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INSTRUMENTALIZING FANTASY[74]

THE PROCESS OF SURNAME LEGISLATION
IN THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
1934-1937

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As the watershed point of a national history told and retold, held sacred and yet contested, the Atatürk years present a fruitful point for scholars of modern Turkey and for ongoing popular debates about Turkish identity. In response to decades of scholarship that focused on official, political economy approaches, the last two decades have witnessed research that attempts to balance this asymmetry in historical voices with new methodologies and sources.[75] In terms of periodization, there has been a shift away

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74 This term is borrowed from Jack Zipes, "The Instrumentalization of Fantasy: Fairy Tales, The Culture Industry and Mass Media," in Jack Zipes, *Breaking the Magic Spell: Radical Theories of Folk and Fairy Tales*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002)

75 Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, eds. *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997).

from rupture to continuity,[76] an emphasis on cultural history[77] and the politics of historical memory,[78] and increasing studies informed by comparative perspectives. While it is important to understand "what happened," many scholars of modern Turkish history, coming together across disciplines, are also concerned with the methods by which we access, and interpret, events. The increasing importance of approaches that emphasize historical memory,[79] ethnography, and the politics of culture have brought discussions of methodology to the forefront of academic discussions. In the present essay I contribute to this process through a discussion of how Turks participated in – and to this day remember – the implementation of the Surname Law (*Soyadı Kanunu*)[80] in June, 1934.

The last of the Atatürk reforms, this law enforced the adoption and registration of fixed, inheritable Turkish-language family names. By stipulating that each Turkish citizen adopt a surname, the law complemented the homogenization and Turkification

76 Selim Deringil, "The Ottoman Origins of Kemalist Nationalism: Namık Kemal to Mustafa Kemal," *European History Quarterly* 23 (1993), 165-91. Michael Meeker, *A Nation of Empire: The Ottoman Legacy of Turkish Modernity* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002).

77 Arzu Öztürkmen, *Turkiye'de Folklor ve Milliyetçilik* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2006).

78 Leyla Neyzi, "Remembering to Forget: Sabbateanism, National Identity, and Subjectivity in Turkey," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44:1 (1999), 137-58. Ayşe Durakbaşa, and Aynur İlyasoğlu, "Formation of Gender Identities in Republican Turkey and Women's Narratives as Transmitters of 'Herstory' of Modernization," *Journal of Social History*, 35:1 (2001), 195-203. Esra Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern: State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

79 Esra Özyürek, ed. *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2006); and, a special issue on memory in *New Perspectives in Turkey* 34 (Spring 2006)

80 Republic of Turkey, Law No. 2525. *Soy Adı Kanunu*. (Surname Law) June 21, 1934. This law made the registration of fixed hereditary Turkish language surnames mandatory and gave citizens a two-year deadline.

goals of accompanying reforms and other legal measures introduced between 1923 and 1938. Most importantly, the law set limits on the language of surnames: While Article Two of the law specified the order in which the proper name and family name would appear in utterance or print, Article Three forbade "surnames related to military rank and civil officialdom, to tribes and foreign races and ethnicities, as well as surnames which are not suited to general customs or which are disgusting or ridiculous." The names of tribes and "foreign nationalities," according to a report by the Ministry of the Interior, were not "deemed permissible" because they would "offend the ideal of national unity."[81] A regulation text (*Soy Adı Nizamnamesi*)[82] elaborated on the law and the procedures by which officials should go about enforcing the law.

In November, 1934, the Turkish Grand National Assembly (GNA) passed two other name-related laws. The first of these, the law on the abolition of such appellations and titles as *efendi, bey,* and *paşa,* banned all religious, military, tribal and other honorific titles that had been in use under Ottoman rule.[83] Later that month came the most significant naming act of all: The GNA bestowed upon its president, Mustafa Kemal, the surname, Atatürk, or chief of Turks.[84] A Prime Ministry statement from 1929 indicates that a committee including a 'foreign expert' had been working on a family name law but we do not know why the government waited five years to approve and apply the law.[85]

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81 *Dahiliye Encümeni Mazbatası,* (December 11, 1933), 6.

82 December 24, 1934: No: 2/1759

83 Law No. 2590: "Efendi, bey, pasa, gibi lakab ve unvanların kaldırıldığına dair kanun." (Law on the abolition of such appellations and titles as efendi, bey, and paşa).

