

How to Divide the “Indivisible Unity”? Debates on the Division of Turkey into Geographical Regions in the Early Years of the Republic

“Bölünmez Bütün”ü Nasıl Ayırmalı?

Erken Cumhuriyet Döneminde Türkiye'nin Coğrafi Bölgelere Ayrılması Tartışmaları

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Abstract

Although Turkey was officially divided into seven regions for the first time in the First Turkish Geography Congress (1941), both throughout the Ottoman Empire and following the proclamation of the Republic, many geographers, including Europeans made attempts to regionalize it. The Congress, being the one to settle on the standardization of geography education as well as zoning, gives valuable insight into the interactions between official history, geography, and national education in the modernization process. Nevertheless, the regional division began in the 1920s and discussions continued after the congress. An understanding of regional classification drawn by the natural boundaries of physical elements was preferred to make the spaces historically marked by different ethnic and cultural communities ordinary parts of a homogeneous whole and to comprehend, control, and recognize them entirely. This article problematizes the meaning and function of regional division in the political and ideological climate of the Early Republic. It reveals how modern geography is handled, on which criteria the geographical zoning is made, and the relationship of this initiative with the hegemonic historiography. This research analyzes texts on regional geography written by geographers and cartographers from the Republican era along with the records, negotiations, and decisions of the Congress.

Keywords: First Turkish Geography Congress, Geographical Regions, geographical zoning

Öz

Türkiye resmen ilk kez Birinci Türk Coğrafya Kongresi'nde (1941) yedi bölgeye ayrılmış olsa da hem Osmanlı İmparatorluğu süresince hem de Cumhuriyet'in ilanından sonra Avrupalılar da dahil olmak üzere birçok coğrafyacı tarafından bölgelendirilmeye çalışılmıştır. Coğrafya eğitiminin standartlaştırılması ve ülkenin coğrafi bölgelere ayrılması konusunu ele alan kongre, modernleşme sürecinde resmi tarih, coğrafya ve milli eğitim arasındaki ilişkilere dair önemli veriler sunar. Ancak coğrafi bölgelendirme girişimleri 1920'lerde başlamıştır ve tartışmalar kongreden sonra da devam etmiştir. Tarihsel olarak farklı etnik ve kültürel toplulukların damgasını vurduğu mekanları homojen bir bütünün sıradan parçaları haline getirmek, bunları bütünüyle kavramak, kontrol etmek ve tanımak için, fiziksel coğrafi öğelerin doğal sınırlarının çizdiği bir bölgesel sınıflandırma anlayışı tercih edilmiştir. Bu makale, erken Cumhuriyet döneminin siyasi ve ideolojik ikliminde ülkeyi bölgelere ayırmanın anlamını ve işlevini sorunsallaştırmaktadır. Modern coğrafyanın nasıl ele alındığını, coğrafi bölgelendirmenin hangi kriterlere göre yapıldığını ve bu girişimin hegemonik tarihyazımıyla ilişkisini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu araştırmada Cumhuriyet dönemi coğrafyacılarının ve haritaçıların bölgesel coğrafyaya ilişkin yazdıkları metinler ile Kongre kayıtları, müzakereleri ve kararları incelenmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Birinci Türk Coğrafya Kongresi, coğrafi bölgeler, bölgelendirme

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Introduction

While history and geography began to institutionalize almost at the same time after the establishment of the Republic, very little interest in historiography and the discipline of history within the research on the Republican period has turned to the development and instrumentalization of the discipline of geography. However, it is possible to observe the traces of many political and social policies identified with the early years of the Republic in the institutionalization process of geography. Strategies and processes such as constructing and teaching the perception of borders, expanding the policy of Turkification, making the Turkish language an everyday language for all regions, and shaping the frontiers of regions went hand in hand with the evolution of geography as well as the development of official history. This paper aims to scrutinize the meaning and function of geographical zoning in the political and ideological climate of the Early Republican period and reveals the continuity between the Ottoman and Republican periods in their shared interest in geography. It seeks to uncover how modern geography was discussed in the nation-building process, what criteria the geographical zoning was based on, and the relationship of this initiative with the hegemonic history and education approaches.

The study will first focus on the geography texts written before and after the First Turkish Geography Congress. Although the Congress is speculated to be the root of the concept of 'region', this article is not chiefly about it; instead, the Congress serves as an aid which makes it easier for us to comprehend the perspective of the geographers which this piece is centered around. The paper rather problematizes how the notion of the region was perceived and communicated to society during the single-party period. The Congress's reports, negotiations, and decisions unveil how the zoning was designed and structured for each region, how the decisions were justified, and how these decisions were made known to large segments by public education. Nevertheless, to make sense of the attempts to divide the country into geographical regions, I think a critical analysis of the geographers' and cartographers' mentality of the period should be conducted. Hence, by looking at the selected books of three important researchers who attended the congress, I intend to gain insight into the ideological and scientific perspectives of the geographers of the Republican period. While doing this, I aim to demonstrate how the process of institutionalization of geography with the claim of being scientific and the policies of Turkification symbolized by maps and borders were intertwined in this era.

