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# History and Historiography:

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## Politics and Memory in the

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### Turkish Republic

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- Ayhan Aktar, *Vârlık Vergisi ve 'Türkleştirme' Politikaları* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2000), 244 pp., TL 7,900,000 (approx. €6.76), ISBN 975-470-779-0.
- Étienne Copeaux, *Espace et temps de la nation turque: Analyse d'une historiographie nationaliste, 1934-1993* (Paris: Éditions CNRS, 1997), 369 pp., €28.97, ISBN 2-271-05465-6.
- Metin Hepar, *İsmet İnönü: The Making of a Turkish Statesman* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 270 pp., €80.00, ISBN 90-04-09919-0.
- Andrew Mango, *Atatürk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey* (Woodstock & New York: The Overlook Press, 2000), 666 pp., €39.95, ISBN 0-58567-011-1.
- Esra Özyürek, ed., *Hatırladıklarıyla ve Unuttuklarıyla Türkiye'nin Toplumsal Hafızası* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001), 349 pp., TL 7,200,000 (approx. €6.16), ISBN 975-470-919-X.
- Ahmet Yıldız, *'Ne Mutlu Türküm Diyebilene': Türk Ulusal Kimliğinin Etno-Seküler Sınırları (1919-1938)* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2001), 351 pp., TL 9,400,000 (approx. €6.88), ISBN 975-470-866-5.

#### I

In November 2001 a minor controversy arose when TRT, the Turkish national broadcasting service, decided to show the film *Salkım Hanımın Taneleri*, which depicts the plight of Turkish non-Muslim citizens during the Second World War, when they were targeted for extraordinary wealth taxes (the capital tax, or *Vârlık Vergisi*).<sup>1</sup> Those who failed to pay were driven into bankruptcy and sent to labour camps in eastern Anatolia. Ahmet Çakar, a high-ranking member of the far-right Nationalist Action Party, or MHP, offended by the way in which Turkey is represented in the film, accused the general director of TRT of treason for trying to show the film on national television. Ironically, the film is based on a novel of the same name by another member of parliament, Yılmaz Karakoyunlu, a leading intellectual in the center-right Anavatan, or Motherland Party (ANAP). Even more ironically, this clash does not reflect a political rivalry; both the MHP and ANAP are part of the ruling coalition government and have a vested interest in maintaining good relations.

<sup>1</sup> 'Salkım'a suç duyurusu', *Radikal*, 28 Nov. 2001, p. 7.

While this particular debate will, no doubt, be forgotten soon enough, the fact that members of the ruling elite would engage in open and violent debate regarding events that occurred more than a half century before reflects the central place that history has taken within Turkish political discourse. In a country suffering from a marked lack of consensus regarding the direction it should take in the future, debates about the past have taken on a striking urgency. At the same time, these discussions reflect a new openness to inquiry regarding formerly taboo subjects and an increasingly lively dialogue between Turkish historians and their foreign counterparts.

This essay examines some of the newest works – both foreign and Turkish – on the Turkish Republic, giving an overview of both the nature of the literature and the place that this historiography has within contemporary Turkish debates. Of particular concern in this discussion is the era of the single-party state, roughly from 1923 to 1950, when under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his successor, İsmet İnönü, the basic outlines of Turkish political culture and national discourse took shape.

## II

It would be difficult to overstate the imprint that Atatürk<sup>2</sup> had on his country. In the wake of the First World War, Mustafa Kemal was able to forge the disparate remnants of the Ottoman military in Anatolia with a variety of popular resistance movements to create a Muslim army capable of forcing, through diplomacy, guile and outright military victory, a redrawing of the maps created after the disastrous 1920 Treaty of Sèvres. Having drawn the lines of a new state, Kemal proceeded to make it into a nation, pushing through a set of Jacobin reforms which reshaped almost every aspect of society in the face of sometimes violent popular resistance and sincere doubts within his own revolutionary elite. By the time of his death, in 1938, Turkey had been largely recast in his image. It would be fair to say that it is impossible to understand the modern Turkish Republic without understanding Atatürk and his legacy.

It is thus no surprise that there is a voluminous literature regarding Atatürk and his achievements. This impressive bulk, however, does not point to a particular richness of scholarly achievement. Rather, the vast majority of these works consist of a sort of modern-day hagiography, the literary aspect of the extraordinary cult of personality which surrounds Atatürk up to the present day in Turkey. It is perhaps this very centrality of Atatürk within state-sponsored nationalism in Turkey that has caused the best scholars, both Turkish and foreign, to avoid tackling his life and achievements head-on; a critical study of his work might well imperil future admission to the various Turkish national archives, where politics has often played a role in research access.