84 Law No. 2587: Kemal öz adlı Cumhur Reisimize verilen soy adı hakkında kanun. (Law on the Surname given to our President named Kemal).

85 Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Başvekâlet Kararname No. 7810. T.C. Başbakanlık Cumhuriyet Arşivi, 2.18.38.

In the following pages I draw on selected sources from my research on Turkey's Surname Law to illustrate the varied processes by which the Surname Law's stipulations played out or were "read" by different state and non-state actors. The sources for this research were collected between the years 1998-2000 and included oral historical interviews with 60 elderly men and women from a variety of backgrounds, the text of the Surname Law and its regulations, parliamentary debates on the Surname Law, records of surname registration from 1934 obtained in Istanbul, records of recent name change petitions, booklets on names and language published in the 1930s, and images and writings from popular print media.

The adoption of surnames in Turkey raises a number of important questions about the manner in which nation-states manage diversity and the complex boundaries, or spaces, between states and populations. James C. Scott describes surnames as "a system of knowledge spun in the webs of power," and focuses on the concept of the modern state's need for legibility.[86] The Surname Law was part of the Turkish state's move to diminish and neutralize markers of ethnic or tribal divisions and to create a unified national community, coherent in its legibility.

Surname registration and legislation are by no means limited to Turkey, and have been part of the projects of imperial, national and colonial regimes.[87] While the need to register populations seems to come with centralization and modernization,[88] the need

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86 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). James C. Scott, John Tehranian and Jeremy Mathias, "The Production of Legal Identities Proper to States: The Case of the Permanent Family Surname," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44:1 (2002), 4-44.

87 Ibid. Sylvie Nautré, *Le nom en droit comparé* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 1977).

88 Gerard Noiriel, "L'identification des citoyens. Naissance de l'état civil republicain," *Genèses* 13 (Septembre 1993), 3-28. Ole Degn, "The Fixation of the Danish Patronymics in the 19th Century and the Law," *Onoma* 34 (1999), 59-76. Eugene M. Avrutin, "The Politics of Jewish Legibility: Documentation

to control the language of names clearly occurs in a national moment.[89] The national "moment" in the Turkish Republic of 1934 was a time when the state, taking the *Tanzimat* reforms a step further, had taken firm control over the dissemination of culture and language. Oral historical narratives about surname adoption, as well as documents from population offices reveal the smaller human spaces where local, individual trajectories encountered, or resisted, state practices. The stories of surnames highlight the fluid boundaries between state actors and the various groups that the nationalist project sought to incorporate, assimilate, and transform. Consequently these stories offer a unique window on the reach of the state into micro-social worlds and processes variously termed as "individual possibilities of action,"[90] "mattering maps,"[91] or "lifeworlds."[92] Surname narratives revealed local, customary and private practices related to surnames and naming. They also articulated the family's perception of their social and political positioning on a historically contingent local and national "mattering map."

Practices and Reform During the Reign of Nicholas I," *Jewish Social Studies* 11:2 (2005), 136-69.

89 Teresa Scassa, "National Identity, Ethnic Surnames and the State," *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 11:2 (1996), 167-91.

90 Edmund Burke, ed. *Struggle and Survival in the Middle East* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993).

91 Migdal adopts this term from Rebecca Goldstein's novel, *The Mind-Body Problem* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 22: "The map in fact is a projection of its inhabitants' perceptions. A person's location on it is determined by what matters to him, matters overwhelmingly, the kind of mattering that produces his perceptions of people, of himself and others: of who are the nobodies and who the somebodies, who the deprived and who the gifted, who the better-never-to-have-been–born and who the heroes." Joel Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

92 Şerif Mardin, "Projects as Methodology: Some Thoughts on Modern Turkish Social Science" in Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, eds. *Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997), 64-80.

The results of my research have shown that popular reception of the Turkish Surname Law was multi-faceted and uneven, and that different state actors brought their own interpretations to the law. Oral historical and documentary data on the application of the surname law have shown that the process of applying the law was hardly standard, particularly with regard to making sure restricted names were not used, and also in terms of the interpretation of "Turkishness."[93] The adoption, registration, and creation of surnames were mediated through a range of relationships, between officials and citizens, as well as among families and between individuals. Elicited surname narratives, mostly childhood memories, are replete with descriptions of interaction between population officials and individuals, among family members, among officials and governors and teachers. A range of factors such as education, social status, migrant status, ethnic affiliation and distance from officialdom determined whether a surname was actively chosen, changed, bestowed, translated (into Turkish) or—in one case—even bought for a coin.

