



FIGURE 9.1. Ramiz Gökçe (1900–1953), Conservative Reaction gets caught in the Republic's Machine, *Akbaba*, front page, March 3, 1924, Atatürk Kitaplığı, Istanbul.

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## Pushing Out Islam: Cartoons of the Reform Period in Turkey (1923–1928)

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YASEMIN GENCER

A cartoon published in 1924, on the front page of the Turkish satirical journal *Akbaba* (Vulture), depicts a machine and as its operator, Mustafa Kemal, the president and leader of the recently founded Turkish Republic (fig. 9.1).<sup>1</sup> A second man, identifiable by his long cloak and turban as a mullah, is caught in a grinding machine. The machine is identified in the register below the cartoon as “the Republic’s Machine” (*Cumhuriyet Makinesi*). Further clarifying the cartoon, its caption reads, “Conservative Reaction gets himself caught in the Modern Machine, whose meaning he did not understand.” The text equates the concept of the republic with modernity, represented by the machine, and, by extension, its opposition with “Conservative Reaction,” personified by the mullah figure.

The mullah, the former leader—and exemplary member—of the Muslim community, is represented as a bumbling cretin so unaware of his surroundings and out of touch with modern technology that he is incapable of avoiding injury (and perhaps even death). He is rendered as a caricature not only by his predicament but also through the style of his depiction. Indeed, in contrast to the portrait-like precision of Mustafa Kemal’s facial features, the mullah peers out at the world through popped eyes and sports a gaping mouth with missing teeth. His turban looks as though it might slip off of his bald head as he jumps back with haste and surprise. The image works closely with the text to depict this man as ignorant and irrational, “conservative” and “reactionary.” While his garments identify him as a Muslim cleric, within the context of the abbreviated language of the cartoon he nevertheless becomes a personification of Islam. The original meaning of the mullah as a positive symbol of Islam is only further inverted by the positioning of the figure as opposite Mustafa Kemal, the virtual savior and leader (and, later, “father”) of the new republic,<sup>2</sup> who seems indifferent to the mullah’s struggle with the machine. Moreover, the cartoonist has bypassed depicting a fully clothed version of Mustafa Kemal in favor of a shirtless portrayal that emphasizes his virility and Herculean strength: his flexed muscles draw attention to the laborious

task of passing reform legislation. In addition to the realistic rendering of Mustafa Kemal's facial features, his body dwarfs the mullah's, adding visual power and charisma to the muscled hero while taking such traits away from the cartoonishly debilitated mullah, whose actions are more animal-like than human. The crazed mullah indeed becomes an example of how not to behave, think, or even dress. Thus, the symbolic embodiment of Islam is reversed from a positive sign to a negative one within the syntax and grammar of the cartoon.

Many similar political cartoons produced in Turkey during the reform period (1923–28) employ narrative dichotomies and pictorial opposites in order to illustrate and drive forward their political messages. They also provide varying degrees of realism to their protagonists in order to elevate them or caricaturize, and thus disempower their antagonists. The “Republican Machine” cartoon, and others like it, presents a message laden with cultural symbols from both the past and present. Specifically, these cartoons relay an opinion regarding Islam that was inspired by the Kemalist reforms of the period that were aimed at modernizing and secularizing the newly established Turkish Republic. However, would it be accurate to characterize these cartoons as anti-Islamic? Are these cartoons advocating for a non-religious society, in which Islam plays no role in a person's life, or do they simply depict a secular separation of religion and state? Finally, why address Islam at all? Where are religion and Islamic identity located within the construction of a supposed Turkish “identity” as promoted within new Republican ideals?

This essay argues that the cartoons dealing with the reforms of the early Republican period promote and support a certain brand of secularism that restricted the role of Islam to the private sphere by systematically depicting its removal from various public spheres in government and society, concluding that the private (and less visible) sphere was to be the place of Islam within the newly minted construct of modern national identity in Turkey. Drawing from five front-page cartoons from three prominent satirical journals, *Akbaba*,<sup>3</sup> *Kelebek* (Butterfly),<sup>4</sup> and *Karagöz* (named after a popular shadow theater character),<sup>5</sup> as well as the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* (Republic),<sup>6</sup> this essay explores illustrations responding to two of the most controversial and superficial reforms of the period 1923–28.<sup>7</sup> These include the abolition of the caliphate and the consequent closing of religious schools (*medreses*) in 1924, as well as the replacement of the Arabic script with Latin letters in 1928.<sup>8</sup> These cartoons use a variety of methods to reinforce their messages, including (but not confined to) juxtaposing Islam and modernity by reconfiguring previously positive iconic symbols

of Islam to negative signs of backwardness, ridiculing Islam through the caricaturing of its leading figures, and using the image of Mustafa Kemal to justify such claims. The decision to focus on cartoons illustrating these two particular reforms is based on the fact that they relate directly to the issues of reforms and identity at stake. These cartoons attest to the key moments of controversy surrounding the reforms through the thoughts and sketches of some of their most enthusiastic supporters.

## The Question of Censorship

While proponents of these reforms were able to express their support through cartoons, there remained a glaring lack of cartoons opposing or criticizing the same reforms. This lack of dissent can best be explained by addressing the question of censorship that persisted since the Ottoman era.

As Palmira Brummett's book *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press* notes, the years 1908–11 witnessed a period of relative freedom enjoyed by the print media in the late Ottoman Empire. This second constitutional period, which followed a thirty-year period of strict censorship imposed by the administration of 'Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), was a time when every opinion was voiced and few social or political criticisms were truly suppressed. The Ottoman press continued to experience relative freedom of expression; satirical publications multiplied;<sup>9</sup> and cartoon arts flourished from 1908 until the First World War (1914–18). Conversely, the Armistice period (1918–20) following the war and Ottoman defeat was one of restricted freedom, especially in the British-occupied capital of the empire, Istanbul.<sup>10</sup>

A brief period of relaxed censorship followed the Turkish War of Independence in 1922, but ended abruptly after a major Kurdish rebellion in February 1925, in which the agitators demanded the reestablishment of the caliphate and religious law and order (*shari'a*) by the Turkish government. These demands created an unstable political environment that the new government combated with the new censorship law. The *Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu* (Law on the Maintenance of Order) was passed in March 1925, allowing the government to shut down any publication considered to be a threat to law and social order, following this rebellion.<sup>11</sup> Shortly after the signing of this code into law, the government shut down eight major newspapers in Istanbul.<sup>12</sup> This law, which was intended to stay in effect for only two years, remained in force until 1929.<sup>13</sup>

Government censorship during the initial years of the republic was a reality—one that certainly influenced and curtailed freedoms of expression.

Moreover, even when the press was not openly censored, social self-censorship may have been taking place, especially during the years after the independence victory and before the Kurdish rebellion that sparked official censorship in the form of a law.<sup>14</sup> As a response to the national victory, and the close encounter with foreign occupation, the initial drive toward social unity could have resulted in a kind of self-censorship to strengthen a cultural identity under threat. This environment fostered the elevation of Mustafa Kemal as a national savior in what Jack Goldstone has called a “honeymoon” period following a major political revolution.<sup>15</sup> It is in this relatively restrictive arena of expression (both self- and regime-imposed) that the cartoons of the early Republican period were born: an environment conducive to messages in support of the rapidly occurring reforms—and an environment hostile to multiple viewpoints. The united messages created in the pages of these satirical journals—a positive and supportive outlook toward the Kemalist reforms—gave the impression of an equally unified front of popular approval. This objective was reached through a wide variety of recurring visual motifs.

