Compensation Claim**

Sidi Wirt, who was subjected to verbal and physical attacks by Princess Şivekâr both at Dolmabahçe and through her statements to the press, as well as in court, filed a lawsuit against the princess on charges of assault, insult, and robbery.<sup>41</sup> At the first hearing on February 26, Princess Şivekâr, seemed to lost her previous boldness, and not wanting her photographs taken, had her lawyer, Mr. Saadettin Ferit, ensured that the judge prevented the journalists from taking pictures. Sidi Wirt, who sent her lawyer in her place, wanted the princess to be punished under Article 179 of the Penal Code, claimed that on the day of the incident, Princess Şivekâr cursed at her three times and attacked her, scratching her face and eyes, so that she was still ill. She demanded 10.000 liras in moral damages and 200 liras in medical expenses from the princess. Following this her lawyer, Mr. Faruk, stated that his client was slapped, punched, scratched, and gossiped about by Princess Şivekâr on the evening of December 31. He also claimed that on the same day and on the night of January 2, during a tea party, the princess humiliated Sidi Wirt in front of many people by showing the coat. Moreover his client had been slandered in the divorce case between the princess and Mr. Selim and in the princess’ interview with *İstiklâl* on January 17<sup>th</sup>. He stated that since there had previously been an unconditional closeness between the two families, the trip to Büyükada that triggered the incident was simply an outing with a family friend on a special day for his Christian client, and that there was a companion present. Since it was not something that would give rise to gossip, his client was beaten and insulted for no reason. He then submitted the reports of the doctors who treated Sidi Wirt to the court to be read out. According to the first report prepared by Doctor Cemal, she suffered bruising on her left shoulder bone due to the assault, her right eye was scratched, and she had other scratches and scrapes on her face. Doctor Fikri’s report stated that she

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<sup>41</sup> “Prensess Şivekâr Hanım Davaları”, *Cumhuriyet*, June 13, 1925, p. 4; “Prensess Şivekâr Mahkûm Mu Olacak?”, *Son Saat*, June 14, 1925, p. 5.

had been undergoing treatment for a long time.<sup>42</sup> In subsequent hearings, a third doctor's report signed "Aziz Fikret" was submitted to the court, attempting to prove once again that Sidi Wirt had undergone 21 days of treatment for the damage to her body. The press, however, mocked the violence that had occurred, writing that the princess must have been a boxer to be able to inflict such damage.<sup>43</sup>

Following the reports, the princess' statement in *İstiklâl* was also read out, and her testimony was taken. The princess, who said she knew Sidi Wirt "just a little", continued her condescending tone, stating that the couple had been "introduced" to her in Paris, and that she did not want to meet Sidi Wirt the first year she came to İstanbul, but later met her at Mr. Suat's "insistence and request". After presenting her interaction with Sidi Wirt as a "favor", she continued, presumably to further belittle her rival, by saying that she had invited her to a ball only because she had invited everyone and therefore felt obliged. Princess Şivekâr also denied making a statement to *İstiklâl* and taking the coat, saying that she picked it up from the ground when Sidi Wirt threw it to escape, and that she did not exhibit the coat in various assemblies while calling her names. In response to questions about the assault, she said she went to Dolmabahçe on December 31; however, contrary to her interview, she denied beating Sidi Wirt, claiming she only warned her. She denied the assault allegation by saying, "Would a woman who was dragged on the ground dance at Maksim until six o'clock that evening?". Following the hearing the princess was treated to coffee in the bar association room.<sup>44</sup> It's noteworthy that the press had ignored this last event, which clearly violates the law and impartiality, focusing only on the scandalous aspect of the incident. Therefore, the well-intentionedness of the press is questionable.

The dance claim which the princess also repeated to the press, was based on what Mlle. Rozablat, whom the princess would later present as a witness, had told her. In her testimony at the June 24 hearing, Mlle. Rozablat explained that she was at Maksim on the night of the incident, where Mr. Selim and Sidi Wirt

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<sup>42</sup> "Madam Saydanın Prenses Şivekârdan Davası", *Vatan*, February 27, 1925, p. 2; "Prenses Şivekâr Hanım Mahkemedede", *Cumhuriyet*, February 27, 1925, p. 4; "Şehrimizdeki Kibar Hayatına Ait Bir Dava", *Tenbîd-i Efkâr*, February 27, 1925, p. 5; "Bir Davanın Garabetlerinden", *Tenbîd-i Efkâr*, February 28, 1925, p. 3.