Interview material and surname petition documents from 1934 in Istanbul population registries show that negotiations about names among families, between citizens and population officials and among population officials were very common.[94] On the other hand negotiation could be completely absent in cases where numerous groups of people, peasants and new immigrants among them, and especially orphans, received names that the population official saw fit. The officials were given this power

93 For a discussion on the Turkish state's interpretation of citizenship, see Mesut Yeğen, "'Prospective-Turks' or 'Pseudo-Citizens:' Kurds in Turkey," *Middle East Journal* 63:4 (2009), 597-615.

94 Meltem Türköz, "The Social Life of the State's Fantasy: Memories and Documents on Turkey's Surname Law of 1934." (Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation: University of Pennsylvania 2004). Meltem Türköz, "Surname Narratives and the State-Society Boundary: Memories of Turkey's Family Name Law of 1934," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43:6 (2007), 893-908.

by the law. In the following pages, I present a selection from the sources illustrating these mediations.

Context and the Process of Accessing Interview Subjects

My interviewees, who were children in the 1930s, had by 1998 and 1999 become identified as relics of the 75-year-old Republic. I conducted research in a national atmosphere in which optimizing the oral transmission of the Atatürk past had become popularized by celebrations to mark the Republic's 75th anniversary. As other scholars have pointed out,[95] publications by the media and state educational institutions had singled out the elderly as being living relics of the national past, encouraging students and other curious citizens to seek out the elderly to interview them about their memories of the Atatürk years.[96] I was yet another "student" of the Republic, mining individual memories for an understanding of the past.

The narration my respondents engaged in was similar to Portelli's term, "history-telling."[97] It combined direct recollection, family story, personal information, occasional self-reflective commentary,

95 Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern.*

96 The conversations about the surname law started out in village cafes in a small Aegean town, where I asked older men the source of their family names and listened to stories of migration, yearnings for homelands and memories of homelands, left behind and the bureaucratic moment of registration. Further on, I interviewed in private homes and in nursing homes in Istanbul. I gained access to elderly men and women in both home and institutional settings through the snowball method, utilizing a range of networks, which included friends, professional contacts, acquaintances and family. Unlike visits to private residences, which provided me access to one individual for an extended time, nursing home visits were often mediated by a social worker, and were likely to yield group interview settings. These three locations provided me the chance to speak with members of the Armenian minority, the civil servant class, and to people who had been merchants.

97 Alessandro Portelli, *The Battle of Valle Giulia: Oral History and the Art of Dialogue* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1997).

and official information. Like "history-telling," these "tellings" were also marked by a series of narratives, with a lot of segues and frequent movement from the past to the present. They were also more multi-authored and multi-vocal than a traditional narrative.

Surname registration narrations were not generally part of the respondents' repertoire of stories. Name stories were elicited, yet they were stories in which the narrators made choices about delivery, given their perception of who they were, who they thought I was, and what the situation warranted. Compared to other events the elderly men and women remembered, the taking of the surname was a minor event from their childhood. The narration of surname registration or adoption was structured by what Portelli calls watershed moments, or what I would describe as *lieux de memoire*[98] such as marriage, the onset or end of professional life, birth or death of children. These *lieux de memoire* are akin to structural content, and it is by keeping them in sight that narrators can foray into memory that is not habitually narrated.

Surnames in Official and Popular Publications

The seeds for a specific law managing surnames were planted a decade before, in the writings of Ziya Gökalp,[99] among a series of articles in dialogue form with a *"Meçhul Filozof,"* or "Unknown Philosopher." In this article the *filozof* informs the inquiring "author" that family names that are fixed, hereditary, and will strengthen families just as they did in the West, while also corresponding to the Turkic past. Like all things in Turkish cultural nation-building, this too was envisioned as being both modern and authentic, rooted in the customs of an ancient Turkic past.

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98 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989), 7-25.

99 Ziya Gökalp, *Çınaraltı Konuşmaları* (Ankara: Yargıçoğlu Matbaası, 1966). These articles were originally published in *Cumhuriyet*, May 27, 1924.