## Nation-Building and National Identity

As a result of the various state- and self-imposed censorships of the early Republican period, most of the satirical journals that remained in operation supported the new government and their reform efforts. The satirical journal *Karagöz* was the most enthusiastic supporter of the Independence Struggle and Mustafa Kemal. Despite an occasional cartoon that voiced objection to censorship,<sup>16</sup> the journal was a prime disseminator of some of the most nationalistic and vehemently pro-reform cartoons of the period—a stance that is perhaps best foretold by its name and history.<sup>17</sup> *Karagöz* was one of the earliest and longest-running journals of the period. The adoption of the name *Karagöz* was a clever idea when the journal first began publication in 1908, during the second constitutional period, when widespread media censorship was lifted. *Karagöz* was the name of a popular shadow puppet character representative of the common Turk and best known for his wit and sharp tongue. The use of the *Karagöz* character as the journal’s mascot (and name) thereby situated the journal on the side of the people.<sup>18</sup> This populist subtext survived the regime change and continued through the 1920s.

*Karagöz* frequently employed the shadow puppet character either as a passive narrator or an active participant in its cartoons. The cartoon character *Karagöz*, like his shadow puppet counterpart, often uses slang and

colloquial language to comment on events. This adds to his popular and populist appeal, which is further amplified by the cartoons' subject matter. For example, the March 1, 1924, issue of *Karagöz* published a front-page cartoon depicting Mustafa Kemal discarding a book whose title reads "old laws," along with Karagöz and his sidekick, Hacivat, happily discarding a skull that bears the inscription "old head" (a common Turkish expression that means outdated mentality) and a jar (fig. 9.2). All the while, a man wearing a turban looks on from behind a wall in the background. A short text placed above the cartoon—"March may enter, and the rubbish must leave"—is a popular expression referring to spring-cleaning. The caption below the cartoon quotes the character Hacivat as stating: "In celebration of the New Year, let's throw away all that is old and worn, Karagöz!" Karagöz responds, "The new Republic must make everything new. That is why we must revive our old Turkish customs and throw out all that is outdated."

The text and cartoon create a clear equation between the discarded objects and the "outdated" thoughts and practices that must be thrown away. The book of "old laws" represents *shari'a* (Islamic law) as an archaic legal system that is no longer appropriate for the emerging secular Turkish Republic, while the "old head" represents a retrograde (i.e., Islamic and Ottoman) mindset that is further stressed visually by the artist's decision to depict a skull rather than a fully fleshed head. The unmarked jar represents the Treaty of Sèvres (August 10, 1920), which was signed by the Ottoman Empire and Allied forces at the end of the First World War.<sup>19</sup> The treaty gave control of the empire's finances to the Allied forces, permitted them to occupy various parts of the empire at will, and required the Ottomans to dissolve their military. The Turkish War of Independence following the First World War prevented the treaty from achieving its intended goal, namely, to reduce the Ottoman Empire to a small land-locked state in the middle of Anatolia.<sup>20</sup>

The selection of certain protagonists is also carefully calculated: Mustafa Kemal represents national freedom and reform; Karagöz and Hacivat symbolize a cultural tradition of storytelling that is considered indigenously "Turkish"<sup>21</sup> rather than Ottoman or Islamic. Furthermore, within their original context of shadow theater, Karagöz and Hacivat represent two vastly different social strata: the lower and middle classes, respectively. It is thus possible to read these characters as representing cooperation across social and economic classes to change the nation and help the state. Additionally, there is a man wearing a turban in the background who is peering from over a wall with an expression of concern discernible on his face; he is obviously excluded from the events taking



مارت ایثیری پیره دیشاری !  
 حجابو - بکی بیگ شرفه ته قدر اسکیز ، پوسکومز وارسه آتام قرمکوز!  
 قرمکوز - بکی جهورت هر شیشی بکی یایق عبودیتدهدو . اولک ایجون اسکیز تورک عادتیزی اجبا ایدرک اسکیزه ، ههلمک عادت نمن وارسه  
 قای دیشاری ایدم !

**کولونج اولیورز!**  
یا تجدد یا ارتجاع !

۱- برنده کوزر آدم چوقدر چوغی ایته ایلماز ،  
 اغیزلرمن بیلیکلر ققط بر ایش آواماز ،  
 اضلرمن ایته کندی صارقیغنی صارماز ،  
 ملکنده داغیققق وار ملت ایشیز قالیور ،  
 بو بوزنده مسائل اولمازور حالبور !

۲- دیورلرکه آوروپاين متخصص کاهلی ،  
 پاراسک قایوغی پشترکه دولهلی ،  
 علقمزی جالیشمک اسرارنه جلمهلی ،  
 بزدهاله قرق ییل بویه سیرق توسق یازده  
 آغچه و نارکاهی برده چوقق قاناز !

۳- ایته زدن باشلامه جاق داها اوقی چاقوق ،  
 بر کون اولسون آوروپیه دقت ایبه یقادیق ،  
 جهودیت آرماسنه مشیت طاقیق ،  
 حالا اسکیز قفا ایبه کیتیبوز تولکده ،  
 آوروپیک قارشیشنده بو ملکک کولکده !

۴- متخصص کاهلی که کوزومزی آتام ،  
 بیکلرده یان کایورده اوبومقدن قاجام ،  
 تومندله کیده هم طیارده اوجام ،  
 یوته قرق ییل بوسالارن قورتولماز ایلمازده  
 آوروپیک قارشیشنده طیارلی آتامز !

۵- بیجربکی اولنق لازم کهنه لکی آتام ،  
 لایق چولرده دکل جانکانه سالام ،  
 مثال بو یا پشندره برآز شکر قانام ،  
 اسکیز قانام اسکیز کیشیزی صاعقه توله دورده  
 حالره آوروپای آجی کولهورور !

FIGURE 9.2. The disposing of old mentalities and laws, *Karagöz*, front page, March 1, 1924, Atatürk Kitaplığı, Istanbul.

place in the foreground. He crowns the clutter of jettisoned objects in the center of the cartoon, thereby personifying all that must be discarded from Islamic civilization. The mullah is thus visually marginalized and symbolically incapacitated. As a result, this cartoon communicates a revolutionary message, pitting Turkishness against Islam, and Western secularism against the “antiquarian” Ottoman-Islamic legal system of *shari’a*.

The cartoon also subtly assigns duty to members of society based on the objects discarded by the protagonists. Karagöz and Hacivat, emerging from the windows and doors of a regular house, represent the people who, having already rid themselves of their foreign occupiers (the Sèvres vase), must now “clean house” of their old ways and mentalities (the skull). Mustafa Kemal, on the other hand, is depicted still wearing his military uniform and appears as the savior and leader of his community. Standing on the balcony of a more palatial building, he tackles legislative reforms, cued by the book of laws he is discarding—or, rather, “reforming.”

