

BETWEEN TURKISH NATIONALISM AND WESTERN CIVILIZATION:
KEMALIST HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN THE 1930S



by
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HISTORY TEXTBOOKS IN THE 1930S

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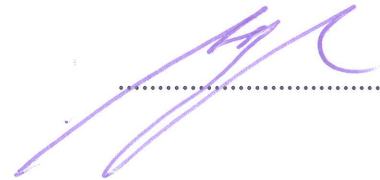
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ABSTRACT

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Turkish Nationalism**

This thesis provides a detailed analysis of the historical narrative contained in the 'Tarih' history textbooks used in the secondary schools of the Turkish Republic in the 1930s. It argues that the shape of this narrative was determined by pragmatic, ideological and historiographical factors. Pragmatically, it was intended to support the program of nation-building and secularizing/westernizing reform embarked on by the Turkish state in the 1920s and 1930s. Ideologically, it reflected the nationalist, positivist and secularist outlook of the early republican Kemalist elite. In historiographical terms, it was influenced by a variety of narratives regarding the history of the Turkish nation that had been developed in the final decades of the Ottoman Empire. The thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter provides an account of the Turkish state's twin programs of nation-building and westernizing/secularizing reform throughout the 1920s, and a discussion of the ideological background to these programs. The second chapter presents a brief account of the writing of the new national history, and places this history in its historiographical context. The third chapter contains an analysis of the history of the Turkish nation as presented in the history textbooks. Separate sections in this chapter focus on the textbook depiction of the origins and character of the Turkish nation, of the Turkish nation's supposed role in spreading civilization throughout the world, of the history of the Turks of Central Asia and of Islam, and of the history of the Ottoman Empire.

ÖZET

TÜRK MİLLİYETÇİLİĞİNİN VE BATI MEDENİYETİNİN ARASINDA: 1930'LARDA KEMALIST TARİH DERS KİTAPLARI

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Anahtar Kelimeler: Tarih Yazımı, Tarih Ders Kitapları, Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi,
Kemalizm, Türk Milliyetçiliği

Bu tez 1930'lu yılların Türkiye'sinde basılan 'Tarih' adlı lise ders kitaplarında yer alan tarihsel anlatının ayrıntılı bir analizini içerir. Çalışmanın argümanı, ders kitaplarında yer alan anlatının aldığı biçimde hem ideolojik ve pragmatik etkenlerin hem de mevcut tarih yazımsal yaklaşımların belirleyici olduğudur. Pragmatik etkenler, Türkiye devletinin 1920 ve 1930'lu yıllardaki ulus inşası ve sekülerleşme/batılılaşma reformlarının desteklenmek istenmesinde yatmaktadır. İdeolojik etkenler ise erken cumhuriyet dönemindeki Kemalist elitlerin milliyetçi, pozitivist ve seküler dünya görüşünü yansıtmaktadır. Ders kitaplarındaki tarihsel anlatı aynı zamanda Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun son yıllarında ortaya çıkan farklı tarih yazım yaklaşımlarının etkisini yansıtmaktadır. Tez üç ana bölüme ayrılmıştır. Birinci bölüm Türkiye devletinde 1920'li yıllarda yapılan ulus inşası ve batılılaşma/sekülerleşme reformlarını ve bu reformların ideolojik arka planını konu etmektedir. İkinci bölüm, yeni ulusal tarih yazımının ortaya çıkışı ve yerleştiği genel tarih yazımı çerçevesini konu etmektedir. Üçüncü bölüm ise incelenen ders kitaplarında yer verilen tarih anlatısının analizini içermektedir. Analiz ders kitaplarındaki tarih anlatısının şu parçalarına odaklanmıştır: Türk ulusunun karakteri, medeniyetin dünyaya yayılışında Türk ulusunun varsayılan rolü, İslam ve Orta Asya Türkleri'nin tarihi, ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun tarihi.

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INTRODUCTION

In an article written in the year 1924, the Turkish nationalist journalist and intellectual Muhittin Birgen lamented the absence of a Turkish national history that could be taught to children in the country's schools:

What a great misfortune it is for the Turkish nation that, having with an enormous effort liberated itself from the grasp of the [Ottoman] empire, it has as yet been unable to escape the grasp of the empire's historians. The supposedly national history books that Turkish children are made to read in our schools today ... contain nothing other than Ottoman history. Our historians, who are not ashamed to call themselves Turks, are somehow unable to leave Ottoman history behind.¹

Birgen's call for textbooks that would teach the children of the Turkish Republic the history of the Turkish nation was answered in the year 1931. That year saw the publication of a series of four secondary school (*lise*) history textbooks, titled simply *Tarih* (History) *I, II, III, IV*, which purported to present an account of the history of the Turkish nation from its pre-historical origins up until the time the books were written. Revised editions of these books would be published between the years 1932 and 1934,² and would form the basis of history education in Turkish high schools until the end of the decade.³

Büşra Ersanlı has pointed out that the Turkish national history presented in these textbooks formed a crucial part of the new state ideology of Kemalism, which was developed by the leadership of the Turkish Republic in the early 1930s.⁴ An analysis of the textbook narrative can thus help to contribute to our understanding of Kemalism itself, of the worldview of its framers, and of the historical context within which these

1 Quoted in Zeki Arıkan, "Ders Kitaplarında Avrupa Tarihi," in *Tarih Öğretimi ve Ders Kitapları – Buca Sempozyumu*, ed. Salih Özbaran (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1995), 154. Translation my own.

2 Türk Tarih Tetkik Cemiyeti, *Tarih I – Tarihtenevelki Zamanlar ve Eski Zamanlar* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1932).
Türk Tarih Tetkik Cemiyeti, *Tarih II – Ortazamanlar* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1933).
Türk Tarih Tetkik Cemiyeti, *Tarih III – Yeni ve Yakın Zamanlar* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1933).
Türk Tarih Tetkik Cemiyeti, *Tarih IV – Türkiye Cumhuriyeti* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1934).

3 Erdal Aslan, "Devrim Tarihi Ders Kitapları," in *Tarih Öğretimi ve Ders Kitapları*, ed. Özbaran, 298.

4 Büşra Ersanlı Behar, *İktidar ve Tarih: Türkiye'de "Resmi Tarih" Tezinin Oluşumu (1929-1937)* (Istanbul: AFA Yayınları, 1992), 89.

books were written. It is with this background in mind that I propose, in this thesis, to engage in a close reading of the historical narrative presented in these textbooks.

Turkish history, the textbook authors claimed in their introduction, had been obscured or misunderstood for centuries. This was supposedly due to a number of factors. First of all, the animosity of Western, Christian historians towards the Islamic world had led them to depict the history of the Muslim Turks as consisting solely of “exploits of blood and fire.” Muslim historians, in contrast, had tended to treat Turkish history as merely an aspect of the broader sweep of Islamic history, and had therefore ignored the long pre-Islamic history of the Turks. Finally, Ottoman historians, in their ambition to create one Ottoman nation out of the distinct elements making up Ottoman society, had neglected and ignored the history of the Turks as a separate nation. The new historical account, so the authors hoped, would restore the Turkish nation to its rightful place in history.⁵

This new account can be summarized as follows: The Turks were an ancient, civilized and racially defined nation with origins in Central Asia. From their Central Asian homeland, the Turks had, in the depths of pre-history, migrated outward and settled in different parts of the Eurasian landmass, including Anatolia. These early Turkish migrations led to the first flowerings of civilization across the ancient world, in the Fertile Crescent, China, India, Egypt, and ancient Rome and Greece. Following this early civilizing wave, the Turkish nation continued to dominate the history of Asia, founding a large number of powerful states and playing a prominent role in the development of the major Asian civilizations – Chinese, Indian and Islamic – while Europe remained stuck in the Dark Ages. In the early second millennium CE, the Turks also resettled Anatolia, establishing the Anatolian Seljuk state, and, later, the Ottoman Empire. The glorious march of Turkish history was temporarily interrupted by the decline of the Ottoman Empire – caused mainly by the empire's cosmopolitan and Islamic nature – and the contemporaneous rise of Europe. The abolition of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the Turkish Republic, however, laid the foundation for the

⁵ *Tarih I*, v.

Turkish nation to once again assume the preeminent position among the nations of the world that it had enjoyed in the past.

Like the Kemalist ideology which it was an integral part of, the new national history was shaped by both pragmatic and ideological considerations.⁶ On a pragmatic level, it was designed to provide a historical legitimization for the abolition of the Ottoman Empire and its replacement by the Turkish Republic, and for the program of nation-building and Westernizing/secularizing reform embarked on by the leadership of the Turkish republic around Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk) in the 1920s and 1930s. On an ideological level, the narrative itself reflected the ideological convictions that had led the Turkish republican elite to embark on their project of nation-building and reform in the first place: a strong Turkish nationalism; an acceptance of both the superiority and the universality of Western civilization; and a positivist belief in science and rational thought as the forces advancing human civilization, coupled to a rejection of religion in general, and Islam in particular, as an obstacle in the path of human progress.⁷

In addition to this, the Kemalist version of Turkish national history needs also to be understood in the context of two major historiographical currents in the late Ottoman Empire and early Turkish Republic. The first of these, linked to the Turkist movement, located the origins of the Turkish nation in the depths of Central Asia, and stressed the central role of the Turks in spreading civilization.⁸ The second current, developed partly in opposition to Turkism, emphasized the centrality of Anatolia, as the national homeland, to Turkish nationhood.⁹ Both of these historiographical currents had an influence on the Kemalist historical narrative.

6 Halil Berktaş, "Dünyada ve Türkiye'de Tarihiçiliğin Durumu ve "Dilin Evrenselleşmesi" Üzerine Düşünceler," in *Tarih Öğretimi ve Ders Kitapları*, ed. Özbaran, 74. For a discussion of the mixed ideological and pragmatic nature of Kemalism, see Paul Dumont, "The Origins of Kemalist Ideology," in *Atatürk and the Modernization of Turkey*, ed. Jacob M. Landau (Boulder, CO: Westwood Press), 25-26.

7 M. Şükrü Hanoğlu, *Atatürk: An Intellectual Biography* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 130-131.

8 Etienne Copeaux, *Tarih Ders Kitaplarında (1931-1993) Türk Tarih Tezinden Türk-İslam Sentezine*, trans. Ali Berktaş (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), 23.

9 Hasan Akbayrak, *Milletin Tarihinden Ulusun Tarihine: İkinci Meşrutiyet'ten Cumhuriyet'e Ulus-Devlet İnşa Sürecinde Kurumsal Tarih Çalışmaları* (Istanbul: Kitabevi, 2009), 224-225.

In line with the above discussion, this thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter provides an account of the Turkish state's twin programs of nation-building and Westernizing/secularizing reform throughout the 1920s, and a discussion of the ideological background to these programs. The final section of the chapter chronicles the growing popular opposition to the state's reforms and policies, and the resulting decision by the Turkish leadership to create a legitimizing ideology. The second chapter presents a brief account of the writing of the new national history, and places this history in its historiographical context. The third chapter, finally, contains an analysis of the history of the Turkish nation as presented in the *Tarih* textbooks. This analysis roughly follows the chronology of the textbook account, and is divided into four main sections. The first section covers the supposed origins and racial characteristics of the Turkish nation, and the construction of Anatolia as the Turkish national homeland. The second section covers the textbook account of the ancient Turks' role in the spread of civilization, and also offers an analysis of how the textbooks depicted the civilization of these early Turks. The third section analyzes the textbooks' Turkification of Asian history, and how the history of (Turkish) Asia was constructed in opposition to that of Europe. The fourth section focuses on the depiction of the history of the Ottoman Empire, and particularly on the textbook account of Ottoman decline.

While this thesis offers, to the extent of my knowledge, the first in-depth study of the entirety of the historical narrative found in the *Tarih* textbooks, aspects of the textbook narrative have previously been taken in hand by a number of scholars. Thus Būşra Erganlı has written a detailed account of the development of Kemalist historiography in the 1930s, but focuses more on the proceedings and discussions of the Turkish History Congresses of 1932 and 1937 than on the content of the textbooks.¹⁰ Erganlı has also authored a chapter on the historiography of the Ottoman Empire during the Kemalist period.¹¹ Etienne Copeaux, meanwhile, has analyzed the *Tarih* textbooks as part of his study of the development of Turkish history textbooks over the period 1931-1993.¹² Aspects of Kemalist historiography were also discussed at a conference on the topic of

10 Erganlı Behar, *İktidar ve Tarih*.

11 Būşra Erganlı, "The Ottoman Empire in the Historiography of the Kemalist Era: A Theory of Fatal Decline," in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, ed. Fikret Adanır et al. (Leiden, Boston and Köln: Brill, 2002).

12 Copeaux, *Tarih Ders Kitaplarında (1931-1993) Türk Tarih Tezinden Türk-İslam Sentezine*

Turkish history textbooks held in 1994.¹³ Finally, Dođan Grpınar has also drawn on the Kemalist textbook narrative as part of his study of the changing perceptions of the Turkish nation in the period 1860-1950.¹⁴ All these studies have been consulted in the writing of this thesis and, where appropriate, their authors' insights have been used.



13 *Tarih Öğretimi ve Ders Kitapları*, ed. Özbaran.

14 Dođan Grpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation, 1860-1950* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

CHAPTER 1

THE HISTORICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CONTEXT

1.1. The Creation of the Turkish Nation State

1.1.1. The National Struggle and the Establishment of the Turkish Republic

By late 1918 the Ottoman Empire, having allied itself with the Central Powers during the First World War, was forced to acknowledge defeat. With only the empire's Anatolian territories yet free of Allied occupation, and with the Allied armies advancing on all fronts, the Ottoman government accepted the ceasefire terms offered by Britain, and Ottoman delegates signed the armistice treaty of Moudros on 30 October 1918. Leading members of the *İttihat ve Terâkki Cemiyeti* (Committee of Union and Progress, CUP), the Young Turk organization which, after seizing power in a coup in 1913, had led the Ottoman Empire through the war, fled the country the very next day.¹⁵

The CUP government had realized the imminence of Ottoman defeat, however, and had therefore, during the final month of the war, laid the foundations of an armed movement that would be able to resist the potential occupation of Anatolia by the Allied powers or their confederates.¹⁶ Popular support for this movement, based around so-called “societies for the defence of national rights” of the Anatolian Muslims against the separatist demands (both real and imagined) of Anatolian Christians, increased rapidly after the Greek occupation of Izmir in May 1919.¹⁷ Following his arrival in Anatolia later that month, Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk), an early member of the CUP and a military officer who had made a name for himself in a number of campaigns throughout the First World War, was able to gradually consolidate this movement under his own leadership.¹⁸

15 Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement 1905-1926* (Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1984), 72.

16 Ibid., 82.

17 Ibid., 105.

18 Ibid., 118-119.

The first congress bringing together delegates from a large number of “defence of rights” societies was held in Erzurum in July 1919, and ended with a declaration insisting on the territorial integrity of all Ottoman lands within the armistice lines of 1918.¹⁹ This was reiterated in the National Pact (*Misak-ı Milli*), adopted in January 1920, which remained the defining declaration of the movement's aims until the signature of the peace treaty of Lausanne in 1923.²⁰ This pact described the Ottoman territories within the armistice lines that were inhabited by a (non-Arab) Ottoman Muslim majority as the indivisible homeland of the Ottoman Muslims.²¹ It was also in early 1920 that the headquarters of the resistance movement in Ankara acquired the character of a full-fledged government, with the first convocation, in April, of the *Büyük Millet Meclisi*, or Grand National Assembly.²²

The Anatolian resistance movement's worst fears regarding Allied designs on Ottoman territory were confirmed by the terms of the peace treaty of Sèvres, which was signed by representatives of the Istanbul-based Ottoman government headed by Sultan Mehmet VI in August 1920. The treaty essentially foresaw the partition of Anatolia. Large parts of south-eastern and south-western Anatolia were declared, respectively, French and Italian zones of influence. An independent Armenian republic was to be created in eastern Anatolia. Eastern Thrace was to be annexed by Greece, as – pending a plebiscite – were the city of Izmir and its surroundings, which the Greek army had occupied in May 1919. The mainly Kurdish areas in south-eastern Anatolia were to be granted autonomy, with the right to make an appeal for national independence to the League of Nations within a year. This left the Ottoman state with Istanbul, and with a small piece of territory covering central Anatolia and the central Black Sea coast.²³

The Anatolian resistance movement rejected the Sèvres treaty, portraying the Ottoman government as traitors for assenting to its terms. The Allies lacked the will to push through the implementation of the treaty by force of arms, and therefore reluctantly

19 Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History*, 3rd ed. (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2004), 150.

20 Erik Jan Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building: From the Ottoman Empire to Atatürk's Turkey* (London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2010), 228.

21 Ibid., 228.

22 Zürcher, *Turkey*, 151-152.

23 Ibid., 147.

accepted the offer of the Greek government to send its armies further east from their base of operations in western Anatolia, and thus to force the resistance to accept the treaty's terms.²⁴ The Greek invasion of Anatolia in the summer of 1920 marked the beginning of hostilities between the Greeks and the Anatolian national resistance, which ended when the Turkish cavalry rode into Izmir in August 1922. Separate campaigns by the resistance armies against the newly formed Armenian Republic in the southern Caucasus, in which the Anatolian forces conquered the town of Kars, which had been lost to the Russians in the 1877-78 war, and against the French occupation of the region of Cilicia in the south-east of modern-day Turkey were also successful.²⁵ By late 1922, the victory of the Anatolian forces in what would become known as the Liberation War (*Kurtuluş Savaşı*) or the National Struggle (*Millî Mücadele*) was thus assured. A ceasefire was signed in October 1922, paving the way for negotiations that culminated in the signature of the peace treaty of Lausanne in July 1923. This treaty superseded the Sèvres treaty, and accorded the new state, ruled by the Grand National Assembly, full sovereignty over almost the entire territory it had laid claim to in the National Pact of 1920.²⁶ At the behest of Mustafa Kemal, and with the approval of the national assembly, this new state was proclaimed as the Turkish Republic on 29 October 1923. Mustafa Kemal became the republic's first president.

1.1.2. Creating the Nation State

As early as 1 November 1922, the Grand National Assembly had passed a resolution deposing the last Ottoman sultan, Mehmed VI. The sovereignty of the sultan was to be assumed by the nation, as the Ottoman Empire was replaced by a new, national state.²⁷ The national character of the new state was enshrined in the first constitution of the Turkish Republic, adopted by the assembly on 20 April 1924, which clearly articulated the sovereignty of the nation: "Sovereignty belongs without restriction to the nation."²⁸ The Turkish political leadership's decision that the republic was to be a nation state

24 Ibid., 147.

25 Ibid., 153.

26 Ibid., 162.

27 Edward Mead Earle, "The New Constitution of Turkey," *Political Science Quarterly* 40:1 (1925), 85.

rested on their conviction that nation states were the only modern and scientific form of political community.²⁹ Nation states' modernity and scientific nature, they believed, made them more cohesive and powerful, and ultimately more successful, than political communities – such as the Ottoman Empire – not based on a single nation. The truth of this assessment seemed to have been borne out by the success of the nationalist separatist movements which sprang up in various parts of the Ottoman Empire, particularly in the Balkans, in the final century of the empire's existence, and the subsequent establishment of a number of nation states on formerly Ottoman territory. Conversely, the success of these movements also appeared to demonstrate the weakness of the multinational Ottoman Empire. As the *Tarih III* textbook would put it in 1931, “The Ottoman Empire was too large, its population was not homogeneous ... there was no shared, solid spiritual bond between the many different elements that made up Ottoman society.”³⁰

Crucial to the conversion of the future leaders of the Turkish Republic to nationalism were their experiences as young military officers in the Ottoman province of Macedonia in the years 1904-1908. In their campaigns against Greek, Serbian, Bulgarian and Macedonian *komitacis* (guerilla fighters), the Ottoman officers were impressed by the strong nationalist sentiments that sustained the *komitacis* in their fight against Ottoman rule. Hanioglu recounts one instance in which the spectacle of a group of captured Bulgarian fighters being serenaded with the Bulgarian national anthem by a gathering crowd of civilians led the Ottoman officers who witnessed the scene to question why the Ottoman Empire did not have its own anthem, only marches dedicated to the Ottoman sultans. In this sense, he argues, the Macedonian campaign served as “a school of nationalism” for many future members of the Turkish Republic's ruling elite.³¹

28 Article 3 of the 1924 constitution. See Earle, 89. Sovereignty was to be exercised on behalf of the nation by the Grand National Assembly. From the foundation of the republic until 1945, and with the exception of two brief interludes in 1924-25 and in 1930, the assembly would be composed exclusively of parliamentarians belonging to the *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası* (Republican People's Party, RPP), led by Mustafa Kemal and, after his death in 1938, by İsmet İnönü. During the period under consideration, the Turkish Republic can thus be described as a one-party state. See Zürcher, *Turkey*, 176.

29 Bobby S. Sayyid, *A Fundamental Fear: Eurocentrism and the Emergence of Islamism* (London and New York: Zed Books, 1997), 65.

30 “Osmanlı İmparatorluğu çok genişti, ahalisi mütecanis değildi. Osmanlı ictimai heyetini teşkil eden başka başka unsurlar arasında ... müşterek ve esaslı manevi bir bağ yoktu.” *Tarih III*, 115. Translation my own. All subsequent translations of textbook extracts are also my own.

1.1.3. Defining the Nation

Yet how was the nation to be defined? Zürcher, basing himself on an analysis of the policies of the CUP government and on the pronouncements of leading actors in the national resistance movement, has argued that both the CUP and the national resistance leaders adhered to a “peculiar brand of Ottoman Muslim nationalism.”³² In Zürcher's reading, the CUP and the national resistance aimed to defend the rights and interests of the empire's Muslims, defined as a nation in contradistinction to the Christians (predominantly Greeks and Armenians) who had dominated the Ottoman economy since the mid-19th century and whose nationalist separatist aspirations had led to major Ottoman territorial losses throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries.³³ With the loss of the empire's remaining European lands in the Balkan wars of 1912-13, and the Allied occupation of Ottoman territories in the Levant, Arabia and Mesopotamia during the First World War, this nationalism also acquired a territorial, Anatolian dimension. In this reading, the nation was both religiously and geographically defined: the markers of national belonging were adherence to Islam and residence within the borders of the National Pact.

While Islam did play an important role in the nationalism of the CUP and of the Anatolian resistance, there was also another aspect to their conception of the nation. Thus, from the turn of the century onward, leading members of the Young Turk movement had begun to espouse a Turkish, rather than an Ottoman Muslim nationalism, which defined the Turkish nation as a linguistically and culturally distinct entity. The roots of this Turkish nationalism can be traced back to the 19th century. In the course of the modernizing *Tanzimat* reforms, and in the face of the nationalist separatist endeavours of various subject populations of the empire, a number of Ottoman Muslim

31 Hanioglu, *Atatürk*, 64. A good example of Ottoman Muslims' turn away from a commitment to the Ottoman Empire, and towards nationalism, is provided by the writer Ömer Seyfettin. In his 1916 short story “Flags of Liberty” (*Hürriyet Bayrakları*), set in Macedonia in the aftermath of the 1908 constitutional revolution, Seyfettin (through the story's narrator, a disillusioned Ottoman officer) depicts nations as primordial social entities, and the nationalist separatism of the empire's ethnic groups as therefore justified. The Ottoman Empire's multinational nature, the narrator argues, is unnatural, and the empire is bound to disintegrate because of it. Rather than attempting to keep the empire alive, therefore, the Turks should found their own nation state. See Ömer Seyfettin, “Hürriyet Bayrakları,” in Ömer Seyfettin, *Bütün Eserleri: Hikâyeler 1*, ed. Hülya Argunşah (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1999), 229-237.

