# Structures of knowledge in the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic, 1731-1980

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**Abstract**: It is argued that the historiographical approaches prevalent in the Ottoman Empire and then in the Turkish Republic, observable in both academic and cultural production and implemented in the education system, were closely related to material transformations in politics and economics. It is further shown, however, that these relations were not of a one-way causality in either direction, but rather part of a singular whole. Debates over the construction of the past and the modernization project survive today in discussions arising from Turkey's possible candidacy for membership in the European Union.

**Keywords**: Turkey, Turkish modernization, Ottoman Empire, incorporation in the modern world-system, structures of knowledge, European Union

## Introduction

For nearly two decades, Turkish historiography has been undergoing significant change and the dominant paradigms of the 1960's and 1970's have been subjected to severe criticisms since the early 1990's. These criticisms concentrate on two main, interrelated points. First of all, the radical disjuncture of the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic, which constituted the main ideological doctrine of the official Turkish view of history, has been under attack. Instead, it has been widely argued that there are significant continuities in the economic, political and cultural spheres between the two regimes.[1] Following on this criticism comes the argument that the early Republican period was characterized by an essentially authoritarian and monolithic rule. The policies of the Kemalist regime, it has been claimed, were designed to enhance the position only of the elite cadres of the Republic; not only were the people living within the

borders of the nation-state molded under a putatively homogenous cultural identity, but this process had also been imposed on them. Cultural differences, local expressions and traditions of various ethnic groups, such as the Kurds, Armenians and Greeks, had all been silenced under the new national category of Turkishness. These two criticisms represent a serious challenge to the legitimacy structures of official discourse. Nevertheless, despite its strength, this revisionist view of history is far from presenting an alternative explanatory framework, simply because similar epistemological questions guide both historiographies.

The current work is a direct result of these critiques, and aims to contribute to the debates by examining the literature focused on the topic of knowledge itself. It will be argued that, for almost three hundred years in the history of the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic, concerning the categories of knowledge various structures have remained essentially the same, although changing form over time. It would not be an exaggeration to argue that the predominant concern during this long period has been how to achieve modernization via Westernization, and a constant reevaluation of history through such a lens. On the whole, Turkish scholarship, at least regarding history, exhibits a Rankean approach. Thus, it is not so different from other nations' histories/history writing practices. Its main concern and *raison d'être* is to incorporate "Turkish" history into world history, that is the world conceived as European. Hence, from the very beginning it was bound to oscillate between a stress on "Turkish" history's similarities with that of its European counterparts on the one hand, and its national differentiation on the other. In short, it is torn between universalist and particularist stances.

## Culture, politics, and knowledge production

The incorporation of the Ottoman Empire into the modern world-system or capitalist world-economy can be seen as at least symbolically coinciding with the year 1731 (Kasaba 1987; on "incorporation," see Hopkins and Wallerstein 1987) and the change in the language of the Ottoman political writing. This is the date of the publication of *Usul ul-Hikem fi Nizam ul-Umen* [Philosophical Principles for Organizing Nations] by Ibrahim Muteferrika; he presented the book to the Sultan Mahmud I. Virginia Aksan (1993), following Niyazi Berkes, marks this as a shift in Ottoman political discourse from an idea of government based on religion, which was in effect until the mid-eighteenth century, to a

growing dominance of an idea of government grounded in reason. Furthermore, Aksan argues that with the Russo-Ottoman Wars and continuing defeats for the Ottoman side, the tone of the writings came to rely increasingly on rational principles. Apart from Muteferrika's work, in Ahmed Resmi Efendi's (the first Ottoman Embassador to travel to Prussia and meet Frederick the Great in 1763) *Hulasat ul-I'tibar* [A Summary of Admonitions] one can observe that the former effect of Ibn Khaldun's view of the circle of states and societies resembling that of a human life, another prevalent theme in the Ottoman political writing until then, was replaced by a different perspective: "An objectivity of tone, a willingness to chastise high and low, and a perceptive understanding of the need for a well-organized, well disciplined, and well fed army" (Aksan 1993: 58). The critical issue here is that Ottoman elites decided to take Europe as their model. Put differently, the solution to the problems that the Empire had been experiencing for nearly two centuries was no longer sought with reference to its Golden Age, the period up until the mid-sixteenth century, but rather starting from the mid-eighteenth century onwards, a different pattern was considered worth pursuing.

On the whole, changes in the eighteenth century had been slow. The empire had been modifying some of its principles, but without naming them as modernization or westernization. For example, İlber Ortaylı (2003: 40) argues that westernization attempts of this period meant nothing more than a rich life, color and glory, nicely ornate gardens and Western music, which the upper classes of the period enjoyed. Similarly, the typical bureaucrat of the period is portrayed by Şükrü Hanioğlu (1984:183) simply as a passive and pragmatic observer of Europe who did not know the language of the countries he visited and, indeed, was not allowed to by higher authorities. Hanioğlu supports this claim by looking at the context in which students were sent abroad. They studied European technology, yet in the cities where they resided they had little or no contact with urban life. Instead, they were accommodated in special villas, or guesthouses outside of the towns. For their lessons there was a translator present at all times to prevent them from learning or using languages other than Arabic or Ottoman. Those "precautions" were taken to guard against any infusion of European culture.

Turkish scholarship has recognized this point of taking precautions against the dissolution of the Empire, while modeling and observing Europe through emissaries and students sent abroad to adopt the knowledge of new technologies,

as the starting point of westernization or modernization. Starting from the mid-nineteenth century onwards[2] this problem has been prevalent in all the debates concerning the path to modernization: either through imitating and hence becoming in every way similar to Europe or through preserving a cultural essence, remaining pragmatic and acquiring only the technology of the Europeans.