The three geographers whose works I have chosen to examine are Hamit Sadi Selen (1892-1968), Besim Darkot (1903-1990), and Faik Sabri (Duran) (1882-1943). Upon completing his doctoral studies in the Department of Geography at the University of Vienna with his dissertation entitled "Tarihî Belgelere göre Anadolu'da Türklük" (Turkishness in Anatolia According to Historical Documents), Selen authored *İktisadi Coğrafya* (Economic Geography) (1926), *İktisadi Türkiye* (Turkey from an Economic Perspective) (1932), *Türkiye Coğrafyasının Ana Hatları* (Outline of Turkish Geography) (1945), *Dünya Ticareti* (World Trade) (1946) and *Ticaret Tarihi* (History of Commerce) (1938). Secondly, Faik Sabri, who was among the first Ottoman student groups to visit Paris in 1909, had a great enthusiasm for the discipline of geography and furthered his understanding of it by attending classes at the Sorbonne. In addition to encyclopedias, atlases, and textbooks for both children and adults, he released booklets that introduced

the countries that would participate in the Second World War. His most celebrated work, *Türkiye Coğrafyası* (Geography of Turkey) (1929), was widely published and circulated for a considerable number of years. The third geographer I researched is Besim Darkot. Having had French lessons from a young age, Darkot pursued his studies in geography and history at the University of Strasbourg in France. Besides his pedagogical writings on the proper method of teaching geography, he also produced numerous works on physical and historical geography such as *Türkiye Coğrafyası* (Geography of Turkey) (1942), *Kartografya Dersleri* (Cartography Lessons) (1947), *Türkiye İktisadi Coğrafyası* (Turkey's Economic Geography) (1955).

While Faik Sabri and Besim Darkot adhered to the principles of the French school, Hamit Sadi Selen was under the influence of the German-Austrian school. As a result of this, Selen "is interested in the natural environment only in proportion to its relevance to human activities and attaches particular importance to the historical view" while Faik Sabri "successfully maintains the balance between physical and human geography" (Erinç, 1973, p. 12). Besim Darkot, on the other hand, initially dedicated his professional career to physical geography, however, following 1945 he shifted his focus to human and historical geography.

I aim to elucidate two debates by concentrating on the works of the three geographers I have chosen. First, as many other researchers state, the strategy of dividing the territory into regions presents a continuity from the Ottoman Empire to Turkey. Nonetheless, I maintain that scientific knowledge is adapted to align with the current needs of the states in question. Secondly, by examining the discipline of geography, I assert that 'science' was a key factor in the formation of the new Republic's political landscape. In other words, science did not replace the political; instead, it acted as a catalyst for the political mechanisms.

It can be said that most academic sources on Turkish geography and the geographical division of Turkish territory are mainly theses and other publications originating from the educational sciences departments of universities. These institutions encompass a broad range of topics related to geography. These sources tend to break down the history of geography education in Turkey into distinct periods and recognize the First Turkish Geography Congress as the beginning of a new period (Koçman & Sutçubı, 2004); (Ertek, 2011); (Karakuş, 2012); (Gümüşçü & Özur, 2016) (Özçağlar, 2020). The most significant reason for this framework is that Hasan Ali Yücel, the minister of education at the time, personally organized the Congress. On the other hand, discussing how geography education should be and determining the curriculum were among the primary objectives of the Congress. Thus, the goal and agenda of the congress, as well as the process of institutionalization of the geography discipline throughout Turkey garnered the most attention from the educational faculties.

Rarely are there any studies that explore the institutionalization of geography in light of the political paradigm of the period. In her book *Memalik-i Şahane'den Vatan'a Sezgi* Durgun touches on the importance of the geography congress in the nation-building process. Durgun draws attention to the fact that the borders of the motherland differed in the process following the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, and therefore the field of cartographic struggle also transformed. The book, which also briefly deals with the

First Turkish Geography Congress, differs from other geography studies by revealing that space is always physically and discursively constructed by the state and reconstructed according to changing political conditions and actors (Durgun, 2011). Another notable study is Behlül Özkan's dissertation published by Yale University Press. He analyzes the development of national spatial consciousness within Turkey by focusing on the concept of *vatan* and demonstrating the role of this concept in not only foreign policy but also in a critical socio-spatial context. In the third part of his work, he compares the geography texts published before and after the proclamation of the Republic and unearths the place of geography education in the construction of Turkish nationalism (Özkan, 2012).

Considering the nationalist and modernist paradigm of the period, which Sezgi Durgun and Behlül Özkan focused on, I aim to understand how and from which needs the territory, whose integrity is an indisputable presupposition, was zoned. I aim to comprehend how geographers and cartographers of the period approached the concept of the region, and what criteria and priorities were taken into account when establishing the regions. I believe that by looking between the lines of the texts of these intellectuals, who were simultaneously loyal to the positivist and scientific thought of the West and strongly connected to Turkish nationalism, we can discover some information that cannot be obtained from the reports.