32 Zürcher, *The Young Turk Legacy and Nation Building*, 230.

33 *Ibid.*, 230.

intellectuals had come to conceive of the empire's Turkish-speaking Muslim subjects as the *unsur-ı aslı*, the “fundamental element” on which the Ottoman Empire was built.³⁴ On one level, Muslim Turkish-speakers were seen as more reliable and as more loyal to the Ottoman state than the other Muslim ethno-linguistic groups ruled by the empire (Kurds, Arabs, Bosnians etc.) and, particularly, than the empire's Christian *millets*. On another level, they were also regarded as more civilized and modern than the Kurds and Arabs on the empire's southern and eastern periphery, and thus as the natural leaders of the empire's modernizing efforts.³⁵

The perception of the empire's Muslim Turkish-speakers as a separate nation was given a further impetus by the emergence, in the late 19th century, of the Turkist (*Türkçü*) movement. Drawing on the work of Western Orientalists, and inspired by contemporary developments in European nationalist thought, Turkist intellectuals developed a vision of the Ottoman Turks as members of a distinct, originally Central Asian nation whose roots extended far into the pre-Ottoman and even pre-Islamic past, and whose membership included all peoples who spoke a language belonging to the Turkic family.³⁶ These views would have a strong influence on the Young Turk movement. Thus, from the last years of the 19th century onward, a number of Young Turk publications began to emphasize the distinctness and superior nature of the Ottoman Turks, not just compared to the empire's remaining Christian subjects, but also compared to the other Muslim subjects of the empire.³⁷

Reflecting the Turkish nationalist convictions of Mustafa Kemal, who would later trace the awakening of his national consciousness to his reading of the poems of the influential Turkist author Mehmet Emin (Yurdakul),³⁸ the constitution adopted by the Grand National Assembly in 1924 was based on a Turkish, rather than an Anatolian Muslim definition of the nation: “Our state is a nation-state. It is not a multi-national

34 Selim Deringil, “They Live in a State of Nomadism and Savagery: The Late Ottoman Empire and the Post-Colonial Debate,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 45:2 (2003), 328.

35 Ussama Makdisi, “Rethinking Ottoman Imperialism: Modernity, Violence and the Cultural Logic of Ottoman Reform,” in *The Empire in the City: Arab Provincial Capitals in the Ottoman Empire*, ed. Jens Hanssen et al. (Beirut and Würzburg: Orient-Institut der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 2002), 45.

36 David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism 1876-1908* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), 7.

37 M. Şükrü Hanioglu, *Bir Siyasal Örgüt Olarak Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Jön Türklük (1889-1902)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1989), 630-632.

38 Hanioglu, *Atatürk*, 71-72.

state. The state does not recognize any nation other than Turks.”³⁹ Yet this does not mean that the Muslim nationalism that had, at least in part, informed the aims and policies of the CUP and of the national resistance completely disappeared with the promulgation of the constitution. Islam did continue to play its part as a marker of national belonging in the Turkish Republic, as became clear in the Turkish state's different treatment of its Muslim and Christian minorities. This difference will be analyzed in the following section.

1.1.4. Turkifying Anatolia

By the mid-1920s, mostly as a result of the massacre and forced expulsion from Anatolia of the vast majority of the Ottoman Empire's Armenian subjects in 1915, and of the population exchange with Greece in 1924, in which the remaining Greek residents of Anatolia (defined as such based on their adherence to the Greek Orthodox religion, rather than the language they spoke, which in some cases – as in that of the Central Anatolian Karamanlis – was Turkish)⁴⁰ were deported to Greece, Muslim Turkish-speakers made up the overwhelming majority of the republic's population. The first census carried out by the republic, in 1927, showed that more than 97% of the republic's citizens were Muslim, and more than 86% spoke Turkish as a first language.⁴¹ Yet, as these numbers show, the population of the republic was not completely homogeneous. It still contained a fairly large linguistic minority – consisting predominantly of speakers of a variety of Kurdish languages concentrated in the country's south-east – and smaller, but (at least in the eyes of the republican leadership) not insignificant religious minorities – mostly Greek or Armenian Christians, as well as a small Jewish community.⁴²

39 Quoted in Mesut Yeğen, “Banditry to Disloyalty: Turkish Nationalisms and the Kurdish Question,” in *Symbiotic Antagonisms: Sources, Discourses and Changing Nature of Turkish, Kurdish and Islamic Nationalisms in Turkey*, ed. Fuat Keyman et al. (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2010), 229.

40 Richard Clogg, “A Millet Within a Millet: The Karamanlides,” in *Ottoman Greeks in the Age of Nationalism: Politics, Economy and Society in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Dimitri Gondicas et al. (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1999), 115.

41 Soner Çağaptay, *Islam, Secularism and Nationalism in Modern Turkey: Who is a Turk?* (Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2006), 16.

42 *Ibid.*, 16.

The experience of the National Struggle and the memory of the Sèvres treaty, which Jung and Piccoli have described as “the historical culmination of ... the Kemalist experience of external conspiracy and internal betrayal,”⁴³ made the republican leadership deeply suspicious of these minorities, particularly of the Christians. The minorities were seen as a potential fifth column that could threaten the political and territorial cohesion of the Turkish Republic – a threat which needed to be neutralized.

In order to combat the putative threat which these respective minorities posed to the Turkish Republic, the republican leadership adopted different approaches. Following a pattern set during the CUP era,⁴⁴ the Christian minorities were systematically marginalized, a process that accelerated after religious minority leaders were pressured, in 1925, into giving up the privileges their communities had been accorded by the treaty of Lausanne. Among other things, Christians were excluded from state (and, to a certain extent, private) employment, their freedom of movement was curtailed, and their ability to purchase or own property was impeded.⁴⁵ All of these policies were designed to exclude Christians as much as possible from the economic, political and cultural life of the country, and contributed to a gradual exodus of Christians, particularly of Anatolian Armenians, from the Turkish Republic throughout the 1920s.⁴⁶

The Turkish state's approach to the Kurdish minority differed, in intention if not necessarily in execution, from its treatment of the Christian minorities. It is here that the Ottoman Muslim nationalism highlighted by Zürcher becomes apparent. Due to the religion they shared with the Turkish-speaking majority, and due to their support for the Anatolian resistance movement during the National Struggle, the Anatolian Kurds were accorded the status of “prospective Turks:” they could, if they adopted the Turkish language and Turkish culture, become full-fledged members of the Turkish nation.⁴⁷ Unlike the Anatolian Christians, whose religion and opposition to the resistance

43 Dietrich Jung and Wolfgang Piccoli, *Turkey at the Crossroads* (London: Zed Books, 2001), 149. Quoted in Fatma Müge Göçek, *The Transformation of Turkey: Redefining State and Society from the Ottoman Empire to the Modern Era* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 102.

44 Uğur Ümit Üngör, “Seeing like a nation-state: Young Turk social engineering in Eastern Turkey, 1913-1950,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 10:1 (2008), 28-29.

45 Çağaptay, 28.

46 Ibid., 35.

47 Mesut Yeğen, ““Prospective Turks” or “Pseudo-Citizens:” Kurds in Turkey,” *Middle East Journal* 63:4 (2009), 597.

movement blocked their path to full membership of the Turkish nation, the Kurds could become assimilated into the Turkish nation.⁴⁸

Yet the support of the Kurds for the Anatolian resistance movement had not been unconditional. It had been based both on promises of greater autonomy for the Kurdish areas within a future Anatolian state, and on the strong Islamic rhetoric used by the leaders of the Anatolian resistance, which presented the war as a fight for the preservation of the Caliphate. The definition of the republic as a Turkish nation state in the 1924 constitution and the abolition of the Caliphate in the same year could thus not but incite discontent among the republic's Kurdish population.⁴⁹ This discontent broke through in the Sheikh Said uprising of February 1925, in which an alliance of Kurdish intellectuals, officers, civil servants and religious leaders, supported by a significant proportion of the local population, seized control of a large area in the country's south-east.⁵⁰ The state responded to the rebellion with a great deal of force. Sheikh Said and his closest supporters were hanged, and leading families accused of supporting the rebellion were deported to western Turkey, as well as having their properties confiscated by the state.⁵¹ Then, in June 1927, the Grand National Assembly passed Law 1164, which created an Inspectorate-General to administer the south-eastern majority-Kurdish provinces. Armed with extraordinary powers, İbrahim Talî, the first Inspector-General, implemented a range of policies aimed at Turkifying the Kurdish population. These included the breaking up of large estates belonging to Kurdish tribal leaders as a way of reducing their influence, the use of primary schools and branches of the Turkish Hearths (*Türk Ocakları*) cultural association to spread Turkish culture and the Turkish language, and the conscription of young Kurdish men into the Turkish army.⁵² Many of these policies continued into the 1930s. While their efficacy has been questioned,⁵³ they are a testament to the determination of the leadership of the early Turkish Republic to create a homogeneous Turkish nation within the borders of the Turkish nation state.

48 Çağaptay, 21.

49 Zürcher, *Turkey*, 177-178.

50 Üngör, 29.

51 Çağaptay, 22

52 Ibid, 23.

53 Senem Aslan, "Everyday Forms of State Power and the Kurds in the Early Turkish Republic," *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 43 (2011), 81.

1.2. The Secularization and Westernization of State and Society

1.2.1. The Reforms

The creation of a homogeneous Turkish nation state out of the remains of the Ottoman Empire was only one aspect of the ambitious reform project embarked on by the leadership of the early Turkish republic. The project also involved the secularization of the Turkish state and, more ambitiously, the secularization and Westernization of the population living inside the borders of the Turkish Republic.

The secularization of the state began with the abolition of the Caliphate in 1924.⁵⁴ That same year saw the abolition of the office of *Şeyhülislam* (the highest religious authority in the Ottoman Empire) and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Pious Foundations (which was replaced by two directorates – the Directorate for Religious Affairs and the Directorate-General for Pious Foundations). Education was both standardized and secularized through the Law on the Unification of Education and the abolition of *medreses* (religious schools), also in 1924. The Swiss civil code and the Italian penal code were adopted in 1926, eliminating the use of *şeriat* (Islamic religious law) from the judicial process. The removal of the article proclaiming Islam as the state religion of the Turkish Republic from the constitution in 1928 may be seen as the final step in the secularization of the Turkish state.⁵⁵

The reforms also sought to eliminate the Islamic character of what may be described as the frames of daily life – dates, times, the alphabet, measures – replacing them with European frames. In 1926, the republic adopted the European way of telling the time and the Gregorian calendar, respectively replacing *Ezanî* time, reckoned from sunset and related to Muslim prayer times, and the *Hijrî* calendar, which was based on lunar months and took the year of Muhammed's flight from Mecca to Medina as its starting point. An even more radical reform was the adoption, in 1928, of the Latin alphabet, replacing the Arabic script which had been in use since the foundation of the Ottoman

54 Following the deposition of Mehmed VI in 1922, his cousin Abdülmecid II had been elected to the office of Caliph by the Turkish Grand National Assembly. He would occupy the position for only two years.

55 For an account of these reforms, see Zürcher, *Turkey*, 187

Empire. In 1931, finally, the republic also adopted the metric system, replacing the old measures of weight and capacity.⁵⁶

Islam was also to be removed from the central position it occupied in Anatolian society and culture. The most important step in this regard was the 1925 suppression of the *tarikats* (religious brotherhoods), which had been the focal point of popular Islam throughout Ottoman history and which, in reaction to the increased European influence in Ottoman political, economic and cultural life, had become more powerful during the last decades of the Ottoman Empire.⁵⁷ The reforms also targeted other aspects of popular religion, such as religious dress and amulets, saints' shrines, and religious pilgrimages and festivals.⁵⁸

Islamic social and cultural practices were to be replaced by “Western” ones. The year 1925 saw the introduction of the “hat reform” prohibiting the *fez* and other religious headwear and enjoining government employees to wear European-style hats.⁵⁹ The Turkish public was also encouraged to adopt European-style social behaviour through the publication, from the late 1920s onwards, of a number of pamphlets, such as the Turkish version of the French manual *Pour bien connaître les usages mondains*, instructing its readers, among other things, in how to properly kiss the hand of a lady or celebrate the new year.⁶⁰

The Turkish leadership also saw the transformation of the status and appearance of women as crucial to the Westernization of society. The Swiss civil code, adopted in 1926, granted extensive rights to women and put them on a more equal legal footing with men. Women were also granted the right to vote in municipal elections in 1930 and in parliamentary elections in 1934. The Turkish leadership also promoted a more public role for women, as well as new female role models, such as Keriman Halis, who won

56 For an account of these reforms, see Hanioglu, *Atatürk*, 214-218.

57 Zürcher, *Turkey*, 192.

58 Ibid., 192.

59 Hanioglu, *Atatürk*, 207.

60 Ibid., 206

the first Miss Turkey pageant in 1929 and went on to win the Miss World contest in 1932, or Sabiha Gökçen, the country's first female fighter pilot.⁶¹

Even the arts were Westernized. Thus, from the mid-1920s onward, the Turkish state made a concerted attempt to replace traditional *Alla Turca* music with European music styles, which culminated in the removal, in 1934, of traditional music from the programming of the state-run radio station. The Turkish state also promoted European fine arts such as sculpture and painting.⁶² Finally, early Turkish republican architecture, perhaps best represented by the government buildings of the new capital Ankara, was strongly influenced by contemporary European architecture.⁶³

1.2.2. The Ideological and Historical Background to the Reforms

1.2.2.1. Historical Progress, Universal Civilization and Westernization

The Turkish reform project was, as Bryan S. Turner has pointed out, “consciously mimetic in that it took Europe as its specific model of adaption.”⁶⁴ In this regard, it was not the first of its kind. As early as the 1830s, members of the educated Ottoman elite had begun advocating the reform of Ottoman state and society along European lines.⁶⁵ Their call for reform was based on the acceptance of the Enlightenment discourse surrounding the concept of civilization which had emerged in Europe in the late 18th century. This discourse equated the highest level of civilization with European modernity,⁶⁶ but also portrayed European modernity as universal and therefore potentially applicable to all human societies. European societies had reached their current level of civilization by passing through a number of stages. If non-European societies followed the path pioneered by Europe, they too could become as civilized as the Europeans. In line with this conception of civilization as universal and human

61 Ibid., 210-212.

62 Ibid., 219-221

63 Ibid., 222.

64 Bryan S. Turner, *Weber and Islam* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974), 168. Quoted in Sayyid, 67-68.

65 Cemil Aydın, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 15.

66 Ashlı Çırakman, “Reflections of European Self-Images in Ottoman Mirrors,” in *Remaking Turkey: Globalization, Alternative Modernities, and Democracy*, ed. Fuat Keyman (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2007), 26.

history as linear progress, Ottoman reformers pushed for reform of the state and of society in order to catch up with the “civilized” nations of the 19th century: Britain, France, Prussia and (somewhat more ambiguously) Russia.⁶⁷

These reformers saw Westernization as desirable in and of itself, believing, in line with the discourse outlined above, that it would allow the Ottoman Empire to reach a higher level of civilizational development.⁶⁸ Yet their reform attempts were also based on a more prosaic consideration. By enacting reforms, they hoped that the empire would be accepted into the family of civilized European nations, and in this way escape the fate suffered by many non-European states – colonization at the hands of one or other of the European powers.⁶⁹ In this sense, the Gülhane Edict of 1839, which launched the *Tanzimat* project of modernizing/Westernizing the Ottoman Empire was a “clear acknowledgment of the existence of a Eurocentric international society and its legitimizing discourse of universal civilization,” which “challenged the Eurocentric international order to clarify its principles of inclusion.”⁷⁰

Many *Tanzimat*-era reformers advocated not only the import of Western science, technology and political institutions, but also the adoption of European social and cultural norms, believing that true modernity could only be attained in this way.⁷¹ Yet over the course of the 19th century, this position was increasingly challenged in Ottoman intellectual circles, particularly by members of the Young Ottoman oppositional movement which emerged in the 1860s. Rather than total Westernization in all areas of life, the Young Ottomans advocated the adoption of European advances in science and administration, but warned against excessive Westernization in society and culture. Thus Namık Kemal, perhaps the foremost Young Ottoman thinker, argued for a distinction between scientific/economic progress, associated with the West, and moral progress, associated with Islam.⁷² Another prominent Ottoman intellectual of the period,

67 Makdisi, 30.

68 Aydın, 18.

69 Halil Berktaş, “Geschichte, gesellschaftliches Gedächtnis und die aktuelle Neurose,” in *Grenzfall Europa/Avrupanın İnce Esiginde: Deutsch-Türkisches Symposium 1998/Türk-Alman Sempozyumu 1998* (Hamburg: edition Körber-Stiftung), 156.

70 Aydın, 19.

71 Ibid., 18.

72 Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 324.

Ahmet Midhat Efendi, contrasted the material progress of Europe with what he saw as its moral decadence and cautioned his Ottoman Muslim readership against emulating European morality.⁷³

The debate about the extent to which reform should include the Westernization of society and culture continued throughout the final decades of the Ottoman Empire, pitting “partial Westernizers” against “comprehensive Westernizers.” One of the main proponents of partial westernization was the prominent Turkish nationalist thinker Ziya Gökalp. Inspired by the example of Japanese modernization, Gökalp argued for a distinction between the concepts of “culture” (*hars*), which was specific to a particular nation and expressed itself through popular music, proverbs, poetry, religion etc, and “civilization” (*medeniyet*), which was universal but whose current level of development was the result of the advances in science and administration associated with European modernity. A nation could, so he argued, adopt this universal civilization (that is European science, technology and state institutions) without giving up its own culture.⁷⁴ Comprehensive Westernizers like Abdullah Cevdet, on the other hand, argued against such a distinction, seeing Europe as the “peak of superiority,” whose civilization needed to be adopted “with its roses and its thorns.”⁷⁵

In their desire to completely Westernize Turkish society, the early Turkish republican elite around Mustafa Kemal were clearly influenced by these “comprehensive Westernizers.”⁷⁶ Through their reforms they aimed to totally transform society and culture in accordance with the model provided by European societies. In this sense, these reforms may be seen as an attempt at social and cultural revolution imposed from above. Underlying their attempts to Westernize Turkish society and culture was the belief that Western civilization (=European modernity) was unitary and indivisible.⁷⁷ It was thus not possible to accept certain aspects of European modernity while rejecting others. Modernity needed to be accepted completely, or not at all. “Modernization was

73 Carter Vaughn Findley, “An Ottoman Occidental in Europe: Ahmet Midhat Meets Madame Gülnar, 1889,” *The American Historical Review*, 103:1 (1998), 43-45.

74 Andrew Davison, “*Laiklik* and Turkey’s “Cultural” Modernity: Remaking Turkey into Conceptual Space Occupied by “Europe,”” in Keyman (ed), *Remaking Turkey*, 42.

75 Quoted in Hanioglu, *Atatürk*, 58-59.

76 Hanioglu, 59.

77 *Ibid.*, 204.

only possible if one created the conditions that had made European modernization possible. Since the preconditions of European modernization were European cultural practices, to be truly modernized one had to accept European culture.”⁷⁸

Yet it needs to be pointed out that, like their Ottoman predecessors, the republic's reformers did not push for the Westernization of their country simply because of their admiration for Western civilization, although this undoubtedly played a part. Like the *Tanzimat* reforms, the republican reform project was also, to an extent, defensive in nature. The Turkish nation needed to adopt Western civilization in order to survive in a world dominated and shaped by that civilization. If it did not, it was doomed to eventual destruction.⁷⁹ The need to Westernize had become even more urgent in the eyes of the republican leadership because of the role played by European intervention in the demise of the Ottoman Empire, and in the near-defeat of the Anatolian resistance movement during the Turkish National Struggle. The perceived urgency and necessity of Westernization is reflected in an oft-quoted line from a speech given by Mustafa Kemal in 1925: “Civilization is such a strong fire that it burns and destroys those who remain indifferent to it.”⁸⁰ The Westernizing efforts of the early Turkish leadership thus resulted from conflicting impulses: on the one hand, a great admiration for the achievements of Western modernity and, on the other, a deep fear of the West.⁸¹

1.2.2.2. Islam as the Constitutive Other of Turkish Modernity

The Turkish republican leadership's reform program thus took the European experience of modernity as a model; the reforms aimed to raise the Turkish Republic and its citizens to the level of Western modernity. Yet the fact that these reforms were deemed necessary in the first place implied that Turkish society was not (yet) modern, not (yet) developed; compared to the societies of Europe, it was backward. Turkish backwardness was conceptualized not just in temporal terms (“Turkey is backward compared to the

78 Sayyid, 68.

79 Göçek, 131.

80 “*Medeniyet öyle kuvvetli bir ateştir ki, ona bigâne kalanları yakar, mahveder.*” Quoted in *Tarih IV*, 235.

81 Halil Berktaş has described this attitude as the “love-hate relationship” binding Turkey to Europe. Berktaş, “Geschichte,” 153.

West.”), but also in geographical terms (“Turkey is not part of the civilized West, it must therefore belong to the uncivilized East”). Bobby S. Sayyid has argued that the republican leadership constructed Turkish backwardness/Easternness around the marker of Islam. Islam was the constitutive other in opposition to which the leaders of the early republic defined the modern state and society they aimed to create; it was through Islam that Turkish backwardness vis-a-vis the developed, civilized West was conceptualized and explained.⁸²

This view of Islam as an obstacle in the path of progress can in part be explained by the Turkish leadership's scientific worldview. Scientism, a key element of the obscure 19th-century doctrine of *Vulgärmaterialismus* subscribed to by many members of the Young Turk movement – including Mustafa Kemal himself – who would go on to lead the Turkish Republic,⁸³ emphasized the unique role of science in explaining human reality and in furthering the civilizational progress of human societies. The resulting advocacy of a dominant role for science in the ordering of modern societies and states was juxtaposed with a strong rejection of religion as obscurantist and as an obstacle in the path of progress.⁸⁴

The Turkish leadership's particular animus against Islam, in turn, stemmed from their internalization of late 19th-century European Orientalist discourses which posited that the pernicious influence of Islam was largely to blame for the backwardness of the Orient. Perhaps the most representative expression of this discourse was Ernest Renan's lecture “Islam and Science,” given at the Sorbonne in 1883. In this lecture, Renan argued that the dogmatism of Islam (supposedly greater than that of Christianity) had made it a serious obstacle to scientific progress in Muslim societies. Islam was opposed to modernity and progress, and a Muslim modernity was therefore impossible.⁸⁵ This supposed antagonism between Islam and Western civilization was accepted by many members of the early republican elite and clearly formed the basis for many of their reforms.⁸⁶ Thus, for example, the abolition of the Caliphate was presented as beneficial

82 Sayyid, 68-69.

83 Hanioglu, *Atatürk*, 50.

84 Ibid., 51.

85 For a summary of Renan's lecture, see Aydın, 47-51.

86 Sayyid, 60-61.

not just for the Turkish Republic, but for all Muslim societies, in that it removed a key obstacle to these societies' "renewal and development."⁸⁷

Islam was also rejected for being an Arab religion.⁸⁸ As Ussama Makdisi has pointed out, in the course of the *Tanzimat* reforms of the mid-19th century, Ottoman statesmen and intellectuals had begun to transpose the European colonialist discourse of a civilized colonizing centre and a to-be-civilized colonized periphery onto the Ottoman Empire. This not-yet-civilized periphery was identified mainly with the Arab provinces of the empire. "Ottoman modernization created its discursive opposite, the pre-modern within the empire, be it in the sands of Arabia or in *cebel-i düruz* [Mount Lebanon]."⁸⁹ With the rise of Turkism in the late 19th century, this contrast between the civilized centre and the backward periphery acquired nationalist connotations. Ottoman reforms came increasingly to be seen as "the desire of the modernizing "Turkish" nation to aid and civilize a backwards "Arab" nation."⁹⁰ This view of Arab culture as backward and anti-modern was shared by the early republican elite. If the Turkish nation was to become truly modern and Turkish, it needed to leave behind all vestiges of Arab culture, particularly Islam. As one early republican writer and politician put it: "To be Westernized meant at the same time to escape from being Arabicized; it meant being Turkified."⁹¹

1.3. Popular Opposition to the Reforms and the Creation of a New Ideology

The implementation of the Turkish government's reform program met with significant popular resistance, most markedly in the country's Kurdish south-east, where opposition to the state's attempts to Turkify the population and a growing Kurdish nationalism were the main motivating factors. While the 1925 Sheikh Said rebellion had been inspired by

87 "... umumiyetle islâmlık ve ayrı ayrı islâm milletler için hiçbir amelî ve müspet faydası bulunmadığı halde mutaassıp ve muhafazakâr zihniyete mesnet olarak teceddüt ve inkişaf cereyanlarının hızını kesen ... [hilâfeti] muhafaza ve idame doğru [değildi.]" Tarih IV, 162.