<sup>43</sup> "Madam Sayda", *Millet*, November 10, 1925, p. 3; "Malum Darp Meselesi", *Cumhuriyet*, November 11, 1925, p. 2; "Madam Sayda-Şivekâr Hanım Davası", *Vakit*, November 10, 1925, p. 4.

<sup>44</sup> "Madam Saydanın Prenses Şivekârdan Davası", *Vatan*, February 27, 1925, p. 2; "Prenses Şivekâr Hanım Mahkemedede", *Cumhuriyet*, February 27, 1925, p. 4; "Şehrimizdeki Kibar Hayatına Ait Bir Dava", *Tenbîd-i Efkâr*, February 27, 1925, p. 5.

were also present from 10 p.m. until 6 a.m. She emphasized they danced incessantly and Sidi Wirt, who drank champagne, laughed, and had fun, was wearing a very low-cut, red sequined dress, and underlined the fact that she did not see any scratch marks on her face,<sup>45</sup> making it clear that the incident has had little physical and mental impact on Sidi Wirt.



*Image-2:* The two pairs together at a ball. Those holding the crescents are Princess Şivekâr&Mr. Selim while the other pair is Sidi Wirt&Mr. Suat<sup>46</sup>

Princess Şivekâr did not attend the subsequent hearings, while the testimonies of Sidi Wirt's witnesses proved beyond doubt that the princess had lied. A driver, named Mr. Cemal stated in his completely discourteous testimony that a "fat" woman had attacked a "thin" woman, pulling her hair and beating her, while shouting "disrespectful", "immoral", "dishonorable", and some curses, while the other woman covered her ears with her hands and remained silent. Furthermore, throughout his entire testimony, he insisted on describing the two women as "fat" and "thin". When asked why he did not intervene in the incident, he stated candidly that he was afraid because the "fat" woman was said to be a sultan. Another driver, Mr. Muhsin, also testified that Princess Şivekâr hid behind a car

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<sup>45</sup> "Madam Saydanın Prenses Aleyhindeki Davası", *Cumhuriyet*, June 25, 1925, p. 4; "Prenses Şivekâr Hanım, Beyanatta Bulunmamış mı?", *Vakit*, June 25, 1925, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> "Prenses Şivekâr ile Amerikalı Madam", *Vatan*, January 29, 1925, p. 1.

and waited, then attacked the woman who got out of the boat with her husband. While beating her, she said, “*You aren’t equal to me!*”, in addition to cursing. When the police arrived and intervened, the princess was still trying to escape to attack again. As with the previous witness, the judge repeatedly asked Mr. Muhsin which insults Princess Şivekâr had hurled, thus attempting to clarify the charge of insult. The driver stated that the princess used curses implying the other party’s unchastity, while Sidi Wirt only repeated “*Je ne sais pas*”.<sup>47</sup> According to him, the princess also forcibly pulled off the other woman’s coat. Although the court did not consider it important, the most valuable information he provided was that the princess offered to bribe him in exchange for not telling the truth.<sup>48</sup> Mr. Osman, a third driver, described how the “*fat*” princess, who had been hiding, suddenly jumped out and attacked her opponent, shouting, “*You can’t be my servant, how dare you be the reason my husband cheated on me?*”.<sup>49</sup> The witnesses heard at the hearing on June 24, also mentioned the phrase “*You can’t be my servant.*” They also confirmed that the princess attacked Sidi Wirt three times, noting that she spoke in English and cursed in Turkish.<sup>50</sup>



*Image-3: Princess Şivekâr, Mr. Selim and Sidi Wirt on the couple’s yacht, with two other men*<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Fr. “I don’t know.”