<sup>2</sup> Properly, Atatürk should only be referred to by this name after 1934, when Turkey required its citizens to take on surnames. He chose – and parliament dutifully conferred – the surname Atatürk, or father of the Turks. Atatürk was born a simple Mustafa and was given (or appropriated) the honorific Kemal, or perfection, at elementary school.

Despite the publication of some useful shorter biographies in recent decades,<sup>3</sup> until very recently the most complete Atatürk biography available in Western languages (and one which has also been commonly assigned in translation by Turkish teachers wishing to give their students an ‘alternative view’), has been the quite readable but hardly scholarly *Atatürk: the Rebirth of a Nation* by Lord Kinross.<sup>4</sup> Kinross, while highly sympathetic to his subject, was not completely swept away by Atatürk’s heroism and was willing to criticise both his betrayal of many of his erstwhile allies and his increasingly erratic behaviour in the final years of his life. Moreover, Kinross had the tremendous advantage of being able to interview many of those who had been close to Atatürk. Nevertheless, his work was the product of a different generation, written in the heroic vein and sometimes shocking in its Orientalist assumptions.

It was with a great deal of pleasure, therefore, that I read the new biography by Andrew Mango. Like Kinross, Mango is a skilled story-teller, and his nearly 550 pages of text hold the reader’s attention throughout. More importantly, he is an accomplished historian and long-time observer of Turkey, fully conversant with the latest literature regarding both the late Ottoman Empire and the early Turkish Republic. Mango provides us with a narrative that is both sophisticated and compelling – a combination that is often sorely lacking in the fields of Turkish and Ottoman studies. Nevertheless, this work is not the product of new archival research. Instead, Mango has judiciously plumbed the existing literature on Atatürk and, in particular, the vast number of memoirs of those who were close to him, to create a complete and ultimately more satisfying narrative. Importantly, because Mango has a sound understanding of the late Ottoman intellectual and social context in which Mustafa Kemal came of age, he is able to embed his biography in a nuanced portrayal of Ottoman society. This has the double advantage of allowing the reader to understand Kemal’s intellectual make-up more fully, while providing the author with a means of unravelling fact and fiction about a figure who has been largely mythologised – not least by himself.

The first two sections of the book consider Kemal’s youth and career as an Ottoman officer. It is a story in which, as Mango himself recognises, ‘fact and legend are hard to disentangle, and Atatürk was the main author of his own legend’ (p. 25).<sup>5</sup> Kemal’s development as a military officer came at a time when conspiracy was as much a part of a cadet’s life as military training. The fervent patriotism of the Ottoman officer corps was matched and indeed augmented by their frustration with what they saw as the incompetence and decrepitude evident in the last years of the reign of Abdülhamid II (1842–1918). It was during this early professional life that Kemal developed many of the personal ties among his fellow cadets and junior officers that he would call on during his long political career. It was also during this period

<sup>3</sup> Valuable shorter works include Alexandre Jevakhoff, *Kemal Atatürk: Les chemins de l’Orient* (Paris: Tallandier, 1989) and A. L. Macfie, *Atatürk* (London: Longman, 1994).

<sup>4</sup> London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1964.

<sup>5</sup> As is the case for most books written on modern Turkey in Western languages, *Atatürk* was almost immediately translated into Turkish. As an ‘event book’, its publisher, Sabah, chose to offer it as a hardback, a rarity in the world of Turkish publishing.

that he commenced his love affair with strong drink, particularly the local aniseed-flavoured *raki* that would eventually cost him his life. A military coup in 1908 – the so-called Young Turk Revolution – was the first fruit of wide-spread dissatisfaction with the Hamidian regime and Abdülhamid was forced to restore the Ottoman Constitution which he had suspended some thirty years earlier. In 1909, an attempt at a counter-revolution gave the Young Turks (or, more accurately, the Committee for Union and Progress – CUP) the pretext to depose Abdülhamid and alter the constitution to establish a true parliamentary regime. Despite Kemal's striking ambition (and to his tremendous frustration), he played no more than a secondary role in these events.

Kemal's political hopes were equally disappointed during the Ottoman Empire's disastrous adventure in the First World War. Kemal was an exceptionally capable officer and Mango does a fine job of both detailing his successes and maintaining a balance between Kemal's contributions and those of other officers. Nevertheless, Kemal's successes at Gallipoli and in Syria were significant and gave him a heroic aura in the public eye. Moreover, his extensive ties within the Ottoman officer corps, his careful grooming of his public image in the popular press, and his frayed relations with the discredited CUP leadership ensured that Kemal was well placed to play a significant role after the Ottoman Empire's defeat in autumn 1918.