88 Hanioğlu, *Atatürk*, 63.

89 Makdisi, 32.

90 Ibid., 45.

91 Falih Rıfkı Atay, *Çankaya* (Istanbul: Doğan Kardeş Basımevi, 1969), 446. Quoted in Meltem Ahıska, "Occidentalism: The Historical Fantasy of the Modern," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 102:2/3 (2003), 378.

a combination of Kurdish nationalism and opposition to the abolition of the Caliphate,⁹² subsequent uprisings in the area seem to have been more purely nationalist in character.⁹³ The cycle of popular uprisings followed by state repression continued throughout the 1920s (a report published by the Turkish Army Staff Headquarters listed a total of thirteen separate rebellions in the period 1925-1930),⁹⁴ culminating in a major rebellion in Ağrı province in the summer of 1930, which the Turkish military only managed to put down with great difficulty.⁹⁵

Yet popular opposition to the reforms was not limited to the country's eastern provinces. By 1929, the state's secularizing and Westernizing reforms, coupled with the deteriorating economic conditions brought on by the Great Depression, were causing increasing discontent throughout the country.⁹⁶ In response, in June 1930, Mustafa Kemal sanctioned the establishment of the *Serbest Cumhuriyet Fırkası* (Free Republican Party, FPP), intended as a loyal opposition party that would provide a safe outlet for popular discontent. Yet the party's criticism of the government's economic policies, as well as its call for a reversal of some of the more radical Westernizing reforms proved hugely and, for the Turkish leadership, unexpectedly popular. The party's leader, Ali Fethi, was met by large crowds wherever he went, and his visit to Izmir in September was accompanied by demonstrations, strikes and attacks on the party offices of the RPP.⁹⁷ Caught off-guard by the level of popular support enjoyed by the FPP, Mustafa Kemal dissolved the party in November 1930.⁹⁸

An incident which occurred a month later in the western Anatolian town of Menemen proved equally shocking for the Turkish leadership. In what would become known as the "Menemen Incident," a crowd gathered around a dervish named Mehmed, a member of the outlawed *Nakşibendi* religious brotherhood, who claimed to be the *Mahdi*

92 Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London: Zed Books, 1992), 298.

93 *Ibid.*, 299.

94 Çağaptay, 21.

95 *Ibid.*, 39.

96 Yılmaz Çolak, "Nationalism and the State in Turkey: Drawing the Boundaries of 'National Culture' in the 1930s," *Studies in Ethnicity and Nationalism* 3:1 (2003), 6.

97 *Ibid.*, 41.

98 Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 59-60.

(Messiah) come to rid the world of evil. When a gendarmerie reserve officer (i.e. a representative of the Turkish state) attempted to disperse the gathering, he was seized by the crowd, beheaded, and his head was paraded around the town on a flagpole.⁹⁹ This incident was particularly alarming for the secular republican elites because it took place in one of the most developed (and therefore supposedly “civilized”) provinces of the republic. Their alarm is well captured in the response of the writer Yakup Kadri to the incident: “[I]t is as though nothing has happened all these years, as though ... the idea of any of our radical reforms has not altered anything in this country.”¹⁰⁰ The incident was thus interpreted to mean that the Westernizing reforms had not taken root among the majority of the population, and that religious backwardness was alive and well.

The Ağrı uprising, the failed FPP experiment, and the Menemen incident, all occurring during what Çagaptay has described as “the troublesome [year] 1930,”¹⁰¹ convinced the Turkish leadership that their attempts to mould the citizens of the Turkish Republic into a cohesive Turkish nation, and to secularize and Westernize Turkish society, had not had the desired success. These events lent an added urgency to the elaboration of a new ideology intended to legitimize their own rule, as well as the reforms they were undertaking. This ideology, “Kemalism,” was officially launched at the third party congress of the RPP in 1931. Central to this ideology was the development of a state-centred Turkish nationalism which, so the Kemalist ideologues hoped, would fill the “legitimacy vacuum” left by the abolition of the Ottoman Sultanate and the Caliphate – that is, the two pillars on which the legitimacy of the late Ottoman state had rested.¹⁰² Further, they hoped that the new nationalism would serve as the foundation for a new civic religion centred on the Turkish nation and the Turkish Republic, which would replace the central role of Islam in Turkish society.¹⁰³

99 Ibid., 60.

100 Quoted in *ibid.*, 60.

101 Çagaptay, 41.

102 Hanioğlu, *Atatürk*, 160-161.

103 *Ibid.*, 160-161.

CHAPTER 2

THE NEW NATIONAL HISTORIOGRAPHY

A core part of the creation of the new Kemalist ideology was the elaboration of a new history of the Turkish nation. This chapter will provide a short account of the writing of the new national history, before placing this history in its historiographical context.

2.1. Writing the New National History

On 26 April 1930, at the behest of Mustafa Kemal, the young history teacher Afet İnan gave a speech at the sixth general assembly of the nationalist *Türk Ocakları* (Turkish Hearths) organization, in which she called for the “true” history of the Turkish nation to be written. Generations of Turks, she claimed, had been taught a faulty and partial version of their own history. This faulty understanding of the past needed to be rectified and the glorious history of the Turks uncovered, so that the Turkish Republic's citizens might “walk along the luminous path of Turkish history toward the bright horizons of the future.”¹⁰⁴ Following İnan's speech and a couple of others in a similar vein, the assembly voted to establish the *Türk Tarih Tetkik Heyeti* (Committee for the Research of Turkish History), charged with “studying and examining Turkish history and civilization in a scientific manner.”¹⁰⁵ A year later, the *Türk Ocakları* were dissolved, and the committee, having changed its name to *Türk Tarih Tetkik Cemiyeti* (Society for the Research of Turkish History), came under the direct control of the state.¹⁰⁶

The *Türk Tarih Tetkik Cemiyeti* took the place of another state-controlled historical association, the *Türk Tarih Encümeni* (Turkish History Council), which dissolved itself

104 The speech is reproduced in Uluğ İğdemir, *Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında Türk Tarih Kurumu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1973). Translation my own.

105 Ibid., 4.

106 Copeaux, 40.

at the end of the year 1931.¹⁰⁷ The *Türk Tarih Encümeni* itself had been founded under the name *Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni* (Ottoman History Council) by Sultan Mehmed V in the year 1909, and charged with writing a general history of the Ottoman Empire.¹⁰⁸ While it was only moderately successful in this regard – only the first volume of the general history was ever published, in 1917¹⁰⁹ – the council also published a number of monographs¹¹⁰ and a bi-monthly journal, *Tarih-i Osmanî Encümeni Mecmuası*, which mostly contained articles on Ottoman history.¹¹¹ After the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the council came under the control of the ministry of education, and its name was changed to *Türk Tarih Encümeni*.¹¹² Yet despite the name change, the council's publications during the 1920s had continued to mostly focus on the history of the Ottoman Empire.¹¹³

Both the fact that it was an originally Ottoman institution, and that its area of research was almost exclusively limited to the Ottoman past, counted against the *Türk Tarih Encümeni* in the eyes of the republican leadership.¹¹⁴ Yet, so Hasan Akbayrak has argued, it was the background of the council's members that eventually convinced the leaders of the Turkish Republic of the need to replace the council with the *Türk Tarih Tetkik Cemiyeti*. Most of the members of the *Türk Tarih Encümeni* were professional historians, and as such, Akbayrak claims, not amenable to writing the ideologically and politically inspired historical narrative which the Turkish leadership had in mind. They thus needed to be replaced by people who would have no professional qualms about constructing such a narrative.¹¹⁵

This argument is supported by the background of the founding members of the *Türk Tarih Tetkik Heyeti*. The committee was headed by Mehmet Tevfik (Bıyıklıoğlu), who was also the general secretary of the office of the president of the Turkish Republic. The

107 Akbayrak, 340.

108 Ibid., 49.

109 Ibid., 95.

110 Ibid., 86.

111 Ibid., 104.

112 Ibid., 253.

113 Ibid., 272.

114 Ibid., 355-356.

115 Ibid., 357.

two assistant chairmen were Yusuf Akçura, the RPP member of parliament for Istanbul, and Samih Rifat, the RPP member of parliament for Çanakkale, while its general secretary, Reşit Galip, was the RPP member of parliament for Aydın. All of the other ten founding members were either RPP members of parliament or at least party members.¹¹⁶ Büşra Ersanlı has described these founding members of the committee as “politicians-historians,” taking on a “triple responsibility: they were leading nationalists, leading party members, and also made up the cadre spearheading the rewriting of [Turkish] history.”¹¹⁷

The political nature of the project to create a new Turkish national history is further highlighted by the central involvement of Mustafa Kemal himself.¹¹⁸ In Afet İnan's account, it was Mustafa Kemal who had first charged her with finding a new approach to Turkish history.¹¹⁹ It was also Mustafa Kemal who, in 1929, had tasked selected members of the *Türk Ocakları* with preparing the rough draft of a new national history¹²⁰ and, once they had formed the *Türk Tarih Tetkik Heyeti*, urged them to publish their findings in book form as quickly as possible.¹²¹ Mustafa Kemal even contributed to the writing of a chapter on the origins of Islam that would appear in one of the history textbooks published in 1931.¹²²

The first work produced by the *Türk Tarih Tetkik Heyeti* was *Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları* (Outlines of Turkish History), published towards the end of the year 1930.¹²³ The book's print run was limited to 100 copies, and while its general approach to Turkish history met with official approval, it was criticised for the number of flagrant mistakes and omissions it contained.¹²⁴ Nevertheless, a simplified version of the history outlined in

116 Ersanlı Behar, *İktidar ve Tarih*, 95. For the full list of members, see İğdemir, 4-5.

117 Ersanlı Behar, *İktidar ve Tarih*, 93. Translation my own.

118 Hanioglu has described the new historiography as one of Mustafa Kemal's “pet projects.” Hanioglu, *Atatürk*, 180.

119 Afet İnan, “Atatürk ve Tarih Tezi,” *Belleten* 10 (1939), 244.

120 Uluğ İğdemir, *Cumhuriyetin 50. Yılında Türk Tarih Kurumu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1973), 3.

121 Ersanlı Behar, *İktidar ve Tarih*, 102-103.

122 Hanioglu, *Atatürk*, 131-132.

123 Türk Ocağı Türk Tarihi Heyeti, *Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları*. (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1930). Reprinted by Türk Tarih Kurumu (Ankara, 2014). All subsequent page references will be to the 2014 edition.

124 Behar, *İktidar ve Tarih*, 103.

the *Ana Hatları* was prepared and distributed to schools as a supplementary textbook.¹²⁵ The following year, the *Türk Tarihi Tetkik Heyeti*, having changed its name to *Türk Tarih Tetkik Cemiyeti*, published a series of four history textbooks for use in the country's secondary schools (*lise*), based on the historiographical outline developed in *Türk Tarihin Ana Hatları*. These books would form the basis of history education in Turkish schools throughout the 1930s. It was only in 1939, a year after the death of Mustafa Kemal, that the decision to remove them from the syllabus was taken, a decision implemented in the year 1941 (*Tarih IV* continued to figure on the high school syllabus until 1944).¹²⁶ At a combined length of nearly 1400 pages, they may be seen as the fullest, most complete expression of the Kemalist version of Turkish national history.

2.2. The Historiographical Background

It is important to note that the new national history was not created in a historiographical vacuum. Rather, it was shaped by a number of historiographical trends that had emerged in the final decades of the Ottoman Empire. This section will therefore provide a short overview of these new historiographical trends.

Among other things, the *Tanzimat* reforms of the mid-19th century created, arguably for the first time in Ottoman history, a public sphere.¹²⁷ The creation of this public sphere, the printing of a number of earlier Ottoman chronicles that had previously only circulated in manuscript form, and the wider availability of works on the history of the Ottoman Empire written by European scholars (most notably Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall's monumental *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*) led to a greater engagement with the Ottoman past than had previously been possible.¹²⁸ Unlike Ottoman historians of earlier centuries, whose works usually took the form of linear

125 *Türk Tarihin Ana Hatları – Methal Kısmı* (Istanbul: Devlet Matbaası, 1931).

126 Aslan, "Devrim Tarihi Ders Kitapları," 298.

127 Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation*, 14.

128 *Ibid.*, 24-26.

chronicles of important events,¹²⁹ 19th-century Ottoman historians, motivated – like the *Tanzimat* reformers – by a desire to improve the functioning of the Ottoman state, adopted a more analytical and critical approach to the Ottoman past.¹³⁰ Many of the histories of the Ottoman Empire written in the 19th century focused on what their authors saw as the factors behind the decline of the empire – be they institutional weaknesses, reactionary social forces, or corruption among the ruling elite – and advocated reform as the only way to ensure the empire's survival.¹³¹

Works dealing with Ottoman history would continue to be published during the final decades of the empire and the early years of the Turkish Republic, but the Ottoman past was gradually marginalized as a subject of historical study, due to a growing interest in the history of the pre-Ottoman Turkic states and societies of Central Asia. This growing interest can be traced to developments in European scholarship. Thus, from the late 19th century onwards a growing number of European Orientalists had begun to dedicate themselves to the study of the culture, language and history of the Turkic-speaking peoples of Central Asia, encouraged by major archaeological discoveries in the area.¹³² The most significant of these finds were the Orhon inscriptions, which had been discovered in what is today Mongolia in 1887 and dated to the early 8th century CE. These inscriptions constituted the first known written example of a Turkic language, and provided important information about the history and culture of the society that had created them.¹³³

Inspired by the increasing amount of research into the past of the Central Asian Turkic peoples, a number of European authors developed more or less fanciful theories about the historical origins of the Turkish nation. Two authors in particular were very influential in this regard. The first was Mustafa Celâleddin Paşa, a Polish convert to Islam, who in 1869 published the book *Les Turcs anciens et modernes*. In this book, he traced the origins of the Turks to a pre-historic Central Asian homeland. He also

129 Behar, *İktidar ve Tarih*, 43.

130 Ibid., 55.

131 Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation*, 33-35.

132 Karl H. Menges, *The Turkic Languages and Peoples: An Introduction to Turkic Studies*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 1994), 3-4.

133 Copeaux, 20

claimed that the ancient Anatolian Hittites and Mesopotamian Sumerians had been Turkish, and that Turks had been the founders of Rome and Roman civilization, basing the latter claim on his supposed discovery of important similarities between Latin and the Turkic languages.¹³⁴ Another scholar, the Frenchman Leon Cahun, made a similar claim in a presentation he gave to the First Orientalist Congress in Paris in 1873. In his speech, he postulated that in prehistoric times the Turks had lived around a Central Asian inland sea, and that, after this sea had dried up, they had begun migrating outwards and settling in various regions of Eurasia, from northern Europe to north-eastern Asia.¹³⁵ In the 1896 work *Introduction à l'histoire de l'Asie*, Cahun reiterated his thesis. Basing himself on the deciphered text of the Orhon inscriptions, he also made claims about the high civilizational level of Turkish society, which, so he claimed, was characterized by a strong sense of justice, equality between men and women, and a high degree of organization.¹³⁶

The theories of Leon Cahun and Mustafa Celâleddin, as well as the more scientific findings of other European scholars regarding the Central Asian Turkic past, had a considerable influence on Ottoman intellectuals of the time, and led a number of them to publish their own works on the history of the pre-Ottoman Turks. In 1886, Mizancı Mehmed Murad, a prominent journalist and future leading member of the Young Turks, published a universal history textbook in which he claimed that the Turks were one of the three great nations of Asia, along with the Indians and the Chinese.¹³⁷ Another prominent journalist, Ahmed Midhat, published the work *Mufasssal Tarih-i Kurun-ı Cedide* (History of Modern Times) in 1887. This book asserted the Turkish ancestry of the Ottomans, as well as providing an account of pre-Ottoman Turkish history.¹³⁸ Finally, Necip Asım, “the first Turkish Turkologist,”¹³⁹ published the general Turkish history book *Türk Tarihi* in 1900. Based to a large part on the theories of Leon Cahun,

134 Ibid., 17

135 Ibid., 18.

136 Ibid., 20-21.

137 Kushner, 29.

138 Ibid., 29.

139 Copeaux, 21. Translation my own.

this work also contained a detailed account of the various pre-Ottoman Turkish Islamic dynasties.¹⁴⁰

Necip Asim's highly influential work stressed the antiquity of the Turkish nation, the high level of civilization it had achieved, and its role in promoting the spread of civilization to other nations. According to Asim, Turks had helped to carry the ideas of the Persians, Chinese and Arabs beyond the political boundaries of these nations, as well as creating a civilization of their own, contemporaneous with the civilizations of ancient Rome and Greece, but free of many of the vices that had afflicted them.¹⁴¹ Turks had also supposedly been an integral part of Islamic civilization, helping to defend Islam against the Crusader armies and contributing to the development of science and art in the Islamic world.¹⁴²

These Ottoman authors' stress on the constructive contribution of the Turks to the development of human civilization needs also to be understood in the context of the growing hostility of European public opinion toward the Turks from the late 1870s onward, mostly in response to accounts of Ottoman atrocities in putting down a Bulgarian uprising in 1876. In European discourse, Turks were increasingly portrayed as a barbaric, uncultured and destructive force.¹⁴³ Arguing against such a portrayal, the Ottoman historians emphasized the civilized nature of the Turkish nation, even going so far as to describe the Turks as civilizationally superior to the Europeans. Thus Necip Asim claimed, in an article written for the Turkist newspaper *İkdam* in 1895, that at the time when the Turks had created the Orhon inscriptions, the Europeans were as yet unable to read or write.¹⁴⁴

The number of associations researching the culture and history of the Turkish nation

140 Kushner, 30.

141 Ibid., 31-32.

142 Ibid., 33-36.

143 Copeaux, 15. A typical example of this discourse can be found in a pamphlet penned by the British Liberal politician William Gladstone in 1876: "The Turks [...] are the one great anti-human species of humanity. Wherever they went a broad line of blood marked the track behind them, and, as far as their dominion reached, civilization vanished from view." Quoted in Murat Kaya, "Western Interventions and Formation of the Young Turks' Siege Mentality," *Middle East Critique* 23:2 (2014), 127.

144 Copeaux, 24.

increased greatly in the aftermath of the 1908 constitutional revolution.¹⁴⁵ The main centre for research into the pre-Ottoman history of the Turks in the Second Constitutional Era (1908-1918) was the Turkist organization *Türk Ocağı* (Turkish Hearth), established in 1912 with the aim of, as the prominent Turkist Tekin Alp put it, “advancing national education, raising the scientific, societal and economic standards of the Turks, who are the most distinguished of the Islamic peoples, and developing the Turkish race and Turkish religion.”¹⁴⁶ To this end, the members of the *Türk Ocağı* aimed to study the histories and cultures of the various Turkic-speaking peoples. Among the organization's founding members were leading Ottoman Turkists and emigré Turkists from the Russian Empire, most prominently Ahmed Ağaoğlu and Yusuf Akçura.¹⁴⁷ Through their journal *Türk Yurdu* (Turkish Homeland), these intellectuals contributed to the further dissemination of Turkist thought among the late Ottoman reading public. Based on their belief that the Turkic peoples all belonged to the same nation, a number of *Türk Ocağı* members also advocated pan-Turkism, calling for the political union of all these peoples in a single state. Key members of the CUP government, most notably Enver Paşa, the minister of war, subscribed to this ideology, and pan-Turkism to a certain extent determined the policies of the Ottoman Empire during the First World War.¹⁴⁸ Forced to give up its political advocacy of Turkism, *Türk Ocağı* (renamed *Türk Ocakları*) would nevertheless continue as a cultural association during the early years of the republic¹⁴⁹ until its dissolution in 1931.

Perhaps the most influential member of *Türk Ocağı* was Ziya Gökalp, a largely self-taught intellectual and sociologist. In his most famous work, *Türkçülüğün Esasları* (The Foundations of Turkism), published in 1923, Gökalp offered a defining account of the Turkist view of history. Gökalp claimed that the Turks, whom he defined as a nation sharing a common culture and language, had played a dominant and continuous role in the history of Eurasia, having, since the time of the Huns, established a large number of united and highly organized states in the steppes of Central Asia. All of these states

145 Behar, *İktidar ve Tarih*, 78-79.

146 Quoted in *ibid.*, 84. Translation my own.

147 Yusuf Akçura would be, as we have seen, one of the founding members of the *Türk Tarih Tetkik Cemiyeti*.

148 Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 51-55.

149 Akbayrak, 305.

ruled over societies notable for their tolerance, their “international morality” (Gökalp's version of the Enlightenment's “universal civilization”) and their “feminist” character.¹⁵⁰ Gökalp's views, and those of his fellow Turkist intellectuals, would have a defining impact on Kemalist historiography.

A second approach to the history of the Turkish nation emerged in the late 1910s. Adapting to the loss of the Ottoman Empire's remaining European provinces in the Balkan wars, which made Anatolia the heartland of what was left of the Ottoman Empire, and rejecting the pan-Turkist project, a number of prominent Ottoman historians in this period began to explore the historical connection between the Turks and Anatolia, constructing Anatolia, rather than the Central Asian highlands, as the homeland of the Turkish nation.¹⁵¹ In the context of the failure of the empire's pan-Turkist policies during the First World War, the decision by leaders of the national resistance movement that the Turkish nation state would be confined to the geography of Anatolia,¹⁵² and the rival claims of Greeks, Armenians and Kurds on Anatolia, the need to establish a historical connection between the Turkish nation and Anatolia began to acquire an even greater importance.¹⁵³

Central to this narrative was the Seljuk Sultanate of Rum,¹⁵⁴ the Anatolian offshoot of the great Central Asian empire established by the nomadic Seljuk tribe in the 11th century. The Rum Sultanate had been established in the aftermath of the 1071 Battle of Manzikert, in which a Seljuk army defeated an army led by the Byzantine Emperor Romanos, opening the way for the Turkic Seljuks to move into Anatolia. In 1918, the noted historian Fuad Köprülü, a pioneer of the study of Seljuk history as an important aspect of the history of the Turkish nation¹⁵⁵ and a future member of the *Türk Tarih*

150 For this summary, see Copeaux, 27.

151 Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation*, 121-122.