<sup>48</sup> “Prenses Şivekâr Mahkûm Mu Olacak?”, *Son Saat*, June 14, 1925, p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> “Prenses Şivekâr Hanım, Beyanatta Bulunmamış mı?”, *Vakit*, June 25, 1925, p. 4; “Madam Sayda”, *Millet*, November 10, 1925, p. 3; “Madam Sayda-Şivekâr Hanım Davası”, *Vakit*, November 10, 1925, p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> “Madam Saydanın Prenses Aleyhindeki Davası”, *Cumhuriyet*, June 25, 1925, p. 4.

<sup>51</sup> “Selim Bey Prenses Niçin Senet Verdi?”, *Vakit*, February 18, 1925, p. 1; “Şivekâr Davası”, *Son Saat*, March 21, 1925, p. 4.

The coverage of this case in the newspapers once again highlighted the aggressive tone of the male-dominated mindset of the period's press towards women's bodies. For example, the subheading of the news article in *Son Saat* about the details of the June 13 hearing was based on a sentence from the testimony of Mr. Cemal as: "*Who Beat Whom on the Pier, Two Women, One Fat, the Other Thin*".<sup>52</sup> Furthermore, throughout the entire process, the age difference between the two women was emphasized. The unnecessary descriptions of the clothing of the upper class is also striking. In the hearing where Princess Őivekâr testified, it was noted that she arrived at the courtroom "*in a luxurious and magnificent dress*" or, according to a more detailed description, "*in a black coat with a fur collar and a black cap on her head*". Again in the same hearing, it's written that Princess Mediha entered the courtroom as a witnesses for the defendant "*with a bouquet of violets pinned to the chest of her navy blue coat*", and that another witness, Mr. Rüştü Pařazade Ekrem, was dressed in "*a navy blue suit with a shiny black cap on his head*". Mlle. Rozablat was also described both physically and in terms of clothing; it was also emphasized that she lived in a mansion in Beyođlu. In contrast, it is noticeable that the clothing of less wealthy, such as the drivers, was not described. The only exception in this regard was made for Ms. Fatma Őayeste. It was written that she "*covered her tulle veil like an old courtier, wearing a dirty, grayish cape*". Another expensive garment described is Sidi Wirt's famous coat, which is detailed as "*beige, lined with mosaic-patterned silk fabric, covered with a lining*".<sup>53</sup>

### **The Aftermath of the Incident**

Although the case essentially ended at the end of 1925, after several appeals over four years, it was completely closed in 1929, and Princess Őivekâr was acquitted of the other two charges and sentenced to pay only 10 liras in compensation for the assault, even though the witnesses' statements proved the existence of both insult and robbery. In fact, in the 1925 ruling, although the princess was acquitted of robbery on the condition of returning the coat and paying compensation for assault, she was found guilty of insult and sentenced to pay 10 liras for this offense under Article 214 of the Penal Code. However, since Mr. Selim was deemed to have provoked the situation, she was not punished for this offense either. Her acquittal on the charge of assault in this first ruling was due to the fact that, despite the doctor's reports, many people who saw Sidi Wirt

<sup>52</sup> "Prenses Őivekâr Mahkûm Mu Olacak?", *Son Saat*, June 14, 1925, p. 5.

<sup>53</sup> "Madam Saydanın Prenses Őivekârdan Davası", *Vatan*, February 27, 1925, p. 2; "Prenses Őivekâr Hanım Mahkemede", *Cumhuriyet*, February 27, 1925, p. 4; "Őehrimizdeki Kibar Hayatına Ait Bir Dava", *Tevhîd-i Eřkâr*, February 27, 1925, p. 5; "Madam Saydanın Prenses Aleyhindeki Davası", *Cumhuriyet*, June 25, 1925, p. 4; "Prenses Őivekâr Hanım, Beyanatta Bulunmamıřmı?", *Vakit*, June 25, 1925, p. 4.

at a nightclub wearing a dress with her chest and arms bare, stated that there were no signs of assault on her body. The ruling concluded that the bruises mentioned in the report could have occurred later, as the report could not identify the perpetrator of these bruises. Although the princess' lawyer continued to argue during the appeal process that these injuries could have been self-inflicted, he was unable to save his client from punishment.<sup>54</sup>