The second part of the book details Kemal's role in the Muslim resistance to effective dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire after the war. One of Mango's successes in this narrative is in explaining how Kemal was able to come to the fore of a group of equally capable officers and take the leadership of the 'national movement'. A significant advantage of Mango's description of the Turkish war of independence is the attention he pays to the role of irregular bands – often little better than bandits – who played an important role in the early stages of the war and then were either co-opted or destroyed after their usefulness had passed. Another important aspect to Mango's treatment of this period is the ways in which he separates it from later national narratives, noting the prominence of Kurds in both the 'national movement' itself and in the discourse of its leadership.

The final section of the book deals with the development of a Turkish Republic whose basic lines were largely set out by Kemal himself. Mango notes Kemalism's borrowings from both Soviet and fascist models, though he believes that for Kemal, dictatorship was a necessary means, rather than an ideal end. Brutal suppression of opposition and betrayal of independent-minded patriots were both aspects of Kemal's rule, though Mango does not see them as matching the scale of the repression found in the Soviet Union or fascist Europe at the time. However, while Kemalist repression is certainly not comparable to the mass destruction of the Nazis or Soviets, comparisons with other interwar dictatorships such as Hungary and Romania seem fair. Brutality was not a part of day-to-day life in the early republic, but threats to the regime were dealt with harshly. Show trials were infrequent, but not unheard of; rebellion was dealt with aggressively and with overwhelming force.

Overall, however, Mango's description of Atatürk's last years is a fair one. Atatürk was central to the development of a new national identity and new national myths.

If he was sometimes guilty of meddling to ill-effect in the day-to-day business of government (often at the behest of a circle of drinking partners whom Mango describes with cold irony as ‘the usual gentlemen’), he nevertheless succeeded in creating a political party guided by a national ideology that would carry out his message after he was gone.

On occasion, Mango seems an overly sympathetic biographer. Certainly, it is hard to view some of Kemal’s personal betrayals and flights of ideological fantasy as simply aspects of pragmatism. Overall, however, Mango works hard to show Atatürk’s marked personal weaknesses and his undeniable strengths as a military and political leader. If the cult of personality which surrounds Atatürk today is, in part, a measure of the Kemalist elite’s current difficulties, it is also a product of the tremendous influence Kemal wielded in creating an independent and forward looking nation out of a broken and defeated people. Mango’s biography is quite simply the best history of this extraordinary figure and one that promises to serve as the standard work for many years to come.

The need for a serious treatment of Atatürk’s successor is, if anything, even more necessary. İsmet İnönü’s began his career as an Ottoman military officer, continued as Mustafa Kemal’s protégé and successor as president of the Turkish Republic, and ended only with his ouster as leader of the Republican People’s Party by Bülent Ecevit in 1972. As Turkey’s unquestioned leader from Atatürk’s death in 1938 through his defeat in free elections in 1950 and as the leader of one of the main political parties for two decades thereafter, İnönü’s contribution to the shape of modern Turkey can be counted as second only to Atatürk’s. Yet İnönü’s personality, always serious and sometimes dour, never lent itself to the hero worship that Mustafa Kemal enjoyed. His attempts, after Atatürk’s death, to create a similar cult of personality around himself were awkward and unsuccessful and today his memory elicits little warmth.

Few authors have seriously tried to assess the entirety of İnönü’s career in Turkish and, until now, none have done so in Western languages.<sup>6</sup> The contribution by Metin Heper, one of the most respected scholars in the field of modern Turkish studies, is thus a very welcome addition to the literature on the early Republic. While Heper apparently did not have access to İnönü’s private papers, he was able to interview İnönü’s children, who apparently were supportive of Heper’s research from the beginning.

The structure of this ‘essay’, as Heper refers to it, is a non-traditional one: the first sections – a long introduction, ‘upbringing and personality’, and ‘political organizations’ – are meant to delineate İnönü’s basic personality traits, which Heper sees as defining his political career. Only in the last fifty pages or so of the book does Heper turn to a narrative of İnönü’s political career (which he starts in 1923, underplaying the highly political nature of the Ottoman military corps).

<sup>6</sup> The most frequently utilised biography of İnönü is Şevket Sürreya Aydemir, *İkinci Adam* (The Second Man), 3 vols. (Istanbul: Remzi Yayınları, 1966-8). The best general treatment of the İnönü period of single party rule is Cemil Koçak, *Milli Şef Dönemi: dönemin iç ve dış politikası üzerine bir araştırma* (The National Chief Period: An Investigation of the Period’s Domestic and Foreign Policy), 2 vols. (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996).