Such debates took place in newspapers. Although not a product of print capitalism as it had been in Europe, the press was supported mainly by the patronage of the state, almost like an "artificial insemination" for the enlightenment of the masses. The publication of the first Turkish newspaper dates from the end of the eighteenth century, to be followed by various non-Turkish newspapers and official gazettes. They were, however, rather limited in numbers and circulation. The blossoming of novels, newspapers, and journals had to wait until the second half of the nineteenth century and the growth of the newly arising middle-classes, which both created and consumed literary production.

The first independent newspaper, *Tasvir-i Efkâr* began publication in 1860. Numerous Western novels and classics were translated into Ottoman around the same time. The village newspapers began their circulation in 1864. They were used as part of the top-down reforms of the Ottoman Empire of the nineteenth century and provided the venues for villagers to read the official news about the legal reforms in the Empire.[3] Multilingual newspapers emerged in the same period. They were among the primary agents in disseminating the views of various national and political groups. Next to the Ottoman, the second half of the nineteenth century saw almost three dozen different alphabets employed— each pronouncing a political stand. For example, in the Albanian newspapers, the usage of the Arabic letters signified the Albanian community's loyalty to the Empire. The choice to use Latin alphabet would mean a leaning towards Italy or Austria, and Greek letters was a sign of commitment to Orthodoxy (Kologlu 1995: 128). Among these multilingual newspapers, those published in French had a unique place in disseminating news from Europe, which the local newspapers were not able to do; they were thus quite influential in the diffusion of European thought throughout the empire.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the debates regarding the path to be chosen in regard to modernization was taking place in a seemingly non-political arena. Under the dictatorship of Abdülhamit II, when almost all arguments

including politics were banned from public discussion, intellectuals began to make known their beliefs, concerns, and wishes through literature (Kansu 2003: 280). In fact, literature had always been important, starting from the mid-nineteenth century. To be more precise in terms of chronology, the year 1859, when Ibrahim Şinasi published a theatrical comedy *Şair Evlenmesi* [Marriage of the Poet] written in a manner quite similar to Moliére, was particularly important for the structures of knowledge. Representing the second generation of bureaucracy, who in the mid-nineteenth century had converted himself from the passive observer of the eighteenth century to an active agent in state affairs, Şinasi was the prototype of the public intellectual figure. Through his works, he took on the responsibility of educating the public. The intellectuals of the post-Tanzimat period used the novel and hybridized it with "traditional" (or local) narrative styles, like *meddah*. One interesting example would be the novels of Ahmet Mithat Efendi. For example, in his *Felâtun Bey ve Rakim Efendi* [Monsieur Pantolone and Mister Balance] he suddenly engages in a dialogue with his readers, criticizes and mocks Monsieur Pantolone's extravagance, distinguishes right from wrong, and does so as if this was a natural way of narrating a story, of writing a novel.

The turning point of the debates of late nineteenth century came with the emergence of a group of intellectuals (Mehmed Rauf, Tevfik Fikret, Halit Ziya Uşaklıgil, Mehmet Cavit and Ahmet Şuayb[4]) gathered around the journal *Servet-i Fünun*, which later came to be known as *Edebiyat-ı Cedide* [New Literature]. Contrary to their predecessors, the members of this group argued that art should not be in the service of the people but it should be done for its own sake. However elitist an argument it may appear, the characters and their surroundings portrayed in the novels, as well as the style, were all pushing the limits of the established literature to its extremes: a discourse completely non-religious, a language reflecting the fuzziness of modern society, themes referring not to the local and traditional but rather to the universal and contemporary, fused with a complete rejection of traditional ethics, which was replaced by the cry of the individual for freedom to live in a liberal society (Kansu 2003: 282). Soon they were accused of being *décadents* by Ahmet Mithat. The *Edebiyat-ı Cedide* was overly influenced by French Literature; it was not "national"[5] but cosmopolitan and its language was not the language of the people. What Mithat was proposing as an alternative, not only in his novels but also in his other publications like "Political Economy" (1874) and "*Üss-ü Inkılap*" (1877/78)[6]— where he built his arguments on the eighteenth-century

mercantilist Colbert— was a defense of a nationalized economy under the scrutiny of the state and closed to the influences from outside (Kansu 2003: 284). Against him, and conservative thought, were primarily ranged the two liberals, Ahmet Şuayb and Mehmet Cavit. The latter, following Adam Smith, in *Ilm-i Iktisat* [Science of Economics] written between 1899 and 1901, criticized the model of state developmentalism. He argued that the only way to societal development lay in the division of labor, that is, through strengthening agriculture, industry and trade within the nation, and through engaging in international trade and exchange with other countries. The state was given the status of a watchman, which was only going to be held responsible for protecting the rights of the individuals and maintaining the systems of education, justice and infrastructure. Along the same lines, Ahmet Şuayb argued that societal change was inevitable; it is a law of nature, but the only possible way to progress is to clear away the obstacles in the way of scientific thought. This could only be possible in a parliamentary democracy, where religion was separated from the state; the main impediment then would be the monarchy and the hegemony of the religious institutions in society (Kansu 2003: 290-93).

This controversy over how to modernize seemed to resolve with the rise of the liberals and the Revolution of 1908 by the Young Turks. It was not only a matter of changing the political structure, but also a significant change had taken place in the categories of knowledge. One has to point out, first of all, that the choice of the name Young Turk, or rather *Jeune Turque*, itself was a serious challenge to the old categories of knowledge, both in stressing being Turk and young. What had always been prestigious in the Empire was to be old and to know the ways of doing things by long and arduous processes of experience and learning. Now, for the first time, a group was challenging that idea (Mardin 2003: 43). The choice of the name Turk was no different. The Empire had always defined itself as being Ottoman and a dynasty (*hanedan*). The name Turk had been used pejoratively until the end of nineteenth century. Moreover, the term "Turk" was a direct adoption from the European sources:

> First, it was introduced as a direct translation of the European "Turk" in reference to the Ottomans, meaning Ottoman Turk. Secondly, it became to serve the new concept of a Turkish people or race— also discovered by the Europeans— which lived both within and outside the Ottoman Empire ... the first used to denote a political entity— the Turks as the rulers of the Ottoman Empire— the second as an historical-lingual-racial entity, devoid, as yet, of political significance (Kushner 1977: 21).