Geography From an Imperial Fantasy to a National Rationality

For many years, the Ottoman dynasty had a grip on the important commercial zones, yet as a result of geographical discoveries that changed the direction of the trade routes, it suffered a significant loss of customs revenues. With the influx of copious amounts of gold and silver from colonized lands into Europe, the worldwide economic landscape was drastically altered. On the other hand, the costs of maintaining the Ottoman palace and waging war caused taxes, the only source of revenue, to be increased, putting a greater strain on the *reaya*, the primary addressee of the taxes. However, the wealth of land and sea connections caused the Ottomans to focus their full attention on the world they had created and not compete in trade with Europe across the Atlantic or south of Africa (Burbank & Cooper, 2018, p. 140).

By the 17th century, the question of what would be the fate of the Empire in the face of the ever-developing West was one of the crucial issues that preoccupied the minds of Ottoman intellectuals. For example, Katip Celebi, an Ottoman polymath and author of the famous geographical work *Cihânnümâ*, was present in the committee gathered to seek remedies to improve the state's finances and he also prepared a report titled *Düstûrû'l-amel li-islâhi'l-halel* on this issue (Gökyay, 1986, p. 9). According to A. Adnan Adıvar, Katip Çelebi complains bitterly about the bigotry of his time and defends the need for positive sciences in his writings (Adıvar, 1982, p. 140). In the introduction to *Tuhfetü'l-kibâr*, he emphasizes the importance of geography and argues that those who govern the state should know closely, if not the whole world, at least the frontier and borders of the Ottoman Empire, and the countries in these regions: "Only then would it be easy to enter enemy countries and protect the borders," he explains. "Thanks to the importance the [European countries] gave to these sciences, the infidels found America, which is called the New World and captured the ports of the Indian lands" (Çelebi, 2018, p. 29).

In addition to Katip Çelebi, geographer and translator Ebu Bekr ed-Diminish (Ebu Bekr ibn Behram el-Dimaşki) was aware that the Ottoman Empire had lost its central position in the universe (Hagen, 2006, p. 233). Ebu Bekr ed-Diminish underscored the significance and necessity of astronomy besides geography and discussed the universe systems of prominent Western astronomers in his writings. Similarly, İbrahim Müteferrika, who made considerable additions to Katip Çelebi's *Cihânnümâ* and published it in 1732, pointed out the importance of scientific methods in general and geography in particular for the survival of the empire in the new world order. What is interesting here is that the colonialism process, enabled by the geography knowledge and techniques of the West, was defined as a success by Müteferrika and it was underlined that this method was also suitable for the Ottoman Empire:

"Jihad is *fardh* on all Muslims against the enemies of religion and the state and knowing all aspects of the conditions of the enemy countries is the most important phase of jihad. Statesmen are personally responsible for this task. They can fulfill these obligations only by knowing geography well [...] If an effort is made to spread the knowledge of geography, it will be ensured that Muslims are aware of each other and thus help each other. By joining hands and hearts of all Muslims, it will be ensured that many of them are freed from the dominion of disbelief. Thus, it is possible for Islamic countries to unite and come together under the auspices of a sultan [...] In this way [via geography], the Christian states received a lot of benefits in a short time. They found the strength to travel all over the world. Now it is obvious that geography science helps to expand the borders of the state. We hope that the spread of this science in our country will cause our borders to expand in the East and West." (Müteferrika, 1995, pp. 89-90)

Although the Ottoman Empire did not have the capacity and enthusiasm to compete with European states for colonialism; geographical knowledge was regarded as one of the tools that could make the Ottomans an imperial power. For many geographers who wished the Ottoman Empire to return to its former glory, the administration should embrace rational thinking, map, and "know" first the neighboring regions and then the whole world in detail. In other words, in the context of the 17th century, geographic information was seen as the lifeline of an empire that lost blood and was trying to get back on its feet.

However, the 19th century was a period of tremendous transformation for both the rest of the world and the Ottoman state. While the Ottoman Empire of the 19th century was typically characterized as stagnant and undeveloped, the West was associated with "progress" by mainstream historiography. Selim Deringil challenges this dichotomous perspective: According to him the Ottoman state had conducted considerable reforms in education, military, and infrastructure to stay competitive with Europe (Deringil, 1998, p. 11). The reforms made during the 19th century were not solely in response to Europe's superior military and technological strength, but also a deliberate effort to understand and adopt their achievements through interaction and internalization (Makdisi, 2002, p. 769).

By the 19th century, the discipline of geography would tend to institutionalize under the influence of the modernization paradigm, and by the 20th century, it would assume new functions to meet the needs of the system of nation-states. While the Ottoman Empire was gradually disintegrating with the nationalist uprisings, the concepts of border and homeland gained a new meaning. At the end of the 18th century, the Ottoman statesmen

began to adopt the concept of “*patrie*” as it was used in Europe and put the word “*vatan*” into circulation. It was no longer where you were born and lived that mattered; it was the place where you felt devotion and loyalty (Özkan, 2012, p. 31). Considering that until the beginning of the 20th century, dozens of ethnic and religious communities had been living in the Ottoman lands, it is comprehensible why Ottomanism was defended by Ottoman intellectuals and politicians for a long time as a unifying ideology. This ideology, which refers to an idealized multiethnic and historical territory rather than the existing Ottoman country, quite narrowed by wars and independence struggles, turned into Turkish nationalism over time as mostly Turks lived in the lands left at the end of the First World War. In other words, the loss of some characteristic lands (especially the Balkans) brought with it the birth of a new paradigm based on geography that was not lost. With the establishment of the Republic, fanciful expansionist projects were largely abandoned and a nationalist outlook that was content with the Anatolian people and circumscribed by the borders of the National Pact¹ was adopted.