According to officially sanctioned publications, the most important characteristic of the new surname, or *soy adı*, was that it would help resolve the problem of homonymy in names, and reinforce the long-lost identity of the Turks, by being passed down to successive generations. This was articulated by the following writers, one in a children's magazine and the other in a surname booklet. *Çocuk Sesi*, published by the Education Ministry, announced that the law on titles had abolished all "distinction" in the new nation, and declared that every household needed to find a surname. The writer suggested that children sit with their father to find a surname: "This name will pass down from your father to you, from you to your son, and from them to your grandchildren, and your lineage will keep reproducing, your offspring will be clear in future eras, and will spread like the roots of a tree."[100] The memory of lineage here is being transferred from individual to state memory but it is a memory in the future tense. In a similar vein, the writer of a surname booklet emphasizes the genealogical practice the law would reinforce and presents the law as being a response to already existing popular demand:

> Except for us, the whole civilized world has already been using surnames to distinguish their ancestry and lineage…Furthermore, even the Greek, Armenian and Jewish citizens living together and among us had surnames. Only the Turks did not have surnames. In the villages, towns and such places of our country the people have felt the need for the surname and have distinguished similar sounding names with the help of *lakabs* that are different from one another…But this spontaneous need was not tied down, or made permanent, and these nicknames remained nicknames/ *lakab* and in many cases were carried by a single person. The children of Mehmed son of Karakahya [for example] take different names according to their trades. A surname doesn't mean one person's nickname; it means the name of his whole lineage.[101]

100 *Çocuk Sesi* (June 1934), 3.

101 Kemalettin Şükrü Orbay, *Öz Türkçe Adlar ve Sözler: Yeni Soy Adları* (Istanbul: Hilmi Kitap Evi, 1935).

The surname would thus enforce lineage, kinship and continuity. It would standardize practices of labeling lineage by cementing a biological family together with a single name, to be registered in state archives. From the official perspective, it would also restore dignity and achieve the goal of a legible society without distinction.[102]

The Village, the City and the Boundaries of Bureaucracy

James C. Scott's observation on the difference between state naming practices and local naming practices is relevant to the data on Turkish surnames.

> State naming practices and local, customary naming practices are strikingly different. Each set of practices is designed to make the human and physical landscape *legible*, by sharply identifying a unique individual, a household, or a singular geographic feature. Yet they are each devised by very distinct agents for whom the purposes of identification are radically different. Purely local, customary practices, as we shall see, achieve a level of precision and clarity- often with impressive economy-perfectly suited to the needs of knowledgeable locals. State naming practices are, by contrast, constructed to guide an official 'stranger' in identifying unambiguously persons and places, not just in a single locality, but in many localities using standardized administrative techniques.[103]

Among the significant divisions in the data that became apparent early on in my research – and which also defined popular experiences of the Atatürk reforms – was the discrepancy between the rural and urban realms. This is apparent in the material I collected, in the conclusions of other studies on names in

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102 For further information on Turkish names see: M. Türker Acaroğlu, *Azınlıklar ve Yabancıların Aldığı Adlar ve Soyadlar Sözlüğü* (Istanbul: IQ Kültür-Sanat Yayıncılık, 2009); Yıldız Kasnak, *Adlar ve Soyadlar Sözlüğü* (Istanbul: Kastaş, 2010); *Türklerde İsimler, Ad Verme ve Soyadları Sözlüğü* (Istanbul: Türkmen, 1999).

103 Scott, et al, "The Production of Legal Identities Proper to States," 4.

Turkey as well as in studies about the rural and urban experience of surname adoption in Europe.[104] For the most part, the population office did not have great relevance for people who were tilling fields, or for those whose every-day-life did not bring them into contact with state institutions such as schools. Indeed, in many stories of non-urban experiences, awareness of the surname adoption begins with school registration. Most of the stories of surnames came with stories about military conscription, migration, marriage, and bank transactions.

The following interviews illustrate the irrelevance a new surname could have for peasants, and also point to the atmosphere of "finding equivalents" to names. In the small town of Gebze, near Istanbul, those who did not have use for the surname would forget it. This was related to me by Mr. Tüfekçioğlu, whose family, he explained to me, was one of the well-known families, and thus had hardly changed their name. Mr. Tüfekçioğlu's family used to be called Tüfekçizadeler. His grandfather was a gun craftsman and provided services to the late Ottoman army. To comply with the law, the family shed the Persian suffix "-zade" and replaced it with the Turkish "-oğlu," thus creating the name Tüfekçioğlu.

