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Early Republican Türkiye through Spanish Eyes: Observations of İzmir and İstanbul during the 1933 Mediterranean University Cruise

**1933 Akdeniz Üniversite Gezisi'nde Erken Cumhuriyet
Türkiyesi: İspanyol Akademisyen ve Öğrencilerin İzmir ve
İstanbul Gözlemleri**

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Abstract

This study examines how Early Republican Türkiye was perceived by Spanish academics and students who visited İzmir and İstanbul during the 1933 Mediterranean University Cruise, an educational initiative organized during the Second Spanish Republic. Focusing on the Turkish leg of the voyage, the study explores how the travelers interpreted the social, cultural, and political transformations of Türkiye through their direct encounters with urban spaces, everyday life, and Republican reforms. The study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and interpretive approach based primarily on Francisco Gracia Alonso and Josep Maria Fullola's comprehensive study of the 1933 Mediterranean University Cruise, *El sueño de una generación. El crucero universitario por el mediterráneo de 1933*, which brings together official historical records and the diaries, letters, memoirs, and personal observations of the students and academics who participated in the voyage. Through textual analysis, particular attention is given to the travelers' perceptions of the Alphabet and dress reforms, secularization, changing representations of women, Turkish nationalism, and the coexistence of Ottoman legacies with the emerging Republican order. The study contributes to the literature by examining Early Republican Türkiye from the perspective of Spanish observers who themselves belonged to a recently established secular republic undergoing its own process of modernization. The findings reveal that the travelers' responses were far from uniform, ranging from admiration and curiosity to perplexity, criticism, and nostalgia. Their accounts demonstrate that perceptions of Republican Türkiye were shaped not only by direct observation but also by pre-existing Orientalist assumptions and political and intellectual perspectives.

Keywords: Turkish Modernization, Westernization, Turkish-Spanish Relations, Early Republican Türkiye, Republican Reforms

Öz

Bu çalışma, İkinci İspanya Cumhuriyeti döneminde gerçekleştirilen ve eğitsel bir girişim niteliği taşıyan 1933 Akdeniz Üniversite Gezisi kapsamında İzmir ve İstanbul'u ziyaret eden İspanyol akademisyen ve öğrencilerin Erken Cumhuriyet Türkiye'si'ne yönelik algılarını incelemektedir. Çalışma, gezinin Türkiye ayağına odaklanarak, seyahat katılımcılarının kentsel mekânlar, gündelik yaşam ve Cumhuriyet reformlarıyla doğrudan karşılaşmaları üzerinden Türkiye'de yaşanan toplumsal, kültürel ve siyasal dönüşümleri nasıl yorumladıklarını ele almaktadır. Araştırmada, temel olarak Francisco Gracia Alonso ve Josep Maria Fullola'nın 1933 Akdeniz Üniversite Gezisi'ni kapsamlı biçimde ele alan *El sueño de una generación. El crucero universitario por el mediterráneo de 1933* adlı çalışmasında bir araya getirilen seyahat günlükleri, kişisel gözlemler, mektuplar, anılar ve geziyi belgeleyen resmi tarihsel kayıtlara dayanan nitel, betimleyici ve yorumlayıcı bir yaklaşım benimsenmiştir. Metin analizi yoluyla, gezginlerin Harf ve Kıyafet reformlarına, sekülerleşmeye, kadınların değişen toplumsal temsillerine, Türk milliyetçiliğine ve Osmanlı mirası ile ortaya çıkan Cumhuriyet düzeninin bir arada varlığına ilişkin algılarına özel olarak odaklanılmıştır. Çalışma, Erken Cumhuriyet Türkiye'si'ni, kendileri de yakın zamanda

kurulmuş ve kendi modernleşme sürecini yaşayan laik bir cumhuriyete mensup İspanyol gözlemcilerin perspektifinden ele alarak literatüre katkı sunmaktadır. Bulgular, gezginlerin Türkiye'ye ilişkin değerlendirmelerinin tek tip olmadığını; hayranlık ve meraktan şaşkınlık, eleştiri ve nostaljiye kadar uzanan farklı tepkiler içerdiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu anlatılar, Cumhuriyet Türkiye'si'ne ilişkin algıların yalnızca doğrudan gözlemlerle değil, aynı zamanda önceden var olan Oryantalist kabuller ile siyasal ve entelektüel perspektifler tarafından da şekillendiğini göstermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Türk Modernleşmesi, Batılılaşma, Türk-İspanyol İlişkileri, Erken Cumhuriyet Türkiye'si, Cumhuriyet Reformları