Similarly, Serif Mardin (Kushner 1977: 44) interprets this challenge as a reflection of the Young Turks in the mirror of the Europeans.

On the political level, one can argue that there had been four important events that affected and shaped the thinking of the Young Turks: the 1789 French Revolution, the 1868 Meiji Restoration, the 1905 Russian Revolution, and the 1906 Iranian Revolution. As a result they have come to the conclusion that "a constitutional administration was the best political system in existence, and an elitist, bloodless revolution from above was the best way to implement it" (Sohrabi 2002: 46).

During the year 1902, the Young Turks conceptualized revolution as something that needed to proceed by evolutionary methods. For legitimation, they referred to "Comtean positivism, the biological materialism of Büchner, and LeBon's social psychological theories of crowd" (Sohrabi 2002: 49). Embedded in such a perspective they found the need for a constitutional revolution. In this sense, they welcomed and appreciated the French Revolution, as the first constitutional revolution, and which based itself on science and philosophy. However, it was criticized for the mass riots it had caused, and was therefore not a preferred model for the Young Turks. They were afraid of similar consequences it could bring about in an Empire that was composed of different ethnic and religious groups, and in turn might cause the Empire to collapse. Thus they argued for a constitutional revolution essentially led from above.

The 1868 Meiji Restoration offered a good example of a conception or model the Young Turks preferred. It provided the Young Turks with the proof that an enlightened leadership could actually modernize another Asian country. As one of the Young Turks put it:

> Knowledge and progress is transferred from one country to another, and from one nation to the other, *gradually*. Yet at some times and under some circumstances the law of evolution can be speeded up. The Great Mikado and the advanced Japanese are the reasons for our opinion. We are ceaseless supporters of revolutions in minds, schools, industry, and knowledge, *but not in the streets* (cited in Sohrabi 2002: 55, emphases added).

Apart from the Meiji Restoration, which served as a possible and feasible example, the Russian Empire offered another situation which could be associated with the then current state of the Ottoman Empire. Although there were some reservations about the disturbances in the Russian population, the

Revolution of 1905 provided fruitful examples concerning the role of secret organizations (although the main example for the organizations came from the independence movements in Greece and Macedonia) and the role of intellectuals in bringing about a revolution. The result and success of the Russian Revolution caused the Young Turks to think more positively about mass movements. Nonetheless, the main support for their arguments came from the 1906 Iranian revolution, which proved to the Young Turks that an Islamic country could well achieve a bloodless constitutional revolution (Sohrabi 2002: 56-57, 60).

It must also be noted that the Young Turks had a military organization at their disposal, which had been one of the main actors in rebellions throughout the Empire, and a revolution without them was inconceivable in the Ottoman context. Concomitantly, in the years 1906 and 1907 some serious tax rebellions occurred. In the 1908 Revolution those two elements came together with the Young Turks resulting in a revolution having elements both from "above" and "below." The revolution signified the foundation of a modern nation-state, and a new citizenry accordingly. With the new constitution all Ottoman citizens were granted equality (such as to employment in the state bureaucracy, to performing military service, to the law, and to paying taxes) and their rights were to be protected by statute.

After the revolution, the main problem became how to reorganize the life of the community. In terms of scholarship and knowledge production, the discipline of sociology became the main reference point. Through the writings of Ahmet Şuayb, Mehmet Cavit and Rıza Tevfik in the journal *Ulm-u Iktisadiyye ve Içtimaiyye Mecmuası* [Journal of Economic and Sociological Sciences] August Comte and Herbert Spencer's theories predominated the discussions. Then, with the translation of Emile Bougle's *Qu'est-ce que la sociologie*, the work of Emile Durkheim entered the debates. Yet, in all of those discussions, solidarity was the main item on the agenda envisaged by the intellectuals for the state of Ottoman society (Toprak 2001: 310-13). "Solidarism" was proposed as an alternative "third way" between socialism and liberalism: believing in a classless and harmonic society sustained by organic solidarity (*tesanüd*) among its members, the Young Turks attempt to form a welfare state which would be responsible for maintaining social justice (Toprak 2001: 313). It was also during this period that the concepts of people, citizen, nation and nationalism were formed and deployed as foundational to the Republic.

Before shifting to the early Republican period (1930-1945), one has to talk about the upshots of the First World War and the sudden importance of Bergsonism, the philosophy of Henri Bergson, between the years 1918-1930 and the crisis of the liberal Western thought. The interesting issue to be kept in mind is that instead of a return to Islamic thought or any other non-Western framework, the intellectuals who were proponents of Bergsonism turned their faces to what they called the "Other West," which they define as being the rebellious West, initiated by Immanuel Kant and then exported to France and echoed in the thinking of Renoir, Boutreaux and Poincaré. The Bergsonians of the 1920's called themselves the "Conservative Modernists." The basic principles of their thought championed science in the search of truth, sought beauty in art, and goodness in religion and ethics. Their emphasis was on the "present," but not conceptualized as an entity stuck in between past and future; it was rather a present in which both resided. The main proponents of this thinking were to be found among the *tekke* members, and according to Oguz Demiralp (2002: 31), given this fact, Bergsonism had already been embedded in the sufi mentality. We can see that the likes of Ziya Gökalp and Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoglu, who will later constitute the theoretical support for positivist Republican thought, were not able to insulate themselves from such ideas (İrem 1999: 159). Towards the end of the decade, conscious conservatives came to be interested in pragmatism, and with that Bergsonism ceased to be influential among the intellectuals.