The historical process that I tried to summarize above raises two issues about the relationship between geography and sovereignty. First, in a time of rapid border alterations, *patrie*/nation consciousness was also revised and rationalized. Mustafa Kemal, criticized for agreeing to the post-war landscape, described his strategy to protect these borders as a “serious and realistic decision” (Toprak, 2020, p. 23). Second, The Treaty of Sèvres, which legitimized the sharing of the homeland by the Allies, made the idea of “geographical unity” an indisputable acceptance in the history of Turkey. Sèvres is not just an international issue that happened in 1920 and was soon overcome; it is a historical syndrome that affects the political and socio-psychological life of the nation in the following decades (Guida, 2008, p. 44). The possibility that European states might once again divide Turkey among themselves, as in Sèvres, and especially since the late 1980s, the PKK’s claim to establish a separate Kurdish nation-state has made the preservation of geographical unity the most important national priority. In other words, in a context where geographical unity is equated with national unity, zoning as well as mapping are highly controversial steps.

Cartographic Discourse: Mapping and Zoning in the Nation-Building Process

As the empire gave way to nation-states, the only authority with the power to create the maps became states. They have availed themselves of cadastral systems to accomplish their two vital objectives, national defense and confirming private property rights. What kind of transformations did the idea of geographical unity go through after the proclamation of the Republic? To answer this question, one must examine the significance of cartographic representation in the nation-building process. Considering that the National Pact, like all other maps, is socially constructed, it is necessary to acknowledge that both the perception of national borders and the development of the discipline of geography are fashioned within the framework of power relations.

Since the late 1980s, it has been asserted by numerous academics that cartography

¹ Misak-ı Milli refer to territories “within the boundaries specified in the Armistice signed on October 30, 1918” and a set of principles aimed to be protected by the national struggle. (Toprak, 2020).

also belongs to the social world in which it is produced, and maps are essentially a product of the culture from which they originate (Harley, 1989) (Pickles, 2004). They pointed out the influence of power relations in this process, demonstrating that maps are not autonomous and objective images, but emphases within a broader theory of representation. Some maintain that the truth has been distorted by maps, with the intent of advancing certain states or propagandizing (Monmonier, 1991). For example, issues such as the assumption of Europe and the USA as the main points of reference on world maps (rule of ethnocentricity) (Harley, 1989), the conflict of cartographers and geographers in trying to satisfy the interests of the elites while under their patronage (Harley, 2009), the manipulation of colonized geographies to favor colonial states (Bittner & Glasze, 2021) are being scrutinized by geographers with an analytical eye.

By emulating Harley's and Pickles' enthusiasm for the works of J. Derrida and R. Barthes, can we conceive of the maps as texts that can be interpreted in multiple ways? By employing this method, one avoids giving precedence to certain forms of maps due to their scientific nature. It facilitates ceasing to fret over map objectivity and to embrace intersubjectivity instead. (Crampton, 2001, p. 242). The map is inherently an expression of an idea. If cartography is a form of discourse that combines graphic and linguistic codes (Pickles, 2006, p. 221), it is logical to decipher the motivations for why a map is created in a particular fashion at a given period in history or why a territory is split into distinct regions in a particular manner. Hence, it is accurate to posit that zoning attempts like mapping are socially constructed and may be regarded as political tools.

Applying the pivotal theoretical approach detailed above, we can conceive of the division of Turkey into regions not as a sudden ruling in 1941, but as both a perpetuation of the Ottoman zoning customs and a challenge to them. First of all, the Ottoman Empire, unlike Europe, did not experience feudalism and largely retained its centralized structure, besides a limited duration when the tax farming system was adopted, and local rulers (*ayans*) strengthened. Despite this, "localism" was the more powerful presence, not proto-nationalism, with some esteemed figures acting as local authorities in distant provinces such as Damascus and Mosul (Faroqhi, 2002, p. 372). One can postulate that the Ottoman Empire's development of its administrative organization in the provinces and the process of geographical zoning contributed to the enhanced governance of subjects. Notwithstanding the centrality of administrative organization, cartographers and geographers were apt to demarcate the imperial lands into zones.