This cartoon assigns roles to certain parts of society—the political and military elite as well as the common folk—and aligns negative and positive symbols with certain persons and ideological paths. It also assigns blame for the state of the country to Islamic law, ignorance, and poor leadership under Ottoman rule, as made apparent by the Sèvres vase. Miroslav Hroch has examined the nation-building efforts of many small European countries, observing that modern nation-states have been constructed around ideas of shared history, culture, and language.<sup>22</sup> It is well established that, indeed, in all cases, these very building blocks of national identities are themselves mere constructs.<sup>23</sup> The cartoon illustrates this process by visually molding a seemingly coherent national identity via a selective process that encourages its readers to “revive” Turkish customs while “throwing out” outdated ones. Outdated elements are equated with religious law and the putatively backward mentalities of the recent, Islamic past. Here, the modern “revival” is sought in a more distant, pre-Islamic, and thus “inherently” and “purely” Turkish, past.

In articulating a new history (or rather, a new take on history) Hroch and Malečková have noted that many nation-building projects found a culprit on which to blame their recent failures.<sup>24</sup> Essential to Hroch and Malečková’s observation is the fact that this occurred mostly in national struggles in which the largest segment of the population were of non-dominant social and political standing. The Turks of the Ottoman Empire were not oppressed and enjoyed a dominant status, as they made up the majority of the population. Yet Turks found themselves in the midst of their own “national struggle” to define, rebuild, and refine a national



identity—following a path of nation-building similar to that of nations in which the majority population was non-dominant.<sup>25</sup> This cartoon clearly partakes in nation-building because it suggests a flaw in the recent past that can be fixed by the Turkish peoples' own efforts and distant past. The Islamic Ottoman age is thus designated as the malaise, and Islam as its cause; conversely, innately Turkish customs,<sup>26</sup> the new (i.e., progressive) republic, and an evacuation of the superannuated are the only remedy.

## Alphabet Reform as a Source of National Pride

According to Hroch, language also has been a major factor in most European efforts at nation-building.<sup>27</sup> On a practical level, a common language is the most perceptible indicator of a person's national identity. Indeed, the rise of the newspaper, journal, and other publications, along with the use of (or realized need for) a common language among minorities, became a point of departure for a great number of national movements in Eastern Europe. The Turkish movement was no exception.<sup>28</sup>

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed linguistic contention in the Ottoman Empire among scholars interested in Turkish culture and history. Debates emerged regarding the "Turkishness" of the Ottoman language, as well as the complex and thus largely unintelligible nature of the Ottoman language to the common people.<sup>29</sup> By the early 1900s, plans for purifying the Ottoman language and even changing the alphabet began to be proposed and debated at length in various journals.<sup>30</sup> The prevalence of Arabic and Persian words and grammatical constructs in the Ottoman language was seen by many scholars as undermining the innate richness of the Turkish language.<sup>31</sup> Such statements indicate a desire to symbolically break from other languages, which were perceived as having exerted dominance over the Turkish language (and, by extension, Turkish culture in general).

Prior to the language reform that would occur in the 1930s, a transformation of the alphabet was instigated in 1928, whereupon the Arabic alphabet was replaced with a system of Latin characters that was called the "Turkish alphabet."<sup>32</sup> The alphabet and its very name gave the people of the Turkish Republic something to claim as their own. It also allowed the new republic to symbolically break away from its Islamic neighbors and Islamic past. While the military victories of the Independence Struggle aided the emerging republic in escaping the grips of foreign political occupation to her west, this legislative victory helped the republic sever itself from the strong cultural influences from the east and southeastern regions. Thus,

when the dust settled, these two events left a more politically and culturally independent Turkish Republic in their wake.

A cartoon about the alphabet reform that appeared on the front page of the satirical journal *Akbaba* on August 30, 1928, cleverly equates the magnitude of the legislative victory (alphabet reform) with the widely celebrated military victory of the Turkish army over the Greek forces six years earlier (to the day) (fig. 9.3). Here, Mustafa Kemal wears a Western-style suit while standing victoriously atop a mountain of crushed Arabic letters. The triumphant leader holds an oversized European steel-nib pen that is meant to create a contrast with the simple hand-cut reed pen traditionally used in the Muslim world.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, this pen bears a crescent and star on its shaft, thus resembling a military banner.<sup>34</sup> It thereby establishes a further nationalistic connection between military and legislative triumphs—as led by Mustafa Kemal. The mammoth pen represents the grand action of lawmaking as well as the specific law on alphabet reform, itself intimately related to the pen. The cartoon is sandwiched between a sentence above it, which states that the cartoon “celebrates the 31 August 1922 victory,” and a caption below that bluntly declares a new “31 August 1928 victory.”<sup>35</sup> The captions above and below the cartoon indicate that the cartoon creates a direct relation between the already well-known military victory and this new legislative victory. By highlighting the multiple fronts on which wars have been waged, the cartoon heralds the progress the country has made in the last six years, militarily and even alphabetically freeing itself from unwanted foreign powers and influences.<sup>36</sup>

The cartoon also combines two moments: the elimination of the Arabic alphabet and the subsequent anticipated period of enlightenment. This awakening is quite literally brought about by the sun, inscribed with the words “the New Turkish Letters,” that is rising behind Mustafa Kemal.<sup>37</sup> The sun is an object that illuminates the world while also commencing a new day; it is a symbol of enlightenment as well as renewal and rebirth. As such, it serves as a harbinger of the rebirth of the nation following the military victory of 1922 while also suggesting that it will defeat ignorance and illiteracy with its radiant light.

The new letters also become bearers of a new Age of Enlightenment, guaranteed to eliminate the darkness and illiteracy caused by the Arabic alphabet (which was argued to be very difficult to learn).<sup>38</sup> The contrast drawn between dark and light, ignorance and enlightenment, is coupled with a second contrast, that of order and chaos. The scrambled Arabic letters are in a state of utter disarray, while the New Turkish Letters rise above the mound in perfectly legible order and arranged in a single register.

# آق قویم بابا

İDARE HÂNESİ  
İstanbul, Ankara Caddesi, ۱۳۳۳  
Telefon: İstanbul 1826

Pazarları, Perşembe günleri çıkar. Millî gazetesi  
Sahibi: YUSUF ZİYÂ

Nispeti 5 Gurundur  
Fibona, seneligi 500, Altı ayligi 250  
Ecnabi, seneligi 1000, Altı ayligi 500

۳۱ آغستوس ۱۹۲۲ ظفرنی نصیر ایدرکه ..



31 Ağustos 1928 Zaferi !

FIGURE 9.3. Ramiz Gökçe (1900–1953), Victory over the Arab Alphabet, *Akbaba*, front page, August 30, 1928, Atatürk Kitaplığı, İstanbul.

The mound of spoliated letters visually conveys the collection, elimination, and domination over the relics of a formidable opponent—now rendered obsolete and relegated to the past.<sup>39</sup> Moreover, the arrangement of the Arabic letters, stacked on top of one another, constitutes criticism toward the calligraphic arts as it exaggerates and thus satirizes the often illegible forms this art took.<sup>40</sup> The use of scripts such as *sülüs* and a popular compositional arrangement called *istif* (whereupon letters are woven together and layered in a stylistic manner) rendered Arabic-language inscriptions aesthetically pleasing but virtually illegible, much like the jumbled mess beneath Mustafa Kemal's feet.<sup>41</sup> Interestingly, on the far right corner of the mound the seemingly carelessly tossed letters, *mim* and *lam-elif*, also happen to spell the word “mullah.” However, this playful arrangement of letters, while appearing accidental, refers any attentive reader to the secularizing reforms of the past five years that systematically pushed Islam out of the public sphere. As will be explored below, alphabet reform was one salient aspect of Mustafa Kemal's larger secularizing agenda for the country that found its place in Turkish cartoon arts.