152 In 1921, Mustafa Kemal had remarked that “Neither Islamic Union nor Turanism [i.e. pan-Turkism] may constitute a doctrine, or logical policy for us. Henceforth, the government policy of the new Turkey is to consist in living independently, relying on Turkey's own sovereignty within her national frontiers.” Quoted in Landau, 74.

153 Akbayrak, 225.

154 In the course of the 1920s, this polity would increasingly be referred to as the Anatolian Seljuk Sultanate (*Anadolu Selçuk Sultanatı*), rather than Seljuk Sultanate of Rum (*Rum Selçuk Sultanatı*), due to the ethnic Greek connotations of the term *Rum*. See Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation*, 116.

155 Akbayrak, 229.

Tetkik Cemiyeti,¹⁵⁶ described the battle and its aftermath as follows: “Completely defeating the Roman emperor Romanos Diogenes in the Battle of Manzikert, [the Seljuk commander Alparslan] ... established absolute Turkish rule in Anatolia.”¹⁵⁷ Manzikert thus came to be seen as the foundation of a Turkish Anatolia, and the Anatolian Seljuk Sultanate as the first in an unbroken line of Anatolian Turkish states that would be continued by the *beyliks* (fiefdoms) which came to dominate Anatolia as the Sultanate began to weaken, the Ottoman state and, finally, the Turkish Republic.¹⁵⁸

A second strand in this construction of Anatolia as the Turkish national homeland emphasized the extent to which Anatolia had supposedly determined the character of the Turkish nation. In this view, the Turkish nation only became constituted as such once the Seljuks had settled in Anatolia. Out of the mixture of the Seljuks' Central Asian warrior nature and Islamic belief, and the traditions and culture of the Anatolian villagers emerged a Turkish nation tied to the Anatolian soil. “It was Manzikert that made the Turks and not vice versa.”¹⁵⁹ In an extension of this interpretation, a number of late Ottoman and early republican intellectuals constructed the Anatolian peasant, due to his daily contact with the land, as the main carrier of Turkish national culture throughout the history of Turkish Anatolia.¹⁶⁰ The pure, uncorrupted Turkishness of the Anatolian peasant was juxtaposed with the degenerate cosmopolitanism that had supposedly corrupted the ideas and morals of the Istanbul- and Rumelian-based intellectual and political elite.¹⁶¹ Thus, for example, in an attack on Ziya Gökalp (a native of the Anatolian city of Diyarbakir) published in 1923, the intellectual Ziyaeddin Fıhri claimed that Gökalp's originally pure Turkish nationalist thought had been corrupted by his exposure to the foetid intellectual atmosphere and political passions of early 20th-century Salonica.¹⁶²

156 Ibid., 379.

157 Quoted in Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation*, 123.

158 Ibid., 124.

159 Ibid., 122.

160 Ibid., 113.

161 Doğan Gürpınar, “From the Bare and Arid Hills to Anatolia, the Lovable and Beautiful: Kemalist Project of “National Modernity” in Anatolian Countryside,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 48:6 (2012), 907.

162 Seçil Deren, “Türk Siyasal Düşüncesinde Anadolu İmgesi,” in *Modern Türkiye’de Siyasal Düşünce: Milliyetçilik*, ed. Tanıl Bora (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2003), 535.

Kemalist historiography as expressed in the *Tarih* textbooks would reflect both the critical approach to Ottoman history that had begun to develop during the *Tanzimat* and had gathered pace during the Second Constitutional Era, and the two approaches to the history of the Turkish nation outlined above. It would thus stress the Central Asian origins and civilizing role of the Turks, as well as the importance of Anatolia as the Turkish national homeland and the role of the Anatolian folk as the carrier of Turkish national culture. This will become clear in the analysis of the textbooks' historical narrative, which is the subject of the following chapter.



CHAPTER 3

BETWEEN TURKISH NATIONALISM AND WESTERN CIVILIZATION: AN ANALYSIS OF THE *TARİH* TEXTBOOKS

3.1. An Overview of the New Historical Narrative

Before going on to a more detailed analysis of the *Tarih* textbooks, I would here like to provide a brief overview of Turkish national history as presented in the textbooks, focusing on each of the *Tarih* volumes in turn.

According to the textbook authors, Turkish national history could be traced a long way into the past. A highly developed, settled and recognizably Turkish civilization had, they asserted, existed along the shores of a vast Central Asian inland sea as long ago as 10 000 BCE. When climatic changes brought on by the end of the last ice age had caused this inland sea to dry up, the Turks were forced to set out in search of new homelands, taking their civilization with them. These Turkish migrations were shown to be the catalyst for the emergence of civilization throughout ancient Eurasia. Turks had supposedly settled throughout the Eurasian world, founding the first civilized societies in China and India. The ancient Sumerians and, crucially, the Hittite, Phrygian and Lydian civilizations in Anatolia were also claimed as Turkish. Turks had not, however, merely founded their own civilizations, they had also spread civilization among other peoples. The development of the civilizations of ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome had thus supposedly been stimulated by these ancient Turkish migrants. The history of the original Turkish civilization in Central Asia, of the Turkish migrations, and of the ancient civilizations that emerged as a result of these migrations was recounted in *Tarih I*, the first volume of the new history textbooks.

According to the new historiography, not all Turks emigrated from the Central Asian homeland. Some of them stayed behind and adopted a nomadic existence more suited to the changed environmental conditions. Over the coming millenia, these nomads would

establish a number of powerful Turkish states on the Asian continent, including – among others – a Turkish Hunnic empire claimed to have existed in Central Asia during the first millennium BCE, the medieval Anatolian Seljuk state, and the Indian Mughal Empire. The history of these states formed one strand of the narrative in the second volume of the history textbooks, *Tarih II*. The second strand of this textbook's narrative was formed by an account of the emergence and spread of Islam. In this account, the Arabs were relegated to a minor, supporting role. Rather, it was the Turks who were shown to have been the driving force behind the spread of Islam and the flowering of Islamic science and culture.

The *Tarih* textbooks presented the Ottoman Empire as the last (bar the Turkish Republic) of the states created by the Turkish nation. The Kemalist historians dedicated one entire textbook volume, *Tarih III*, to an account of the empire's history. This account is notably more negative than the textbooks' triumphant depiction of the earlier Turkish states. Following a brief and glorious golden age in the 15th and early 16th centuries, Ottoman history was presented as a story of continuous decline, caused by the degeneration and corruption of the Ottoman state, constant wars against various European powers, the reactionary influence of Islam, and the empire's cosmopolitan nature. This account of Ottoman history was juxtaposed to an account of contemporaneous developments in Europe. The final textbook in the series, *Tarih IV*, offered an account of the Turkish National Struggle, the abolition of the Ottoman Empire and the founding of the Turkish Republic, and of the reforms undertaken by the Turkish leadership during the 1920s, presenting these developments as a restoration of the glorious pre-Ottoman Turkish past.

3.2. The Turkish Nation and the Turkish National Homeland

3.2.1. Creating the Turkish Nation: Race and Language

One main aim of the new historiography was the creation of a cohesive Turkish nation, corresponding as closely as possible to the population of the Turkish Republic, and the definition of which would not rely on Islam as a marker of national belonging. With these aims in mind, the Kemalist historians created a vision of a primordial Turkish community, whose origins they traced to Central Asia, and whose modern-day representatives, so they claimed, were the Turks living in the Turkish Republic. This ancient community had supposedly already had all the characteristics of a nation in the modern sense: “The Turkish race, having throughout history demonstrated an eye-catching desire for unity, is at the same time also a community that corresponds in the closest possible way to the concept of the nation as it is defined today.”¹⁶³

Yet as this extract also makes clear, the textbook authors viewed the Turkish nation as congruent with the Turkish race. How, then, did they define the concept of race? According to the textbooks, ancient mankind was divided into a number of races. Membership of a given race was based on descent, and races were distinguished by various physical features – skin colour, height and head shape being the most prominent. “Race is the unity exhibited by people descended from the same blood and sharing the same physical features.”¹⁶⁴ Within this framework, the Turks were described as a white, brachycephalic (“short-headed”) race.¹⁶⁵

Büşra Eranlı has noted that this view of the ancient Turkish nation as a distinct race was clearly inspired by race theories that had gained a wide currency in late 19th and early 20th-century Europe. Specifically, she cites the influence of Eugene Pittard, a Swiss anthropologist known for his anthropometrical research, and of the French

163 “... tarihte daima göze çarpar bir birlik arzeden Türk ırkı ... aynı zamanda bugünkü millet tarifine de en uygun büyük bir cemiyettir.” *Tarih I*, 20.

164 “*İrk, aynı kandan gelen ve cismen birbirine benziyen insanların gösterdiği birliktir.*” *Ibid.*, 18.

165 *Ibid.*, 16-18.

aristocrat Arthur de Gobineau, one of the founders of modern racism.¹⁶⁶ In his 1856 *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, de Gobineau had postulated the existence of three separate human races – white, yellow and black – and the natural superiority of the white race over the other two.¹⁶⁷ For de Gobineau, the ancient Turks of Central Asia had belonged to the yellow race.¹⁶⁸ Mustafa Kemal had read de Gobineau's essay¹⁶⁹ and, according to the Kemalist historian Afet Inan's oft-cited anecdote, the characterization of the Turks as a yellow race was one of the catalysts for the creation of the new Turkish national history. In the year 1928, after she had shown him a French geography textbook in which the Turks were described as a secondary, yellow race, Mustafa Kemal had responded: “No, that is not possible, we should look into this. Get to work.”¹⁷⁰ By depicting the Turks as a white race, the Kemalist historians thus hoped to undercut European discourses of Turkish racial inferiority.

The authors of the *Tarih* textbooks went even further. While the Turkish nation could, so they claimed, trace its origins to the dawn of human civilization, and had been able to preserve its racial distinctness throughout history,¹⁷¹ the same could not be said of the European nations. Unlike the Turkish nation, the European nations did not correspond to any particular race, but had been created out of a mixture of various different races.¹⁷² The origins of the European nations were also supposedly very recent, neither the French nor the German nation having begun to constitute itself as such before the late Middle Ages.¹⁷³ The Turkish nation was thus both much older than the European nations and, according to the logic of racist theorists such as de Gobineau, who posited that racial mingling led to a decline in the quality of the human stock,¹⁷⁴ superior to them.

166 Ersanlı, 109.

167 Gregory Blue, “Gobineau on China: Race Theory, the “Yellow Peril,” and the Critique of Modernity,” *Journal of World History* 10:1 (2001), 100.

168 Arthur de Gobineau, *The Inequality of Human Races*, trans. Adrian Collins (London: William Heinemann, 1915), 128.

169 Hanioglu, *Atatürk*, 166.

170 Inan, 244.

171 “... Türk ırkı benliğini en çok muhafaza etmiş bir ırktır.” *Tarih I*, 20.

172 “*Filhakika, bugünkü Avrupanın büyük millet kütleleri doğrudan doğruya bir ırka mensup olmadıkları gibi, bu cemiyetlerin ekserisinde bariz vasıflarını muhafaza etmiş hâkim bir ırk ta mevcut değildir. Bu milletler muhtelif ırkların muhtelif nispetteki tesalüplerinden husule gelmiş yeni birer heyettirler.*” *Ibid.*, 19.

173 The *Tarih II* textbook described the aftermath of the division of Charlemagne's Empire among his sons as follows: “*Bu tarihteki (843) taksime rağmen her kısma düşen ahalinin ayrı ayrı birer millet haline gelebilmeleri için, bundan sora daha çok asırlar geçmiştir.*” *Tarih II*, 200.

174 Blue, 102.

Yet the textbook's creation of a congruence between the Turkish nation and the Turkish race was not solely designed to prove the racial superiority of the Turks over the Europeans. It was also a way of merging the Muslim inhabitants of the Turkish Republic into a single nation – without actually making any reference to Islam. In this context, the textbook's emphasis on language as an indicator of racial belonging becomes important.

Thus, according to the *Tarih I* textbook, physical features were not the sole indicator of race. An equally important indicator was language, which was described as a product both of the environment a society inhabited, and of the racially determined biological features shared by members of this society. In this way, language was clearly linked to race.¹⁷⁵ The authors identified four main Eurasian language families – Turkic, Indo-European, Semitic and Mongoloid – which corresponded roughly to the main Eurasian races. Native speakers of the Turkic languages were, then, racially Turkish.¹⁷⁶

The textbook went on to claim that, while the Turks had been able to preserve their racial distinctness, and thus their language and culture, better than any other race, a few groups among them, having lived for long periods among other peoples, had forgotten their language and cultural identity.¹⁷⁷ This argument was applied most prominently to the Anatolian Kurds. In the *Tarih IV* account of the Sheikh Said rebellion, the rebels were described as “pure” Turks. However, due to the provocations of foreign powers and the policies of the Ottoman Empire, they had supposedly forgotten their own (Turkish) language and culture, and had come to see themselves as separate from the Turkish nation. As a result of this, they were now making demands for independence from the Turkish Republic.¹⁷⁸

175 “*Dimanın en kıymetli mahsulü olan dil bilhassa Türk ırkının büyük ekseriyetinde tarihi devirlerin husule getirdiği tekâmül silsilesi içinde daima ana hatlarını muhafaza etmiştir. Tarihtenevki zamanlarda ve tarihi devirlerde ayrı ayrı cemiyetler, medeniyetler, devletler vücuda getirmiş olan bu büyük ırk mensupları, kuvvetli dimağlarının muhtelif muhitlerde yarattığı müşterek dil ve harslarla ve irsî vasıflarile uzun veya kısa müddetler zarfında birbirinden daima müteessir olmuşlardır.*” *Tarih I*, 20.

176 *Ibid.*, 18-19.

177 “*Ancak uzun devirlerde ve büyük ekseriyetler içinde ihtilâtlara maruz kalanları temessül edip isimlerini ve dillerini muhafaza edememişlerdir.*” *Ibid.*, 20.

178 “*Asılları en saf türklük kökünden geldiği halde asırlardanberi hariçten giren siyâsi tahrikler ve saltanat idaresinin fena siyasetleri yüzünden bir kısmı kendilerini türklükten ayrı saymağa başlamış olan şark vilâyetleri Türkleri ...*” *Tarih IV*, 192.

If the Kurds were actually Turks who had simply “forgotten” their Turkish identity, there was no reason for the Turkish state to grant them national independence or even autonomy. Rather, they would have to be re-assimilated into the Turkish nation. It is in this context that the notion of language as a key marker of racial/national belonging became important. If race and nation were tied to language, forcing the Kurds to speak Turkish would allow them to (re)join the Turkish national fold. In this way, the concept of race outlined in the textbooks provided a theoretical justification for the forced assimilation measures employed by the state against the Kurds in the late 1920s and 1930s, namely the prohibition of the Kurdish language and the Turkification of Kurdish place and personal names.¹⁷⁹ Thus, Soner Çağaptay has argued, the conception of race outlined in Kemalist historiography was inclusive, rather than exclusive. By focusing on language as the main marker of racial belonging, and equating the concepts of race and nation, the Kemalist historians created a way for the Kurds to become not just Turkish citizens, but members of the Turkish nation.¹⁸⁰

Çağaptay actually goes further, arguing that the Kemalists expected even non-Muslims to become assimilated into the Turkish nation in this way, a position that seems to be supported by the definition of the term “Turk” adopted at the RPP's 1931 congress: “Every individual residing inside the Turkish Republic who speaks Turkish, has been brought up with Turkish culture, and has accepted the Turkish ideal is a Turk, regardless of his/her religion.”¹⁸¹ Yet, reflecting the anti-Christian bias of Turkish nationalism discussed in the first chapter of this thesis,¹⁸² no claim regarding the Turkishness of the republic's Jewish or Christian minorities was made in the *Tarih* textbooks. In practice also, as had been the case during the 1920s, the Turkish state's policies towards the Jews and Christians during the 1930s (and after) aimed more at segregation than integration.¹⁸³ What this suggests is that, in the textbooks, the concept of race as the marker of belonging to the Turkish nation served as a “scientific” replacement for a

179 Üngör, 30.

180 Çağaptay, 97-98.

181 “*Türkiye Cumhuriyeti dahilinde Türk dili ile konuşan, Türk kültürü ile yetişen, Türk mefkûresini benimsiyen her fert, hangi dinden olursa olsun Türktür.*” Quoted in *Tarih IV*, 182.

182 This bias is also reflected in the *Tarih II* account of the conversion of a number of Turkish tribes to Christianity during the Middle Ages, which, in the eyes of the authors, made them lose their Turkishness: “*Roma Papalarının bütün Avrupa âlemini propaganda ile hristiyan yapmak hususunda aldıkları tedbirler ve gösterdikleri meharek ve faaliyetler hayrete şayandır. Bu suretle birçok kavimlerin hristiyanlığı kabul etmeleri suretile Türk âlemi milyonlarca ırkdaşını kaybetmiş oldu.*” *Tarih II*, 78.

marker which had been prominently employed during the Second Constitutional Era and the National Struggle: Islam.

3.2.2. Anatolia: the Turkish National Homeland

In addition to creating a Turkish nation out of the Turkish Republic's Muslim inhabitants, the textbook authors also had to establish that nation's historical right to the territory controlled by the Turkish Republic. They did this by constructing a historical link between the Turkish nation and Anatolia, which in the Kemalist narrative became the national “homeland protected by the Turks”¹⁸⁴ - in contrast to the Central Asian *anayurt*, or “original homeland.”¹⁸⁵

Here, it is important to note that the correspondence between the territory of the Turkish Republic and the geographical area described as Anatolia was an innovation of the early republic. During the Ottoman period, Anatolia had not included the eastern provinces of Erzurum, Van, Diyarbakır or Hakkari, which were inhabited mostly by Armenians and Kurds, and which the Sèvres Treaty of 1920 had accorded to prospective Armenian and Kurdish states. Following the establishment of the republic, Turkish geographers came up with a variety of geographical classifications which extended the geographical entity referred to as Anatolia so as to include these provinces, and thus to create as close a congruence as possible between this term and the territory controlled by the Turkish Republic. This process would culminate in the definition, adopted at the 1941 Turkish Geography Congress, of the eastern provinces as “Eastern Anatolia” (*Doğu Anadolu*). In this way, the territory of the Turkish Republic was turned into a coherent, indivisible geographical unit.¹⁸⁶

183 See, for example, Hatice Bayraktar, “The anti-Jewish pogrom in Eastern Thrace in 1934: new evidence for the responsibility of the Turkish government,” *Patterns of Prejudice* 40:2 (2006), 95-111; Ayhan Aktar, ““Tax me to the end of my life!” Anatomy of an anti-minority tax legislation (1942-43),” in *State-nationalisms in the Ottoman Empire, Greece and Turkey*, ed. Benjamin C. Fortna et al. (London: Routledge, 2013), 188-220; Ali Tuna Kuyucu, “Ethno-religious 'unmixing' of 'Turkey': 6-7 September riots as a case in Turkish nationalism,” *Nations and Nationalism* 11:3 (2005), 361-380.

184 “... *Türkün barındığı öz yurdu Anadolu ...*” *Tarih IV*, 15.

185 *Tarih I*, 26.

186 Gürpınar, “From the Bare and Arid Hills,” 908-909.

The historical claim of the Turkish nation to Anatolia was clearly expressed in the definition of Turkish national homeland contained in the 1931 program of the RPP: “The national homeland is the land of the Turkish nation within our current political borders, which the Turkish nation has occupied throughout its ancient and exalted history, leaving its remains buried in the depths of the earth.”¹⁸⁷ The “remains” here referred to the archaeological remains left behind by the Hittites, an ancient people who had established an empire in Anatolia in the mid-second millennium BCE. The *Tarih I* textbook, adopting a thesis that had first been propagated by Mustafa Celâleddin Paşa in the late 19th century, and reprised by the Turkist intellectual Ahmed Ağaoğlu in the introduction to the 1922 work *Pontus Meselesi*, claimed that the Hittites had belonged to the Turkish nation.¹⁸⁸ Like many other groups of Turks, they had supposedly emigrated from the *anayurt* after the Central Asian inland sea had dried up, and had finally settled in Anatolia. Here, they had established a number of states which were eventually united into the Hittite Empire.

The claim that the Hittites were Turks went against existing European scholarship, which had found (in 1915) that the Hittite language was an Indo-European, not a Turkic tongue.¹⁸⁹ The textbook authors' peculiarly defensive insistence that “The languages of the Hittites ... were Turkic languages. The language of the Hittites is not a Semitic or Indo-European language.”¹⁹⁰ suggests that they were aware of this fact. Yet the claim that the Hittites belonged to the Turkish nation suited the nation-building motives of the Kemalist historians. By Turkifying the Hittites, they could argue that Turks had been the first inhabitants of Anatolia, and that the Turkish presence there predated that of either Greeks or Armenians.¹⁹¹ The Turks thus had a greater claim to Anatolia than either of these other nations.

The *Tarih I* textbook also Turkified the Phrygian and Lydian states which rose in central and western Anatolia after the collapse of the Hittite Empire in the late second

187 “*Vatan Türk Milletinin eski ve yüksek tarihi ve topraklarının derinliklerinde mevcudiyetlerini muhafaza eden eserleri ile yaşadığı bugünkü siyasi sınırlarımız içindeki yurttur.*” Quoted in *Tarih IV*, 179.

188 *Tarih I*, 128.

189 Can Erimtan, “Hittites, Ottomans and Turks: Ağaoğlu Ahmed Bey and the Kemalist Construction of Turkish Nationhood in Anatolia,” *Anatolian Studies* 58 (2008), 157.

190 “*Etilerin esas dilleri ... türkçe asıldandır. Etilerin dili samî veya Hint-Avrupalı değildir.*” *Tarih I*, 128.

191 Gürpınar, “From the Bare and Arid Hills,” 920.

millenium BCE. Yet once these states had collapsed in their turn, around 500 BCE, the focus of the narrative shifted away from Anatolia, with the following 1500 years of Anatolian history barely rating a mention. The history of the Byzantine Empire, which dominated Anatolia for much of the first millenium CE, was accorded a mere six pages, of which three pages were given over exclusively to an account of the 6th-century reign of the emperor Justinian.¹⁹² Meanwhile, while *Tarih II* did contain some passing references to the presence of Armenians in Anatolia,¹⁹³ neither of the two major medieval Armenian states in Anatolia – the Bagratid Kingdom and the Kingdom of Cilicia – was accorded a separate chapter, or even a separate paragraph in the textbook's account of Anatolian history.

Anatolia only took centre stage again with the arrival of the Seljuks. Drawing on the historical narrative that had been developed during the late 1910s and 1920s by Fuad Köprülü in particular,¹⁹⁴ the textbook argued that the victory of the Seljuks at the battle of Manzikert in 1071 left Anatolia open to the Turks.¹⁹⁵ With the establishment of an independent Anatolian Seljuk Empire (*Anadolu Selçuk İmparatorluğu*) by the Seljuk commander Suleiman in 1077, a “Turkish unity in Anatolia”¹⁹⁶ was supposedly created. Yet the establishment of the Anatolian Seljuk state did not merely mean Turkish political overlordship over Anatolia. The textbook also claimed that the Seljuk invasion entailed a Turkification of the Anatolian population. Thus, the existing urban and rural population of Anatolia had supposedly been decimated as a result of the near-continuous wars between the Byzantine Empire and its eastern neighbours – first the Umayyads, then the Abbasids and finally the Seljuks. This meant that the Turks who migrated to Anatolia as a result of the Seljuk victory at Manzikert quickly came to constitute a majority of the Anatolian population.¹⁹⁷ As most of these migrants were Muslims, this also meant the Islamization of Anatolian society.¹⁹⁸

192 *Tarih II*, 39-43.