> When the surname law was passed, in general, everyone took their own *lakab*, or nickname. They switched them to whatever it might correspond. For example ours is Tüfekçioğulları. The [former] "-zade" [105][ending] corresponded to "-oğlu." So, many surnames were carried over. Then those who did not remember, or those who did not want to, the population offices gave them surnames. For example [let's say he] cannot think of [a surname], and a well-known name that comes from the past does not exist,

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104 Degn, "The Fixation of the Danish Patryonymics in the 19th Century and the Law."

105 Article 7 of the Soy Adı Nizamnamesi stipulated that "suffixes and words referring to other nationalities such as –yan, -of, -ef, -viç,-iç,-is,-dis,-pulos,-aki,-zade,-mahdumu,-veledi, and –bin may not be used. These must be replaced with 'oğlu'."

many of those people were named by population officials. I remember that.

In contrast to his own family, who did not have to memorize a whole new name, other people who were renamed with an unfamiliar name were not so lucky, he said. I commented to Mr. Tüfekçioğlu that he must not have had to make a big adjustment to his new name. He replied, "I had no trouble."

MT[106]: Were there any who had trouble?

NT[107]: Of course, they would give them a name they did not know.

Woman (listening to conversation): And they would forget it!

NT: He cannot memorize, I know it. Especially in the villages and such. They had some trouble, of course. They were not able to adapt.

MT: You mean the name would be given, and they would forget? Is that why they had trouble?

NT: They would forget. I remember several such cases. There were those who were forgotten, those who went to the population offices later to find out what their surname was. They had forgotten. It did not stay in their mind. We had a neighbor. They went and opened the registers and got [the name]. It happened. But this is not the effect of [the law?] When [the name] comes from one's own lineage, one does not forget...There were many who took names that had no relation to the past, but they later changed, with a court order."

An anecdote in a satirical magazine named *Akbaba* illustrates the divergent universes of the urban elite and the peasants. In this story, the author highlights possibilities for misunderstanding the similarities between *ad* (name) and *at* (horse). These words were used interchangeably in the 1930s as well; the *Tarama Dergisi*, defines both *ad* and *at* as "name." The anecdote starts out with an urbanized man, Yusuf, writing to his uncle in a village in Kayseri province:

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106 Meltem Türköz.

107 Mr. Tüfekçioğlu.

Dear Uncle,

There's a new law being passed. From now on there will be no one without a *soy ad* (surname). I have found a beautiful *at* (name) for you. We will use it from now on. I am taking care of the registration into the records. I kiss your hands.[108] Greetings. Your son, Yusuf.

The uncle, who interprets the note to be about an *at* (horse), is suspicious of his nephew's sudden generosity, but the rest of the family persuade him to ignore his doubts. The uncle and the members of the family begin to wonder what kind of *at* (horse) their nephew has purchased. Is it a pedigree Arabian horse that they can breed? It must be a race horse that has won competitions in Ankara, and so forth. Bearing presents from the hometown, the uncle sets out for the big city to pick up the *at* (horse). When he is greeted by his surprised nephew, the uncle says, "I have come for the *at* ...you know, the beautiful *at* you wrote of in the letter, " to which the nephew replies, "Is an *ad* (name) worth so much expense and trouble?" and fishes into his pocket for a piece of paper and produces the name he has found. "Is this the *'at'* you found?" asks the uncle. "Yeah. [the surname] Demirbaş-oğlu. This is our ancestry. I found it in history [books]." As the exasperated uncle turns around and walks away, the nephew asks, "Where are you going, uncle?" The uncle replies:

Where would I go but to the village!...Foolishly, I came here because I thought you had bought a pure breed horse. I should have known. If you had a horse, you would ride it and would not show me its tail. This is my punishment for having made you educated![109]

While the external forms of Kemalism took root in the cities and intensified categories of progress and backwardness, peasants were concerned with horses rather than names, which you

108 Kissing the top of the hand is a sign of respect for elders.

109 *Akbaba* 27 (July 5, 1934), 10.

can't ride to market or to the doctor. The universe of the peasant or worker was quite removed from the concerns of bureaucracy as the following example shows. I met Gülsüm Geniş in the seaside town of Yeni Foca, in western Turkey. She was a first generation population exchange immigrant from Greece following the Treaty of Lausanne (1923).[110] Geniş was her husband's name. Her daughter explained how her husband's father had acquired the name Geniş, which means wide, relaxed, or sometimes, generous.