## Secularism as Modernization

Within the context of early Republican thought and the realities of the post-World War I period, both secularism and nationalism were seen as means by which to achieve a modern state.<sup>42</sup> At this time, the late Ottoman and early Republican intelligentsia equated ideas of “modernness” with “Western civilization” or even “Europeanness”; thus, that which was European or Western was modern and advanced.<sup>43</sup>

Because a secularized state was an envisioned path to modernity, one comes across a wide array of cartoons that illustrate modernity's conflict with, and victory over, religion. The oppositional dichotomy created between modernity and the institutionalized religious establishment is demonstrated by a front-page cartoon published in the satirical journal *Kelebek* on March 13, 1924 (fig. 9.4). Here, a rather stern Mustafa Kemal is depicted operating a steamroller that is crushing domed buildings as the occupants run off, angrily shaking their fists in the air. The cartoon is adorned with the title “Real Revolution.” The caption below the cartoon reads: “A strong administrative machine like this was all that was necessary for definitive reform.” Both the machine and Mustafa Kemal bear the signs of modernism. The steamroller is a modern industrial creation from the West, built to pave roads and flatten rubble and rubbish. Likewise, Mustafa Kemal is depicted—as he was in life—dressed in a European-style

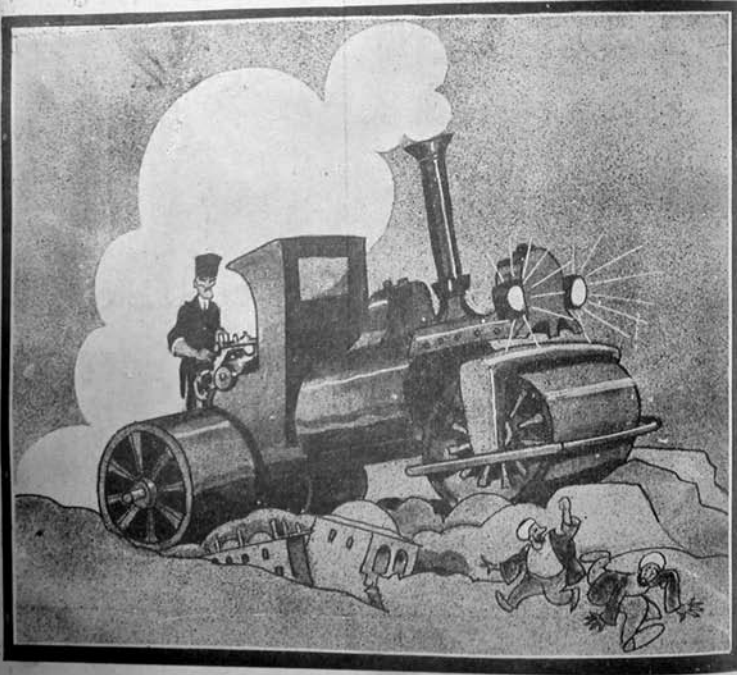
مدیری محمود اسعد

نسخه ۵ غرشدن ۱۳ مارت ۳۴۰ برشیت نومرو: ۴۹

# کلبک

پرشنبه کونلری نشر اولونور ادبی مزاح مجموعه سی

حقیقی انقلاب



قطعی اصلاحات ایچون آئین بویه اولل بر اداره ماکنه سی لازمدی .

FIGURE 9.4. The administrative machine of definitive reform, *Kelebek*, front page, March 13, 1924, Atatürk Kitaplığı, İstanbul.

suit. Placed at the helm of the machine, he takes on the role of a modern Western leader, a path-breaker of sorts.

What, then, constitutes the old in need of crushing in this cartoon? The domes of the building and the fleeing men are what the Republic needs to eradicate. The fleeing men, like the turbaned man in figure 9.1, represent religious figures, and furthermore serve as personifications of Islam. Represented here as small and cowardly—hardly able to remain and fight—these mullah figures and Islam provide the antithesis of modernism as represented by the machine and its driver, Mustafa Kemal. Published ten days after the abolition of the caliphate and the signing of the *Tevhid-i Tedrisat* law, which closed all religious schools (*medreses*), this cartoon both commemorates and legitimizes the recent reforms while also calling for additional reforms in the caption. By generalizing the mullahs as religious figures rather than simply showing the caliph or a *medrese* teacher, it widens its message to one that is critical of Islam's role in both politics and the public sphere.

This cartoon also follows a similar formula to two previously discussed cartoons (figs. 9.1 and 9.3). Both visualize Mustafa Kemal as the savior and leader-in-chief. He wields utensils of enlightenment (the pen-banner) and modern technology (machines). In both figures 9.3 and 9.4 he triumphantly stands atop mounds of the demolished past. Both forms of rubble—the Arabic alphabet and the *medreses*—are symbols of Islam. These symbols, however, have been transformed from intellectual symbols of the past to ones of backwardness and ignorance. Finally, in all three cartoons, symbols of the recent Islamic past are juxtaposed with (and eliminated by) the symbols of modernism and nationalism.

Ahmet Davutoğlu has pointed out that secular forms of society were foreign to non-Western countries such as Turkey. Thus, the ideological importation of secularism from the West caused it to be “de-traditionalized” in that it was automatically deemed an alien—and thus inherently non-indigenous—concept. In this way, secularism became closely associated with other dynamic technological, scientific, and cultural imports from the West,<sup>44</sup> and was consequently placed within the conceptual sphere of modernism and progress. The Republican era's emphasis on and glorification of pre-Islamic Turkish civilization also helped in limiting the role of Islam in public life because, in Republican thought, pre-Islamic Turks were forbears to modern democracy and ideas of equality.<sup>45</sup> Thus, it was argued that before Islam Turks had achieved a society closer to modern European models, thereby demonstrating that there was no need for Islam to achieve internal reform and social progress. In other words, modernity could be

considered but a revival of Turkish cultural traditions that not only predated but also outlasted the presence of Islam in Ottoman lands.

To illustrate this modernist, secular approach to nation-building let us turn to one last cartoon that again deals with the alphabet reform. The cartoon was published on November 30, 1928, in the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* (fig. 9.5 and plate 21).<sup>46</sup> It portrays an automobile built of Latin letters speedily driving by a camel, formed by Arabic letters. The automobile touts a small Turkish flag on its hood. It also happens to be the only item on the front page of the newspaper that is picked out in red, other than the title of the newspaper, “*Cumhuriyet*,” which is located right above the cartoon. This clever use of color almost renders the red newspaper title a label for the red automobile, effectively naming the car “Republic.” The automobile, as the faster and more efficient mode of transportation, embodies advancement and modernity—as does the Latin alphabet (from which it is composed). On the other hand, the slow and stubborn camel serves as a metaphor for the Arabic alphabet, and thus sluggishness.<sup>47</sup> This interpretation is confirmed by the text above the cartoon, which claims that “making the transition from Arabic letters to Turkish letters is like getting off a camel and getting into an automobile.”