On the whole this format does not serve the author well. In the first section, Heper tries to draw out particular values that he sees as serving as a signpost for İnönü throughout his life: self-education, orderliness, patience, and so on. It is only through understanding these, Heper argues, that we can understand İnönü and his attitude towards governance. Unfortunately, by using this framework, Heper fails to create a multifaceted picture of his subject, instead offering his reader anecdote upon anecdote of İnönü's statesmanlike and humane qualities. Typical in this regard is the following: 'İnönü, with his laudable characteristics of diligence, responsibility, conscientiousness, trustworthiness, self-discipline, and punctuality began to draw wide attention even while only a captain in the army' (p. 63). With regard to İnönü's 'weaknesses' as a political leader, Heper writes:

It has been noted that for the most part İnönü had two things on his mind – his loved ones' most mundane and his country's most important problems. In day-to-day politics, in particular, in matters of capturing and remaining in power, for the most part, İnönü was an amateur. Once in a speech to Parliament, İnönü himself confessed this particular characteristic: 'I think I know a lot of things, but I have not yet discovered the secret of how to dupe people and obtain their votes during elections (p. 94).

Few readers would consider a lack of duplicity a failing in a leader (at least in theory) and it is doubtful that Heper does either. Indeed it is not clear what weaknesses Heper does see in his subject, a man whose sole failing in his narrative is an over-devotion to duty. Although this work was written in English and only later published in Turkish, one suspects Heper hopes to offer his own countrymen a reminder of political values which seem increasingly rare in the rough and tumble world of Turkish electoral politics. Still, in a work of scholarship and history, this laudatory tone is an uncomfortable one.

Part of the problem derives from the first, larger section of the essay, which deals with İnönü's personality and political philosophy by ranging back and forth over his very long career, offering anecdotes and quotations to support Heper's evaluations of İnönü's character. The central weakness of this framework is that it does not allow the author to evaluate how İnönü's personality developed as he dealt with new responsibilities and new opportunities. There is no growth. İnönü's political values and political vision in 1923 and 1973 seem identical.

Heper's treatment of İnönü's attitude towards democratisation is characteristic. In Heper's evaluation, İnönü (and Atatürk) were always intent on democracy but felt that the country needed to be 'ready' first. There were two extremely short-lived experiments with democracy under Atatürk and both have commonly been framed as attempts to offer an 'escape valve' for political unrest without threatening the integrity of the secular and monolithic state.<sup>7</sup> In both cases, political parties were closed down as soon as they showed themselves capable of mounting a challenge to established rule.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Erik Jan Zürcher, *Political Opposition in the Early Turkish Republic: The Progressive Republican Party, 1924–1925* (Leiden: Brill, 1991); Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek-Parti Yönetimi'nin Kurulması, 1923–31* (The Foundation of Single Party Rule in the Turkish Republic, 1923–31) (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 1999).

İnönü's rule from Atatürk's death to the end of the Second World War is generally viewed as increasingly autocratic, with comparisons to fascism increasingly easy to make. Certainly, the strains of armed neutrality in the Second World War would have made experiments in democracy even more difficult and hazardous for the regime. Heper, however, argues that İnönü hoped quickly to bring democratic rule to Turkey after Atatürk's death and that the authoritarian nature of this period, as well as his new title of 'National Chief', were simply the necessary tools to lay the basis for this transition (p. 181). Although İnönü may in fact have harboured such plans at this early date, there is little historical evidence to support it. The general thrust of Turkish policy during the war seems to have been to maintain neutrality until the winning side was determined. Most probably, Turkey's decision to side decisively with the Western democracies was more determined by their victory – and the remaining threat of the Soviet Union – than by any long-standing plan for liberal democracy.

Heper's book gives a useful introduction to a man who, despite a career of some fifty years at the highest levels of Turkish politics, is seldom remembered in his home country and hardly known at all beyond its borders. Nevertheless, a full and balanced appraisal of this long political life – and of the imprint it has made on Turkish society – has yet to be produced.