The thought of zoning the immense Ottoman territories appealed to the interest of not only Ottoman geographers but also Europeans. *La Turquie d'Asie, géographie administrative: statistique, descriptive et raisonnée de chaque province de l'Asie Mineure* of Vital Cuinet, a French geographer who held a post in the Ottoman Public Debt Administration between 1880-1892, is of particular interest in this context. The voluminous work based on the Ottoman Official Almanac of 1306/1889 (Salname) and a compilation of statistical notes acquired during his twelve-year journey of discovery not only discloses the administrative structure of the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century but additionally classifies the provinces within the country (Cuinet, 1892).² Ewald Banse,

2 L'Anatolie Orientale: Trébizonde, Erzeroum, Bitlis, Van, Diarbékir; Les Provinces Arabes: Alep, Mossoul, Bagdad, Bassorah; Provinces des Îles de l'Archipel et de la Crète; Vilayet de Constantinople et Mutessariflik

the German geographer, divided Turkey into 10 regions such as Mesopotamia, Armenia, Cilicia etc. categorizing them according to ethnic-historical features (Gürsoy, 1957).³ Besides, as stated by Behlül Özkan, the late Ottoman textbooks of geography, written by Ottoman cartographers such as Sabit Efendi, Ahmed Cemal,⁴ Mehmed Hikmet, Ali Tefvik, and İbrahim Hilmi, described the empire in terms of three divisions: Ottoman Europe (Avrupa-yı Osmani), Ottoman Asia (Asya-yı Osmani), and Ottoman Africa (Afrika-yı Osmani). Despite this, no unanimity was achieved among the authors of these textbooks concerning the subdivisions of the three continental parts of the empire (Özkan, 2012, p. 111).

The Ottoman maps in the 19th century frequently depicted regions using their corresponding ethnic designations. The Turkish government's attempt to change place names following the construction of the Republic is connected to the prevalence and continuity of ethnic designations of Ottoman regions. It is conceivable to observe ethnic toponyms on a series of maps of the late 1800s, initially created by European mapmakers and then by the Ottoman Ordnance Command. For example, Austrian and Russian map materials incorporated regional names such as Armenia, Cilicia, Lazistan, and Kurdistan, and outlined the territories of tribes and clans in the Southeast and the Arab provinces. Both Vital Cuinet's and Heinrich Kiepert's maps feature toponymes presented in German and French transliterations, along with their original names and Arabic or Roman equivalents (Öktem, 2008).

Following the Sheikh Said rebellion (1925), the Reform Plan for the East (Şark Islahat Planı) was implemented, resulting in an acceleration of the Turkification program. The Ministry of Education released a statement known as "Currents Trying to Disintegrate the Turkish Unity" on 8 December 1925, where they underlined that the designations Kurd, Laz, Circassian, Kurdistan, and Lazistan should not be utilized and a fight should be waged against these issues (Kürdoloji Çalışmaları Grubu, 2011). Thus, the name 'Kurdistan', which has been used in the ordinary language since the end of the 16th century and was formally an Ottoman province between 1846-1868, or the name 'Lazistan' corresponding to a certain region/sanjak since the 17th century was forbidden, like other ethnic region names.

Following the Republic of Turkey's establishment, the term Kurdistan was successively removed from textbooks, and Upper Cezire (*Yukarı Cezire*) was briefly employed; thereafter, Anatolia was adopted for present-day Turkey for a while. Anatolia was split into geographical divisions, and the area depicted as Kurdistan by certain authors during the Ottoman era was referred to as Eastern Anatolia and Southeastern Anatolia (Biçer, 2020, p. 74). Since the late 1920s, it is clear that the names originating from the areas where an ethnic group is the predominant population have been absent from maps. For a better grasp of how this process was constructed, it could be helpful to scrutinize the texts that reveal the mentality of geographers and cartographers of the Republican era.

d'Ismid; Vilayet de Smyrne et le Mutessariflik de Bigha; L'Anatolie centrale Angora, Koniah, Adana, Mamouret-ul-Aziz, Sivas; L'Anatolie occidentale: Brousse et Castamouni.

3 He named the sub-regions as follows: Thrace, Bithynia, Phrygia, Paphlagonia, Galatia, Lycaonia, Pamphylia etc.

4 Anatolia; Aegean Islands; Kurdistan; Al- Jazeera, Iraq, and Al- Hasa; Syria and Palestine; Hedjaz and Yemen.

Between Science and Ideology: The Geographers and Cartographers of the Republic

Considering the progress of the discipline of geography since 1923, two important developments become evident. First, in 1935, the Faculty of Language, History, and Geography was established, and the Institute for Geography was formed within the Faculty under Herbert Louis's leadership (Louis & Bediz, 1941). Prominent geographers including Cemal Arif Alagöz, Niyazi Çıtakoğlu, and Danyal Bediz conducted research in this institute (Özçağlar, 2020, p. 216). Second, on 6-21 June 1941, the First Geography Congress was convened in Ankara under the leadership of Hasan Ali Yücel, the Minister of National Education. The congress not only intended to devise the curriculum of geography lessons and textbooks, as well as to define geographical terms; it also approved the division of Turkey into seven geographical regions.