The actions and direction of the automobile, especially in relation to the camel, signify and heighten the perceived cultural break between the Islamic Arab lands east and southeast of Anatolia and those of the more technologically advanced European countries to the west. While both “vehicles” are moving uphill toward the sun, one will most certainly reach it, and hence enlightenment, before the other. Indeed, the rays of the sun are already touching the front end of the car. Likewise, the exhaust from the automobile is almost in physical contact with the camel. Thus, the people of the new Turkish Republic are aboard the automobile and moving quickly toward modernity, whereas users of the Arabic script remain left behind in a cloud of dust.

This cartoon illustrates one of the more practical arguments put forth in favor of a new alphabet: that the Arabic alphabet was too time-consuming and hard to learn. This cartoon therefore may be pointing to the relative time it takes to learn the two scripts. However, on a more ideological level the cartoon is commenting on Islamic and perhaps even Arab culture. The Arabic script leaves whole societies—represented here by a traditional mode of transportation—behind. The cartoon, by depicting the new script as a sleek automobile, places the new alphabet within the realm of the modern and the progressive, moving westward toward the sun.



FIGURE 9.5. Ramiz Gökçe (1900–1953), The Turkish Alphabet leaves the Arabic Alphabet in the dust, *Cumhuriyet*, November 30, 1928, Atatürk Kitaplığı, İstanbul.

The leap from Arabic to Latin script was even more significant than it may appear at first glance. It truly constituted a symbolic break with Islamic culture, as the Arabic language is considered to be the language of God, and therefore the written words in the Qur’an are seen as God’s inerrant Logos. The Arabic script since the first centuries of Islam enjoyed an exalted status as the script transmitting the “word of God.” Indeed, in the Ottoman Empire, for most people, the very act of learning to read and write began with the Qur’an in *medreses*; thus, the Qur’an and literacy went hand in hand. The adoption of the new “Turkish Alphabet” broke this link, effectively secularizing the act of learning to read and distancing literacy proper from holy scripture. Alphabet reform also served to create an even more visually secularized society, as newspapers, signs, monumental inscriptions, and other forms of public writing would no longer “look” Islamic or Arabic to Westerners who often lumped the two identities together. The public spaces of the new Republic of Turkey, with



the adoption of its new alphabet, appeared more secular and modern to visitors from Europe; Turkey separated itself from the rest of the Muslim Middle East while simultaneously drawing itself closer to the “West.”<sup>48</sup>

## One Message, Multiple Messengers

The political cartoons of the early Republican period present to their readers a wealth of information through a number of expressive vehicles, the most obvious of which is the satirical journal itself. Any given visual message—be it a photograph in a newspaper or an advertisement—communicates through many elements, ranging from the name of the publication in which it appears to the very medium used to spread it.<sup>49</sup> Each artistic and compositional decision made for the communication of a visual message is calculated and rarely accidental.<sup>50</sup> Such is the case with the cartoons discussed in this essay.

The cartoons examined here all present various aspects of the constructed national identity of the Turkish Republic. Their messages revolve around newly articulated ideas of modernity, secular life, and “Turkish” nationalism embodied by the Westward-looking republic. These messages begin to be communicated through the medium of the printed satirical journal, which itself is a transmitter of a message of modernity and technological advancement, especially in a society that was initially so slow to adopt the printing press.<sup>51</sup> The prominent placement of these cartoons within their respective journals only serves to amplify their messages, as they all serve as front-page illustrations. Thus, they take on the secondary function of advertisement for that particular issue and for the journal in general. Those who agreed with or admired the cartoon would ideally buy that issue, and hopefully become regular consumers of the product from that point onward.

In addition to the printed medium and the placement of these cartoons within the journals, their messages were communicated visually from within the confines of their frames, further strengthened by text. It quickly becomes apparent that both visual and textual vehicles transmit the message of modernization and secularization. Most frequently, cartoonists used the realistic depiction of Mustafa Kemal to convey their messages. Following the victory in the Independence Struggle, Mustafa Kemal garnered a great amount of admiration, gratitude, and respect from the public at large, which translated into political capital and an almost indisputable mandate for change. His face and persona were thus deployed in the task of leading the people in the direction of his desire. As a result,

Mustafa Kemal is employed as the main communicator of positive change in these cartoons, and his idealized physical likeness symbolizes determination, leadership, agility, modernity, and victory. Additionally, depictions of Mustafa Kemal in these cartoons become representative of the nation as well, as he is shown leading by example, and the nation is expected to follow his lead.

For every reforming change, there must be a policy in need of change or oppression in need of suppression—in other words, a conflict in need of resolution. There must be an antagonist to Mustafa Kemal: a new enemy to replace the old foes of the battlefields. In each of these cartoons the conflict and solution co-exist within a single, nonlinear narrative. The internal opposition to Mustafa Kemal was to be the object of his secularizing and modernizing reforms: Islam. An important tool for the creator of a visual message is the culturally recognizable icon. The cartoon, advertisement, or poster needs to take advantage of shorthand references and symbols in order to conserve space: saying the most with a limited amount of room.

Barthes points out the importance of utilizing such a visual language in advertisements, whose main goal is to communicate a message accurately and clearly.<sup>52</sup> This is the case with Republican-period cartoons, too. Just as Mustafa Kemal is being used to symbolize a number of ideas and ideals, so are images (such as the mullah, camel, Arabic script, and domed buildings) used to allude to Islam. Most significant, though, is the reversal of many of these images, from previously revered symbols of Islam to caricatured icons of backwardness. These Islamic icons, adopted by the cartoonists of this period, are repeatedly reconfigured to signify the antimodern by their systematic juxtaposition to Mustafa Kemal and his machines of progress.

## Subverting Islam: Pushing it Out from Where and Why?

Overt censorship and journalistic editing can never be completely eliminated from the process of satirical cartoon production and the messages such cartoons are meant to convey, especially in the cases of publications from the 1920s and 1930s, when many governments were closely involved in overseeing and censoring the press.<sup>53</sup> While it is almost impossible to gauge the extent of editing and censorship that occurred in the cartoons of the reform period, it is clear that there are indeed certain boundaries that the cartoonists were reluctant to cross.

Secularism as a modern, national drive is a recurring theme in these cartoons. While they advocate for the “pushing out” of Islam through their

narrative lines and imagery, however, the cartoons also do not advocate for a non-Islamic society. The brand of secularism advocated by the new Republican government is indeed reflected in the cartoons, as they do not comment on private practices of faith such as prayer or fasting. A prime example of this distinction can be seen in the cartoon from the journal *Karagöz* (fig. 9.2), in which a book marked “old laws” is being discarded. While the old laws referred to are clearly *shari’a* laws derived from the Qur’an itself, it would have been inconceivable for the artist to depict a Qur’an being discarded.

Similarly, the *Kelebek* cartoon depicting the destruction of buildings by a steamroller refrains from showing average citizens running from the buildings; instead, men who are clearly identifiable as mullahs are used as representations of institutional and public Islam—the type of Islam that requires a leader (e.g., a caliph or religious school teacher). The buildings themselves are not explicitly identifiable as mosques, but rather resemble buildings of religious instruction such as *medreses*, as they lack prominent minarets.<sup>54</sup> These two examples constitute the expressive boundaries that were so critical to maintain at this time. Although the secularization reforms were revolutionary, the cartoonists, like the legislators, were careful not to interfere in the personal spheres of the Muslim faith.