The debates about how to modernize, and the question of universalism versus particularism continued in the idea of solidarism through the first years of the new Republic. However, after the Great Depression of the 1929 there was a change in the project of maintaining social order. That period has been conceptualized in terms of the advent of corporatism. The period 1930-38 can be conceived as an effort, guided under the direct supervision of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic, towards the invention of a historical reading for the new state that would situate Turkish history in that of Western civilization. Parts of this effort supporting the idea that the Turks have a civilization like their "good" and "evil" others (Europeans and Arabs respectively) include: the foundation of the *Türk Tarih Tetkik Cemiyeti* [The Society for Analyzing the Turkish History] in 1931, which would later become the *Türk Tarih Kurumu* [Institution of Turkish History] in 1935; the first and second congresses on history in 1932, and 1937 respectively; the three language congresses of 1932, 1934 and 1936; the reform of the *İstanbul Darülfünun*

(guided by a rhetoric that said it was *useless* for the building of a new nation[7]) and its eventual replacement by the University of Istanbul in 1933; the transfer of *Mülkiye* from Istanbul to Ankara to form the basis of the University of Ankara.

The main thesis that was developed during these years was basically as follows. Turkish civilization had its roots in Central Asia. The Turks had inhabited this land and formed a civilization long before the Europeans did. In fact, the Europeans were living as cavemen when Turks were leading a civilized life. The Turks, in need of constant movement across Asia because of deteriorating environmental conditions, disseminated their civilization together with their language. It was argued that if one investigates closely it could be seen that all languages across the world had their origins in Turkish. To prove this the intellectuals used sources from the French orientalists such as René Gerin, *Les hommes avant l'histoire*, Eugène Pittard, *Les Races et l'histoire*, André Berthelot, *L'Asie Ancien, Central et sud-orientale d'Aprés Ptoleme*, to name a few. Yet, to prove that the theory had a scientific basis, they also relied heavily on the findings of archeological excavations conducted at various sites in Anatolia (Aydin 2002: 403). Blood samples were drawn and bones and skeletons from the excavations were tested with the aim of proving the Aryan character of the Turkish people. Those attempts were only some among numerous activities for constructing a new nation-state and a new national identity to go along with it. An important part of this project was to educate and bring civility and modernization to the masses, apart from proving to the world that Turks had had a civilization since time began.

The agents of such "enlightenment" were the intellectuals. Ziya Gökalp, for example argued that one cannot find civility among the people, and they should be indoctrinated with Western ways. Mümtaz Turhan, the first social psychologist in Turkey, shared the same concern, and argued that the modernization of the masses is the job of a first class, an elite cadre (Deren 2002: 385). The initial response to that call came from former members of the Communist Party of Turkey[8] gathered around the journal of the *Kadro* [Cadre] in 1932. In an effort to become the organizing elite of the new Republic, they defined themselves as intellectuals filled with enthusiasm about the Revolution and identifying their mission as doing whatever they could to uplift the country by enhancing it with advanced scientific, technical and cultural knowledge via dissemination to the public (Tekeli & Ilkin 1984: 43). Such an

understanding finds its roots in a definition of the country as underdeveloped. Once independence was guaranteed, then statism emerges as the next necessary step; the state should be the only agent in bringing about development and industrialization. There should be autocratic rule during this process, but only as an interim solution. Once a level of industrialization and development similar to the advanced industrial countries is achieved the country might then take off on a similar path. The only critic of this group in that period was Ahmet Agaoglu. Although one might call Agaoglu a liberal, interestingly they shared similar concerns. The main point of dispute stemmed from the way they overcome backwardness. Agaoglu was arguing that in an underdeveloped country the only way to overcome this situation was to imitate the Western countries, and ask for their guidance in the process of modernization. The model in which the state is supposed to perform all of the economic activities did not seem realistic to him.

Yet, both parties were imagining an organically bounded nation, and this is reflected in two different utopian novels: one, by Agaoglu, *Serbest Insanlar Ülkesinde* [In the Land of Free People] written in 1930, and the other, *Ankara* written only a few years later by another prominent figure in the *Kadro* movement, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu. In the former, the author dreamed of an industrial communal society, where each and every individual has a sense of responsibility towards themselves and others, but overall to the community. There is an organic division of labor and equality among the constituents of society. A member of the parliament is not privileged over a worker; both of them work towards the enhancement of the nation's prosperity. Karaosmanoğlu's novel is composed of three sections, and the utopian part is last. In the first two parts, he tells the story of a woman, who by marriage to a bureaucrat came to Ankara in the 1920's. The couple lived on the outskirts of the city and led a relatively poor life until after the war of independence and the establishment of the new Republic with new leadership. The author closes this part by making his main character fall in love with an army officer in whom she saw the spirit of the revolution. In the second part of the novel, we observe the new couple in an upper-class neighborhood in Ankara. The husband has now resigned from the army and has become an upper cadre of the new Republic. Among the routines of their daily lives, they seek enjoyment in the balls given for the elites of Ankara. At this point Karaosmanoğlu, through the discontents of his female character, criticizes such life. She is simply bored with this kind of lifestyle. Having lost her interest both in her husband and in the spirit of the revolution she meets a young and fiery intellectual whom she marries in the third section. It is now the

future of the Republic, where men and women alike devote themselves only to development and prosperity of the nation. It is a world where the new generation, guided by the intellectuals, is physically fit, intellectually cultivated, and spiritually content with itself and its surrounding world.[9]