> They said for everyone to come and get surnames. They waited and he did not come. They said he was in the fields. So then they said, this man is a very *geniş* man, a very relaxed man. Let his surname be Geniş, said our relatives.

Similarly, another man who neglected to come to the population office to register was given a name that the family felt was insulting. Hayriye Gariboğlu told me that her father, who used to carry the name, Hamamcızade, because they ran a hamam (a public bath) was denied this name because he did not come early enough to register it.

> ...my father's surname changed. My father, may he rest in peace, neglected it. He didn't go announce another surname. So they called him Barçın. In those days they issued surnames to those who didn't come. They did not accept Hamamcızade any longer. If [he had] gone up there they probably would have accepted it, but they gave him Barçın as a punishment. It is the name of a valley, I researched it. There is apparently [such a place] in the Antalya region.

Mrs. Gariboğlu's family interpreted this act as a punishment, particularly because it came during the time when her father was going bankrupt. In the previous example, the family served as the intermediary for the name Geniş and thus it was not perceived as an insult. Yet even in the cities, many people were beyond the reach

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110 See: Samim Akgönül's work on surname choice among Muslim refugees from Greece in the population exchange: *De La Nomination en Turc Actuel: Appartenances, Perceptions, Croyances.* (Istanbul, İsis Press: 2006).

of the registration process. One of my favorite stories is about a man who purchased his name in an Istanbul cafe. Orhan Çimrenli sat in his habitual coffee house and learned from another man sitting in the café that the national deadline to find and register a new surname was near. This man who notified him claimed to be adept at making words into names for the so far undocumented young man. My respondent said he accepted, and his interlocutor played with sounds and syllables, and created a new surname: "If you didn't like it, I could try again," he said. In the end, the transaction was worth a small fee. It was thus that some names multiplied through simple agglutination, tailored through individual creativity and craft, and custom-made by the local men of language for a small fee.[111]

Translation and the Process of Finding Equivalence

It is significant that the surname law is set against the backdrop of the Turkish language reform and the spread of the pure Turkish (*Öztürkçe*) movement. In many of my interviews I heard people tell me they needed to find the "equivalent" or new "version" of their names.[112] And indeed there were cases when surname adoption took this form of "equivalent substitution." Sabri Baydar's family was told that their former family name Haydaroğulları (sons of Haydar) was not appropriate because it was "not Turkish." According to what appears to be a "folk etymology" by Mr. Baydar, the family was given a Turkish name that was supposed to be the semantic equivalent.[113]

Our *lakab* is Haydaroğulları, but in the wake of the law in 1934 that

111 Orhan Çimrenli, October 19, 1999.

112 One of the draft articles of the surname law that never made it into the final text concerned proper names and suggested that citizens should "find the Turkish equivalent" of their name and register it.

113 For a compilation of a great number of family surname stories, see: İbrahim Aksu, *The Story of Turkish Surnames: An Onomastic Study of Turkish Family Names, Their Origins and Related Matters* (Çanakkale: Olay Gazete Press, 2005).

stipulated that nicknames such as *bey, efendi, paşa and ağa* be banned, the [officials] insisted that the word Haydar was a foreign word, an Arabic word. That law was intended for Turkification, so that all words, titles, all of them be in Turkish, in *Öztürkçe*. And in that period, the surnames became mandatory. This nickname of ours, Haydaroğlu, was not welcomed by the population administration who was giving surnames. They said it was foreign...When it was said that the word Haydar was not acceptable, they [my family] took its equivalent, the word Baydar. From what I remember, the old Haydar oğlu was crossed out on the old identity card and next to it, it was written Baydar, as a surname. That is what happened.