*Image-4:* Some members of the Şakir Pasha Family: (From left to right) Ms. Sare İsmet (Mr. Suat's mother), Ms. Hakkiye (Koral) (Mr. Suat's eldest sister), Sidi Wirt, Geraldine, Ms. Ayşe (Erner) (Mr. Suat's elder sister), Ms. Aliye<sup>55</sup>

<sup>54</sup> "Prenses Şivekâr", *Vakit*, December 4, 1925, p. 1; "Prenses Şivekâr, Cezadan Kurtuldu", *Vakit*, December 14, 1925, p. 4; "Prenses Şivekâr Hanımın Beraatine Karar Verildi", *Akşam*, December 16, 1925, p. 3; "Prenses Şivekârın Davası Temyize Gönderilecek", *Halk Gazetesi*, December 17, 1925, p. 6; "Prenses Şivekâr", *Vakit*, October 29, 1926, p. 4; "Şivekâr Hanım", *Milliyet*, October 29, 1926, p. 3; "Prenses Şivekâr Davası", *Vakit*, October 14, 1924, p. 3; "Şivekâr Davası Yine Kaldı", *Vakit*, December 20, 1927, p. 4; "Şivekâr Hanım", *Vakit*, October 5, 1927, p. 3; "Şivekâr Davasında", *Vakit*, January 31, 1928, p. 3; "Şivekâr Hanım", *Vakit*, March 6, 1928, p. 3; "Prenses Şivekâr H. 10 lira nakdî cezaya mahkûm oldu", *Cumhuriyet*, September 3, 1929, p. 2; "Prenses Şivekâr H. MM. Sayda için '10' lira ceza verecek", *Son Saat*, September 3, 1929, p. 1; "Prs. Şivekâr", *Vakit*, September 3, 1929, p. 1; "Prenses Şivekâr H. On Liraya Mahkûm Oldu", *Milliyet*, September 3, 1929, p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> Koç, *op. cit.*, appendices. Although the source states that the woman in the middle and the child are Musa Cevat Şakir's first wife Agnieszka Kefiera and their daughter Mutaharra, this information is incorrect.

When the lawsuit came to an end, Ms. Aliye's assault case was about to begin, and the Şakir Pasha Family was once more in the spotlight. A few days after the conclusion of the compensation case, the family was once again targeted, this time through Mr. Suat. According to reports, an individual who conducted certain commercial negotiations in Chicago by introducing himself as a prince was featured in local newspapers as "*Prince Suat Şakir of Türkiye*". The press first published critical reports about this person, whose identity they claimed they could not determine. A few days later, the identity was revealed as Mr. Suat "*who was never ashamed of introducing himself as the Turkish Prince in America*", who is Ms. Aliye's youngest brother, and the husband of Sidi Wirt, with whom Princess Şivekâr had quarreled.<sup>56</sup> The situation was not limited to this revelation; many allegations about the couple, who were no longer together, were published in the columns. Some of them stand out by openly accusing Mr. Suat of being a spendthrift and a fraud with phrases such as: "*...he has a habit of claiming to be a prince everywhere. He even sent a picture of Dolmabahçe, claiming it was a picture of the place where his family lived in İstanbul*". According to this news, Sidi Wirt was the mistress of an American millionaire, and shortly after she gave birth, the man died in a car accident. Since there was no marriage between them, she could not inherit. However, the millionaire's family gave her \$500 a month to take care of the child. While living in Paris on this money, she met Mr. Suat Şakir and married him. In the end, fed up with her husband not finding the \$500 sufficient and finding illegal money from various sources, she left Turkey.<sup>57</sup> However, according to family memoirs, this woman, whose name was Sayida due to her Egyptian mother, was the former wife of Jack Spreckels, the son of a Californian sugar magnate who had died in a traffic accident. She met Mr. Suat at the bar of a hotel where they were staying in Paris or Rome, fell in love, and moved to İstanbul with her six-year-old daughter. After seven years, unable to endure the financial