### III

A central question in the recent Turkish historiography has been the nature of nation building in the republic. A sense of 'Turkishness' as a meaningful term of political identification was limited to a relatively small intellectual elite, while for the majority of the population, the term 'Turk' might be an ethnonym, devoid of political content or, colloquially, a simple 'yokel'. Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, a novelist and important Kemalist intellectual of the early republic, recounts in his novel, *Yaban* ('The Stranger'), the sort of confusion that took place when nationalist intellectuals encountered their countrymen: 'But Sir [a villager says], we aren't Turks . . . We are Muslims, thanks be to God, those [Turks] of whom you speak live over in Haymana'.<sup>8</sup>

The process by which a Turkish national identity was formulated in the early republic and the ways in which minority groups were assimilated, co-opted, or pushed out have become a central concern of Turkish – and to a lesser extent, Western – historians over the last two decades. In part, this is the result of broader historiographical trends. The study of Turkish nationalism has benefited no less from the 'constructivist turn' highlighted by scholars such as Benedict Anderson and Ernest Gellner than from the field of nationalism studies as a whole. Indeed, Turkey, with its fanciful if short-lived early theories of a Turkish 'sun language', from which all other languages were spawned, and the Turkish roots of the Sumerians and Hittites, sometimes seems almost a model case for state-sponsored identity construction.

<sup>8</sup> Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu, *Yaban* (The Stranger) (Istanbul: İletişim, 1999), 173.

Etienne Balibar has noted that all communities are imagined.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, some communities, one feels, are more imagined than others.

Equally important in the development of a serious scholarly literature on the *Kimlik Sorunu*, or Identity Problem, as this issue is often referred to in Turkish intellectual discourse, has been the process of democratisation and growing pluralism in Turkey since the late 1980s. Along with the question of developing civil society institutions, the identity question has been one of the central concerns of the intellectually vibrant and politically important ‘Second Republican’ movement. This loose grouping of intellectuals has tried to develop a Turkish model which favours pluralism and multi-voice in public discourse that has generally been shunned by traditional Kemalists, who fear that opening the public sphere to such questions would pose too great a risk of religious populism or ethnic separatism.

Popular reaction to the excessive restrictions imposed after the coup d’état of 12 September 1980, and grudging state recognition that wider public debate is a necessary price for membership of ‘the West’ have helped create an atmosphere in which previously taboo subjects could be broached. This is particularly true for the period after 1989, when the brilliant, colourful, and corrupt, populist Turgut Özal, became president, and opened up the floodgates of public debate on a wide range of issues, from the rights of the Kurdish minority to the place of Islam in public life. One important result (ironically, since most Turkish intellectuals despise Özal and all he stood for) was a virtual renaissance in the historiography of the Turkish Republic.

Ahmet Yıldız’s book, whose title translates as ‘How Happy is He Who Can Call Himself a “Turk”’: The Ethno-Secular Boundaries of Turkish National Identity, 1919–1938’, provides a particularly important contribution to this literature. The title of this monograph comes from a play on Atatürk’s famous saying, ‘How happy is he who calls himself “Turk”’.<sup>10</sup> While Kemal’s original statement was meant to foster pride among a defeated people, Yıldız’s work shows how such an identity was developed and examines the range of definitions of nationhood that were explored in the early years of the republic. Although its dense jargon and uneven editing have, perhaps, limited the book’s impact on popular discussions of Turkish identity, the central point Yıldız makes is a fundamental one: the Kemalist project of nation formation came not out of a simple declaration of nationhood but developed out of a complex historical process of trial and error.

Tracing this process from its Ottoman roots through the first decades of the Turkish Republic, Yıldız explores the ways in which the elite sought to develop a practical and intellectually satisfying framework for the evolving national identity. Like much of the recent scholarship, Yıldız recognises the conflation of ‘Muslim’ and ‘Turkish’ identities in the development of a national movement in the Turkish war of independence. In an important departure from nationalist historiography,

<sup>9</sup> Etienne Balibar, ‘The Nation Form’, in Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein (trans. Chris Turner), *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 93.

<sup>10</sup> ‘Ne mutlu Türküm diyene’

Yıldız argues that 'In an ethnic coalition in which Kurds, Circassians, and Laz [stood] alongside the Turks, the common denominator and basis for socio-political legitimacy was Islam' (p. 128). While this observation has been similarly stressed by scholars such as Erik Zürcher, Yıldız gives us the fullest picture yet of the nature of this discourse and the ways in which it was eventually 'secularised'.<sup>11</sup>

For Yıldız, the shift towards a more ethnically based understanding of Turkish nationalism developed in the period 1929–38, when a project of Turkification of the various populations of the republic came to the fore as a central aspect of the developing vision of Turkish nationalism. Central to this project, according to Yıldız, was an effort to assimilate the Kurds, whose loyalty had come into question following the Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925–6. There were other aspects to this project, however. Some early republican intellectuals seem to have been influenced by racist currents embraced in fascist Europe, while a concern with Turks being counted among the 'yellow races' in some European scholarly literature of the day seems to have played a role as well. Finally, Yıldız argues, the racial turn was meant to develop a vision of the nation that would wean the republic's citizens from their ties to Islamic codes and norms, and allow them to modernise more quickly (pp. 158–63).