The issue of division into geographical regions was handled by the "Turkish Geography Commission" of the First Geography Congress. Some of the geographers and cartographers on the commission are as follows: Herbert Louis, Cemal Arif Alagöz, Niyazi Çıtakoğlu, Danyal Bediz, Besim Darkot, Hamit Sadi Selen, Hamit Nafiz Pamir, Ahmet Ardel, Ali Tanoğlu (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Maarif Vekilliği, 1941). As per the Commission's report, the term "Anatolia" was employed to represent expansive regions, and when the region had a coastline, the name of the sea was determined by reference. In other words, both in defining the borders of the regions and in naming them, elements of physical geography were considered.

In 1939, the Ministry of Education asked Herbert Louis to prepare a work on the geography of Turkey. This work named *Türkiye'nin Büyüklüğü ve Cihandaki Yeri* (Turkey's Magnitude and Place in the World), which was in German was translated into Turkish by Sırrı Erinc, and then a committee of faculty members examined it and issued a report. At the opening of the First Geography Congress, both Louis' work and the report were distributed to members. In the congress book published after the event, Louis's work, the report, and finally Selen's memorandum "on the division of Turkey into geographical regions" took place.

Louis commences his work with a meticulous and thoroughly comprehensive account of the geography of Turkey. Turkey's morphological structure is mentioned under 12 *tabii ve hayatî muntaka* (natural and social regions) such as Doğu Toros *mintikası* (Eastern Taurus region), Ege *mintikası* (Aegean region), İç Anadolu *havzası* (Central Anatolia basin), Hakâri *mintikası* (Hakâri region), Ağrı *yüceyeri* (Ağrı region), etc. One could not be incorrect in suggesting that the classifications he formulated are largely congruent with the natural boundaries produced by high mountains.

A detailed examination of Louis' work was undertaken, with critiques offered, in the report prepared by İ. H. Akyol, B. Darkot, A. Tanoğlu, and A. Ardel. These four eminent geographers studied Louis' text line by line and revealed its deficiencies. A point of contention was Louis' region division. According to them, Louis's morphological classification was unclear and pedagogically inadequate. Some regions are named according to a certain direction, some according to mountains and seas, and some according to provinces. Second, they argue that aspects like climate, lifestyle, and crops cultivated

were disregarded by Louis and a classification was established solely on morphological qualities. From their viewpoint, further clarification, and investigation were needed for the regional divisions (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Maarif Vekilliği, 1941, p. 235).

The above discussion provides insight into the Congress environment. The engagement of leading geographers and cartographers reveals how important the establishment of regions was. This leads us to analyze their works to gain a better understanding of the connection between geography as a field of study and the governmentality of the period.

In this part of the article, I will examine the selected works of two of the above-mentioned researchers who participated in the Turkish Geography Commission: Hamit Sadi Selen and Besim Darkot. Additionally, despite being a part of a different commission in Congress, Faik Sabri's (Duran) significant works on zoning deserve to be mentioned in this paper. These three geographers had a strong affinity for the notion of "region" before the First Geography Congress and were among the first to create regional maps. They were pioneering intellectuals who had benefited from Western training. Besides, they embraced a nationalist and modernizing perspective, dedicated to the ideals of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and the Republic. While examining these regional geographers in detail, my purpose is to illustrate that reconstructing geography as a science began even in the 1920s and that the division of the country into geographical regions essentially aimed to provide a standardization that was in harmony with the modernization paradigm of the early Republican period. I seek to reveal that the regulation of geographical scales was invented as an alternative to ethnocultural/historical zoning. Influenced by Turkish nationalism, these researchers of the period employed geography to reproduce the hegemonic discourse.

Hamit Sadi Selen is one of the most distinguished geographers among those mentioned. After completing his doctorate in Austria, Selen worked as a teacher and lecturer in Istanbul and Ankara. As one of the leading geographers of his time, he also had the opportunity to encounter Mustafa Kemal Atatürk during his tenure at the (Turkish) Historical Society (Bellekten Türk Tarih Kurumu, n.d.). He contends that the notion of "Anatolia", indicating Turkey's geographical unity, saves us from being restricted by political frontiers. The region referred to as Anatolia was once very small, but during the Republican period, the area was extended eastward, resulting from the requirement to denote geographical unity (Selen, 1945, p. 2). To put it, by broadening the region, the necessary territorial harmony is achieved.

Selen conducted a noteworthy study within the hegemonic ideology of the era regarding a cartographer from the 16th century, Nasuh Silahî. Claiming that the works created by the Turks in the domain of cartography in the 16th century are of a higher caliber and worth than foreign works of the same time, Selen spotlights Silahî's atlas, *Menazil* (Selen, 1937). He brings to light a section in the atlas called "climates" while explaining the relevance of *Menazil*, which provides in-depth plans and depictions of Anatolia, Iran, and Iraq. According to Selen, Nasuh Silahî determined seven climates, classified the climate of each locality, and indexed a catalog of towns for each climate. Selen apprises us that the latitudinal and longitudinal coordinates of each location are listed in the meticulously organized atlases. Notwithstanding his skepticism about Nasuh Silahî's classification mirroring the classical classifications, he applauds the cartographer's scientific method in

dividing the country into climates (Selen, 1937, pp. 4-5).