Mr. Baydar rationalized this change by saying that he had found out recently from an Arabic speaking "person of knowledge" that "Haydar" and "Baydar" indeed corresponded to one another. Furthermore, Sabri Bey added, his father had been told in the days of the Surname Law that Haydar and Baydar both meant lion. While Mr. Baydar was content with the equivalence, Mr. Tüzün of Gaziantep did not like the translation of his name to Tüzün from Hazırcızade, which signified the family's history in the region.

For the urban, educated population, the methods of the language reform served as a significant backdrop, and great resource for the surname selection process. The reform was launched with a big congress in 1931 and continued for several years. It made use of three methods to eliminate Arabic and Persian elements and replace them with Turkish ones: Turkish words were borrowed from old texts, selected from spoken language, or, if no equivalent could be found, they were invented.

Short surname booklets with suggestions for new surnames and proper names circulated during this period. These methods were loosely applied by population officials, and also disseminated in surname booklets, which included suggestions about how to multiply names by adding on *Öztürkçe*-sounding suffixes and prefixes. Semantic meaning was not always the most important element of surname adoption, as the following suggestion by a writer shows:

Our book has more than three thousand names. Don't underestimate this. From these three thousand words, if you want, and with the methods we show you, you can create three hundred thousand or more names. And with no resemblance to one another. As we said above, you must first of all check your taste, your desire. For example, you should know whether you want two syllable names such as Ertan, Güner or Oran, or three syllable names like Ertengü or Kubilay, or one syllable like in Er, Tan, or Can. Once you have determined this, the second issue arises. You must determine with what letter your surname should begin, and which vowels and consonants it should contain, and with which letter it should end.[114]

In the cities, because of problems of duplication,[115] people were more interested in originality of names. The population archives I visited in Istanbul show that officials and citizens negotiated and collaborated on names using sometimes creative, but often mundane, suffixes. In population records I was able to examine at a central population office in Istanbul, I saw many crossed out names replaced with names modified by adding suffixes, removing aspects which led to duplication, in addition to lists of names people had prepared before coming.

The mundane interaction between the officials and citizens was frequent enough to be represented as follows, in the satirical magazine, *Akbaba*:

> That day the population official's office was very crowded. He was working nonstop, but things were just not working out.
>
> --The name you have chosen?
>
> --Tan (said the citizen)

114 Orbay, *ÖzTürkçe Adlar ve Sözler*, 4.

115 Article 15 of the Soy Adı Nizamnamesi stipulated, "if two families who are not of the same ancestry have chosen the same name in a village, town or city, the name of the first applicants will be registered, but the others must be made to change. If this [second family] insists on the name, then a prefix or suffix like büyük or küçük can be added to distinguish the name."

--No, it won't work (said the population official)

--Ertan; that one exists too (said the official)

--Öztan

--That too

--Did they take all of these? Are there any names with −öz, or −er that have not been taken? Am I the only one who is too much? (asked the citizen)

--At our office, it will be too many; they will hold me responsible. Go register at an office where they don't have that many −öz or −er names.

--Okay, good bye.[116]

Perhaps for this reason, names, in cities, could be scarce, or coveted and particularly attractive ones needed to be taken quickly.

Registry documents from Istanbul show that for minorities in particular, Turkish-ness in names was an issue of dispute, but there was also some contradiction due to the stipulation that the new names had to be from the Turkish language.[117] A piece of correspondence between two population officials in Istanbul points to the lack of standard communication among the population offices concerning procedures for minorities. Although there was clearly a written document that instructed population officials what to do about minority names,[118] it is not clear why officials insisted in practice that minority names be changed.

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116 *Akbaba* 82 (July 27, 1934), 3.

117 Madde 5 - Yeni takılan soyadları Türk dilinden alınır. (Article 5: New surnames must be derived from the Turkish language). Madde 7 - Yabancı ırk ve millet isimleri soyadı olarak kullanılamaz. (Article 7: The names of foreign races and nationalities may not be used as surnames).

118 I discuss the significant issue of minority names in more detail in my dissertation (2004) and in an article in Meltem Türköz, "Surname Narratives and the State-Society Boundary: Memories of Turkey's Family Name Law of 1934," *Middle Eastern Studies* 43:6 (2007), 893-908.