<sup>56</sup> "Bu da kim?: Sözde prens imiş!?", *Milliyet*, September 7, 1929, p. 1; "Amerikada kendisini Türk prens diye tanıtan Suat B. kim", *Cumhuriyet*, September 11, 1929, p. 1; "Türkiye prensi", *Cumhuriyet*, September 11, 1929, p. 3; "Sahte prens..", *Akşam*, September 12, 1929, p. 2. As a matter of fact, all reports in the American press refer to Mr. Suat as "*prince*" and Sidi Wirt as "*princess*". "Sidi Wirt Spreckels Now A Turkish Princess; Former Ranch Girl Weds Bosphorus Noble", *The New York Times*, July 26, 1923, p. 1; "Princess Chakir Wins A Divorce At Reno; Former Sidi Wirt Spreckels Charged Her Turkish Husband With Not Supporting Her", *The New York Times*, October 1, 1929, p. 32. Likewise, reports of Sidi Wirt's fourth marriage at the end of 1929 again used the phrase "*Turkish Prince*", and the American press continued to refer to Mr. Suat as "*Prince Suad Chakir of Turkey*" for many years afterward. "Former Sidi Wirt Marries Fourth Time; Ex-Wife Of J. D. Spreckels and Turkish Prince Marries Lieut R. A. Gardner Of Army Air Corps", *The New York Times*, December 8, 1929, p. 26; "Debut With a Royal Touch", *The San Francisco Examiner*, September 6, 1957, p. 16.

<sup>57</sup> "Amerikada kendisini Türk prens diye tanıtan Suat B. kim", *Cumhuriyet*, September 11, 1929, pp. 1-2; "Sahte prens..", *Akşam*, September 12, 1929, p. 2.

difficulties and her husband's infidelities, she left him for good.<sup>58</sup> However, there are some minor inaccuracies not only in the press but also in the family's story.

First of all, her name was Sidi after her Egyptian grandmother, and the man referred to as the "sugar king" was John Diedrich Spreckels II, the grandson of Claus Spreckels, the German-born real sugar king and founder of the Spreckels Sugar Company. Just three weeks after divorcing his first wife, he married the singer Sidi Wirt in San Francisco on September 15, 1915. Even though she was not a mistress, there was indeed an inheritance dispute. In 1921, at the age of 37, Mr. Spreckels was seriously injured in a traffic accident, and died from blood loss in the hospital. He left behind two separate wills. The first was dated 1901, and bequeathed half of his estate to his first wife, while the second, written in his own hand, bequeathed one-third of his estate to Sidi Wirt, sparking an inheritance battle between them. Although the couple had divorced a few months before the accident, the decision hadn't yet been finalized, meaning they were still legally married. This meant that she was legally entitled to half of the estate as the deceased's widow. Furthermore, according to the handwritten text of the second will, the couple's only child, four-year-old Geraldine, was also to receive an equal share of the inheritance with her three siblings from her father's first marriage.<sup>59</sup> While living in Paris, Sidi Wirt met Mr. Suat Şakir and married him in 1923.<sup>60</sup> According to reports from 1929, she filed for divorce, because he did not contribute financially to the household and family.<sup>61</sup> At the end of 1929, when Sidi Wirt remarried in the United States, she was still married to Mr. Suat in the Republic of Türkiye, and the divorce case filed against her by Mr. Suat was still

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<sup>58</sup> "Prenses Şivekârı Dava", *Vatan*, January 26, 1925, pp. 1-2; Şirin Devrim, *Şakir Paşa Ailesi "Harika Çılgınlar"*, trans. Semra Karamürsel, Milliyet Publications, İstanbul, 1996, pp. 70, 94; Şirin Devrim, *Şirin*, 2nd ed., Doğan Publications, İstanbul, 2003, p. 170; Emel Koç, *Alyoşa*, Can Publications, İstanbul, 2004, pp. 69, 90; Nermidil Erner Binark, *Şakir Paşa Köşkü (Ahmet Bey ve Şakirler)*, 5th ed., Remzi Publications, İstanbul, 2000, pp. 141-142.