In his book *İktisadi Coğrafya* (Economic Geography), released in the early 1920s, Selen had already addressed the issue of dividing Turkey into regions (Gürsoy, 1957, p. 223).⁵ Scrutinizing Selen’s geography books reveals that he conducted detailed studies into the “racial characteristics” of the regions. Selen claims that Turkey has a notable “racial unity” compared to other nations and through investigations conducted in 1937-1938, a more scientific comprehension of the racial characteristics of the people of Turkey can be attained (Selen, 1945, p. 87). Following the presentation of some information about the average height, head size, and skin color for men and women, Selen reveals the percentage of the brachycephalic type by region: “75% of the population is of this type [brachycephalic]. However, it differs by region. Although it constitutes 93% of the population in Central Anatolia, it does not exceed 65% in the east and south” (Selen, 1945, p. 87). As he depicts the racial characteristics of the people residing in the regions in such a manner, he considers the administrative divisions when delineating the regions.

The memorandum Selen gave to the First Geography Congress presents his most succinct views on the division of Turkey into geographical areas. He points out that the regional division in translations from the West is done by administrative and historical norms, however, an examination according to geographical methods is needed:

“The region is composed of secondary parts that are distinguished by common geographical features. These features are formed by the joint and reciprocal effects of elements such as land, water, air, plants, animals, and humans. [...] While dividing Turkey into geographical regions, the first thing that draws our attention is the morphological characteristics. Differences in terms of climate and vegetation are added to this morphological feature” (Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Maarif Vekilliği, 1941, pp. 251-253).

As comprehended from Selen’s statement, segregating the country into regions consists of grouping settlements with similar physical characteristics. For example, to take Selen’s perspective, erasing the Roman-era regional designations both uphold the autonomy of the sovereign state and acknowledges the scientific credibility of the field of geography. To be more precise, the institutionalization of geography as a scientific discipline and the policy of Turkification that is part of the contemporary nation-state paradigm intersect.

Faik Sabri, a key figure in the establishment of the Institute of Geography at Istanbul University with Erich Obst, and himself an author of numerous geography books and atlases should also be mentioned when discussing the division of Turkey into geographical regions. Like Hamit Sadi Selen, Faik Sabri came back home after receiving education in Europe (but he was a proponent of the French school) and served as a lecturer and teacher in various institutions. Even before the First Geography Congress, Sabri sought to create distinct regions within the frontiers of the Republic of Turkey in his works, following the partition of the Ottoman territory into zones in the 1910s: “Turkey is made up of six sections whose climates, natural features and living conditions are distinct” (Sabri, 1929, p. 197).⁶ A closer look at his book *Türkiye Coğrafyası* (Turkish Geography) may be of aid in understanding Sabri’s ideology and scientific method together.

5 Selen’s regions: North Anatolia (Karadeniz mailesi), Marmara region, West Anatolia, South Anatolia, Middle Anatolia, East Anatolia, Southeast Anatolia (Cezire- i Ulya) (Selen, 1926).

6 Marmara and Pashaeli region, Black Sea Region, Central plateau region, Islands Sea region, Mediterranean region, Eastern highland region. (Sabri, 1929, p. 197).

Sabri suggests that after the World War, Turkey was populated exclusively by Turks, and had a political and racial unity. On the other hand, certain nomadic groups like the Yuruks, Turkmens, and Kurds also exist. Sabri furnishes a full account of the various districts these groups inhabit in each geographical region, what kind of economic activities they are engaged in, and what kind of cultural habits they have. Discussing Turkey's human geography, he also refers to the government's resettlement policy: "In the past, Turkey was home to a considerable number of nomadic tribes. The government made efforts to resettle them to appropriate locations and was partially successful" (Sabri, 1929, p. 209).

Noting the east-west dichotomy is something Sabri often does when discussing the social and cultural aspects of geographical regions. The book incorporates a variety of visuals, such as "Dressing Styles in Eastern Provinces", "Dressing Styles Around İzmir", and "Kızıldaş women's dressing styles" (Sabri, 1929, pp. 216-217). As communities other than the Turks are generally viewed as nomadic and without any fixed spatial ties, their clothing and eating habits are categorized by region. Sabri attempts to structure his book by geographical terms, yet he also relies on ethnic/historical place names.⁷

If we compare the 1929 and 1938 editions of *Türkiye Coğrafyası*, we can see that the earlier one acknowledges the Kurds as the inhabitants of the Eastern regions of Turkey.

"There are some Kurds among the Turks in eastern Anatolia. Moreover, there are breeds such as Circassians and Georgians who migrated from the Caucasus, and Albanians and Bosniaks who passed through the Balkan peninsula to Turkey; but they do not constitute the majority in any part of the country, and they are becoming more and more Turkish [...] Other minorities in Turkey are Greeks, Armenians, and Jews" (Sabri, 1929, p. 177).