193 *Ibid.*, 226-227, 229, 233, 235, 268, 272.

194 Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation*, 110.

195 “... bütün Anadolu Türkler karşısında adeta müdafaasız kalmıştı.” *Tarih II*, 227.

196 “... Anadoluda Türk vahdeti ...” *Ibid.*, 229.

197 “Bizanslıların Emeviler ve Abbasilerle, daha sora Selçuklularla mütemadi harpleri, Anadoluyu harap etmişti. Anadoluda Selçuk Devleti kurulduğu zaman, şehirler harap, ahalden mahrum, tarlalar bakımsız ve metruk bir halde idi. Şarktan mütemadi gelen Türk kütteleleri, Anadoludaki nüfus kesafetini yeniden çoğalttı.” *Ibid.*, 282.

198 “Selçuklarla beraber Anadoluya gelen Türk kütteleleri hemen umumiyetle müslüman idiler, binaenaleyh müslümanlık Anadoluda hâkim din oldu.” *Ibid.*, 283.

Under the small Anatolian *beyliks* which began to emerge and expand along with the gradual disintegration of the Anatolian Seljuk state in the 13th century, the Turkish language also supposedly gained greater prominence, not just as the language of the people, but as the language of literature and government (in which fields the Persian language had previously been dominant). The *Tarih II* textbook described this process as follows: “During the 14th century, as the Seljuk state, whose palace life had been unduly shaped by Iranian culture, was replaced by independent beyliks in different parts of Anatolia, the Turkish language gained greatly in importance...By the end of the 14th century, the Turkish language had ended the dominance of foreign languages in Anatolia.”¹⁹⁹

According to the textbook account, Anatolia was thus politically, ethnically, linguistically and religiously Turkified during the era of the Anatolian Seljuk sultanate and of its successor states. This laid the basis for the supposedly continuing Turkish dominance over Anatolia, even after the disintegration of the Seljuk state: “After the Seljuk sultanate in Anatolia crumbled and fell apart, the Turkish nation founded the more powerful Ottoman Empire; after the Ottoman Empire itself was consigned to history, the Turks decided to found another, even more powerful, national and modern state carrying their own name”²⁰⁰ - the Turkish Republic.

The textbook narrative thus created a dual Turkish claim to Anatolia. The Turks (as Hittites) had been the original settlers of Anatolian soil, and therefore had a greater claim to Anatolia than either the Greeks or the Armenians,²⁰¹ rendering any putative irredentist ambitions which these nations might have on the territory of the Turkish Republic illegitimate. The ancient Turkish claim to Anatolia was reinforced by the account of the Turkification of Anatolia under the Seljuks, and by the textbooks' almost complete silence regarding the historical existence of non-Turkish states or peoples on Anatolian soil. The impression given is of a continuous, and dominant, Turkish presence

199 “XIV. asırda, saraylarında İran kültürüne fazla mevki veren Selçuk Devleti yerine Anadolunun muhtelif yerlerinde müstakil beyliklerin kurulması, Türk diline büyük bir ehemmiyet verdirdi ... türkçe XIV. asır sonunda Anadoluda yabancı dillerin hakimliğine nihayet vermiştir.” Ibid., 287.

200 “Anadoluda Selçuk Saltanatı yıkılıp dağılınca, ondan daha kuvvetli Osmanlı Saltanatını kuran millet, Osmanlı Saltanatı tarihe karışırken de, ondan daha kuvvetli başka bir devlet, kendi adını taşıyan milli ve muasır bir devlet kurmaya azmetmişti.” *Tarih IV*, 14.

201 Copeaux, 31.

in Anatolia, from antiquity until the founding of the Turkish Republic, which legitimized the creation of a Turkish nation state on this territory.

3.3. The Turkish Nation and Civilization

3.3.1. The Turks as the Founders of World Civilization

The aim of the new Turkish national historiography was not only the creation of a coherent Turkish nation and of a Turkish national homeland in Anatolia. The Kemalist historians also needed to legitimize the Westernizing reforms of the Turkish leadership and its attempts to make Turkey part of the West. They did this by elaborating what Hanioglu has termed “an extravagantly flamboyant theory”²⁰² designed to prove that a) civilization was Turkish in origin, and that b) Turkish civilization, even in its ancient form, bore many of the hallmarks of Western modernity.

According to this theory, the ur-Turks in the Central Asian *anayurt* had developed a sophisticated, sedentary, agrarian civilization while humans in other parts of the world were still stuck in a primitive, nomadic, hunter-gatherer way of life.²⁰³ Migrating outward from their homeland and settling in other parts of Eurasia, the Turks took their civilization with them. These migrations were shown to be behind the spread of civilization throughout the ancient world: “In search of better climes, the Turks, carrying the seeds of their civilization, migrated outwards in all directions; they searched for fertile plains and rich water sources that would be suitable for agriculture. When they encountered primitive natives, they either drove them out or, by mingling with them, civilized them.”²⁰⁴ In this way, Turks supposedly brought civilization to

202 Hanioglu, 59.

203 “*Dünyanın başka taraflarında, insanlar; daha kaya ve ağaç koruklarında en koyu vahşet hayatı yaşarken Türk, Anayurdunda kereste, maden medeniyetleri devirlerine kadar ulaşmıştı. İnsanlıkla hayvanlığı hakiki ve bariz surette ayıran devir, hayvanları ehlileştirme devri, en evel burada açılmış; tabiatı insan iradesine boyun eğdirerek işletmenin ilk merhalesi sayabileceğimiz çiftçilik, burada başlamıştır.*” Tarih I, 26.

204 “*Daha iyi iklimler aramağa çıkan Türkler ... medeniyetlerinin tohumlarıyla birlikte dört bucağa yayıldılar; çiftçiliğe yarıyacak güzel ovalar; zengin su boyları aradılar. Karşılaştıkları iptidai yerlilerle çarpışarak onları ya başka yerlere sürdüler, ya da içlerine girerek temdin ettiler.*” Ibid., 28.

China, India, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Anatolia; that is to say, to all the civilizational centres of the ancient Eurasian world.

This theory is very similar to 19th-century European theories claiming that a single people – the Indo-Europeans – had spread civilization across ancient Eurasia. The existence of the Indo-Europeans (or Indo-Aryans – the term had not yet acquired the stigma of association with Nazi ideology) had first been posited in the late 18th century, after the English scholar Sir William Jones had discovered striking similarities between Sanskrit, Latin, ancient Greek and Persian, and the Germanic and Celtic languages. These similarities, he argued, could only be explained by the fact that all these languages derived from a common source,²⁰⁵ which later studies located in the steppes of southern Russia. Successive outward migrations of tribes living in this area had supposedly spread the shared language of these tribes across Eurasia, and the various languages belonging to the Indo-European family had evolved out of this ur-language. Under the influence of 19th-century race theories and assumptions regarding the civilizational superiority of the Europeans, these Indo-Europeans came to be seen not as a loose federation of tribes spreading a common linguistic heritage, but as members of a single race sowing the seeds of civilization across ancient Eurasia. Thus Friedrich Max Müller, a professor of Sanskrit at Oxford University, had in the mid-19th century described the Indo-Europeans as “the masters of history,” endowed with a “mission to link all parts of the world together by chains of civilization, commerce and religion.”²⁰⁶

Possibly inspired by such claims, Samih Rifat, a bureaucrat in the late Ottoman and early republican administrations and after 1923 an RPP member of parliament, had in the 1920s propounded a theory whereby the Turks were the oldest race in the world, originating in Central Asia, and from there had spread their language and civilization across Eurasia, a claim he intended to prove by demonstrating the Turkish ancestry of the Eurasian languages.²⁰⁷ Widely ridiculed, even in Turkish nationalist circles, Rifat nevertheless assumed an important position in the *Türk Tarihi Tetkik Heyeti* upon the

205 John Keay, *India: A History* (London: HarperCollins, 2000), 20.

206 Quoted in *ibid.*, 21.

207 İlker Aytürk, “Turkish Linguists Against the West: The Origins of Linguistic Nationalism in Atatürk’s Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 40:6 (2004), 13.

committee's establishment in 1930, and was thus prominently involved in the elaboration of the new historiography.²⁰⁸

Tarih I acknowledged the existence of the Indo-Europeans, but located their origins in north-eastern Europe, on the shores of the Baltic Sea. From here, they textbook authors claimed, the Indo-Europeans (a tribal federation, rather than a race) had migrated south and westward, occupying modern-day Germany, France, Spain, Italy and the British Isles, and forcing the local populations to adopt their language.²⁰⁹ The influence of the Indo-Europeans was thus contained within Europe, and any connection between the Indo-Europeans and the civilizations of ancient Anatolia, Persia,²¹⁰ and India²¹¹ was strenuously denied. In Kemalist historiography, the honour of civilizing the ancient Eurasian world belonged exclusively to the Turks.

Northern China, being closest to the Turkish *anayurt*, was, according to the *Tarih I* textbook, the first region to be civilized by the Turks, who supposedly arrived there around 5000 BCE, bringing with them agriculture and civilization²¹² and establishing a ruling class over the local population.²¹³ The Turks also brought civilization to India, invading the subcontinent from the north, pushing the local, dark-skinned population southward, and establishing the civilizational centres of Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro,²¹⁴ whose remains archeologists had discovered a few years prior to the writing of the *Tarih* textbooks, and dated to the mid-fourth millennium BCE.²¹⁵ A second wave of invaders, who began to settle the Indian north in the mid-second millennium BCE, were also claimed as Turks, a clear rejection of 19th-century European scholarship, which had determined that these ancient settlers had been a branch of the Indo-Europeans.²¹⁶

208 Ibid., 15.

209 *Tarih I*, 259.

210 “Avrupalıların İran ve Arî kelimesi üzerindeki telâkki ve taksimleri tamamile yanlıştır.” Ibid., 164.

211 “Hindistan, M. E. 1500 tarihlerinde şimalden, Pencap üzerinden yeni bir istilâya uğradı. Ortaasyadan gelen bu istilâcılara Avrupa âlimleri Hint Arileri derlerse de bunlar hakikatte yurtlarından ayrılmış Türk kabileleridir.” Ibid., 75.

212 Ibid., 28.

213 Ibid., 56.

214 Ibid., 29.

215 Keay, *India*, 12.

216 Ibid., 21.

Another Turkish migratory wave supposedly brought civilization to Anatolia, Mesopotamia and Egypt. As we have already seen, Kemalist historiography claimed that the Hittite civilization was founded by Turks who had migrated westward. But these would-be Hittites did not migrate on their own – they were accompanied by other Turkish tribes, who would go on to establish the civilizations of Sumer, Akkad and Elam in Mesopotamia.²¹⁷ Other Turks supposedly laid the foundations of Egyptian civilization, even if the later development of that civilization was attributed to local Semitic tribes.²¹⁸ Turks were also claimed to be the authors of Minoan and Mycenaean civilization, having migrated west across the Aegean Sea from Anatolia.²¹⁹

3.3.2. Defining Turkish Civilization: Sumer and the Hittites

Both the *Tarih I* textbook and its precursor, *Türk Tarihin Ana Hatları*, devoted a significant amount of space to accounts of the political history of Sumer and the Hittite state, and to a description of their respective societies and cultures.²²⁰ What is interesting about this description is that it was framed in terms designed to underline the civilizational modernity of these societies. This emerges most clearly in the textbooks' portrayal of the social position of Hittite and Sumerian women. Thus, *Türk Tarihin Ana Hatları* claimed that Hittite women enjoyed a high position in society – they took part in the running of the state, pronounced judgments, and even went to war.²²¹ Sumerian women, meanwhile, lived in monogamous union (this union, the authors emphasized, was not a religious institution) with their husbands, had an equal claim to family property, could work in any profession they chose, and walked the streets with their faces uncovered.²²² Moreover, girls were allowed to attend the same schools as boys, where they took classes in reading and writing, grammar, construction, geography,

217 *Tarih I*, 87.

218 *Ibid.*, 108.

219 *Ibid.*, 191-192.

220 Based on the notion that these states were both formed by participants in the same Turkish migratory movement, the textbooks claimed that they shared many of the same characteristics. See *Türk Tarihin Ana Hatları*, 174.

221 “Etilerde kadın hürriyeti yüksekti. Bunlar hükümet işlerinde vazife aldıktan başka, hâkimlik de yaparlar ve erkekler gibi muharebelere giderlerdi.” *Türk Tarihin Ana Hatları*, 172.

222 “Sumerlerde aile teşkilâtı tek zevce (monogamie) esası üzerine müessesdi. İzdivaç, dinî bir mahiyette değildi ... İzdivaçtan sora kadın, aile mallarında ve mülklerinde müşterekti ... Kadın iktisadî bir istiklâlde sahipti, istediği işi tutabilirdi; tezgâhlarda, mağazalarda çalışır; yüzü açık olarak gezerdi.” *Tarih I*, 97.

mathematics, measurements and literature.²²³ This commitment to secular education and learning was in keeping, so the textbook authors averred, with the Sumerians' positivist approach to knowledge.²²⁴

This view of Sumerian and Hittite society was based to a certain extent on Western scholarship. Thus the claim that Hittite women participated in warfare may be traced to the 1884 work *The Empire of the Hittites* by the Presbyterian missionary William Wright, which contained the claim that the Amazon warriors of Greek legend had in fact been Hittite priestesses.²²⁵ Similarly, the archaeologist Leonard Woolley, whose 1929 work *The Sumerians* was listed among the sources for *Türk Tarihin Ana Hatları*, had noted that Sumerian marriages were monogamous, and that the wife had joint control over her dowry (if not over the entire family property) with her husband.²²⁶ Woolley also noted that women could independently engage in business,²²⁷ while both boys and girls could attend school, where they learned grammar, mathematics and measures.²²⁸ The claim that Sumerian women walked the streets uncovered, meanwhile, was possibly based on Sumerian statues of women with their hair and face unveiled.²²⁹

Yet I would argue that this portrayal of the Sumerian and Hittite societies was also shaped by the Kemalist leadership's view of Western modernity and by the concepts which they considered to be integral to this modernity: secularism, equality between the sexes, the participation of women in public life, and a positivist approach to knowledge. Turkish civilization as it appeared in its Sumerian and Hittite incarnations was inherently and precociously Western: it was Western before the West. In this context, the references to the absence of female veiling and the existence of secular, mixed education are particularly interesting, suggesting that “real” Turkish civilization was

223 “Sumerlerin talim ve terbiye teşkilâtı mükemmeldi. Erkek ve kız çocukları bir arada tahsil ederlerdi. Mekteplerde okuma yazma, gramer, inşa, coğrafya, riyaziye, mesaha usulleri, mikyaslar ve edebiyat öğretilirdi.” Ibid., 97.

224 “Sumerlerin fikirlerinin filî tezahürleri tetkik olunursa müspet bir felsefeye salık oldukları anlaşılır.” Ibid., 97.

225 William Wright, *The Empire of the Hittites* (London: James Nibet & Co., 1884), 74. Wright's work was one of the main sources used by the Turkist intellectual Ahmed Ağaoğlu in composing the introduction to the 1922 work *Pontus Meselesi*, which popularized the notion that the Hittites had been Turks. See Erimtan, 157.

226 C. Leonard Woolley, *The Sumerians* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1928), 100.

227 Ibid., 101.

228 Ibid., 108-110.

229 Ibid., facing page 164.

opposed to two institutions fundamentally associated with Islam (and thus also with the “backward” East): the veil and the *medrese*. The Kemalist secularizing and Westernizing reforms could then be portrayed as a return to the original civilization of the Turks.

3.3.3. Civilizing Europe: Ionians, Phocaeans and Etruscans

Having Turkified the population and civilization of ancient Anatolia, the textbook authors went on to argue that the seeds of civilization were brought to Europe by three peoples from the western region of Anatolia: the Ionians, the Phocaeans and the Etruscans. The Ionians, an ancient people based on the Anatolian Aegean coast, and one of the main contributors to the flowering of ancient Greek civilization, became, in the Kemalist version of history, a Turkish tribe. Migrating westward from Anatolia, the Ionians supposedly settled on the Greek peninsula, where they spread their civilization among the local population,²³⁰ themselves the descendants of earlier Turkish migrants.²³¹ Over the following centuries, these Turkish inhabitants of the Greek peninsula would supposedly mingle with a number of other races, producing the Greek nation that the Romans were familiar with.²³²

The Kemalist historians also Turkified the Phocaeans, a branch of the Ionians that, around 600 BCE, had established a trading outpost in what is now the city of Marseille on the French Mediterranean coast. From this outpost, they supposedly spread the rudiments of civilization among the local population: “It was the Phocaeans who taught the people of France the alphabet and the use of money.”²³³ Finally, the textbooks also claimed the Etruscans as Turkish, arguing that they were related to the Anatolian Lydians, and endowed with a culture that was superior to that of any contemporary European people, including the Greeks.²³⁴ According to this account, the Etruscans,

230 *Tarih I*, 200.

231 *Ibid.*, 185.

232 *Ibid.*, 186.

233 “*Fransa ahalisine alfabeyi ve para kullanmasını öğreten Foçalılardır.*” *Ibid.*, 200.

234 “*Diğer hiçbir Avrupalı millet hars itibarile [Etrüsklere] muadil değildi ... Mimarlıkta kemer ve kubbe yapmasını bilirlerdi ki o zaman Grekler bilmiyorlardı.*” *Ibid.*, 265.

having crossed the Eastern Mediterranean, established a sophisticated civilization on the Italian peninsula and founded the city of Rome. Roman civilization, while not Etruscan (i.e. Turkish) itself, would be raised on the foundations created by the Etruscans.²³⁵

While the origins of the civilization of the ancient Greeks and Romans – and, by implication, also the origins of Western civilization – were clearly claimed as Turkish in the textbooks, neither the Greek, nor – more obviously – the Roman polities were thus Turkified quite as comprehensively as those created by the Hittites and Sumerians. To a large extent, as Wendy Shaw has suggested, this seems to have been simply a matter of expediency: the Sumerian language had not been classified at the time the textbooks were written, and it was thus relatively easy to claim a Turkish origin for this language and thus for the people who spoke it.²³⁶ A similar thing held true for the Hittites: while the Hittite language had been deciphered and classified as Indo-European in 1915, the study of Hittite civilization was still in its infancy, which made the claim that the Hittites were Turks somewhat less controversial – particularly as Western archaeologist frequently drew parallels between the customs and dress of the Hittites and those of the modern-day inhabitants of Anatolia.²³⁷ Conversely, both ancient Rome and ancient Greece had been studied in great detail by Western scholars, and it was consequently much harder to rewrite their history so as to make these polities completely Turkish.

Yet I would suggest that the partial Turkification of the Greek and Roman polities also foreshadowed another aspect of the Kemalist historical narrative that becomes very prominent in the textbook account of the two millenia following the birth of Christ. This is the division of Eurasian history into the history of two distinct entities: Europe and Asia. This division will be analyzed in the following section.

235 Ibid., 268.

236 Wendy M.K. Shaw, “Whose Hittites, and Why? Language, Archaeology and the Quest for the Original Turks,” in *Archaeology under Dictatorship*, ed. Michael L. Galaty et al. (New York: Springer, 2004), 135.

237 Ibid., 137.

3.4. Asia and Europe

The Kemalist division of Eurasia into the distinct spheres of Europe and Asia can be traced to the ideology of pan-Asianism. Pan-Asianism had first emerged in the 1880s, both in response to the realities of Western imperialism, and to the increasingly elaborate European (and US American) theorizing about the inherent superiority of the “white,” Christian nations over Islam and the “yellow races” of Asia which accompanied the imperialist enterprise.²³⁸ Pan-Asianism defined Asia as a cohesive body in contradistinction to the European West. According to pan-Asianists, Asia had long been militarily and civilizationally superior to Europe, but from about the 16th century had begun to “fall behind” the West. It was this falling behind that had enabled the Europeans to eventually subjugate much of the Asian continent.²³⁹ The Kemalist historians adopted from pan-Asianism both the concept of Asia as a coherent block, and the claim of Asian military and civilizational superiority over Europe prior to the 16th century. Yet, in an idiosyncratic twist that was nevertheless wholly consistent with the broader scope of the Kemalist historical narrative, they attributed both the coherence of Asia and its superiority over Europe to the dominant role played by the Turkish nation in the history of Asia.

3.4.1. Asia Turkified

The Kemalist historians invested a considerable amount of effort and ingenuity in order to Turkify the history of Asia from the early first millennium CE until the 16th century. Turks were shown to have built almost all of the great Asian states in this period, and to have militarily and politically dominated the continent. This account also once again underlined the inherent civilizational capabilities of the Turks. Just as Turks had supposedly spread civilization throughout the ancient world, so they were also shown to be behind the various flowerings of civilization on the Asian continent in this period, whether in Tang China, Mughal India, the Central Asian steppes or the Islamic Middle

²³⁸ Aydın, 7-8.

²³⁹ Eri Hotta, “Rash Behari Bose and his Japanese Supporters,” *Interventions* 8:1 (2006), 123-124.

East. Kemalist historiography thus created a coherent Asian/Eastern civilizational block – one whose civilization was shaped by the Turkish nation. The Turkification of Asian history may be seen to consist of three separate steps: the Turkification of India and China, the Turkification of the Central Asian steppe empires, and the Turkification of Islam.

3.4.1.1. China and India

As we saw in the previous section, according to Kemalist historiography Turkish migrants from Central Asia had brought civilization to China and India. Turkish involvement in Chinese and Indian history did not end there, however. Thus, Turks supposedly continued to shape Chinese civilization throughout the subsequent millennia: *Türk Tarihin Ana Hatları* argued that both Confucius and Lao-Tzu, the founder of Taoism, were Turks.²⁴⁰ Turks, so *Tarih I* claimed, also played a key role in shaping Chinese political history. Thus the three great dynasties which dominated the history of pre-imperial China – the Xia, the Shang, and the Zhou – were all supposedly of Turkish origin.²⁴¹ The same claim was made for Ying Zheng, the first man to unify the various Chinese kindoms into a single state in 221 BCE (Ying Zheng was also, incidentally, portrayed as a kind of proto-Atatürk, driving through a reform of the Chinese alphabet in the face of strong opposition from the religious establishment).²⁴² The Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE), and the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368 CE) founded by the Mongol warlord Kublay Khan, were supposedly also Turkish.²⁴³

As in the case of China, Turkish involvement in Indian history also supposedly continued long after the initial Turkish invasions of the subcontinent. A number of states set up by nomadic invaders in northern India in the early first millenium CE – specifically the Kushan empire and an Indo-Scythian state – were supposedly Turkish,²⁴⁴

240 *Türk Tarihin Ana Hatları*, 65. This claim is only implied, not made implicit, in *Tarih I*.

241 *Tarih I*, 57

242 *Ibid*, 58. The textbook even referred to the Chinese religious scholars who supposedly opposed the alphabet reform as *ulema*, a term usually reserved for Islamic religious scholars.

243 *Türk Tarihin Ana Hatları*, 77-88.