As a general framework for examining society and as an intellectual movement, one can observe the replication of the *Kadro* movement later on in the 1960's, with similar concerns and with similar leftist intellectuals gathered around the newspaper *Yön* [Route]. Before turning to that period, a few remarks are in order concerning the 1950's. Although in terms of intellectual production and discussion the period seems not to have been so fertile, it nevertheless prepared the context for the debates of the 1960's. First of all, a shift took place in the conceptualization of the West. In the previous periods, the West had always been thought of as Europe. After the Second World War, the West became the United States. This, however, was not a choice made exclusively in the fifties. One can also observe the growing sympathy towards the United States during the early Republican period. It is well known that John Dewey and William James were invited to Turkey in 1924 to inspect and advise on the universities and education at the lower levels. Later on in the second half of the 1930's in the establishment of village institutes (*Köy Enstitüleri*), the American model was highly influential (Bora 2002: 149). Again, in the choice of the Anglo-Saxon philosophy to be taught in the universities, there was a leaning towards the American model (Direk 1998).

With the rejection of Europe as *the* West, Republican Turkey embraced America as the new model; and the new item to be taken from the West was private entrepreneurship. Of course one of the most important facets of this change was pragmatic for the Turkish part. In the international arena Turkey had been almost alone since the war, and a partnership with the United States would both reverse this position, and at the same time, provide a shelter against the threats of the Soviet Union (Bora 2002: 151). Apart from that, the life style of the Americans, more specifically their conservatism, and respect for community life and religion seemed more familiar than the Jacobean French thought to the new conservative thinking. The new conservatives, gathered around *Demokrat Parti* [Democratic Party], came to power in the 1946 elections. They remained in power until the military coup in 1960 and Americanism has continued to be one of the basic tenets of the conservative thought down to the present.

The 1950's had been a decisive period when political positions were once again defined. Against the conservatives, the leftist movement in the 1960's defined themselves first and foremost as anti-American, and found themselves once more attached to the ideals of the Republic, stressing the Revolution's spirit of national independence and anti-imperialism. Most of them saluted the military coup of 1960 and named it as a revolution for overthrowing the conservative liberal government of the pervious decade. This coup marked the beginning of a new statist era. An import substitution model was adopted; five-year development plans were inscribed in the constitution; and within this context the social sciences acquired the main responsibility of guiding the development of the nation according to scientific principles. Sociologists, economists, anthropologists started to work in the projects supported by the state development institute (Devlet Plânlama Teşkilatı, DPT). In many ways this period can be compared with the 1930's developmentalist spirit. However, the peculiarity of this later period lies in the fact that now there was an established cadre of state officers and intellectuals to undertake the task at hand.

Developmentalism brought with it the issue of planning, and the immediate implication was that the most crucial problem of the day was underdevelopment. If Turkey was going to make plans for the future, it should first overcome this problem. It could not be solved by only viewing the present condition, but a reconceptualization of the past was necessary as well. Thus, history, both as a discipline and a way of thinking became central to the debates of the following decades. The major problem with the historical view that had been developed prior to the 1960's was that it was idiographic. In the preceding periods Turkish history had been conceptualized only as a series of events in reference to itself, and thus a tautology for the state of underdevelopment that persisted. If the modernization movement or the reforms of the early republican period had been successful, Turkey would have taken its place among the developed nations by then. So other explanations were to be sought and new conceptualizations were to be made not with an idiographic understanding but with the help of a nomothetic method, with the relevant theoretical framework coming from the social sciences. Thus, from the mid 1960's onwards the historical record became the object of study not only for historians but also for social scientists (see Tekeli 1997: 13).

And interest in history was not confined just to academia. It was also the main concern of Marxist intellectuals of the time. Since the beginning of the

Republican period, the 1960's witnessed the first extensive translation effort of the Marxist and leftist literature that had developed outside of Turkey. Also, for the first time, in 1963, a legal socialist party was established: the Turkish Labor Party (TLP). There as well, the conceptualization of the past became the main issue in the party for the strategic planning of a coming revolution.

The main debate of the period was in what ways the modern Turkish Republic was a continuation of the Ottoman Empire. Since the problem of underdevelopment still persisted, the question was what went wrong with the attempts at modernization in the early Republican period. There are two principle sides to this debate. Nationalist intellectuals argued that there was a discontinuity between the two periods. For them the Republican period was first and foremost an anti-imperialist bourgeois revolution. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk saved the country from colonization. He started the reforms that would modernize the country. However, those reforms were brought abruptly to a halt, first because of his sudden death in 1938 and later on with the success of the Democratic Party in the elections of 1950. Thanks to the military intervention of 1960, Turkey could enact the reforms of Atatürk from where he had left off in 1938. On the other hand, another group of intellectuals argued that the revolution of 1923 was a continuation of the Ottoman Empire, especially in its economic structure.

By the end of the 1970's the import substitution strategy in Turkey had fallen into crisis, undermining the nationalist ideology as well.

> The new accumulation strategy of the 1980's included the expansion of market forces in the economy, together with the expansion in the cultural realm of the competitive individualist ideologies. The failure of state-centered nationalism then found expression in the growth of an ideological commitment to religion, local community, and ethnicity. The state could no longer claim the loyalty of the population as it openly surrendered to the alleged superiority of the market. The collapse of the statist and nationalist loyalties of the people, that is, the belief that the state would deliver and that the common national interest of development would be protected, directly undermined the secularist legitimation (Gulalp 1992: 20).