The two reforms discussed in this essay—the abolition of the caliphate and the alphabet reform—possess strong symbolic components that speak to the new constructs of Turkish national identity that leaders of the Republic were keen to verbalize. This raises the following questions: whom do these reforms (and the cartoons that illustrate them) target and what do such visually elaborated reforms aim to accomplish? The answer to these questions can be explained in part through both Hroch and Davutoğlu’s approaches to national movements and secularism. Hroch has observed that the process of nation-building largely consists of identity politics based on a community’s shared history, language, and culture. The Kemalist reforms of the 1920s, including the abolition of the caliphate and the adoption of the “New Turkish Alphabet,” were part of a nation-building program intended to create a national identity that was modern, Turkish, and secular.

Davutoğlu, on the other hand, has noted that present-day approaches to secularism have sought to reincorporate religious identity into the discussion in a renewed attempt at cultural self-assertion within the global community.<sup>55</sup> This self-assertive attitude, adopted in tandem with the project of constructing a new “Turkish” identity in the 1920s, worked in the opposite direction, as it aimed to assert itself as non-Islamic and hence declare itself modern to the rest of the world.

Turkish Republican leaders' desire to prove Turkey a modern nation divorced from its Islamic and Ottoman past is reflected in Turkish newspaper articles that celebrate foreign approval of the Republican reforms. This was usually done by republishing European and American articles that bear titles such as "The Marvel of the Near East: Country Civilized in Four Years."<sup>56</sup> Similarly, Mustafa Kemal himself betrayed his own preoccupation with appeasing the West by conforming to modernity with these words: "There is no way to be successful with turbans and robes, now we have proven to the world that we are a civilized nation," a statement that adorned the front page of an issue of *Cumhuriyet* in 1928.<sup>57</sup>

These reforms—symbolic as they seem—are therefore aimed at transforming the new Turkish society from within, while also transforming the international image of Turkey from Ottoman, Islamic, and backward to Turkish, secular, and modern. Mustafa Kemal and the leaders of the new Republic sought to cut off cultural ties to the previous political entity that occupied the same core territories as the new one. The brand of secularism envisioned by the reformers and cartoonists alike was one that subverted Islam, pushing it out of public visibility and relegating it to the private sphere of life, where it would effectively remain out of public and international view. The excitement and anxieties that accompanied such reconfigurations of identity on the national scale were then poured into visual imagery. Through cartoons, the many reforms passed by the new Republican government gained a second level of visibility that was achieved by rationalizing, promoting, and illustrating what were already very visible social changes.

## NOTES

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1. The cartoon was published in the upper left corner of the front page, immediately below the title head of the journal. The cartoon occupies about one-sixth

of the front page, not including the rather large title head that is typical of these kinds of satirical journals.

2. For a discussion of theories of the concept of Atatürk as “progenitor,” see Özyürek, “Miniaturizing Atatürk,” 382–83.

3. *Akbaba* was published twice weekly (on Mondays and Thursdays) in Istanbul from December 7, 1922, to January 1977. It consisted of a single broadsheet-style folio, folded in half to create a four-page format. A single issue of *Akbaba* featured between seven and twelve cartoons or illustrations. Usually, the back page contained two to three republished cartoons from a European or American publication.

4. *Kelebek* was published once a week (Thursdays) in Istanbul from April 12, 1923, to September 5, 1924. A single issue consisted of eight folios (sixteen pages) and featured anywhere between fourteen and twenty cartoons or illustrations. Like *Akbaba*, most issues included several foreign cartoons republished on the back page.

5. *Karagöz* was published twice a week (Wednesdays and Saturdays) in Istanbul from August 10, 1908, to January 26, 1935. This publication consisted of a single broadsheet-style folio, folded in half to create a four-page format. Between two and five cartoons appeared per issue. Although often elaborate and detailed, the cartoons in *Karagöz* were generally not as aesthetically pleasing or artistically executed as those of *Akbaba* and *Kelebek*.

6. *Cumhuriyet* is a daily newspaper that is still published today. It began publication in Istanbul on May 9, 1924, as a six-page newspaper. Around the end of 1925 the newspaper occasionally increased to eight pages during the weekends. In the summer of 1928 the newspaper became eight pages long every day, until the alphabet reform at the end of 1928, at which time the number of pages dropped back to six. As a newspaper, it is heavy on photographic content but contains fewer cartoons than the satirical journals.

7. The most visible and violent opposition to the abolition of the caliphate was the Sheikh Said Rebellion of 1925, which took place in the eastern parts of Anatolia, especially in cities such as Diyarbakır and Bingöl. A discussion on the somewhat unclear and tentative role of the caliph during the very beginning of the new Turkish state's existence (before the caliphate was abolished) can be found in Zürcher, *Turkey*, 167–68. The Sheikh Said Rebellion is also covered on pages 169–72. The following publication, however, focuses on the abolition of the caliphate in particular: Satan, *Halifeliğin Kaldırılması*.

8. Between 1924 and 1928 other modernizing reforms also took place. These included the hat and clothing reform (November 25, 1925), the closing of the *tekkes* and *zaviyes* or dervish lodges (November 30, 1925), the adoption of the Gregorian calendar (enforced after January 1, 1926), the acceptance of the *Türk Medeni Kanunu* (the Turkish civil code on February 17, 1926), and the removal of a clause from the Constitution stating that the religion of the Turkish state is Islam (April 10, 1928). However, due to space constraints, this discussion will only focus on two such reforms. For more information on all of the early Republican period reforms, see Kili, *Türk Devrim Tarihi*.

9. Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908–1911*. 3–4. Between the years 1879 and 1907 the number of Turkish gazettes published in Istanbul was 103. In the single year following the Second Constitutional Revolution,

240 were published. Also, see Brummett's Appendix I (333–34), which lists 68 different satirical journals published during the years of the Second Constitutional period.

10. Kayalı, "Liberal Practices in the Transformation from Empire to Nation-State," 175–94.

11. See Zürcher, *Turkey*, 178–79; and Öngören, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Mizahı ve Hicvi, 1923–1983*, 89.

12. See Zürcher, *Turkey*, 179–80. The journal *Vatan* (Motherland), for instance, was one of the Istanbul periodicals to be closed. It was shut down just months after publishing a cartoon against government censorship and amid growing rumors of increased governmental crackdowns on the freedom of the press. Cartoons about censorship, however, were not at all uncommon. Journals such as *Akbaba* and *Karagöz*, which survived through the environment of increased censorship brought about by the *Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu*, continued to periodically publish anti-censorship cartoons, usually by depicting a personification of the press muted by means of a mouth-gag or padlock of some sort.

13. *Ibid.*, 184.

14. It is difficult to prove if this was at all happening (and, if so, to what extent) given the lack of extant primary sources, such as the memoirs or personal notes of writers and cartoonists publishing in these satirical journals. Research concerning this topic awaits in-depth scholarly attention.