This document has been turned back after having gone over the Interior Ministry's circular on the surnames of Christians... distributed to all the districts. In this circular it says: These [people] already have surnames and because of this it is not mandatory for them to have a Turkish name or for them to remove additions to their names such as *yan, diz* or *aki*. Actually every Christian family carries a registered or unregistered surname... We are registering the surnames of non-Muslims in their own language without hesitation based on the judgment of this order. A comrade who wishes to achieve the ideal of performing duties for the people in a mentality of populism should be able to respond to the legal requests of every citizen worth respect without being affected by any sentiment. We insist that this surname can be registered. If you are insisting on objecting then you may appeal to the higher authorities. I wish that the people's business not be slowed down by personal opinions and that our writing not be interpreted as orders but to be seen as the new writing style of the language reform.

It is clear that "personal opinion" on the part of officials and bearers of Christian names resulted in changes in a number of Greek and Armenian names and also many Muslim names that were unrelated to a family's original name. As one of my respondents, Ms. Divan, told me concerning her family's decision to drop a "–an" ending, "It was clear everywhere that you were Armenian. It was better in those days, not to have [that suffix]." The clearest statement about the status of minority names can be found in a thesis published in 1934 by a Rechad Osman (Atabek):[119]

> What will happen to the names of non-Muslim minorities living in Turkey? Those who do not have surnames will have to take a name of the Turkish language. If we interpret the project literally, those who have patronyms must keep them.

However, even this statement demonstrates that the writer is

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119 Reşat Osman Atabek, *Le Nom de Personnes dans les Codes civils suisse et turc.* (Liège: Imprimerie Georges Thone, 1934).

aware of a lack of clarity concerning non-Muslim minority names. According to Atabek's assessment, the matter of non-Muslim minorities is of secondary importance; because of their low numbers, he predicts that in time, they will "be completely assimilated" and the government will grant them the right to change their names to a Turkish name.

Conclusion

The Surname Law was a product of its immediate political context and preceding decades; and it was an important way by which the state instrumentalized its fantasy of national unity. As a law that was issued simultaneously with the law to abolish titles, the Surname Law was invoked in interviews and some publications of the period as an "equalizing," populist law that erased the distinctions of the late Ottoman period. To some audiences it was also portrayed as placing Turkey closer to the "family of modern nations" because it imitated practices long used in Europe. In its homogenizing role, erasing or concealing markers of undesirable social units such as tribes, and "foreign nationalities," it was all the more complex because it was in that role that the state's attitude towards its non-Muslim others wavered between assimilation and segregation.

The early 1930s in particular were a period of intense "translation," literally and figuratively. Word collection mobilization and other zealous efforts[120] of the language reform had appended glossaries on much of the printed media. Many popular anecdotes in satirical publications such as *Akbaba* address the confusion wrought by new words. In the instrumental idea of the language reform, every name, word, or sound was envisioned as having an equivalent, whether rediscovered, put together or invented.

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120 A recent interdisciplinary workshop, "Journée d'études sur le nom," organized by the French Institute for Anatolian Studies addressed the topic of names and governance in the Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic. "Nommer et ordonner ? L'introduction des noms de famille en Turquie." Institut Français d'Etudes Anatoliennes, Istanbul, April 15, 2011.

When my respondents narrated their memories of the surname law, and told me about restrictions placed on their names, I often heard them say that that their name or particular types of names were not accepted "then," or "in those days," indicating that they perceived a different attitude towards surnames. As name change petitions from subsequent years indicate, negotiations over names continued as bearers changed their relationship to their surnames.[121] Further studies on the synchronic aspect of state society relationships through surname negotiations ought to be enlightening about the state practices towards citizens over a period of time.

The Atatürk period continues to fuel current debates on Turkish identity; what is at stake in present-day political circles continues to inform how this period is understood and mobilized. We must understand the burgeoning interest in the unofficial aspects of Turkey's modern history in the context of developments in Turkey since the 1980s and 1990s – developments that coincided with the emergence of identity politics and the "rediscovery of history by Turkish society."[122] By the 1990s, people outside of scholarly circles started to question the story told to them in schools about Turkey's population and its diversity. The evolving social and cultural history of modern Turkey can be seen as a multifold process informed by its authors, audiences, and consumers, both academic and non-academic.

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121 See: Senem Aslan, "Incoherent State: The Controversy over Kurdish Naming in Turkey," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (2009), for a study of the state's attitude towards Kurdish names. Elise Massicard's ongoing work on current applications to courts for name changes is also important.

122 Neyzi, "Remembering to Forget," 138.