This new accumulation strategy was instituted with a military coup in 1980 and with it almost all of the leftist intellectuals and scholars from the universities all over the country were either put in prison or were forced to leave the country. In this context, the Islamic elite began to dominate the intellectual

field. However, it has to be mentioned that when talking about Islamism, and the Islamic intellectual, it would be a mistake to conflate it with traditional fundamentalist Islamic ideology. Islamic thought in the 1980's and 1990's has to be seen as an extension of individualist thought, a coping strategy, and most importantly as an identity (Gulalp 1992). Apart from this, its main implication has been the reintroduction of Turkey's Ottoman past into the political arena, not as a past that needs to be overcome but rather as a past to be embraced and accepted with grace. Such a relationship with history implied that the very foundation of the Republic would be put under scrutiny. As it has been argued above, the debates about whether the Republic was a break from the Ottoman Empire or whether it was the continuation of it had already begun in the 1960's. But then, the legitimacy of the Republic was widely accepted and whether or not it had been the result of a Revolution had never been disputed. In the 1990's the continuity/discontinuity debate turned into a battleground where the revolutionary character of the Republic itself was questioned.

Islamists were not the sole agents of this change. Throughout the 1980's and 1990's, there was a civil war going on in the southern Anatolia, where the population consists mostly of Kurds. The war reached its peak in the mid-1990's and around the same time, opposition to the war grew, especially among the intellectuals. This opposition combined too with a criticism of the state. Added to those two major movements was feminism, which started to develop in the 1980's. However, the impact of feminism has not been as powerful as the other two, primarily because it remained solely an academic activity, and has not been popularized in Turkey until recently.

## Problems and comments

When one looks at the formation of the structures of knowledge and the debates of the various epochs in Turkish history, its Ottoman past and Republican present, one can say that the main concern and the cutting edge of the discussions has been in the realm of historiography, or historical consciousness. It has been the arena where political struggles (including the negotiation of incorporation in the capitalist world economy) were fought out in the world of knowledge. Nonetheless, and however controversial it might seem, I argue that right up until the present, although the concerns and criticisms of each period vary, the mentality and the structures underlying them remain the same.

First and foremost, the main problem is the question of modernity; all Turkish history has been written as a history of modernity.[10] Moreover, it continually puts forth a state-centered model of modernization, where the primary agent of change is the state itself. Thus, it does not concern itself with the social classes, "pays little attention to ... nomads, peasants, artisans and shopkeepers in reducing history to ruling class history from above (Berktay 1992b: 240). Additionally, the works concerned with modernization concentrated mainly on the changes brought about by the state after the Declaration of Tanzimat in 1839. This is the time which is also seen as the period of coming to terms with Europe on several levels: on the legal level (Tanzimat's new legislation to bring equality and property rights to each *tebaa* of the Empire under a single law), on the political level (construction of a constitution, and restriction of the Sultan's rights as the sole sovereign), and on social level (attempts to form a public school system, and the foundation of the first public libraries).

Secondly, historiography restricts itself to the legal boundaries of the nation-state *per se*. It becomes explicit when studies concerning the Ottoman Empire are examined geographically. One can observe that the studies of the Empire are confined mostly to the borders of the Turkish Republic as of 1923, when the nation-state itself is founded and the boundaries clarified after the Serves Treaty in 1922. It treats the areas outside of Anatolia only in terms of provinces, and thus not affecting the core. This should be considered as a function of taking the nation-state as *the* unit of analysis, and exhibits various problems and shortcomings, especially with regard to the conduct of social research. The unit of analysis from this perspective was, then, situated in a broader context, meaning that it was defined in relationship to others, and that essential other has always been the West, even though one should not discount the influence of Eastern nations on the Ottoman Empire and Turkey.

One missing link of this sort is certainly Egypt. The relationship of the Empire with Egypt often seems to remain oddly tangential for social analysts in Turkey, although it has always been present. For example, when we look at the negative aspects of the "fully Europeanized individual" or *musrif* (meaning extravagant) in the early Turkish novels, we see that this negative image is actually created by the presence and lifestyles of various Egyptian pashas in Istanbul. As a result of the enrichment of those pashas due to the goldmines in the Nile region between 1857 and 1866 when they acquired great wealth, they began to live a "luxurious life" in Istanbul, a lifestyle that displayed conspicuous consumption

designed mostly with European elements (Mardin 1995: 47). Also, the first Turkish newspaper was first printed in Egypt, but it is conveniently characterized as spreading the reformation of the Turkish language to Egypt (Kologlu 1988). Another interesting example in this context can be observed from the area of music. As a reaction to the banning of the *tekke* music from radio broadcasts in the 1930's, people started to listen to Arabic channels, especially Egyptian radio, and we can observe the creation of a completely new musical form called *arabesk*, which has become so popular that even in the 1980's political parties started using those songs as part of their election campaigns.

Now this omission is not limited to Egypt. The Western provinces, for example that of Hungary, is absent from the literature as well. However, as Ilber Ortaylı argues, the effect of Hungary was quite widespread in Ottoman culture, from military technology to engineering, to cooking. And although this integration was disrupted by the signing of the Karlowitz Treaty, "Hungarian emigrants continued to contribute much to the modernization of Ottoman society and state, and to the improvements of Turkish culture up to the mid-eighteenth century and then again especially in the nineteenth" (1994: 9).

More important than just the relationships with "other cultures," is the possibility of placing Turkey in a different geography that does not simply take its own nation-state borders as an unquestioned given. Again in relation to the structures of knowledge, one example of the sort can be sustained in reference to the role archeology played in the 1930's in the construction of nationalism. Suavi Aydin (2002: 412) argues that Germany and various East European countries were all using the ideas of prehistoria and protohistoria as nation-building tools based upon *kultur* against their *civilized* opponents, France and England. Yet, what he is defining in reference to archeology, that is, promoting culture in its opposition to civilization, also shows up in the discussions of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Ottoman Empire, and in Turkey in its early years. The concept of civilization for the nationalist and pro-modernist new intellectuals, however, was a product of the nineteenth century and mainly used to denote an Islamic civilization (Ortaylı 2003: 22).