15. See Goldstone, "Rethinking Revolutions," 18–32.

16. One very interesting cartoon, published on the back page of *Karagöz* on March 8, 1925, confronts the pivotal Law on the Maintenance of Order. It depicts a large hand holding an oversized sword over an urban landscape, with mountains and fields in the background, while *Karagöz* and *Hacivat* stand on a balcony in the lower right corner. The hand has the word "Republic" written on it, whereas the sword is labeled as "Law on the Maintenance of Order." Below the cartoon is a dialogue between *Hacivat* and *Karagöz*, in which *Hacivat* asks *Karagöz* whether the sword held above them would pose any threat to them. *Karagöz* responds by saying that the sword is not dangerous as it is there to protect them. He continues by explaining, quite ambiguously, that the sword will protect them because it is a "sword of justice that demolishes modernity, civilization, dignity, honor, protection, evil, mischief-making, and corruption."

17. For a study that deals more closely with *Karagöz* (in addition to other journals) and that explores the extent to which *Karagöz* was a vehicle in spreading Turkish nationalistic feelings within the context of the Balkan Wars, see Heinzlmann, *Osmanlı Karikatüründe Balkan Sorunu (1908–1914)*.

18. This journal was not, however, the first to make use of the *Karagöz* character in its cartoons. A much earlier journal, first published in 1873, was named *Hayal* ("Fantasy/Dream"), which was the most common generic name for Turkish shadow theater plays. This particular journal often featured in its cartoons *Karagöz* and *Hacivat* in their original, two-dimensional form: directly transcribing the images from shadow puppet format to cartoon. This is not the case with the *Karagöz* journal, in which the characters are rendered in a more realistic style relative to their shadow puppet counterparts.

19. The city of Sèvres is best known for its exquisite porcelain vases. Such vases appear both in Turkish and European cartoons as a symbol of the Treaty of Sèvres.

For instance, in the May 10, 1923, issue of *Akbaba* a cartoon originally published in the German newspaper *Jugend* ("Youth"), was republished (no. 45, p. 4). It depicts a cat wearing a fez tipping over a vase from its pedestal. The caption below reads: "The leap of the Angora cat toppled the Sèvres Vase." Another cartoon, published in *Karagöz* on February 18, 1922, (no. 1453, p. 4), illustrates Karagöz handing a vase to Mustafa Kemal or a group of national representatives. Karagöz's words are written in the caption: "Oh representatives, have a good trip. But I have just one request from you: two years ago a delegation that was leaving here brought me this vase from Europe. They call it 'Sèvres' or something . . . I was never able to use it and I cracked it. Bring me back a sturdy gift when you return." All of these cartoons draw on the idea that porcelain, like a treaty, is fragile. For more information on Sèvres porcelain, see Préaud et al., *The Sèvres Porcelain Manufactory*.

20. See B. Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 1st ed., 234–49.

21. An elaborate and rich mythology has developed around the characters of Karagöz and Hacivat and the origins of the shadow theater tradition. These stories are mostly maintained by *hayalis*, or professional performers of the shadow play, and are closely linked with the early periods of the Ottoman Empire. These tales persist despite more convincing evidence pointing to an importation of this performing art from Egypt in the sixteenth century. See And, *Yıktın Perdeyi Eyledin Viran*, 17; and Tietze, *The Turkish Shadow Theater and the Puppet Collection of the L. A. Mayer Memorial Foundation*, 16–17. In particular, the popular myth of Karagöz places him in the service of Orhan Bey, the second Ottoman sultan, during a time when the state still maintained a more Turkish, and less overtly Islamic, identity. Karagöz, as the shadow theater character best known for his sharp tongue and social commentary, thus gave his name to this political satirical journal. He serves as a mascot since he frequently appears in cartoons as either an active participant or witty commentator.

22. See Hroch, "The Social Interpretation of Linguistic Demand in European National Movements," 67–68; and Hroch, "Real and Constructed: the Nature of the Nation," 93–95.

23. See Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

24. Hroch and Malečková, "Historical Heritage," 33–34. See Davutoğlu, "Philosophical and Institutional Dimensions of Secularisation," 197.

25. Hroch and Malečková, 15, 25.

26. Pre-Islamic Turks were believed to have had held "modern" values, including women's equal status in society and democracy brought upon by their nomadic lifestyle. *Ibid.*, 30, 35. See also Durakbaşa, "Kemalism as Identity Politics in Turkey," 139.

27. See Hroch, "The Social Interpretation of Linguistic Demand in European National Movements," 67–95.

28. *Ibid.*, 77–78. Also see Karpát, "A Language in Search of a Nation," 453–55; and Köroğlu, *Propaganda and Turkish Identity*, 25.

29. Süleyman Paşa (1838–78), author of *Sarf-ı Türki* (Turkish Grammar), asserted that although the language spoken in the Ottoman court was composed of three languages (Turkish, Persian, and Arabic) it must not be called "Ottoman" but rather "Turkish," as Ottoman refers to the state and not the nation or language. See Göçek, "Decline of the Ottoman Empire and the Emergence of Greek, Armenian, Turkish, and Arab Nationalisms," 37; and Karpát, *The Politicization of Islam*, 337–38.

30. Koroğlu, *Propaganda and Turkish Identity*, 40–43. For early references to alphabet reform in particular, see Çeviker, *Gelişim Sürecinde Türk Karikatürü-III*, 143; and Koloğlu, *Kim Bu Mustafa Kemal?* 145. Celal Nuri (1877–1939), who was the head writer for the daily newspaper *Ileri* (“Forward,” published between 1919 and 1927), often wrote of the need to change the alphabet. Also, Hüseyin Cahid (a writer called for the Ottomans to abandon the Arabic script as early as the 1910s.

31. *Ibid.*, 40. Also see Gökalp, *Türkleşmek, İslamlaşmak, ve Muasırlaşmak*, 12–14. This work is a compilation of nine articles written by Gökalp and published in the journal *Türk Yurdu* between the years of 1913 and 1914.

32. More information on this language reform can be found in Aytürk, “Turkish Linguists against the West” 1–25; Aytürk, “The First Episode of Language Reform in Republican Turkey,” 275–93; and Ertürk, “Phonocentrism and Literary Modernity in Turkey,” 155–85.

33. See Heinzelmann, “The Hedgehog as Historian,” 206–207, for a 1910 account illustrating the differences between the two writing traditions and these two very different writing implements as experienced by a European-educated Ottoman. Heinzelmann summarizes the message of the story as “even the worst scrawl produced with a steel nib is a match for the traditional style of Ottoman official handwriting.”

34. The interpretation of the crescent and star at the top of the pen-banner can be expanded to include a number of visual references. This motif itself resembles the Arabic letter *nun*. This letter is featured at the beginning of the sixty-eighth chapter of the Qur’an, called “The Pen” (*Surat al-Qalam*). The initial verse of this chapter reads: “Nun. I call to witness the pen and what they inscribe.” See Ali (trans), *Al-Qur’an*, 497. According to Devellioğlu’s *Osmanlıca-Türkçe Ansiklopedik Lûgat*, 845, a relevant meaning for the letter *nun* draws upon a common interpretation of this Qur’anic reference, giving it the meaning “ink well.” Thus, the letter *nun* that symbolizes the inkpot that becomes an accomplice to the pen in recording all of life until the day of Resurrection. The *Osmanlıca-Türkçe Ansiklopedik Lûgat* also lists another relevant meaning in its entry for *nun*, which is “sword.” If one chooses to see the crescent and star motif as doubling as the Arabic letter *nun*, then within the context of the cartoon it holds great potential for the reading of a number of additional layers of meaning. The cartoonist, by depicting Mustafa Kemal as the wielder of the pen (and ink pot), may be positioning him as the proverbial creator of the new republic. Similarly, as wielder of the “sword,” he can also be seen as the protector of the republic. That said, in a relatively more literal way the placement of the crescent and star on the pen could also be meant to create a resemblance to the rifles that often bore these motifs.

