

SYMPOSIUM :

**THE CHANGING TURKISH CULTURE
AND TURKISH TYPE THROUGHOUT
HISTORY**

BEĞLÂN B. TOĞROL, Chairperson (Turkey) - Introduction

BEĞLÂN B. TOĞROL, (Turkey) - General Outlines
of the changing Turkish history
and the ancient Turkish type.

ESİN CANTEZ (Turkey) - Westernization
movements and consequences.

NAMIK AYVALIOĞLU (Turkey) - Cultural Revolution
of Atatürk.

BEĞLÂN B. TOĞROL (Turkey) - The Emergence
of the current Turkish type.

Introduction

History starts with the act of writing, thus extending back more or less to the 3rd millenium B.C., when the earliest documents in cuneiform were written in Sumerian, the language of the former inhabitants of southern Mesopotamia. The scientist who solves the riddle of the written word by deciphering for us alphabets long forgotten opens up doors which extend into the corridors of time providing us with frames of reference by which the happenings of the present day may be judged and understood. History is made by man : man, it turn, is made by history. Therefore, the laboratory of the cultural researcher is an historical one. Historical variables present many facts that can be used by the scientist to test and develop his hypotheses. As in nature, the events of history conceal «laws» representig certain common processes in human experience that need to be discovered.

In this symposium, a short summary of the historical background of Turkey is given as a discussion of factors contributing towards its westernization, in spite of the allegiance of the Turkish people to Islam. The reason for choosing this particular topic is our belief in the Turkish experience as being valuable in providing insight into the process of social and cultural change. The Turkish experiment in Westernization is unique in that it has happened without resorting to the harsher methods of a totalitarian régime. We believe that the modern development of Turkey is a consequence of its history, and we feel that an outline of its historical points underlined might be of help to overcome certain misinterpretations and hasty conclusions that recent accelerated developments occurring in Turkey might probably induce.

The job of the social scientist is to probe the meaning of human events and to seek for the relationships of cause and effect that are inherent in them. The Turkish experience in becoming westernized if studied objectively through scientific methods can certainly provide a basis for some valuable generalizations which might be of help to other developing countries.

Mango (1968), the English historian on Turkish and Near Eastern history writes :

Turkey is today undergoing the most rapid and the most extensive changes in its history. Change is everywhere - in the growth of the population, of literacy, of industry, of communications, in the diversification of employment for women, in internal and external migrations ... that rapid change is the dominant trend in Turkey cannot be denied. (pp. 165, 168).

This was eighteen years ago. During the last two years Turkey has made another great leap forwards and suddenly has changed from being an exporter of agricultural products to an exporter of industrial products (over 80%), and from a literacy level of about 60% to over 85%. Even the geography of the country is rapidly changing. Everywhere roads are being opened, dams and bridges are being built. From a geographical point of view the territory of modern Turkish Republic is a peninsula situated in the northwest of the Middle East. It is rectangular in shape surrounded by the Black Sea, the Aegean and the Mediterranean on its three sides

covering an area of 780.623 km². Its north-western corner extends into Europe covering an area of 23.623 km², not very large but comparable in size to some Western countries such as Belgium or Holland, not to mention Liechtenstein. The Turkish Straits, dividing Turkey-in-Europe from Anatolia, have been bridged at the narrowest point of the Bosphorus in Istanbul. Thus, the Turks own Istanbul, the straits, and the highly strategic peninsula of Anatolia, vital in the delicate balance of world politics. As, the English writer, David Hotham (1972) in his book «the Turks» says, «Turks asserted their right to these places by military conquest - the way in which all peoples in history have asserted their right to be anywhere». (p. 4)

Turks are allies in the Western Alliance and they have been using the Western script since 1928. The question of whether a Turk is a European has become an obsolete question since 1949 by their membership to the Council of Europe. They are a member of NATO and other Western organizations, such as OECD. This year's President to OECD is the Turkish Prime Minister Mr. Turgut Özal, and the President-Elect of the Council of Europe is the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Vahit Halefoğlu. Turkey has also applied to become a permanent member of the EEC, hoping to take her rightful part in this organization as well. All these factors set modern Turkey apart from her muslim neighbours. In this symposium the westernization of Turkey as a consequence of cultural and social changes caused by different events in Turkish history is studied within an historical perspective. It is believed that the Turkish experience can provide valuable insight to the problem of cultural change rendering generalizations which might be of help to other developing countries.

Four papers will be presented emphasizing landmarks of considerable importance for the development of Turkey. The general outlines of Turkish history is dealt with in the first paper by myself starting with the pre-Islamic period in the sixth century A.D., as depicted in the first written historical documents in Turkish, found in the basin of the Orhon and Yenisey rivers. The psychological analysis of some of the Turkish types in these Orhon inscriptions will also be discussed.

Dr. Esin Cantez in the second paper will deal with the period starting with the beginning of the eighteenth century when the Ottoman armies were forced to abandon the siege of Vienna which resulted in the decline of the Empire. This started two hundred years' of attempts to reform and renovate the Empire by the Sultans, the viziers and the learned élite. Two very important acts that brought about great changes in Turkey were, firstly Sultan Selim the Third's attempt to establish a new army independent of the Janissaries in 1793 and, secondly, Sultan Mahmut the Second's abolition of the Corps of Janissaries in 1826. Compulsory primary education, establishment of the military academy and the school of medicine, the introduction of a modern police system and postal service were all begun during this time paving the routes for further developments.

Dr. Namık Ayvalıoğlu in his paper will discuss the emergence of modern Turkey with the proclamation of the Turkish Republic on 29th October 1923 after the First World War, which brought about many accelerated reforms. These were in a sense a continuation of a process going back at least two hundred years. Atatürk's reforms and his decisive steps towards the secularization of Turkey and the acceptance of the Swiss Civil Code as the basis of Turkish law are perhaps the two most important reforms which created the social environment to induce change in individuals' attitudes and behaviours to bring about permanent changes in the socio-cultural system in Turkey.

The final paper given by myself deals with the analysis of some of the modern Turkish types that have emerged as a consequence of all the previous reforms along with the intense combined influence of literacy and secular education. The contribution of the absence of class feeling and discrimination, and sense of freedom and equality inherent in the Turkish character to achievement of Westernization are discussed.

REFERENCES

- Hotham, D. (1972). *The Turks*. London : Cox and Wyman.
Mango, A. (1968). *Turkey*. London : Thames and Hudson.