<sup>59</sup> "John D. Spreckels, 73, Pioneer, Dies at Coronado Home", *The San Francisco Examiner*, June 8, 1926, pp. 1, 6; "Jack Spreckels Takes Miss Wirt as Bride", *The Sacramento Union*, September 17, 1915, p. 1; "Ciddie Wirt Makes Informal Announcement of Her Engagement to John D. Spreckels", *The Garden City Herald*, May 27, 1915, p. 7; "John D. Spreckels, Jr., Dies From Injuries In Auto Accident", *Coronado Eagle and Journal*, August 13, 1921, p. 3; "Spreckels, Jr., Killed", *Los Angeles Times*, August 9, 1921, p. 1.

<sup>60</sup> "Second Wife in Legacy Fight: Lawyer Doubts Third Will by Spreckels Jr.", *San Francisco Chronicle*, August 23, 1921, p. 3; "Sidi Wirt Spreckels Now A Turkish Princess; Former Ranch Girl Weds Bosphorus Noble", *The New York Times*, July 26, 1923, p. 1. Although some newspapers reported that the marriage took place in June 1922, this information is incorrect. "Princess Şivekârı Dava", *Vatan*, January 26, 1925, p. 2.

<sup>61</sup> "Princess Chakir Wins A Divorce At Reno; Former Sidi Wirt Spreckels Charged Her Turkish Husband With Not Supporting Her", *The New York Times*, October 1, 1929, p. 32.

ongoing in 1931; since it could not be finalized because Sidi Wirt's whereabouts were unknown.<sup>62</sup> In short, neither the claims of the newspapers nor the family's memories are entirely accurate; the reality is a mixture of the two.



*Image-5: John Diedrich Spreckels II*<sup>63</sup>



*Image-6: Mr. Suat řakir*<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> "İstanbul 6 ıncı hukuk dairesinden", *Cumhuriyet*, November 12, 1931, p. 6.

<sup>63</sup> "Spreckels, Jr., Killed", *Los Angeles Times*, August 9, 1921, p. 1.

<sup>64</sup> Devrim, *řakir Pařa Ailesi "Harika ılgınlr"*, p. 87; Erner Binark, *op. cit.*, appendices.

## **Conclusion**

The Dolmabahçe Incident was more than a tabloid scandal in early Republican İstanbul; it revealed how society and the press perceived the elite. The case underscores the early Republican press' role in social transformation. During this period, the press did not merely report news—it actively shaped, redefined, and at times directed social values. Thus, the Dolmabahçe Incident stands as a key example for understanding the social structure, class tensions, and media influence of early Republican Türkiye. Remembered as a sensational case that captivated the public, it also serves as a historical document revealing how relations among the press, class, and society were established in the Republic's formative years.

However, while examining all these, the triggering factor underlying the period press' critical approach to the elite in question should not be overlooked. The press did not criticize the “rich” as a whole, but rather the “degenerated” class it perceives as belonging to the late Ottoman modernization rather than to the modernization of the Republic. And through the cases of “high society”, it clearly expresses that this segment did not see itself as belonging to society, just as society did not see them as belonging to it. The preferred language is especially striking. First, it trivialized the problems of the wealthy—mocking their “petty troubles”. Second, it reflected a deeply sexist outlook. Both of these “Western-minded” women were depicted as characters in a melodrama rather than real individuals. In this sense, the Dolmabahçe Incident is significant both for the press' critical stance toward high society and for its explicit display of a demeaning attitude toward women.

While the critical stance toward high society reflected the ideology of the Republic, this attitude often came at the expense of individual dignity and privacy. This incident, which occurred on the last day of 1924 and was frequently featured in the press throughout 1925 is a suitable example in this regard. Both the incident itself and the relevant lawsuits to it were widely reported in the newspapers, becoming a source of entertainment, and the details of the hearings adorned the columns moment by moment. The media's fascination with the case continued beyond the courtroom. The parties involved were targeted through their private lives, and the ensuing lawsuits were presented not as legal matters but as spectacles that entertained the public. Beyond its scandalous surface, the Dolmabahçe Incident stands as a cultural mirror reflecting the social and moral climate of early Republican Türkiye.

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