35. This cartoon may also be visually quoting a newly erected statue of Mustafa Kemal in Sarayburnu (1926). See Gezer, *Cumhuriyet Dönemi Türk Heykeli*, 319, 347.

36. Although the importation of these very modernizing innovations and social reforms would seem at first to constitute its own form of “foreign influence,” it was not considered as such. This is the case because the decision to modernize and reform society was made from within; that is, it was considered a voluntary endeavor taken up by the leaders of a now free people who are (at least in theory) ruling themselves—a people who, in the aftermath of the First World War, came very close to losing this right. See Poulton, *Top Hat, Grey Wolf, and Crescent*, 90.



37. Mustafa Kemal himself was often metaphorically likened to the sun in cartoons. Özyürek mentions in “Miniaturizing Atatürk,” 381, that such an equation had started as early as the 1930s. Indeed, it seems to have begun even earlier, in the 1920s, within cartoons. Furthermore, this equating of both the new alphabet and Mustafa Kemal with a bright, rising sun may indeed be imagery that later inspired the naming of the Turkish-centric language theory championed by Mustafa Kemal himself in the 1930s, called “the Sun-Language Theory.” For information on the Sun-Language Theory see Aytürk, “H. F. Kvergić and the Sun-Language Theory,” 23–44; and Ertürk, “Phonocentrism and Literary Modernity in Turkey,” 177–81.

38. There were a handful of practical (as opposed to ideological) arguments made at this time against the Arabic alphabet, ranging from the time it took to learn the alphabet to its inadequacy in representing the needs of the Turkish language (which has fewer consonants and more vowels than Arabic). One cartoon (*Akşam*, 1928, by Cemal Nadir, dedicated to “the children of the republic who have learned to read so well in two months”) illustrates the difficulties of reading this script, which has no representation for short vowels. A child with a book in his hand is depicted frame after frame, asking various people how a certain word may be read; each person gives him a different answer (some of the suggestions are *malaska*, *mülaska*, *müllasika*, and *melasakka*). Finally, he approaches a mullah and asks if the word is read as *melasakka*. The toothless mullah yells back at him: “how can you not recognize the name Mullah Saka! For that, you shall receive a beating!” Also see n.48 for a description of another cartoon that “illustrates” the relative difficulty of learning the Arabic script.

39. The mound motif also resembles Roman triumphal mounds of spolia, as seen on such monuments as the Arch of Titus in Rome. Perhaps, then, it is no coincidence that the cartoon’s frame takes on an arched shape in its upper half, making it appear that Mustafa Kemal is standing beneath a possible “triumphal” arch. However, while the use of the word “spolia” within the Roman context suggests that the mounds were made of valuable objects worthy of transport and subsequent display, the “spolia” of this cartoon should be read in a more nuanced fashion. It seems more plausible that the Arabic letters are considered more of a “worthy opponent” that is difficult to overcome because of its long and rooted history. Such an opponent therefore can only be defeated by the strength and will of the Turkish people.

40. See n.34.

41. *Sülüs* (thuluth) and *nastalik* (nasta’liq) were the most common calligraphic scripts used for monumental inscriptions. Both are quite stylized and more difficult to read than scripts such as *nesih* (naskh), which were favored in newspapers, journals, and other printed materials due to their relative clarity.

42. See Akman, “From Cultural Schizophrenia to Modernist Binarism,” 85.

43. Davutoğlu, “Philosophical and Institutional Dimensions of Secularisation,” 173.

44. *Ibid.*, 199.

45. See n.27.

46. The cartoon was published in the middle of the upper half of the front page, immediately below the title head of the newspaper. It occupies about one eighth of the front page.

47. The widespread view of camels as stubborn animals, prevalent in Turkey, is best expressed by the popular comparison “more difficult than getting a camel to jump a moat,” in regard to measuring a task’s relative difficulty. In fact, another cartoon was published in *Cumhuriyet* in 1928 (by Mahmud Arif) depicting a man attempting in vain to get a camel to jump a moat. Its caption reads: “Learning the Arabic alphabet is more difficult than getting a camel to jump a moat, whereas the new alphabet can be learned in just three to five lessons.” Likewise, the contrast between camel and modern machinery was used as a rhetorical tool to compare the Latin and Arabic alphabets as early as 1922 in the Azeri publication, *Gelecek* (“Future”). See I. Baldauf, *Schriftreform und Schriftwechsel bei den Muslimischen Russland- und Sowjettürken*, 625.

48. A frequently cited Mustafa Kemal quote about alphabet reform underlines this emphasis. In speaking for the Turkish nation, he stated that it wanted to “show with its script and mentality that it is on the side of world civilization”; see Karpas, “A Language in Search of a Nation,” 457.

49. See Barthes, “The Photographic Message,” 16–19.

50. *Ibid.*, 31.

51. The first Ottoman Turkish printing press was established in 1727 by İbrahim Müteferrika in Istanbul, almost three centuries after the initial development of the technology in Europe. The most comprehensive analysis of the various theories concerning the reasons for the late adoption of printing technology by the Ottoman Turks can be found in Sabev, *İbrahim Müteferrika ya da İlk Osmanlı Matbaa Serüveni*, 56–65. Also see my study, Gencer, “İbrahim Müteferrika and the Age of the Printed Manuscript,” 181.

52. See Barthes, *Image, Music, Text*, 35–40. Barthes also warns of the “repressive value” of too much text. Thus, too much text has the potential to exclude and/or deter a portion of the audience (28–30).

53. See Morley, *Writing on the Wall*, 93.

54. Large *medreses* usually existed as dependencies to mosques and mosque complexes in major cities; however, *medreses* could also exist as separate buildings. For some examples of both independent and mosque-dependant *medreses* see Ettinghausen, Grabar, and Jenkins-Madina, *Islamic Art and Architecture*, 215, 225–27, 234–41; Blair and Bloom, *The Art and Architecture of Islam*, 45, 70–73, 196–97, 215–18, 222; also see Pereira, *Islamic Sacred Architecture*, 195–96.

55. Davutoğlu, “Philosophical and Institutional Dimensions of Secularisation,” 207–208.

56. Republished in *Cumhuriyet*, July 5, 1928 (no. 1492, p. 1). The article was republished in its original form and within its own small frame. Turkish commentary on the article itself surrounds the inserted column. Later, on July 27, 1928 (no. 1514, p. 1), *Cumhuriyet* featured a lengthy article noting that a “foreign journalist” had called Mustafa Kemal a “source of light for the East.”

57. *Cumhuriyet*, September 17, 1928 (no. 1566, p. 1).