1. Introduction

The Spanish Second Republic (1931-1939) was a period of extensive reforms aimed at restructuring and modernizing the education system, accompanied by innovative initiatives in the pedagogical and cultural spheres. The Republican government sought to remove education from religious control and establish it as a free, secular public service guaranteed by the state. As part of this effort, it also adopted the principle of coeducation, bringing female and male students together in the same educational system in an attempt to promote greater equality of opportunity in education.¹ Despite the severe economic conditions of the period and the limitations of the state budget, the government undertook extensive efforts in the field of education. The educational principles of the Institución Libre de Enseñanza, founded in 1876, had by the establishment of the Republic become an important influence on official state education policy. The institution advocated an education open to scientific developments and independent of dogma and political interference, with the aim of encouraging democratic participation and strengthening social integration.² One of the most concrete and ambitious applications of this educational philosophy was the Mediterranean University Cruise, undertaken in the summer of 1933. Organized under the leadership of Manuel García Morente, Dean of the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters at the Central University of Madrid (Universidad Central), the voyage brought together approximately two hundred academics and students. It was intended to provide participants with an opportunity to study the origins of Western civilization and Mediterranean culture through direct engagement with the places in which they had developed.³ In this respect, the Mediterranean University Cruise can be regarded as an important educational experiment that illustrates how the secular and innovative educational approach developed during the Republican period was conceived not only within Spain but also in relation to the historical, cultural, and social realities of the wider Mediterranean world.

1 Eduardo González Calleja, Carlos María Rodríguez López-Brea, Rosario Ruiz Franco, and Francisco Sánchez Pérez, eds., *La España del siglo XX: Síntesis y materiales para su estudio* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2015), 96.

2 Mónica Soria Moya, "La educación en la Institución Libre de Enseñanza," *Quién. Revista de Filosofía Personalista*, no. 15 (2022): 105.

3 Francisco Gracia Alonso and Josep Maria Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación: El crucero universitario por el Mediterráneo de 1933* (Barcelona: Edicions Universitat de Barcelona, 2006), 10–11.

This study examines the Turkish leg of the voyage, particularly the stops in İzmir and İstanbul, which were among the most critical and politically symbolic points on the route. The study examines the observations of Spanish intellectuals and young people toward Early Republican Türkiye at a time when the Second Spanish Republic itself was undergoing the difficulties and tensions of modernization and secularization. In this context, particular attention is given to how the alphabet reform, changes in dress, and measures aimed at modernizing public life in Türkiye, together with the historical and architectural sites visited in İzmir and İstanbul, were perceived and described by the Spanish travelers. The study approaches these observations within the context of the modernization and secularization policies of the period and examines how the transformation taking place in Türkiye was understood from the perspective of Spanish visitors. At the same time, these accounts are approached as records of the travelers' encounters with Türkiye, while taking into consideration the intellectual and political perspectives that informed their interpretations.

Rather than engaging in abstract theoretical debates, this study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and interpretive approach based on historical sources and personal accounts. To provide a clear thematic focus, the study is guided by the following central research question: *How did Spanish academics and students on the 1933 Mediterranean University Cruise perceive Early Republican Türkiye, and what role did their views of the East and their intellectual context play in shaping these perceptions?* By framing the inquiry around this question, the study seeks to explore the interplay between direct observation and the observers' subjective cultural frameworks. Its primary method is to examine the urban, cultural, and political landscape of Early Republican Türkiye through the subjective perspectives of the Spanish academics and students who visited the country in 1933. Using textual analysis, the study examines the Spanish travelers' observations and assessments of Turkish cities, social life, the reforms of the Republic, and the rise of Turkish nationalism. The analysis considers the intellectual background of Spanish circles at the time, including their orientalist perceptions of the East, while also examining how the encounter between these established ideas about the East and the Republic's policies of modernization and Westernization was understood in the travelers' accounts. Within this framework, different responses to the reforms of the new Türkiye—including perplexity, admiration, nostalgia, criticism, and disappointment—are considered in relation to the particular contexts of the personal accounts in which they appear.

The primary source for this study is the comprehensive work by Francisco Gracia Alonso and Josep Maria Fullola, entitled *El sueño de una generación. El crucero universitario por el mediterráneo de 1933* (The Dream of a Generation: The 1933 Mediterranean University Cruise). The work combines official records obtained from state archives with the personal diaries, letters, and memoirs kept by the students and academics who took part in the voyage. The travel diaries published in the appendices, with their original spelling, style, and modes of expression preserved, provide the main empirical basis for the urban, social, and cultural descriptions presented in the work.⁴