244 *Tarih I*, 77-78.

as, notably, was the Buddha.²⁴⁵ The textbooks also glorified the period 1001-1857, during which a number of Muslim dynasties of Central Asian origin controlled parts of northern and central India, as the great age of Turkish-Indian civilization. This civilization was shown to reach a high point under the early Mughal emperors – Babur and Akbar in particular being singled out as avatars of Turkish greatness – and to only have come to an end when the British forced Bahadur II, the last Mughal, to abdicate in 1857.²⁴⁶ In this way, the Kemalist historians created a version of Indian history that was, like their version of Chinese history, fundamentally shaped and dominated by the Turks. Of the three nations – Indian, Chinese and Turkish – which the Young Turk journalist and historian Mizancı Mehmed Murad had described as the great nations of Asia in 1886, only one remained in the Kemalist version of Asian history: the Turkish nation.

3.4.1.2. Central Asia

The Kemalist historians also laid claim to almost all of the ancient and medieval nomadic polities of the Central Asian steppes. These polities, so they asserted, had all been founded by descendants of the Turks who had stayed behind in the *anayurt* and had adopted a nomadic existence more suited to the changed climatic conditions.²⁴⁷ The polities claimed as Turkish by the Kemalist historians included the Asian Huns,²⁴⁸ the Scythians, the Avars, the Hunnic confederation which, under Attila and his successors, overran much of Europe, the White Huns (*Akhunlar*),²⁴⁹ the Göktürk confederation and its various successor states, the Bulgars and the Khazars. States founded by later Muslim Central Asian dynasties – the Karakhanids, the Khwarezmids, the Seljuks and the Timurids – were also appropriated as part of the history of the Turkish nation.²⁵⁰

245 Ibid., 76.

246 *Tarih II*, 294-295.

247 *Tarih I*, 39

248 The textbooks' term for the Hsiung-nu (*Tarih I*, 63), a Central Asian nomadic federation which threatened the western borders of the Chinese states from the third century BCE to the first century CE. Chinese sources traced the origins of the Hsiung-nu back to remote antiquity, allowing the *Tarih* authors to claim a late second millennium BCE origin for the "Asian Hunnic Turkish Empire" (*Asya'da Hun Türk İmparatorluğu*). See Ying-Shih Yü, "The Hsiung-nu," in *The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia*, ed. Denis Sinor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 118.

249 The textbooks' term for the Hephthalites (*Tarih II*, 28), a Central Asian tribe described by the Byzantine historian Procopius as "the only ones among the Huns who have white bodies and countenances which are not ugly." Quoted in Denis Sinor, "The Hun Period," in *The Cambridge History*, ed. Sinor, 202.

250 *Tarih I*, 40.

Interestingly, the textbook account was more ambiguous regarding the origins of the Mongols, seemingly unable to decide whether this greatest of the Central Asian steppe empires should be claimed as a Turkish state or not. Thus, the Mongols were not described as racially Turkish, but Turks were claimed to have played a central role in the civilizational development of the Mongol Empire²⁵¹ and of its successor states, most notably the Golden Horde.²⁵² In this way, the textbook authors avoided racially associating the Turks with the Mongols, who, in European racist frameworks, were seen as representatives of the yellow race.²⁵³

In describing the later historical Central Asian states and societies as Turkish, the textbook narrative was largely in accordance with contemporary scholarship. Thus, in a series of lectures on the history of the Central Asian Turks held at Istanbul University's Institute of Turcology in 1926, the noted Russian orientalist Vasilii Barthold had covered the history of the Göktürks, the Uyghurs, the Bulgars, the Seljuks, the Karakhanids, the Khwarezmids and the Timurids.²⁵⁴ What was more controversial was the textbooks' Turkification of the earlier Central Asian nomadic societies, particularly the Scythians, the Hsiung-nu and the Huns. European scholars had established that the Scythians were an Indo-European people and probably spoke a language related to ancient Persian,²⁵⁵ while a dearth of archaeological and linguistic evidence meant that no consensus existed (or exists) regarding the origins or even the language of the Hsiung-nu²⁵⁶ or the Huns.²⁵⁷

I would argue that there are two reasons why the textbook authors chose to Turkify these earlier Central Asian nomadic societies. First, it allowed them to suggest a degree of historical continuity between the supposed inhabitants of the pre-historic Turkish *anayurt* and the later, recognizably Turkic, societies of Central Asia. Second, by Turkifying the Huns in particular, the Kemalist historians were able to create a narrative

251 *Tarih II*, 260-261.

252 *Ibid.*, 313.

253 See for example de Gobineau, 111.

254 G.L.M. Clauson, Rev. of *Orta Asia Türk Tarkhi Hakkında Dersler* by V. Barthold, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland* 4 (1928), 928-929.

255 Tamara Talbot Rice, *The Scythians* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1958), 38

256 Ying-Shih, 118

257 Sinor, 201

of Turkish military superiority over the West that lasted for over a thousand years. Thus, the *Tarih I* and *II* textbooks dwelled extensively on the military successes of the Huns under Attila, whose European campaigns they portrayed as sowing fear and awe across the continent,²⁵⁸ and who at one point supposedly ruled over all of Europe.²⁵⁹ By the time of Timur a thousand years later, very little had supposedly changed: “In the time of Timur, Europe was nothing but a province of Asia. Its cities were like villages and the life of its inhabitants was marked by misery. When the great Timur, Khan of the Turks, appeared on the threshold of Europe, the kings of Europe paid homage to him through envoys and letters.”²⁶⁰ In contrast, the only major campaigns of the “West” against the “East” prior to the late 15th century – the Crusades – were treated with considerable disdain. The Anatolian Seljuks and various supposedly Turkish commanders in the Levant (including, as we shall see below, the fabled Salahaddin Ayyubi) were shown to have dealt comfortably with anything the Crusader armies could throw at them. The Crusades' lack of impact was underscored by a table in *Tarih II*, in which the results of the six out of the eight Crusades were listed as either “nonexistent” or “not important.”²⁶¹

The incorporation of these Central Asian states and societies into the history of the Turkish nation also posed a problem, however. Within the civilizational frameworks then common in European scholarship, nomadism corresponded to a lower civilizational standard than that of the settled societies of Europe.²⁶² In keeping with their depiction of the Turkish nation as the carriers of universal civilization, the Kemalist historians thus had to repudiate the European notion that the Central Asian nomads were uncivilized barbarians.

This repudiation was clearly expressed in the passages describing the civilization of the various nomadic states. Thus, the Huns, whom European historians, “unable to put aside the painful memories of [the Hunnic invasions],” had “for centuries described as

258 “Avrupada hayatları at sırtında geçen cesur Hunlardan mürekkep Türk süvari ordularına karşı çıkabilecek hiçbir millet yoktu. Avrupa baştanbaşa korku ve dehşet içinde idi.” *Ibid.*, 23.

259 “Attilâ, bütün Avrupaya hâkim bir vaziyet aldı.” *Tarih I*, 341.

260 “Timur zamanlarında ... Avrupa, Asyanın bir ... vilâyetinden başka bir şey değildi. Orada şehirler, köylerden ve hayat, sefaletten ibaretti. Timur Avrupa eşiğinde görüldüğü zaman, Avrupa kırılları, Türklerin Hakanı Büyük Timura mektuplar ve sefirlerle hürmetlerini takdim ettiler.” *Tarih II*, 301.

261 *Ibid.*, 244.

262 Aytürk, 6.

uncivilized and barbaric,” were in fact a civilized people, with a strong literary and theatrical tradition²⁶³ – a bold claim to make for what was an essentially oral culture with an unknown language.²⁶⁴ Similarly, the Bulgar Turks had by the fifth century CE supposedly reached a civilizational level that was incomparably higher than that of the neighbouring Slavs, and it was only due to the influence of the Bulgars that the Slavs were able to develop their own civilization.²⁶⁵ The Gökturks, meanwhile, were both heroic and humane, did not take any pleasure in raping and pillaging,²⁶⁶ and had achieved a refinement in their material culture that was equal to that of the Byzantines.²⁶⁷ Finally, regarding the material artifacts left behind by the Uyghurs (the successors of the Gökturks in Central Asia), the textbook authors quoted an (unnamed) German archaeologist who had approvingly noted that “The Turks can be rightfully proud of the beautiful and great civilization of their ancestors, [who were able to produce these artifacts] at a time when such things did not exist in England, France or Germany.”²⁶⁸

3.4.1.3. İslam

The Tarih II textbook also Turkified the history of the Islamic world, focusing particularly on the Turkish role in the creation of various Islamic states and empires, and on the contributions of Turks to Islamic civilization. However, the textbooks did not only lay claim to the Central Asian Muslim Turkic states which Turkists like Necip Asim had long regarded as part of the history of the Turkish nation. They also claimed three other major centres of Islamic civilization: the various Muslim states on the

263 “Hunların şiddetli hücumlarının acı hatıralarını unutamayan Avrupa müverrihleri, onları asırlarca medeniyetsiz ve barbar olarak tasvir ve tavsif etmişlerdir. Halbuki Hunların kendilerine mahsus irfan, san'at ve medeniyetleri vardı ... Hunlarda edebiyat müterakki idi ... Tiyatro edebiyatı da oldukça ileri idi.” Tarih II, 27.

264 Sinor, 201.

265 “[Bulgarların] Tuna'nın aşağı mecrasını zaptettikleri, birçok İslav kabilelerini hakimiyetleri altına aldıkları zaman, onlarla mukayese edilemeyecek kadar yüksek, müterakki bir medeniyet sahibi idiler ... cenup İslavları da ancak bu medeniyetin nüfuzu sayesinde inkişaf edebildiler.” Ibid., 66-67.

266 “Gök Türkler çok cengâver olmakla beraber, çok ta insaniyetli idiler. Meselâ Asurilerin ve sair bazı cengâver milletlerin zafer kitabelerinde göze çarpan “Kan dökmek ve çok adam öldürmek zevki” Türk kitabelerinden anlaşıldığına göre asla mevcut değildi.” Ibid., 49-50.

267 Ibid., 50.

268 ““İngiltere, Fransa ve Alamanyada böyle şeyler yokken, güzel ve büyük bir medeniyet sahibi olan cetlerle Türkler hakkile iftihar edebilirler.”” Ibid., 59.

Iberian peninsula, the Abbasid Caliphate, and the empire created by the Ayyubid dynasty in the Levant.

The textbook authors claimed the Iberian Muslim states by arguing that the North African Berbers who played a key role in the Muslim conquest of the Iberian peninsula were racially Turkish.²⁶⁹ The key role of the Turks in the political history of the Abbasid Caliphate, on the other hand, mostly came at the expense of prominent Persians. Thus Abu Muslim, the Persian leader of the revolution that overthrew the Umayyads and brought the Abbasids to power, in the textbooks became a Turk leading a Turkish army “which also included Iranians.”²⁷⁰ The Persian Barmakid family, a number of whose male members rose to prominence as viziers to the early Abbasid caliphs and as the boyhood teachers of the caliph Harun al-Rashid and his sons, was also Turkified,²⁷¹ as, tenuously, were Harun's sons, the later caliphs Mamun and Mutasim – through their supposedly Turkish mothers.²⁷² The Ayyubid state, finally, was claimed for the Turks by Turkifying the Ayyubid dynasty's founder, the 12th-century military commander Salahaddin Ayyubi.²⁷³

By Turkifying these Islamic polities, the textbook authors were able to emphasize the contribution of Turks to the development of Islamic civilization. Thus, the civilizational flowerings that took place on the Iberian peninsula under Muslim rule,²⁷⁴ and in the Levant under the Ayyubids,²⁷⁵ were both attributed to the Turkish nature of these respective societies. More importantly, though, the authors sought to Turkify what is often termed the Golden Age of Islamic civilization, whose onset coincided with the early ascendancy of the Abbasid Caliphate.

269 Ibid., 133.

270 “*Horasanlı Ebümüslim namında bir Türk genci ... İranlıların da iltihak ettiği kuvvetli bir Türk ordusu ile ... Abbasoğullarından “Ebulabbas Abdullah” ... halife ilân ettirdi.*” Ibid., 148.

271 Ibid., 149.

272 Ibid., 151.

273 Ibid., 262. Thanks mostly to his sympathetic portrayal by Enlightenment authors such as Gotthold Lessing and Sir Walter Scott, and to the 1898 visit of Kaiser Wilhelm II to his tomb in Damascus, Salahaddin had by the early 20th century emerged as the Muslim hero *par excellence*. See Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation*, 87-88.

274 “*Endülüüs tarihi dahi ince bir tetkikten geçirildiği takdirde orada da bütün Avrupayı irşat eden yüksek medeniyet kurucularının ve ilim saçan büyük âlimlerinin Şarktan giden Türk âlimleri ve Türk ırkından ... Berber-Hazarlar olduğu kolaylıkla anlaşılır.*” Ibid., 164.

275 “*Eyubbî Devletile, Mısır ve Suriyede medeniyet noktasından yeni bir devir açıldı ki, bu devre doğrudan doğruya Türk Devresi demek lâzımdır.*” Ibid., 266.

The Turkification of Islamic civilization, like the claim that the Central Asian nomads had possessed a high level of civilization, ran counter to the majority of European scholarship. In contrast to their low opinion of nomadic civilization, 19th and early 20th-century European scholars did acknowledge the high level that Islamic civilization had reached during the Islamic Golden Age, symbolized by such individuals as al-Biruni, al-Farabi or Ibn Sina. Yet in keeping with the dominant racial discourses of the time, they attributed this to the supposedly overwhelming civilizational influence of the (Indo-European) Persians.²⁷⁶ Perhaps the best-known expression of this interpretation featured in Ernest Renan's 1883 speech at the Sorbonne, which has already been cited above.²⁷⁷ In this speech, Renan argued that Persians, not Arabs or Turks, had been behind the cultural and scientific efflorescence of the Islamic Golden Age, but that this fact had long been obscured by the use of Arabic as the *lingua franca* of Islamic culture and science, which he likened to the use of Latin in the Christian West. Just as Western scholars like Francis Bacon or Spinoza wrote their treatises in Latin, but were themselves ethnically English or Dutch, so Islamic scholars like al-Biruni or Ibn Sina wrote their treatises in Arabic, but were in fact ethnically Persian.²⁷⁸

The textbook authors did not challenge this argument, but simply adapted it: “Poets, historians, scientists and philosophers (Ferdowsi, al-Biruni, Ibn Sina...) were employed at the palaces of the Turkish sultans of the period. As had become customary, they wrote the majority of their works in Persian or Arabic. In a similar way, Latin was used in Europe at the time.”²⁷⁹ The implication is clear: these leading lights of Islamic civilization were not Arabs, nor Persians, but Turks, a claim that was made even more explicit elsewhere: “Al-Biruni was a Turk from Khwarezm. Ibn Sina was a Turk who was born in the village of Afshine close to Bukhara.”²⁸⁰ The high civilization of the Islamic Golden Age was thus turned into a predominantly Turkish civilization.

276 Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation*, 89.

277 See page 17 above.

278 Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation*, 90-91.

279 “... şair, tarihçi, âlim ve filozoflar (Fırdevsi, Elbiruni, İbnisina...) bu devrin Türk padişahlarının saraylarında yetişmişlerdir. Bunlar eserlerini ekseriya, âdet olduğu üzere, farisî ve arapça yazarlardı. Nitekim bu zamanlarda Avrupada da lâtinçe kullanılırdı.” *Tarih II*, 299-300.

280 “*Eburreyhanibirunî Harzemli bir Türktür ... İbni Sina Buhara yakınında Afşine kariyesinde doğmuş bir Türktür.*” *Ibid.*, 163.

In this way, the Kemalist historians were able to emphatically claim a dominant role for Turks in the development of Islamic civilization, whether as rulers, soldiers, artists or scholars: “Turks accomplished great things in every branch of Islamic civilization, without exception.”²⁸¹ Yet the textbooks also stressed the fact that Islamic civilization was not just Turkish, but superior to the contemporary civilization of the West, as the textbook account of the technological, scientific and cultural transfers from the Islamic world to Europe that began in the aftermath of the Crusades makes clear:

Windmills, which up to this time had been unknown to the Europeans, began to be constructed after the Crusaders saw them in the East. The arbalest, the drum and the trumpet became known in Europe in the same way. Aristocratic ladies began to use scents and pomades. Lords began to decorate the hitherto bare walls of their castles with worked copper plates and tapestries from the East. The Europeans also learned about the great inventions of the compass, paper and gunpowder from Turks in the East.²⁸²

By Turkifying Islamic civilization, the textbook authors could prove that Turkish civilizational superiority vis-a-vis the West, whose beginnings could be traced to ancient pre-history, continued until well into the second millennium CE. The pre-Ottoman Turks were thus not only militarily, but also civilizational superior to the West.

It is this, perhaps, that explains the somewhat surprising inclusion of the great age of Islamic history as part of the Kemalist, secular history of the Turkish nation. One reason for this, suggested also by Gürpınar, might be the continuing importance of Islam to the national identity of the Turks. Regardless of all Kemalist rhetoric to the contrary, Islam (and its history) remained an integral part of Turkish national identity, and could thus not easily be jettisoned.²⁸³ Yet the Turkification of Islamic history may also be seen to result from the internal logic of the Kemalist historians' creation of a Turkish Asian civilizational block. In this reading, the textbook authors' attempt to Turkify Islamic history mirrored their attempt to civilize the history of the Central Asian nomads: the nomads were Asian and Turkish and therefore needed to be portrayed as civilized.

281 “*Bilâistisna islam medeniyetinin her şubesinde Türklerin büyük hizmetleri oldu.*” Ibid., 162-163.

282 “*Avrupada o zamana kadar bilinmiyen yeldeğirmenleri Haçlıların, şarkta bunları görmelerinden sora yapıldı. Arbalet (oluklu ok), tambur, trampete şarkta görüldükten sora Avrupada tanındı. Asılzade hanımlar kokular ve pomatlar kullanmıya başladılar. Senyörlerin o zamana kadar çıplak olan şatolarındaki oda duvarları, işlenmiş bakır levhalar ve şark kumaşları ile süslendi ... Avrupalılar, büyük icatlardan olan pusulayı, kâğıdı ve top barutunu da şarkta Türklerden öğrendiler.*” Tarih II, 243.

283 Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation*, 84.

Islam, on the other hand, was Asian and civilized and therefore needed to be Turkified. The Islamic Golden Age, then, was not appropriated for religious reasons, but rather because it was a period of Asian civilizational greatness – one, moreover, that was recognized as such by European scholars.

3.4.2. The Rise of Europe

Tarih III, citing the French historian Edouard Driault, described the 16th century as the “great century of the Turks.”²⁸⁴ During this century, according to the textbook, the states controlled by the Turkish nation included the Ottoman Empire, the Mughal Empire and the Golden Horde, whose combined geographical extent was greater than that of either the Umayyad Caliphate or the empire of Alexander the Great had been. The 16th century was claimed not only to mark a high point in the history of the Turks in terms of military success and political greatness, but also in terms of wealth and civilizational brilliance.²⁸⁵

Yet this period also witnessed the rise of Europe, which the textbook recounted in the following way:

Between the middle of the 15th and the end of the 16th century, the last traces of the Middle Ages gradually disappear in Europe, major changes take place, the horizon expands, important steps are taken toward new developments, the growing religious crisis has important effects. Military, geographical, economical, philosophical, religious and political developments contribute to the beginning of European early modernity.²⁸⁶

These developments would, in time, allow a number of European states to colonize large parts of the world, in the process further increasing their own wealth and power, and making Europe the “most important continent.”

284 “... Fransız müverrihi Driyo (Drieault) diyor ki: “XVI. asır, Türklerin büyük asırır ...”” *Tarih III*, 69.

285 “*Vakâ islâm tarihinde Türk devresinin gerek siyasî hasmet ve askerî azamet, gerekse servet ve medenî parlaklık itibarile en yüksek devresi XVI. asırır.*” *Ibid.*, 69.

286 “*XV. asrın ortalarından XVI. asrın sonlarına kadar ... Avrupada Ortazamanların son izleri yavaş yavaş silinir; büyük değişiklikler olur, ufuk genişler, yeni tekâmül yollarında ehemmiyetli adımlar atılır, dinî buhran inkişaf ederek mühim neticeler verir. Hulâsa askerî, coğrafi, iktisadî, fikrî, dinî, siyasî sahalarda tekâmüller vukua gelerek Avrupanın Yenizamanları ... hulûl eder.*” *Ibid.*, 80.

The growing wealth and power of Europe was accompanied by the development of European civilization. According to the textbook, this development had begun during the late Middle Ages: “In the 12th and 13th centuries, civilization in Western Europe began, after a long period of lagging behind the Eastern and Islamic world, to revive.”²⁸⁷ As in the case of ancient Greece and Rome, this civilizational development was shown to have begun through the influence of Eastern learning.²⁸⁸ Yet over the coming centuries, European civilization would outgrow its Eastern roots. By the 17th century, according to Kemalist historiography, Western civilization had surpassed its Eastern counterpart, even if the East was not yet ready to accept this.²⁸⁹ From the 17th century onward, in a development which the textbook portrayed as mirroring the decline of the Ottoman Empire, the world came increasingly to be dominated by Europe and European civilization.

3.5. The Ottoman Empire

Where in *Tarih I* and *II*, the history of the Turkish nation was shown to encompass all of Asian history, in *Tarih III* the focus narrowed. The majority of this textbook was dedicated to an account of Ottoman history; other Asian states only received a passing mention. In Kemalist historiography as expressed in the *Tarih* textbooks, the history of the Turkish nation in the age of European ascendancy was thus almost exclusively tied to the history of the Ottoman Empire. The textbook divided Ottoman history into four periods: the establishment and rise of the Ottoman state (“*Osmanlı Devleti'nin Kuruluşu*”), from its foundation by Osman I in 1299 until the conquest of Constantinople in 1453; the Ottoman golden age (“*Osmanlı İmparatorluğu*”) between 1453 and the death of Grand Vizier Sokollu Mehmet Paşa in 1579; the age of Ottoman decline (“*İmparatorluğun İnhitâtı*”) from 1579 until 1792,²⁹⁰ and the age of

287 “... on ikinci ve on üçüncü asırlarda Garbî Avrupada medeniyet, şark ve islâm âlemine nazaran uzun bir gerilik devresinden sora yeni bir canlanma göstermeğe başlar.” Ibid., 16.

288 “... müslüman âlemile vaki olan medenî temas fikir ve san'at faaliyetinin de uyanmasına sebep olmuştur ... Avrupada bu devirdeki her yenilik gibi darülfünun tesisi de ilk evvel İtalya ve Fransada yani müslüman âlemile en çok temasta bulunan memleketlerde görülür.” Ibid., 17.

289 “Şarkın müslüman kavimleri, XVI. asırda medeniyetçe garba mütefevvik bulduklarından, XVII. asırdan itibaren medeniyette tefevvukun garba geçtiğini kabul ve itiraf etmiyorlardı.” Ibid., 189.

disintegration and collapse (“*İmparatorluğun İnhilâli ve İnkırazı*”) from 1792 until the year 1919.