Many of these themes are also examined in Ayhan Aktar's collection on 'The Capital Tax and 'Turkification' Policies', which draws together five previously published articles centred on questions of Turkification and, particularly, the relations between the Turkish Republic and its non-Muslim citizens in the period up to 1945. As Aktar makes clear in his introduction, these issues have generally not been open to scholarly debate and intellectual inquiry. While bureaucratic barriers have been erected to limit the use of Turkish archives, populist nationalism has created public censure for intellectuals who discuss a whole range of what are commonly referred to as 'sensitive issues' (p. 10).<sup>12</sup> Aktar circumvented some of these constraints by working with British and American archival materials and making use of Turkish parliamentary debates. Others have utilised personal memoirs, popular media and oral histories to equally good effect. The effects of this new inquiry have been impressive; in only a decade or so the literature on these once taboo subjects has flowered and even found growing (if still quite limited) acceptance within popular debate and discourse.

As Aktar shows, the relationship of the Turkish Republic to its non-Muslim citizens was uncomfortable from the start. Even after the massacre and mass exile of the Armenian population during the First World War and the mutual ethnic cleansing that was evident on the Greek–Turkish front in western Anatolia during the Turkish war of independence, there was a significant non-Muslim population in Anatolia in 1923. In the Treaty of Lausanne (1923), which gave the new republic international recognition, it was agreed that all Muslims living in Greek territory (with the exception of the population in eastern Thrace) would be forced to move

<sup>11</sup> Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1993), 156.

<sup>12</sup> While probably more true for the republican than for the Ottoman archives, Aktar's complaints regarding the difficulties of researching some politically charged topics are valid. Nevertheless, my own experience has shown that, for the patient and diplomatic researcher, there are tremendous treasures to be found regarding even the most sensitive issues.

to Turkey. At the same time, all Orthodox Christians living in the Turkish Republic (with the exception of those in Istanbul and a few small island populations) would be required to move to Greece. Importantly, Aktar frames these exchanges within a history of forced migrations and ethnic violence as part of nation building which he dates back to the Balkan Wars (1912–13) and which I would date back to at least 1876 and the beginnings of the Russo–Turkish War (1877–8).<sup>13</sup> Implicitly, Aktar suggests that this process continued into the Turkish republican period, not through massacre, but through discrimination and disdain.

The picture he paints is a grim one: forced immigration, job discrimination and, in the *Varlık Vergisi* referred to at the beginning of this article, expropriation of wealth and, sometimes, incarceration and forced labour. There is much to credit in this portrayal and it serves as a useful corrective to a historiographical tradition which has painted the condition of non-Muslims (and, particularly, Jews) in the Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic in overly rosy tones. At the same time, one feels that Aktar overplays his hand here. Although the discrimination which he chronicles was real and the historiography has long needed to address it, Aktar gives scant attention to some of the alternate tendencies within the republic: once non-Muslims had won citizenship, there were real efforts to integrate them into the national community and, during the Holocaust in Europe, genuine attempts were made to protect Turkish Jews caught up in the Nazi machinery, even if they had let their Turkish citizenship lapse.<sup>14</sup> While Aktar quite rightly concentrates on the extent to which non-Muslims were considered a foreign and inassimilable population under Atatürk and İnönü, a full understanding of Turkish nationalism need to consider these countervailing currents as well. This being said, Aktar has provided us with the fullest and most sophisticated analysis yet of the development and implementation of the *Varlık Vergisi*, opening up a chapter in Turkish history which, as suggested at the beginning of this article, many would prefer to leave closed.

Aktar, in addition to his position as professor of political science and international relations at Marmara University, is a prominent intellectual who has done much to bring recent debates in modern republican history to a popular audience. Yıldız lacks Aktar's clear and forceful prose and it is perhaps for this reason that his work has made so small a stir within Turkish intellectual circles. This is unfortunate. With