Thirdly, again, in line with the above, one can observe that the period between the late sixteenth and eighteenth centuries remained rather a black sheep for scholars of the Turkish Republic, which then led to something akin to amnesia

in the collective memory. The main reason for such an omission stems from relying on the authors of the official history of the sixteenth century as evidence, without a critical evaluation. Being part of the ruling class of the Empire, those writers were interpreting the changes happening at the time as that of decline. What is of concern here is, apart from the validity of the sources, or whether or not what was recorded in them expressed the truth of their time, is the idea of the decline *per se*. As Rifa'at Abou-El-Haj (1994) argues, one has to evaluate the works of those "intellectuals" as products of certain social beings. As historical subjects they do belong to a certain class, and reflect its disquiets. The interesting thing about the Ottoman historical writing of the seventeenth century is the fact that the ones who are composing that history are indeed participants in the events they write about. He describes three groups of historians each representing the social groups or classes they belong to: *alim* historians representing the perspective of the shariah, *katib* historians presenting that of the state bureaucracy, and an increasing number of *enderuni* historians who were members of the sultan's inner circle of advisors and attendants. When assessed in such a manner, the very idea of decline can also be read as pointing towards a change in society and the state, as reflected by the writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[11] To take a few examples: sultans who fell into melancholia (or rather pipe dreams) about gold, silver and property in accordance with their epoch (see Fleischer 1983 and Schmidt 1987); a former Grand Vezir in the time of Suleyman the Magnificient, Lutfi Pasha's concerns about property rights becoming widespread so much that "the summary annexation of the property of the people to the property of the sovereign " reflected in his *Asafname* of 1541, as another sign of decline (see Lewis 1988); the emergence of the genre of *Book(s) of Curses* directed to the newly rich classes of Istanbul who are extravagant and conspicuous in their attitudes and comportment, but stingy at the same time (just like merchants), who do not follow the rules of manners of the old *kibar* culture that was prevalent in the city, and have grown to such an extent that they have become a threat to the old lifestyle (see Salgirli 2003); or Qoci Bey's cry in his *Risale* for everything being out of place: the military ranks are filled with "those who were Johnny-come-latelys, those who said 'there is profit here', who could not distinguish good and evil, those who had no legitimate connection, those who by origin or stock were not possessors of *dirliks*, some of them city boys and some of them peasants, a bunch of commoners, not useful for anything" (quoted in Howard 1988: 68). These can all be read as symptoms of such change. Moreover,

apart from the literary genres of the period, there were other indicators of change, such as in the urban centers, the entry of members of religious and ethnic minorities into public service suggested the appearance of something like secularism in the society at large, and an underplayed, but still relatively significant trend towards equality. In other words, the shift in the direction of commercialization was accompanied by a shift in the social status of certain sectors in Ottoman society (Abou-El-Haj 1994).

Another question that needs to be asked is as follows: even if one is going to take for granted that the state is collapsing, does that immediately entail that society is collapsing too? Can societies and cultures possibly face a phenomenon that can be called a "decline"? It is conventionally accepted that the Westernized parts of the Empire consist of its Western and sometimes eastern and southern provinces. Thus, the changes indicated above, towards commercialization, or capitalization, are thought of not as being an essential part of the Empire, which is also another sign of the predominance of the national boundaries in the unconscious underpinnings of the scholarship.

In sum, by the way it is treated in scholarship, that forgotten period has come to resemble the middle ages of European history, preceded by the justice and glorious victories of the Ottoman Empire and followed by the ultimate renaissance of the nineteenth century soon to be completed by the Turkish Republic after 1923.

All those characteristics are product of a scholarship that is highly elitist (Berktay 1992a and 1992b) both in its organic ties with the state, and to borrow a term from Murat Belge (2002), the products of the intellectuals occupying the position of "children of the state." Such attitudes result in a transcendental statist mentality casting its shadow over scholarly praxis. Thus, on the whole when we talk about the agencies of scholarship we might easily be referring to an *intelligentsia* rather than intellectuals (Ortaylı 2003: 17).

## Concluding remarks

Throughout this article I have tried to demonstrate the interrelated structures that have been persistent since the eighteenth century in the formation of knowledge in Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic; namely the tension between universalism and particularism via the construction of the state as the

primary agent of history. I argued that this could be observed especially within discussions concerning possible strategies deployed to modernize and develop—more importantly, in the reduction of this question to a choice between maintaining an essentialized Turkish identity and becoming European. In other words, on the one hand there lies the nationalist development project where Turkey should be preserving its cultural essence, its identity and lifestyle. Any relationship with Europe (or any other Western country for that matter) should only be pragmatic in nature; namely, it should consist of just acquiring material propellers, scientific and technological advancements. At the opposite end of the spectrum of modernization choices, on the other hand, lies the project that sees European (or Western) science and technology as a totality. From this point of view it is argued that to fully incorporate those institutions into society one has to be flexible in relation to identity. Attempts to adapt modern science and technology without an accompanying mentality are bound to prove futile.

Such polarization has reached its peak since the end of the 1990's, with Turkey's possible candidacy for the European Union (EU). It will probably take some time to be able to observe the reflections of this process in scholarly writing and its possible effects on historiography.[12] However, one specific point may be mentioned. Amidst these battles, the burgeoning studies in revisionist historiography side occasionally with the proponents of membership in the EU. Rather than seeing it as a result or cause of the EU ascension process, our interpretation of this affinity might profit from looking at an earlier period, the late 1970's and early 1980's. On the academic level, since that period Ottoman historians have started to voice their dissent to the exclusion of Ottoman history from European and world histories.[13] In the following decades, interpreting changes in the Ottoman Empire concomitant with a larger European perspective became the new paradigm. Instead of the previous period's "modernization-as-catching-up-with-Europe" understanding, "modernization-as-being-on-the-same-path-with-Europe" now represents the common view.[14] In this shift, there are two points that need to be stressed. First of all, the model, with which the Ottoman/Turkish history has been associated, remained the same. Secondly, the new paradigm has only been applied to Ottoman history. The early Republican period remains unaffiliated with 1920's and 1930's Europe.