This periodization roughly followed that used by late Ottoman historians of the Ottoman Empire, who tended to divide Ottoman history into four periods: rise, golden age, stagnation and decline.²⁹¹ This reflects the fact that in many ways the *Tarih III* version of Ottoman history was a fairly standard account, whose basic shape did not differ much from that of accounts written by late Ottoman historians. According to those histories, the Ottoman state had enjoyed a steady period of territorial expansion and civilizational development from its foundation around 1300 until roughly the end of the 16th century, based on the competence of its rulers, the strength of its armies and the efficiency of its administration. Yet from the late 16th century onwards, a succession of weak rulers and economic crises, the corruption and degeneration of the military and of the administrative apparatus, and various prisings among the empire's subjects led to a decline in Ottoman fortunes, which, helped along by increasing European intervention in Ottoman affairs, gathered pace as time went on, and eventually led to the empire's collapse.²⁹²

Kemalist historiography adopted this basic outline, but modified it in accordance with the nationalist, secular and Westernizing exigencies of the Kemalist nation-building project. In this version of Ottoman history, the greatness of the Turkish nation was the main factor behind the rise and golden age of the Ottoman Empire. Yet as European civilization and military strength came to surpass that of the Turkish East in the early 17th century, and as Europe began to use its superiority against the Ottoman Empire, the empire's strength and civilization went into eclipse. In a world increasingly dominated by Western civilization, the Ottoman state needed to Westernize in order to survive, yet

290 The choice of the year 1792 as marking the beginning of the final period of Ottoman decline is a strange one; usually this period is seen to start with the signing of the Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca in 1774, which granted major Ottoman territories, as well as the protectorship of the empire's Christian Orthodox subjects to the Russian Empire, and is generally seen to mark the beginning of the “Eastern Question” of how best to divide up the Ottoman Empire's territories among the Great Powers without upsetting the European balance of power. The choice of the year 1792 may be explained by the fact that the *Tarih III* authors, presumably basing themselves on the periodization used in Hamit and Muhsin's 1924 work *Türkiye Tarihi*, defined the period 1792-1839 as the “age of reforms,” but then included this period within the broader period of disintegration and collapse. For Hamit and Muhsin's *Türkiye Tarihi*, see Ersanlı, *İktidar ve Tarih*, 100-102.

291 Ersanlı, “The Ottoman Empire in the Historiography of the Kemalist Era,” 124.

292 Donald Quataert, “Ottoman History Writing and Changing Attitudes Toward the Notion of “Decline,”” *History Compass* 1 (2003), 1-2.

failed to do so mainly due to the obscurantist influence of Islam. Matters were not helped by the multinational composition of the empire, which prevented the Turkish nation from exercising its natural leadership role, and which, following the emergence of nationalism as a political force, inevitably led to the Ottoman Empire's disintegration. Here, the textbook authors' depiction of the Ottoman golden age, and of what they saw as the three main factors behind Ottoman decline – European intervention, the failure to Westernize, and the empire's multi-national composition – will be analyzed in more detail.

3.5.1. The Ottoman Golden Age

The textbook account of the rise and golden age of the Ottoman state was not very different from earlier accounts. Where it did deviate from many prior accounts was in the emphasis which the narrative placed on the fact that the rise of the Ottoman state to greatness was determined by its Turkish nature. Thus, the textbook narrative stressed the fact that the Ottoman state was founded by Turks around the year 1300,²⁹³ and that its organization and administration were similar to those of the other post-Seljuk Anatolian Turkish states.²⁹⁴ Following its foundation, the Ottoman state expanded rapidly, a process only briefly interrupted by Timur's invasion of Anatolia and the defeat of the Ottoman army under Bayezid I in the Battle of Ankara in 1402,²⁹⁵ and in 1453 an Ottoman army led by Mehmed II conquered Constantinople, an event which *Türk Tarihini Ana Hatları* presented as a victory for the Turkish nation over all of Europe: “The conquest of Istanbul by the Turks was at the same time a defeat for all of Europe and Christianity at the hands of the Ottoman Empire.”²⁹⁶

Further conquests under Mehmed II, Selim I and Süleyman over the following century proved the continuing military prowess of the empire, and made it, by the time of

293 “*Osmanlı Devletini tesis eden ve soradan Osmanlı namını alan Türkler ...*” *Tarih III*, 1.

294 *Ibid.*, 4-6.

295 Interestingly, the *Tarih II* textbook does not favour either side in its account of this battle, portraying Bayezid and Timur as Turkish lords of equal stature. *Tarih II*, 324-327.

296 “*İstanbul'un Türkler tarafından fethi, aynı zamanda bütün Avrupa'nın ve Hristiyan âleminin o vakit, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu tarafından mağlubiyeti demektir.*” *Türk Tarihini Ana Hatları*, 392.

Süleyman, “one of the world's largest states.”²⁹⁷ Yet according to the textbook, the Ottoman Empire was not only notable for its size. The state was also extremely wealthy, superior to the West in manufacturing and trade,²⁹⁸ tolerant and just towards both its Muslim and non-Muslim subjects,²⁹⁹ and run by an administration that no less an authority than Niccolò Machiavelli had described as the best in the world.³⁰⁰

The empire's power was matched by its civilization – dubbed “Ottoman-Turkish culture”³⁰¹ – which supposedly reached a high point during the reign of Mehmed II. This expressed itself in material culture and architecture, as well as in the realms of literature and philosophy.³⁰² The textbook also emphasized the fact that, reflecting the Turkish nation's commitment to scientific progress, the empire's *medreses* in this period taught not only religious subjects, but also physics, astronomy, zoology, and other natural sciences.³⁰³ “Ottoman-Turkish” civilization was shown to reach a second high point during the reign of Süleyman.³⁰⁴ This was evidenced, in particular, by the architectural masterpieces created by Mimar Sinan, after whom Ottoman architecture “began to decline in terms of simplicity, solidity, magnificence and splendour,”³⁰⁵ and the poetry of Bâkî and of Fuzulî, whom, the authors proudly noted, the British orientalist H.A.R. Gibb had described as one of the world's great lyric poets.³⁰⁶

As this brief overview has illustrated, the first 250 years of the Ottoman state and of Ottoman civilization were clearly Turkified in the textbook account. Yet as the Ottoman realm supposedly began to exhibit the first signs of decadence and decline during the

297 “... *Sultan Süleyman zamanında ... Osmanlı İmparatorluğu dünyanın en büyük devletlerinden biri [idi].*” Ibid., 52.

298 “*Zaten XVI. asırda şarkın sanayi ve ziraati garptan üstündü.*” Ibid., 53.

299 “*İstanbulun fetih üzerine, Türklerin şöhreti Avrupanın her tarafına yayıldı. Türklerin ellerine geçen memleketleri çok adalet ve merhametle idare ettikleri, fıkaraı zenginlerin gadir ve taziyikundan kurtardıkları şayi olmuştu; Türk tebaası olan kavimlerin refah ve saadete erdikleri söyleniyordu.*” Ibid., 40.

300 “... *Makyavelli bile, Türk idaresinin o zamanlarda mevcut idarelerin hepsinden daha eyi olduğunu yazıyordu.*” Ibid., 40.

301 “... *Osmanlı-Türk harsı ...*” Ibid., 41.

302 Ibid., 41-42.

303 Ibid., 42.

304 “... *Kanunî Süleyman zamanı, Osmanlı Türklerinin hars itibarile de en mütekâmil bir devridir.*” Ibid., 57.

305 “... *bundan itibaren Osmanlı mimarısı sadelik, salâbet, azamet ve ihtişam cihetile düşmeye başlar.*” Ibid., 58. The textbook does not claim that Sinan was Turkish, noting merely that he was from the central Anatolian city of Kayseri. In this way, the problem of Sinan's non-Muslim origins is fudged. See Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation*, 49.

306 “... *İngiliz müşteşriki Mister Gip, Fuzulîyi, bütün dünyanın en büyük lirik şairlerinden saymaktadır.*” Ibid., 59.

later years of Süleyman's reign,³⁰⁷ the authors began to gradually disassociate the Turkish nation from the fortunes of the Ottoman Empire, a process that will be analyzed in more detail in the following sections.

3.5.2. Factors Behind Ottoman Decline I: European Intervention

Tarih III portrayed European wars against the Ottoman Empire and European interventions in the empire's internal affairs as having played a major part in the empire's economic decline and gradual territorial disintegration. In line with the Kemalist historians' conception of two opposed civilizational blocks in Europe and Asia, European wars against the Ottoman Empire were shown to be part of a general European counterattack against the Turkish-dominated East.³⁰⁸ This counterattack had supposedly begun in the late 15th century, with Christopher Columbus' attempt to find an alternative route to India – part of a cunning European plan to attack the Turkish world from behind³⁰⁹ – and the subjection of the Central Asian Golden Horde to the lords of Rus.³¹⁰ Yet it was not until the late 17th century that the Europeans were sufficiently strong, and the Ottomans sufficiently weak, for the European armies to be consistently successful in the campaigns against the Ottoman Empire itself.³¹¹

The textbook characterized the early European campaigns against the Ottoman Empire as religiously motivated. Thus the Christian campaigns against the Ottomans which ended in decisive Ottoman victories at the 1396 Battle of Nicopolis³¹² and the 1444 Battle of Varna³¹³ were described as “crusades,” as were the anti-Ottoman campaigns of

307 “*Hasılı, Kanunî Süleyman devrinde zirvesine eren Osmanlı saltanatında, muvaffakiyet, servet ve refahtan doğan inhitat ve inkıraz emareleri de görülmeye başlamıştı.*” Ibid., 61.

308 “... *Türklerin tevessüü ve medeniyeti sekte ve tevakküfa uğramış ve XVII. asırdan itibaren ricat ve inhitat başlamıştır. Türklerde, tevessü hareketi durur durmaz, hıristiyan Avrupalılar mukabil taarruza geçtiler.*” Ibid., 69.

309 “*1495 [sic] te Amerikayı keşfeden ve insaniyete, medeniyete hizmet kastile hareket ettiğini zanneylediğimiz Kristof Kolomp. Garptan giderek Hinde vâsil olmak ve bu suretle Türk-islâm âlemini arkadan vurmak istiyordu.*” Ibid., 70.

310 “*İlk büyük ricat ve inhilâl bugünkü Rusyada sakin Türkler arasında vukua geldi. Hâkim olan Altınordu hanları, mahkûm mevkiine, mâhkum olan Rus beyleri, hâkim mevkiine geçtiler.*” Ibid., 69.

311 “... *Osmanlı-Türkleri bir asır kadar mukavemet edebilmişler (XVII. asır); fakat sora, daha ilerde göreceğimiz veçhile, onlar da ricate icbar edilmişlerdir.*” Ibid., 70.

312 Ibid., 20-21.

313 Ibid., 30-31.

the Holy Leagues of 1571³¹⁴ and 1684.³¹⁵ Perhaps reflecting the authors' assertion that in the aftermath of the Renaissance and of the Protestant Reformation religion had begun to lose its influence over European politics,³¹⁶ the religious aspect faded into the background in the textbooks' account of later European-Ottoman wars. Thus the 18th-century Russian and Austrian wars against the empire were shown to be predominantly motivated by profane considerations, particularly the Russian desire to have access to the Mediterranean Sea, and the Austrian Habsburg emperors' endeavour to seize as many Ottoman possessions in the Balkans as possible for themselves.³¹⁷ European interactions – both military and diplomatic – with the empire in the 19th and early 20th centuries, meanwhile, were shown to be guided by the conflicting exigencies of the European colonial enterprise and of the “Eastern Question.” Following the industrial revolution, a number of European powers thus supposedly decided to reduce the Ottoman Empire to the status of a semi-colony which would supply them with raw materials and serve as a market for their manufactured goods.³¹⁸ At the same time, the European powers were shown to profit from the Ottoman Empire's continuing weakness by gradually carving up the empire's remaining territories. The 1878 Treaty of Berlin, in which the empire lost most of its remaining European territories, was portrayed as a direct precursor of the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres, the “final” division of the Ottoman Empire.³¹⁹

What is striking about this account of the European role in the decline and disintegration of the Ottoman Empire is its neutral tone. In marked contrast to earlier polemics against

314 Ibid., 65

315 “*Bu müttefikler heyetine ... “İttifakı Mukaddes” namı verilmişti; Türkler aleyhine yürüyen ordu, tam bir Haçlılar ordusu idi.*” Ibid., 147. The Holy League of 1571 was an alliance of almost all Catholic Mediterranean powers, organized by Pope Pius V and aiming to end Ottoman control of the Eastern Mediterranean. The League won a crushing victory over the Ottoman fleet at the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. The Holy League of 1684, meanwhile, was an alliance of the Holy Roman Empire, Poland-Lithuania, Venice and Russia, which was organized by Pope Innocent XI, and whose various campaigns against the Ottoman Empire would lead to the signing of the Treaty of Karlowitz in 1699, a treaty which enshrined the first major territorial losses of the Ottoman Empire.

316 “... *protestanlık reformasyonu Ortazamanların emperyalizm ve teokrasisine kat’i olarak nihayet vermiştir.*” Ibid., 103.

317 Ibid., 143-144.

318 “... *Fransa ve İngiltere ve bunları müteakıp sanayileşen Avusturya ve Prusya Osmanlı memleketlerinin, Osmanlı Hükümeti idaresi altında kalarak, kendilerine ham eşya hazırlayan ve kendilerinin mamulâtını satın alan bir ticaret sahası, bir istismar mantığı halinde yaşamasını menfaatlerine muvafık buluyorlardı.*” Ibid., 241.

319 This continuity is clearly expressed through the terminology used to describe these treaties: the Treaty of Berlin is referred to as “*Osmanlı Devletinin Parçalanması,*” (*Tarih III*, 259), and the Sèvres Treaty as “*Osmanlı Devletinin Son Parçalanması.*” (*Tarih III*, 309).

European intervention penned by Turkish nationalists in the late Ottoman period, in the textbooks we find very little condemnation of European aggression. This contrast may be illustrated by comparing the textbook's account of the Italian invasion of Ottoman Libya in 1911 to the portrayal of the same event in the Turkish nationalist Ömer Seyfettin's 1911 short story *Primo: Türk Çocuğu*. Where the textbook lapidarily noted that the Italians, “accepting the crisis of the Ottoman state as an opportunity, set out to occupy Tripoli,”³²⁰ Seyfettin's reaction was considerably more outraged: “In the middle of the twentieth century, when – so one hoped – the rights of individuals, societies, states and nations had become clearly defined, how could this piratical assault have been expected? What a vile crime this was...”³²¹

The difference between these two accounts may be explained by the fact that the Kemalist historians, unlike Turkish nationalists of the late Ottoman era, did not closely identify with the Ottoman state. In the Turkish Republic, they had their own state – one, moreover, that had been created by abolishing the Ottoman dynasty. This is not to say that the textbook completely disowned the Ottoman past: as we have seen, the rise and golden age of the Ottoman Empire were largely attributed to the efforts of the Turkish nation. Yet as the narrative moved forward into the age of Ottoman decline, references to the empire's Turkish nature became less and less frequent. The final disassociation of the Turkish nation from the Ottoman empire was clearly expressed in the *Tarih III* account of the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres: “Fortunately, the Turkish nation, the rulers and most important element of this country, paid no heed to the Ottoman sultan's signature [of the Sèvres Treaty]. The sultan who sent his delegates to Sèvres had no kind of command or power over “Turkey.””³²² It is thus possible to speak of a partial Turkification of Ottoman history in Kemalist historiography, whereby the Turkish nation was associated with the early periods of Ottoman greatness, but not with the later periods of decline and disintegration.³²³ The neutral depiction of the European wars of

320 “Osmanlı Devletinin buhranını [İtalya] da fırsat ittihaz ederek Trablusgarba ... işgale teşebbüs etti.” *Tarih III*, 301.

321 Ömer Seyfettin, “Primo Türk Çocuğu,” in Ömer Seyfettin, *Bütün Eserleri: Hikâyeler 1*, ed. Hülya Argunşah (Istanbul: Dergâh Yayınları, 1999), 167. Translation my own.

322 “Bereket versin ki Osmanlı Sultanının imzasına, bu memleketin hâkimi ve esas unsuru olan Türk Milleti hiçbir kıymet vermiyordu; Sevre murahhaslar gönderen Sultanın “Türkiye” üzerinde hiçbir hüküm ve nüfuzu yoktu.” *Tarih III*, 310.

323 See also Gürpınar, *Ottoman/Turkish Visions of the Nation*, 45-58, for an extensive discussion of this point.

aggression against an empire that was no longer Turkish can be understood in this context.

The textbook's neutral approach to these European interventions may also be ascribed to the fact that the authors viewed European colonialism as a natural result of the European powers' scientific, military and economic ascendancy over the rest of the world: “During the 19th century, the European states began to expand into the territories of nations that were scientifically and economically backward.”³²⁴ Europe had civilizationally overtaken the rest of the world, and this to an extent legitimized the colonial expansion of the European powers, just as the earlier civilizational superiority of the Turks had legitimized their expansion across Eurasia. If the Ottoman Empire did not want to fall victim to European colonialism, it had to catch up with European civilization; it had to Westernize. In failing to do so, it had only itself to blame for its subjugation at the hands of the Europeans. This brings us to the textbook's depiction of the empire's failure to Westernize, which will be covered in the next section.

3.5.3. Factors Behind Ottoman Decline II: Failure to Westernize

As we have seen, the Kemalist historians perceived Western civilization to have overtaken the civilization of the East early in the 17th century. This meant that the Ottoman Empire had to adopt at least some aspects of Western civilization if it was to survive in a world increasingly shaped by that civilization: “From the 17th century, it became imperative for the East to start adopting Western sciences.”³²⁵

In this context, the textbook repeatedly cited the case of Russia as an example which the Ottoman Empire should have emulated.³²⁶ The Westernization of Russia had begun, so the textbook authors claimed, in the early 17th century under the first Romanov tsar, and had involved inviting European merchants to Russia, sending ambassadors to

324 “*XIX. asırda ... Avrupa devletleri ... ilmen, iktisaden geri kalmış olan milletler elindeki memleketlere yayılmağa başladılar.*” *Tarih III*, 287.

325 “... *artık [XVII. asırda] şarkın garp ulûmundan istifadesi zarureti hasıl olmuştu.*” *Tarih III*, 120.

326 The choice of Russian Westernization as a comparative standard is interesting. Thus Palmira Brummet, in her analysis of political cartoons from the Second Constitutional Era of the Ottoman Empire, has noted that Russia was seen as, “in part, a reflection of the Ottoman self.” Palmira Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908-1911* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2000), 165.

European capitals, granting women greater access to public life, and offering patronage to artists.³²⁷ Supposedly building on these earlier reforms, Peter the Great in the early 18th century embarked on a more extensive Westernization program:

Peter wanted to reform the state of Muscovy, which until his reign had been ruled through the institutions and protocol inherited from the Turkish khans of the Golden Horde and from the Byzantine Empire, and to adopt a European system. Annihilating the Streltsy, who were similar to the Janissaries, with great violence, he established European-style regiments in their place and trained and equipped them according to European standards. He aimed not only to reform the structure of the state, but also the lifestyle of the people, forcing them to abandon the old dress of Muscovy. Peter succeeded in reforming the Russian people's religious institutions, the style of education (the first secular schools were opened in this time), and the structure of society.³²⁸

These reforms, so the textbooks, allowed the Russian state to escape the Eastern civilizational block it had been a part of, and to become a fully fledged and flourishing member of Western civilization.³²⁹

Compared to the supposed alacrity of the Russian state in adopting Western civilization, Ottoman Westernization was shown to be late, placing the empire at a growing disadvantage vis-a-vis the Europeans: “The Ottoman state's reluctance to profit from Western civilization – and be it solely through imitation – meant that the state's power declined even more dramatically.”³³⁰ The textbook did speak approvingly of the military reforms eventually enacted by Selim III and Mahmud II in the early 19th century, and of

327 'Romanof Hanedanının, iktidar mevkiine geçmesile Rusyada karışıklık devri nihayet bulur, mühim bir tekâmül devresi başlar ... garplulaşmanın zarureti anlaşılıyordu. Rusyaya ecnebi tacirler çağrıldı ... Avrupanın muhtelif merkezlerine sefaret heyetleri gönderildi. Kadın kapalı ve mütecerrit vaziyetten çıkarılmak, güzel san'atlere mevki verilmek istendi.' *Tarih III*, 127-128. In actual fact, Russian Westernization did not begin until the reign of Peter the Great in the early 18th century, but by backdating the reforms by a century the textbook authors were able to underline the alacrity with which the Russians supposedly adopted Western civilization, and the comparative sluggishness of the Ottomans in doing the same.

328 “Petroya kadar, Altınordu Türk Hanlarının ve Bizans imparatorlarının teşkilât ve teşrifatı ile idare olunan Moskof Devletini, bu Çar; Avrupa usulünde tanzim ve idare etmek istemiş, ve Yeniçerilere benzeyen Strelits askerini büyük bir şiddetle imha edip, yerine Avrupa usulünde alaylar tesis ve bunları Avrupa harp san'atine uygun bir tarzda talim ve terbiye ve teçhiz ettirmiştir ... Bunlardan maada, eski Moskof âdetlerini, eski Moskof kisve ve kıyafetlerini de zorla değiştirerek yalnız devlet idaresini değil, halkın maişet usullerini de tebdile çalışmıştır; Petro, ahalinin dinî müesseselerinde, tedris usullerinde (ilk laik mektepler o zaman açılmıştır) ve içtimâî teşkilâtında dahi hayli değişiklikler yapmağı muvaffak olmuştur.” *Tarih III*, 142.

329 “... Moskova Çarlığı, XVIII. asır başında şark medeniyetinden sıyrılarak garp medeniyet havzasına girmek için çok uğraşmış ve bundan da müstefit olmuştu; kuvvetli bir Rusya İmparatorluğu teşekkül etmişti.” *Ibid.*, 148.

330 “... garbın medeniyetinden velev taklit suretile olsun, istifadeye şıtap etmemek, Osmanlı Devletinin daha ziyade kuvvetten düşmesini intaç edecekti.” *Ibid.*, 147-148.

the *Tanzimat* reforms that followed them, which were portrayed as a fairly comprehensive overhaul of the Ottoman state.³³¹ Yet these reforms, so the textbook, were a failure because – unlike the reforms embarked on by Peter the Great – they failed to fundamentally change the “soul or worldview” of the people.³³² Successful Westernization would only be achieved through the radical social reforms initiated by the Turkish government in the 1920s.