<sup>13</sup> For an important, if highly polemical, discussion of the human costs for Muslims in this break-up, see Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821–1922* (Princeton, NJ: Darwin Press, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> Stanford Shaw, in his *The Jews of The Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic* (London: Macmillan, 1991) and *Turkey and the Holocaust* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), is the most prominent defender of the Ottoman and Turkish record with regard to their Jewish population, and the Turkish state has often pointed to its record on this account as a point of pride. Recently, this record has been brought under increasing scrutiny. Of particular interest are the decidedly critical works of the independent Turkish scholar, Rifat N. Bali, whose works include *Bir Türkleştirme Serüveni, 1923–1945: Cumhuriyet Yıllarında Türkiye Yahudileri* (A Turkification Adventure, 1923–1945: Turkish Jews in the Republican Years) (Istanbul: İletişim, 1999); *Musa'nın Evlatları, Cumhuriyet'in Yurttaşları* (Children of Moses, Citizens of the Republic) (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001); *Les Relations entre Turcs et Juifs dans la Turquie Moderne* (Istanbul: Éditions Isis, 2001).

its framework as a single narrative and greater intellectual balance, Yıldız's work, at least as much as Aktar's, deserves consideration both within scholarly and public discussions of the development of Turkish nationalism.

#### IV

As has been stressed throughout this review article, the history and historiography of the Turkish Republic are fundamentally tied to Turkish identity politics. As in all states, the process of nation building and the elaboration of a national history have gone hand in hand. The Turkish republican elite needed to create a new national identity to replace the local, confessional and imperial allegiances that had once formed the basis for political identity in Anatolia. As Yıldız has shown, after the first few years of Turkish independence, the Kemalist elite found it necessary to develop a fully elaborated historical narrative of self in order to meet the varied ideological needs of this nation-building process. This first attempt took the form of the 'Turkish history thesis', which attempted to solve the problem of Anatolian diversity by arguing that the territory had actually been settled by Turkish nomads millennia ago and that non-Turkish speaking populations in Anatolia largely consisted of 'Turks who had forgotten their language'. This neat act of historical fancy has been a point of fascination for a number of students of Turkish nationalism and is the subject of several significant monographs, most notably those by İsmail Beşikçi and Büşra Ersanlı-Behar.<sup>15</sup>

In an important contribution, Étienne Copeaux carries the narrative of official Turkish history writing from these first experiments through to the modern day.<sup>16</sup> Beginning his discussion with the an excellent review of the development of the Turkish history thesis, Copeaux briefly considers countervailing trends in historical writing in the period directly after Atatürk's death, before moving on to his central concern: the slow development of a new, officially sanctioned nationalism, the 'Turkish-Islamic synthesis'.

It is here that Copeaux makes his greatest contribution to our understanding of Turkish historiography and its place within the development of Turkish nationalism. Too often the literature regarding Turkish nationalism has framed Kemalism as an

<sup>15</sup> İsmail Beşikçi, *'Türk Tarih Tezi', 'Güneş-Dil Teorisi' ve Kürt Sorunu* ('The Turkish History Thesis', the 'Sun Language Theory' and the Kurdish Question) (Ankara: Yurt Kitap Yayın, 1991) and Büşra Ersanlı-Behar, *İktidar ve Tarih: Türkiye'de 'Resmî Tarih' Tezinin Oluşumu, 1929-1937* (Power and History: The Development of the 'Official History' Thesis in Turkey) (Istanbul: Afa Yayınları, 1992). Despite the general opening of debate in Turkey, Beşikçi continues to languish in prison, punished for scholarship which has highlighted Kurdish identity and the efforts of the Turkish state to extinguish that identity.

<sup>16</sup> As with Heper's work on İnönü and a growing number of foreign-language works on Turkish history, Copeaux's monograph was almost immediately translated into and published in Turkish by the Türkiye Ekonomik ve Toplumsal Tarih Vakfı (Turkey Economic and Social History Foundation) through their publishing house, Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları. This foundation, established by Turkish academics in 1991, has along with the publishing house, İletişim, been fundamental in bringing Turkish historiography up to world standards. Through translations of the best foreign and Turkish works, they have made available to an educated Turkish public, for the first time, serious critical study of Turkish history in their native language.

ideological constant, unchanging in form and content. This is certainly the way in which it has tried to represent itself. Atatürk has been elevated to such a lofty position in Turkish iconography that it would be difficult to imagine a national rhetoric that did not give him and his ideas a dominant role. Yet this prominence of place and near-universal acceptance has meant that Atatürk has become the vessel in which any number of formations of Turkish nationalism must, of necessity, be poured. Only a few years ago, Necmettin Erbakan, the leader of the now banned Islamist, Refah (Welfare) Party, exclaimed that 'If Atatürk was alive today, he would be a member of Refah'. The idea that the passionately secularist Atatürk would have found a political home in political Islam is, at the very least, counter-intuitive; nevertheless, it suggests the extent to which all Turkish political views hope to claim his legacy in their pursuit of power. 'Kemalism', in this general sense, is so broad a political value in Turkey at this point that it has lost much of its meaning.