# Endnotes

[1] Although an overall critique was widely recognized by 1990's, dissenting voices against the dominant historiography initially started to be heard in the late 1960's in the debates over whether the Ottoman Empire had a feudal system or constituted an instance of the Asiatic mode of production. Çağlar Keyder and Huricihan İslamoğlu argued that hitherto Ottoman and Turkish histories have been written as the history of political processes and one that can observe continuity between these two if the economic processes were taken into account. Eric Jan Zürcher pursued the continuity argument in the political processes and established the links between the Committee of Union and Progress and Kemalists.

[2] This debate survives in discussions concerning Turkey's membership in the EU.

[3] Although they were abolished in the 1920's, one might argue that these newspapers promoted the reading culture in villages and towns.

[4] The latter two were more involved with writing social and political analyses, whereas the former three produced novels and poetry.

[5] It must be noted in passing that the term "national" did not refer to the nation as we conceive it today. At that time the term had more of a connotation referring to the Muslim community, *ümmet*.

[6] The latter book was been written against those who were criticizing Abdülhamit II.

[7] In 1933, a few months prior to the reform, this fact is stated clearly in a speech by the period's Minister of Education, Reşit Galip: "There have been great political and social revolutions undergone by whole nation. Yet Darülfünûn chose to stay a neutral observer in all these. In the field of economy, there have been essential steps taken. Here, too, Darülfünûn remained unimformed. There have been radical changes made to the law. Darülfünun just took those new laws to its old internal regulatory system. There has been a revolution in the alphabet, with the 'Özdil' movement started, Darülfünun has been ignorant of this. A new conception of history encaptivated the whole country in the form a national movement. It took three years for Darülfünun to take notice. İstanbul Darülfünun was stagnant, it had been enclosed in its shell" (quoted in Hirsch

1950: 309). Following those words, *Istanbul Darülfünun* was deprived of the autonomy it had enjoyed since its beginnings and was put under the direct supervision of the state by becoming part of the Ministry of Education, and the Dean was given the status of a representative of the Minister of Education (Direk 1998: 86).

[8] This link with the Communist Party of Turkey should not come as a surprise, because as Kayalı (2000: 20) pointed out, it is plausible to think of the communist party as the leftist wing of the *Cumhuriyet Halk Fırkası* (Republican People's Party), which was the single party until 1946.

[9] Still, apart from state sponsored conferences, institutions and intellectual activity, interestingly, what one may call independent intellectual production in various forms also reflected the general spirit of its age and contributed to the call of the arms. For example, after the establishment of the University of Istanbul, Reinbach tried to create a positivist study of science in the department of philosophy; yet it proved futile and failed to form a tradition because the area was not broad enough for the formation of a national identity (Direk 2002: 87). The term "independent intellectuals" is used here to refer to those who did not have organic ties with the state; an interesting example of such production would be to look at the novels of the period. Along with the efforts of the government, novels concentrated as well on the ancient Turkish history and how well the Turks were successful in establishing states (Çeri 2000: 21).

[10] I would like to thank Baris Mucen for clarifying this point.

[11] Besides, since the change is slow, or rather not immediately "observable" in the overall way of things, we often do consider the period before the mid-eighteenth century in terms of a static and traditional society. However, such a conceptualization is also an extension of a certain view of change. As Hobsbawn states: "The dominance of the past does not imply an image of social immobility. It is compatible with cyclical views of historical change, and certainly with regression and catastrophe (that is failure to reproduce the past). What it is incompatible with is the idea of continuous *progress*" (1972: 6, emphasis in the original).

[12] There is already a copious literature on Turkey and the EU, most by political scientists on possible strategies that Turkey might follow in the process of ascension. See Müftüler-Baç (2005) and McLaren and Müftüler-Baç (2003).

There are other scholars who are trying to reconcile Turkey's history with Europe and integrate the relationships with EU in a broader perspective designating an affinity between the two geographies. For an example of this, see Akcan (2005) and Keyder (2003).

[13] One immediate and explicit example of such effort is the collection of essays published in 1974 and edited by Kemal Karpat, titled *The Ottoman State and Its Place in World History*. In the introduction of the book, Karpat indicates that Ottoman history has always stayed on the fringes of the discipline of history, and never acquired its rightful place in world history. When he talks about world history he only refers to the omission of Ottomans in European history writing. William H. MacNeill, and Halil İnalcık, in the same collection as well, try to situate Ottoman Empire in European history. The common point in all these articles is the claim that European (hence world) history cannot be understood without taking into consideration the Ottoman Empire.

[14] It is also interesting that the works produced with such understanding usually study the Hamidian Era (1876-1908). For more studies focusing on synchronizing Ottoman Empire with Europe, see Fortna (2000); Frierson (1995); Özbek (1999); Deringil (1991 and 1993). Abdülhamid II's period had been widely regarded as a dark period in the process of modernization until very recently. For example see two of the most acknowledged books: Berkes (1964) and Lewis (1968). This widespread belief is based mainly on his extensive usage of religion in state affairs. Deringil claims the contrary. He argues that even though he made use of religion, he did it in a modern sense. It was part of his reinvention of tradition efforts, and hence, Abdülhamid II represented not a setback but a continuum to modernization. For a comprehensive study on the historiography of Hamidian period see Özbek (2004); for contributing to this newly developing literature see also Özbek (2005) and Karpat (2001).

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