However, the 1930s saw the term "Kurd" be avoided due to the influence of racial analyses of Turkish nationalism. This pattern is also observed in Faik Sabri's 1938 edition, where he opts to use terms like "nomads" or "*aşirets*" (tribes) in place of Kurds when referring to those residing in the eastern regions.⁸ Sabri's attitude entails observing or exhibiting the inhabitants of a specific region as a homogeneous whole. Faik Sabri seems to be revising his books by the political atmosphere while articulating his desire to make geography an "analytical science".

Besim Darkot is another researcher who looks at geography through an ideological lens of the period. Darkot, like his two other colleagues, was educated in Europe. Following his return from France to Turkey, he carried on in his academic pursuits and eventually became a professor. He was particularly intrigued by economic and regional geography.

It is reported that Besim Darkot's early research had a major impact on the zoning resolution adopted at the First Geography Congress (Tuncel, 1992, p. 4). He frequently broached the topic of Turkey's division into particular geographic areas in his books. In *Türkiye İktisadî Coğrafyası* (Economic Geography of Turkey), written years after the First Geography Congress, he states that "a full consensus on how the country will be partitioned into regions has yet to be achieved" (Darkot, 1963, p. 69). However, he explicitly affirms that the seven-zone classification agreed upon in the Congress is the most accurate and that he adheres to this system (Darkot, 1963, p. 71).

⁷ Mountain Ararat can be cited as an example.

⁸ Sezgi Durgun also points out the differences between the two editions (Durgun, 2011, p. 269).

Examining the lesser-known books and articles of Besim Darkot, one can observe that his normative claims regarding the Turkification policy of the early Republican period were quite vital in his approach to the discipline of geography. Darkot, who associates the inhabitants of a particular region with its geographical features, explored many provinces including the Upper Euphrates Region and specifically the city of Tunceli, which is quite extraordinary for its ethnic-cultural structure and historical background. In an article on the geography of Tunceli, he considers the extreme geographic conditions the reason for both the local people's brutishness and their political confrontations with state control: "Mountain character seems to rule overall, even in life on the plain. Water floods from the mountains. Sometimes raiding crowd of people is more destructive than this water..." (Darkot, 1943, p. 116). Darkot adduces the provincial topography to justify the government's regulations in Dersim and highlights the "state of nature" that is valid not merely in the landscape but also among the "uncivilized" people of the region.

"People wishing to enter in this hilly terrain first encounter hardly passable rivers easily guarded by castles positioned in hills next to passageways, and then mountains rising step by step. Canyons which divide these mountains and resist armies with little effort... Plains that people use as fields and winter quarters among mountains, summer pastures in higher zones... In brief, it is the kind of country that gives refugees the opportunity to survive and doesn't easily give way to foreigners [...] Cotton in small quantities has been cultivated since of old. Mulberry tree are grown in many places... There is no doubt that fruit growing is open to improvement. In a geography book it is written that the fruit types decrease in this part of the Eastern Anatolia. Must we unthinkingly attribute that to climate? May fruit trees, like civilization, be late to enter these places?" (Darkot, 1943, pp. 117-122).

It could be reasonably argued that Darkot employs colonial rhetoric when he pens his thoughts about the Eastern regions. From his point of view, the East was the region that the state sought to penetrate but could not subdue. Those who are yet to experience the benefits of civilization live in a different spatiotemporal dimension in comparison to the west of the country. This outlook reveals that hierarchies are established not only between regions but also among the inhabitants of those regions.⁹

Conclusion

For a thorough review of the different perspectives and debates about dividing Turkey into geographical regions, it is essential to reflect on the ideological climate of the single-party period and the evolution of the geography discipline in Turkey. Dividing the country into distinct geographical parts is not an original policy nor is it exclusive to Turkey. For centuries, it has been common knowledge that dissecting the whole into fragments grants more efficient control. In this paper, I sought to display that what is distinctive in Republican Turkey are the criteria employed in ascertaining the regions. Since the late 1920s, a regional division that is linked to physical geography has been favored over one that is based on the historical/traditional habitat of an ethnic group or a civilization before the Turks. This tendency, which can be seen in other countries as well, was advantageous for young Turkey, which was attempting to break free from its multi-ethnic Ottoman background and was often at risk of being sundered by secessionist rebellions.

9 After the transition to the multi-party period, Darkot continued his studies of eastern Anatolia. He was part of the delegation that had the task of investigating the region for the establishment of the university in the east and wrote the "report on the eastern university" (Tuncel, 1991, p. 8).

Nevertheless, a matter of equal worth to the political and ideological environment of the early Republican period is the institutionalization of geography and its attempt to distinguish itself as a “science” separate from history. Physical geography elements could be the ideal point of reference for Western-educated geographers and cartographers who wish to establish objective criteria for dividing the country into regions. The idea of dividing regions according to cardinal directions (east, west, south, north, etc.) seems to be not only scientific-based but also secure. It can obscure the fact that a distinct group of people have been living in a certain region “from time immemorial” (*kadimden beri*) and may impede this knowledge from being handed down to future generations. Geography books began to portray the east-west dichotomy, sometimes with a colonial style. Thus, I suggest rethinking the assumption that geographic regions were objectively categorized, keeping in mind that cartography, like so many other things, is a form of discourse.

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