For Copeaux, the development of this Turkish-Islamic synthesis can be traced at least as far back as 1945, when the leadership of the ruling Republican People's Party began to open up public discourse in preparation for the transition to democracy, though one might usefully argue that its roots lie deeper still, extending into the last years of the Ottoman Empire (p. 78). Nevertheless, the opening of public space in the years immediately following 1945, did allow for new formulations of Turkish nationhood that could not be voiced during single party rule. Given that Copeaux sees the genesis of this tradition in the beginnings of Turkish democratisation, it is indeed ironic that the pivotal moment within his narrative is the 12 September 1980 coup, which, he argues, allowed this synthesis to take a position of dominance within Turkish political life (pp. 80–1). The new military rulers of Turkey, according to Copeaux, viewed the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, particularly as it was formulated by İbrahim Kafesoğlu and his *Aydın Ocağı* (intellectual hearth), as a useful ideological tool:

[At] the same time as [the new regime] was reinforcing the Cult of Kemalism, it was making official the place of religion in society, making religious education a requirement at all levels and allowing complete freedom to the development of [religious high schools]. (pp. 80–1)

Within this new context, Turkish nationalism was to be based on two traditions: its Central Asian roots and its Islamic religion. What the generals put in place was continued under Özal and his successors and, indeed, this synthesis is now very much the dominant historical framework for understanding national identity in Turkey.

The bulk of Copeaux's work is a thematic overview of Turkish historiography and the ways in which this historiography has been utilised and disseminated over the years, with most attention being paid to the 1930s, when the Turkish historical thesis was dominant, and the 1980s and 1990s, when Turkish-Islamic synthesis had come to the fore (Copeaux ends his narrative in 1993, but no radical change in official Turkish nationalism has occurred since then). The value of this framework is manifest: Copeaux is able to show how a variety of specific key symbols were utilised in two very different historical narrative frameworks, giving a reader a sense of the limits and flexibility within a given nationalist discourse. In so doing, he also

familiarises the reader with the mental landscape of Turkish nationalism and the way in which specific symbols were utilised for very different political purposes. At the same time, this thematic approach may leave the reader who is less familiar with Turkish history somewhat adrift; one sometimes feels that a more rigid chronological narrative would have served the reader better.

A more serious concern is the extent to which it represents Turkish nationalism as merely the product of elite formulation and state edict. As has been noted above, the relationship of 'Turkishness' to Muslim self-identification was manifest from the beginnings of the republic; it may be that any popular form of Turkish nationalism would have to unify the two. In this context, the Turkish-Islamic synthesis may be seen as a final grudging acknowledgement by a fundamentally secularist state elite that it had somehow to lay claim to the Islamic tradition if it was to maintain legitimacy. From electoral results to popular media, there is much in modern Turkey which seems to support this conclusion. It is one that relatively few intellectuals in Turkey or abroad have yet to tackle effectively.

If Étienne Copeaux has concentrated on the process by which the state develops historical memory, a recent collection of essays edited by Esra Özyürek, on Turkey's historical memory, directly addresses the ways in which state identity creation and popular formulations interact. The book comprises eleven essays, ranging in topic from a fascinating description of the development of nationalism among the Turks of Cyprus to an analysis on the debates surrounding the film *Salkim Hanimin Taneleri* mentioned at the beginning of this article. Needless to say, with regard to a collection of this sort, the quality of essays range from very good to mediocre.

Nevertheless, taken as a whole there is much to recommend this book. Worthy of special note is Sam Kaplan's extremely interesting chapter on Turkish and Armenian attempts to garner French support for their claims to territory in the period after the First World War. This piece serves as a useful introduction to the work as a whole in that it stresses the fundamentally political qualities of historical memories. Most of all, however, this collection serves to show the startling variety of narratives of self that are evident in modern Turkey, ranging from celebrations of *Rembetika*, the wild and sometimes mournful Greek music of dance halls and *tavernas*, to the halls of the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara.

This collection demonstrates what becomes clear to even the most casual observer of Turkey: it is a country in the midst of fundamental changes. The process of democratisation has created tremendous strains on the ideological basis of the regime and on the assumptions of its citizenry. In this context, history and historical memory have become a central arena for often ferocious debates over national identity and how Turkey should situate itself in the world. The results of this contest over Turkey's future are not yet clear; the results for our understanding of Turkey's past have been extraordinary and diverse.