The textbook authors placed much of the blame for what they saw as the late and partial nature of Ottoman Westernization on the dominant role of Islam in Ottoman state and society. The extent to which Islam was associated with “Eastern backwardness” in the minds of the Kemalist historians becomes clear in their account of the reign of Mehmed II's successor Bayezid II, described as the Ottoman state's “first period of religious reaction.”³³³

During the reign of Mehmed II, the Ottoman state had faced west. In the palace and residences of the Ottoman sultan, a free, art-loving and splendid lifestyle had flourished, far from any religious fanaticism. During the time of Bayezid, a political and social reaction becomes evident. A religious scholar from Aleppo nicknamed “the Arab Mullah,” having been appointed to the office of *Şeyhülislam*, incited this opium-addled ruler down the road of religion, dervishry and fanaticism. Western and local artists were chased from the palace; engraving, paintings and sculptures were removed from the palace and sold in the central market. The influence of scholars and sheikhs from the East increased. In short, in Ottoman culture and politics, the reign of Bayezid II witnessed a time of reaction.³³⁴

The Ottoman Empire was able to recover from this period of religious reaction and experience a second civilizational flowering during the reign of Süleyman. But Islam,

331 “*Tanzimat Devrinde, Osmanlı Devletinin idare şekli, Avrupa devletlerinin idare tarzlarına hayli benzetildi. Dahiliye, hariciye, adliye, maarif ve sair nazırlıklar ihdas olundu ... Avrupa payitahtlarına daimi elçiler gönderilerek devletlerle fasılasız diplomasi münasebatına girildi. Asker, Avrupa usulile tanzim ve talim olundu; Avrupa modeline göre mahkemeler yapıldı ... medreseler teşkilâtı ipka olunmakla beraber yeni usulde mektepler açılmağa başlandı.*” Ibid., 248

332 “... “*Tanzimat*” muvaffakiyetsizliğe uğradı. Devletin şekli haricisi hayli Avrupalılaşmakla beraber, halkın ruh ve nazarları pek değişmedi.” Ibid., 249

333 “*Osmanlı Devleti'nde İlk Gericilik: II. Bayazıt*” Ibid., 44

334 “*Fatih devrinde Osmanlı Devletinin gözü garba bakıyordu ... Osmanlı saray ve konaklarında taassuptan uzak, serbest, san'at seven ve debdebeli bir hayat başlamıştı. Bayazıt zamanında siyaset ve hayatta bir aksülâmel, bir irtica görülmektedir ... O sıralarda Şeyhülislâmlığa tayin olunan Halepli bir hoca, “Molla Arap”... bu afyona müptelâ hükümdarı, ... zahitlik, dervişlik ve dinî taassup yoluna sevkemişlerdir ... Sarayda bulunan yerli ve Avrupalı san'atkârlara yol verildi; levhalar, tasvirler, heykeller saraydan çıkarılıp, çarşı pazarda sattırıldı ... Şarktan gelme âlim ve şeyhlerin sarayda itibarı arttı ... Hasılı Bayazıt II. zamanında, Osmanlı Devletinin hars ve siyasetinde bir irtica meşhuttur.*” Ibid., 44-45

according to the textbooks, would continue to frustrate Ottoman reformers and prevent the Ottoman Empire from moving towards Western civilization. Thus, the authors blamed the 1808 rebellion of the Janissaries against Selim III's military reforms on the provocations of the *ulema* and of the *Şeyhülislam*,³³⁵ and voiced a damning indictment of Islam as a reactionary force:

In Europe after the Renaissance, religious fanaticism had collapsed to a certain extent, and there had been a concerted effort to found social and political life on the positive sciences; in the fields of science and art, Europe had progressed year by year. In the Ottoman realm, on the other hand, even in the beginning of the 19th century ignorance and religious fanaticism blocked any attempts at renewal and progress. This led to a decline in the social and political life of Muslim Ottomans.³³⁶

While Selim III's successor Mahmud II, according to the textbook, attempted to limit the power of the religious elite in the course of his centralizing reforms in the early 19th century, he was not entirely successful.³³⁷ Like the complete Westernization of state and society, complete secularization would only be achieved through the reforms of the Turkish Republic.

3.5.4. Factors Behind Ottoman Decline III: The Empire's Multinational Character

In addition to European interventions, the empire's failure to Westernize and the dominant role of Islam, the Kemalist historians also portrayed the Ottoman Empire's multi-national composition as a main reason for its decline and eventual disintegration. One aspect of this problem was the supposedly undue influence of non-Muslims and non-Turks in the running of the Ottoman state. In this context, the authors highlighted two cases in particular: the so-called “women's sultanate” (*kadınlar saltanatı*) during

335 “*Kabakçoğlunun kıyamında, halkı en çok teşvik eden ulema sınıfı idi; kıyamı, şeyhülislâm ile sadrazam kaymakamı idare ettiler.*” Ibid., 196

336 “*Avrupada, Rönesans Devrinden (XV. asır) beri, taassup bir dereceye kadar yıkıldığından, içtimâî ve siyasi hayatı, müspet ilimler üzerine kurmaya çalışılıyordu; Avrupa yıldan yıla ilim ve san'at sahalarında ilerliyordu. Halbuki Osmanlı ülkesinde XIX. asrın başlarında bile cehil ve taassup her türlü yeniliğe ve ilerlemeğe ... manialar ihdas ediyordu. Bu hal, tabiatile müslüman Osmanlı içtimâî ve siyasi hayatının gerilemesine sebep oluyordu.*” Ibid., 197.

337 “*Mahmut II. ulema ile de uğraşmış ve nüfuzlarını kesre hayli çalışmış ise de tamamen muvaffak olamamıştır.*” Ibid., 207.

the late 16th and early 17th centuries, and the golden age of the Greek Orthodox Phanariot families in the 18th century.

The “women's sultanate” was a period lasting from the final years of Süleyman's reign until the mid-17th century, during which various wives, mothers and consorts of the Ottoman sultans enjoyed an unprecedented degree of influence in the running of the state. Coinciding as it did with a period of economic, political and social disruption in the Ottoman realm, it is perhaps not surprising that a number of (male) contemporary Ottoman and foreign commentators blamed the greater influence of these royal women for the problems afflicting the empire, a point also taken up by later historians.³³⁸ The Kemalist historians adopted this point, but added a nationalist dimension to it by stressing the non-Turkish origins of these women:

The ineffectiveness and immorality of the sultans who succeeded Süleyman opened the way to palace intrigues and the tyranny of the palace women. The most important of the women to gain power and rule the sultanate in this way were Süleyman's favourite, the Russian Hürrem Sultan, as well as Murat III's wife, the Venetian Safiye, and especially Ahmed I's favourite, the Greek Kösem Sultan. Kösem, who dominated the reign of six sultans, did not even shy away from toppling her own son from the throne and having him executed, or from attempting to poison her grandson, in order to perpetuate her rule.³³⁹

In this way, the empire's decline following its “Turkish” golden age was tied to the pernicious influence of these non-Turkish and, at least originally, non-Muslim women at the very heart of Ottoman power.

If the textbook authors placed much of the blame for the empire's decline in the late 16th and 17th centuries on the dominant position of foreign women in the Ottoman state, the continuing travails of the state throughout the 18th century were blamed on the Phanariots, a mercantile Greek Orthodox community from the Fener district of Istanbul which, through its hold on the positions of grand dragoman (chief translator to the Ottoman porte) and *voyvoda* (chief administrator) of the provinces of Wallachia and

338 Leslie Peirce, “Shifting Boundaries: Images of Ottoman Royal Women in the 16th and 17th Centuries,” *Critical Matrix* 4 (1988), 69-70.

339 “*Kanunî Süleymandan sora padişahların şahsen kabiliyetsiz ve ahlâksız olmaları, saray entrikalarına ve saray kadınlarının tahakkümüne yol açmıştır ... Bu suretle nüfuz kazanmış ve saltanat sürmüş olan saray kadınlarının başlıcaları Kanunî Süleymanın ... gözdesi Rus Hurrem Sultan ile Murat III. ün zevcesi Venedikli Safiye (Bafo) ve bilhassa Ahmet I. in hasekisi Rum Kösem Sultan idi. Altı padişah devrini idrak eden Kösem, hakimiyetini idame için oğlunu halî ve idamdan, torununu, zehirletmeye teşebbüsten bile çekinmemiştir.*” *Tarih III*, 118.

Moldavia, gained considerable influence during this period.³⁴⁰ According to the *Tarih III* account, the Phanariot lords almost completely controlled the Ottoman administration during the 18th century,³⁴¹ and this had a deleterious effect on the functioning of the Ottoman state. Equally motivated by greed and a desire to avenge the annihilation of the Byzantine Empire at the hands of the Ottomans, these “cast-offs of the Byzantine Empire”³⁴² supposedly did their utmost to keep the empire economically and militarily weak, and to prevent any meaningful attempts at reform.³⁴³

In this context it is interesting that, in contrast to other Turkish nationalists of the time,³⁴⁴ the textbook authors took a fairly positive view of the *devşirme*, the “levy of boys” imposed on the Christian population of the empire's Balkan provinces by which the Ottoman state took young boys from their families and, having made them convert to Islam, trained them to serve as soldiers in the Janissary corps or as bureaucrats in the administration. There are two possible explanations for the positive portrayal of this practice of bringing non-Turks into key positions in the Ottoman state. One is that the main period of the *devşirme* levy lasted from the mid-15th to the early 17th century, and thus coincided roughly with the Ottoman golden age. A second explanation is that the Kemalist historians were intent on refuting Balkan nationalist accounts, which presented the practice as a “blood tax” and as the epitome of Ottoman cruelty towards the empire's Christian subjects.³⁴⁵ Not at all, the textbook authors insisted: “As the Christian boys who joined the Janissaries or entered the palace service were able to gradually rise to the highest offices and thus to positively affect the lives of their families, the Christian subjects began to offer their sons to the *devşirme* of their own volition.”³⁴⁶

340 Christine M. Philiou, *Biography of an Empire: Governing Ottomans in an Age of Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 10-11.

341 “Biraz mubalâğa ile denilebilir ki XVIII. asırda Rum patrikhanesi ile Fenerli beyler; bütün Osmanlı idaresini kontrol etmek ve bu idarede sözlerini geçirmek iktidarını elde etmişlerdi.” *Tarih III*, 199.

342 “... Bizans döküntüleri ...” *Ibid.*, 198.

343 *Ibid.*, 199.

344 Büşra Ersanlı, “The Ottoman Empire in the Historiography of the Kemalist Era,” 138.

345 Fikret Adanır, “Güneydoğu Avrupa'daki Tarih Ders Kitaplarında Osmanlı İdaresi İmgesi: Gelenekler ve Yeni Yaklaşımlar,” in *Tarih Eğitimi ve Tarihte “Öteki” Sorunu*, ed. Ali Berktaş et al. (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1998), 144-145.

346 “Yeniçeriliğe giren, devşirmeliktен saraya alınan huristiyan çocuklar; gütgide en büyük makamlara kadar yükselebildiklerinden ve bunların vaziyeti yakınlarının ahvaline çok eyi tesirler yaptığundan, huristiyan ahali çocuklarını kendi rıza ve ricaları ile devşirme ocağına vermeğe başlamıştı.” *Tarih III*, 23.

For the Kemalist historians, an even greater problem than the high positions achieved by various non-Turks in the Ottoman state was the multiethnic and multireligious make-up of the empire's population, particularly in the Balkan provinces. The textbook authors – in another apparent effort to counter the negative depiction of early Ottoman rule in the nationalist historiography of various post-Ottoman Balkan states – stressed the fact that, during the empire's early centuries, Ottoman rule over the Balkan provinces had been characterized by a high degree of tolerance, peace and a low tax burden on the local population. As a result, the Balkan peasants were happy to accept Ottoman overlordship, preferring it to the rapacious and arbitrary rule of their own lords.³⁴⁷ The subsequent decline of the Ottoman Empire, however, also supposedly had a negative effect on Ottoman rule over these provinces, as provincial administrators increased the tax burden and began fighting amongst themselves, and as the region was repeatedly ravaged in the wars between the empire and its northern neighbours. The resulting dissatisfaction of the local population, combined with the adoption of the nationalist ideals of the French revolution by local intellectuals, led to the emergence, from the early 19th century onward, of nationalist separatist movements in a number of Balkan provinces.³⁴⁸

The textbook account of the emergence of the Balkan nationalist movements and of their efforts to create their own nation-states separate from the Ottoman empire is surprisingly neutral. This is probably due to the fact that the textbook authors, despite the traumatic experience of the Balkan wars, felt a certain amount of sympathy for these movements' aims. Like the Turkish nationalist movement which many of the textbook authors had been a part of, the Balkan nationalist movements were grounded in “national principles,” and as such their cause was worthy of acknowledgment, if not approbation.

According to the textbook authors, once the world had entered the age of nationalism, and once national movements had begun to form among the empire's subjects, the Ottoman Empire was doomed. This doom could not be averted by introducing legal

347 “Balkanlardaki hıristiyan köylüler; Türk idaresi altında, vasileus ve kırallar zamanından çok daha mes'ut ve müreffeh bir hayata kavuştular.” Ibid., 36.

348 Ibid., 197-198.

equality for all of the empire's subjects (as was done through the 1856 Rescript of Reform), nor by instituting limited popular representation (between 1876 and 1878, and again from 1908 until the self-dissolution of the Ottoman parliament in 1920), nor by attempting to foster a kind of civic nationalism based on the Ottoman state. The textbook authors were critical of these efforts to save the Ottoman Empire in the face of the rising nationalist tide, portraying them as naive and idealistic. This criticism was most clearly expressed in the description of the aims of the 19th-century Young Ottoman movement, which had been among the key advocates of such reforms:

As the ideas of European civilization began to slowly spread among Ottoman Muslim intellectuals, a few young, talented and educated Ottoman bureaucrats came to believe, based on their reading of French books, that if only the Ottoman Empire could be placed on a constitutional footing, and if the principles of freedom and equality were accepted and a parliament was founded, the Greeks would forget their Greekness, the Bulgarians their Bulgarianness, the Serbs their Serbness, and all would become Ottomans. They hoped that the effects of liberty and constitutionalism would end corruption, religious and national hatreds and conflicts, and create a well-ruled, happy and prosperous "Ottoman nation." Most of these young men were idealists and some of them poets; yet they had no real understanding of economic, financial and political matters, and they most certainly never understood the national principle.³⁴⁹

The Kemalist historians claimed that their criticism of the Young Ottoman's ideals had been borne out by developments during the Second Constitutional Era, when even the previously loyal Muslim subjects of the empire, despite being given full political rights, began to turn against it.³⁵⁰ In the face of the primordial force of nationalism, they reasoned, any attempt to save the Ottoman Empire was a lost cause.

349 "Avrupa medeniyeti fikirlerinin Müslüman Osmanlı münevverleri arasında az çok yayılması üzerine, Osmanlı yüksek memurlarının Fransızca kitap okumaya heves eden bazı müstait ve yetişmiş çocukları, devlet idaresi ... meşrutî bir şekle konul[ursa ve] ... [h]ürriyet ve müsavat esasları kabul olunur ve bir meclisi meb'usan teşkil edilirse, Rum, rumluğunu, Bulgar, bulgarlığını, Sırp, sırplığını unutup Osmanlı olacak zannediyorlardı. Hürriyet ve meşrutiyetin tesiri ile suiistimaller; dinî ve millî münaferet ve mücadeleler, hepsi ortadan kalkıp mükemmel idare olunan mes'ut ve müreffeh bir "Osmanlı Milleti" teşekkül eder ... ümidinde bulunuyorlardı. Bu gençlerin çoğu idealist ve bir kısmı şair ... idi; fakat iktisadî, malî ve idarî meseleler hakkında ciddî malûmatları yoktu. Hele milliyet esaslarını asla anlıyamamışlardı." Ibid., 254-255.

350 "Görülüyor ki İmparatorlukta ikinci defa meşrutiyetin ilânile bütün tebaaya siyasi hukuk verilmiş olmasına rağmen ... meşrutiyet devrine kadar millî iddiaları az olan müslüman gayritürkler dahi milliyete müstenit istiklâl davasına girişmişler ve hatta fili hareketlere bile geçmişlerdi." Tarih III, 303.

3.5.5. Coda: The Turkish Nation Resurgent

According to the textbook authors, the Turkish nation had, for all its many contributions to the Ottoman state and to Ottoman civilization, maintained a separate identity throughout the history of the Ottoman Empire: “The real mass of the Turkish nation never accepted Ottomanism. As a matter of fact, the people of Anatolia only referred to the palace and its coterie as Ottoman, and always saw themselves as separate.”³⁵¹ Along with its separate identity, the Turkish nation had also preserved the characteristics that had made it such a great civilizational force throughout history. Thus, the *Tarih III* textbook noted that a chickenpox vaccine was used in Anatolian villages in the 17th century, long before it was introduced in Europe, and went on to claim that “Even at a time when Ottoman culture was inferior to European culture in every area, there were still some important events that proved the superiority of age-old Turkish civilization, preserved in the deepest layers of the Turkish folk, to [that of] Europe.”³⁵²

Yet the civilizational potential of the Turkish nation had for centuries been submerged under the dead weight of a corrupt and weak state and of Islam, and diluted by the cosmopolitanism of Ottoman society. If the Turkish nation wanted to regain the civilizational leadership role it had held throughout history, it would have to get rid of these obstacles to its development. This became possible after the victory of the Anatolian forces in the National Struggle, portrayed as a reclamation of sovereignty by the Turkish nation after 300 years.³⁵³ This victory allowed the Turkish nation to rid itself of the Ottoman sultanate after centuries of misrule,³⁵⁴ to abolish the caliphate and other religious institutions that had sunk the nation into apathy and ignorance,³⁵⁵ and, in accordance with the “natural, necessary and ungovernable exigencies of history,” as

351 “... *Türk Milletinin aslı kütlesi osmanlılık vasfını üzerine almamıştır. Hakikaten Anadolu halkı her zaman yalnız sarayla onun etrafında toplanmış zümreye Osmanlı demiş ve kendini daima onun dışında tutmuştur.*” *Tarih IV*, 183.

352 “*Osmanlı harsının bu suretle Avrupa harsına karşı, her sahada yenilerek gerilemekte olduğu bir zamanda bile, çok kadim, halkın en derin tabakalarına kadar girmiş Türk medeniliğinin Avrupaya tefevvukunu gösteren bazı mühim vak'alar malûmdur.*” *Tarih III*, 149.

353 “*Türk Milleti, bu kat'i zafer sayesinde, üç asırdır kaybettiği siyasi ve iktisadî istiklâlini istirdat edecek ...*” *Tarih IV*, 121.

354 “*Türk milleti ... [a]sırlarca kendini fena idare ve istismar ederek inkırazını hazırlıyan saltanat ve hilâfet sistemine nihayet ver[di].*” *Ibid.*, 57.

355 *Ibid.*, 157.

Mustafa Kemal put it in 1927,³⁵⁶ to establish a Turkish nation state in the Turkish national homeland. As a result of these changes, the Turkish nation was able to finally take its place as a full member of modern, Western civilization.



356 “... tarihin tabii, zaruri ve önüne geçilmez icapları ...” Quoted in *Tarih IV*, 146.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have argued that the Turkish national history found in the *Tarih* textbooks was the product of three main groups of factors. These groups may be categorized as, respectively, pragmatic, ideological and historiographical. On a pragmatic level, the new national history had to fulfill a number of functions. First of all, it was supposed to legitimize the abolition of the Ottoman Empire and its attendant institutions – most notably the Caliphate – and the empire's replacement by the Turkish Republic. Secondly, the new historical narrative aimed to legitimize the claim of the Turkish Republic to the territory it had been granted by the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923. Thirdly, it aimed to provide a historical basis for the Turkish state's attempts to mould its Muslim citizens into a cohesive, Turkish-speaking nation. Fourthly, the textbooks aimed to counter Western claims about the Turks' supposed barbarity and lack of civilization. Finally, the *Tarih* narrative had to historically legitimize the attempts of the Turkish state to Westernize and secularize Turkish society and culture.

Beyond these pragmatic aims, the textbook narrative also reflected the ideological convictions of the Turkish republican political elite of the early 1930s, which underpinned the project of nation-building and reform embarked on by the Turkish state in this period. First among these convictions was a strong sense of Turkish nationalism. This included both a belief in the historical greatness and distinct character of the Turkish nation, and the conviction that the nation-state, in which the national and the political unit were congruent, was the most modern and advanced form of political community. Secondly, the *Tarih* narrative also reflected the scientific beliefs of the republic's political elite. These expressed themselves in the textbooks' depiction of science as the engine of human progress, and, conversely, of religion as the main obstacle to human advancement throughout history. Thirdly, the history found in the textbooks was also clearly shaped by the Kemalist historians' belief in the civilizational superiority of the modern West, and the concomitant conviction that the world was divided into distinct Eastern and Western spheres.

The Turkish history we find in the *Tarih* textbooks needs also to be understood in the light of various narratives of Turkish history that had been developed in the decades prior to the writing of the textbooks. Thus, the textbook history shared a number of important characteristics with the Turkist historical narrative, most crucially in its focus on the pre-Islamic Central Asian origins and the civilized/civilizing nature of the Turkish nation. Of particular importance in this context are the influence of Leon Cahun, whose theory of an ancient Turkish nation living around a Central Asian inland sea the textbooks adopted, along with Necip Asim's focus on the antiquity and civilizing role of the Turkish nation and Ziya Gökalp's characterization of Turkish national culture as feminist and expressing an “international morality.” Along with these various strands of the Turkist historical narrative, the textbooks also drew on the pioneering work of Fuad Köprülü on the pre-Ottoman Turkification of Anatolia under the Seljuks, while also adopting the claim, first made by Mustafa Celâleddin Paşa in the 19th century and reprised by Ahmed Ağaoğlu in the 1920s, that the ancient Hittites had belonged to the Turkish nation.

All of these factors combined to create the elaborate history of the Turkish nation presented in the *Tarih* textbooks. The creation of a narrative of the past that showed the Muslim inhabitants of Anatolia to be members of a single, Turkish nation provided a historical foundation for the Turkish state's nation-building efforts. At the same time, the creation of a historical link between the originally Central Asian Turkish nation and Anatolia – first through the Hittites and then through the Seljuks – legitimized the claim of the Turkish Republic (as the Turkish nation state) to the territory it controlled, trumping the rival claims of Greeks and Armenians in the process.

The textbook depiction of the Turkish nation as the founders of world civilization, meanwhile, countered Western assertions about the supposed barbarism and civilizational incapacity of the Turkish nation. This was further reinforced by depicting the pre-16th century civilizational superiority of the Asian East to the European West as a result of the dominant role played by the Turkish nation in the history of Asia. By showing the civilization created by the Turkish nation to carry many of the hallmarks of Western modernity – secularism, a positivist approach to knowledge, equality between

the sexes – the *Tarih* textbooks also created a historical legitimization for the Westernizing and secularizing reforms of the Turkish state, showing these reforms to be restitutive rather than revolutionary in nature.

Finally, the textbooks placed the blame for the Turkish nation's contemporary backwardness vis-a-vis the West squarely on the shoulders of the Ottoman Empire. Both the stifling influence of Islam and the multinational nature of the empire, they argued, had prevented the Turkish nation from keeping up with the civilizational advances made by the West from the late 16th century onward, and had in fact caused it to fall further and further behind the West. This depiction of the Ottoman past as a kind of Dark Age in the history of the Turkish nation legitimized the abolition of the Ottoman Empire and its replacement by the national, secular Turkish Republic, which – according to the textbooks – would allow the Turkish nation to return to the vanguard of world civilization.

In both its temporal and geographical scope, the historical narrative found in the *Tarih* textbooks was undoubtedly unusual – a result of the myriad different factors that informed its creation. On another level, however, the Kemalist historical narrative may also be seen as a typical example of how modern states use a particular narrative of the past in order to legitimize their rule,³⁵⁷ mould their subjects into a coherent social and political unit, and give that unit a particular shape.³⁵⁸ In this context, a potentially fruitful avenue of future enquiry might be the comparison of Kemalist historiography to the histories created by other modern states. On the basis of the themes covered in this thesis, two approaches in particular suggest themselves. The first of these is a comparison of the depiction of the imperial past in the historiographies of Kemalist Turkey and other modern post-imperial successor states. A second, different approach might compare the historiography of the Kemalist state to those developed by other non-Western states which had embarked on radical programs of modernization and Westernization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, focusing in particular on how these states used history in order to legitimize their respective projects of

357 Eric Hobsbawm, “Mass-Producing Traditions: Europe, 1870-1914,” in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 263-264.

358 *Ibid.*, 271.

modernization. Both of these comparisons might contribute to a deeper understanding of these two particular aspects of the Kemalist historical narrative.



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