2. Arrival in Türkiye and Impressions of İzmir

The *Ciudad de Cádiz*, carrying approximately two hundred university students and academics from some of Spain's oldest universities, arrived in İzmir from the island of Rhodes, the previous stop on the voyage, on 4 July 1933. The ship's entry into Turkish territorial waters took place in a tense atmosphere, owing to the sensitive geopolitical conditions in the Aegean at the time and the controls imposed to prevent smuggling.⁵ As the ship approached the Gulf of İzmir, it was stopped by a warning shot fired from a Turkish military fort on the shore. After more than two hours of intensive logistical negotiations between the ship's authorities and the Turkish port authorities, conducted by means of flag signals, permission to approach the port was granted only in the evening. As soon as the ship docked, Turkish police officers boarded and subjected all passengers to a thorough and stringent inspection of their passports.⁶

When the *Ciudad de Cádiz* arrived in İzmir on the evening of 4 July 1933, none of the passengers was able to go ashore that night because of the strict passport controls at the port and the lack of an opportunity to exchange money at such a late hour.⁷ The following day, most of the group went ashore to visit İzmir, while some chose to remain on board. One reason for this was the landing fee that the Turkish authorities required from passengers going ashore. Among those who remained on the ship, however, were also individuals whose decision was motivated by ideological and political considerations rather than financial concerns. The prominent art historian Manuel Gómez Moreno regarded the Turkish Revolution, which brought about the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the abolition of the caliphate, as a "disruption of the sacred foundations of the social and political order." To express his dissatisfaction with and opposition to the new regime, Gómez Moreno refused to go ashore. Another prominent scholar of the period, Elías Tormo, likewise showed reluctance to disembark because of similar conservative reservations.⁸ These reactions indicate that the group did not respond to its arrival in İzmir in a uniform manner. The first encounter with Türkiye thus became an early point at which differing views of the Republican regime emerged among the participants.

For the Spanish passengers who went ashore, İzmir offered an unsettling combination of natural beauty and the physical remnants of wartime destruction. The city had not yet recovered from the devastating effects of the Turkish War of Independence, particularly the 1922 fire that had reduced much of İzmir to ashes. Along the waterfront, where the wealthiest part of the city and its commercial center had once stood, the passengers saw piles of rubble, ruins, and blackened remains of walls in place of grand buildings. For the travelers, this devastation gave İzmir a deeply somber appearance.⁹

5 Since Spain had no official diplomatic representation in İzmir, the precise cause of the incident could not be established at the time. Later assessments, however, suggested that it may have resulted from the Spanish ship approaching the shore without flying either the Turkish flag or the other official signal flags required under international maritime regulations. Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 220.

6 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 219-220.

7 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 220.

8 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 220.

9 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 440-441.

The Spaniards who went ashore also found the city's emerging urban fabric aesthetically unappealing. Carlos Alonso del Real, one of the students, described İzmir as an ordinary and poorly maintained city that had lost its character, and he ironically criticized the local population for taking pride in its impoverished squares and poorly maintained public buildings. Arguing that the city was experiencing a crisis of identity and had become neither fully Eastern nor fully Western, Alonso del Real interpreted the new social and political atmosphere in İzmir as a combination of weakening religious ties, technological and modern transformation, and an increasingly aggressive form of nationalism.¹⁰ The Spanish travelers' initial impressions of İzmir therefore brought together two aspects of the city's recent history: the physical destruction left by the war and the traces of the new social and political order taking shape during the Republican period.

3. The Tension Between Romance and Reality in İstanbul

The *Ciudad de Cádiz* departed from İzmir in the afternoon of 5 July 1933, bound for İstanbul. In the early hours of 6 July, after leaving the island of Lesbos (Midilli) behind, the ship entered the Dardanelles at around 5:00 a.m. After sailing across the Sea of Marmara, it reached the southern end of the Bosphorus in the afternoon. To the Spanish passengers, the Bosphorus was a magnificent waterway, with its lush gardens, grand waterfront mansions, and scenery reminiscent of the Swiss lakes. When the ship anchored at the Galata Quay in the evening, Julio Palencia, the Spanish Consul General in İstanbul, and officials from the municipal tourism department came aboard. Palencia met with Dean García Morente and Ferrandis, who was responsible for the administrative affairs of the voyage, and finalized the group's itinerary in İstanbul.¹¹

On their first evening in the city, some of the passengers climbed the Galata Tower, a Genoese structure dating from the fourteenth century, to watch the sunset, accompanied by a European resident of the Galata district. From the top of the tower, the orange evening light falling on the domes of İstanbul's mosques and the silvery glow of the Golden Horn left a strong aesthetic impression on the travelers.¹² This enchanting first impression, however, gave way to a marked tension between romance and reality once the passengers began to explore the city itself. Rather than the exotic Eastern city associated in the travelers' minds with harems, concubines, and sultans, İstanbul in 1933 appeared as a city in transition, bearing the marks of the collapse of the empire, the change of regime, economic crisis, and the struggle for independence against the Greek occupation. The city's dark and quiet streets disappointed travelers who had encountered a much livelier atmosphere in Tunisia, Egypt, and Palestine.

Those who had come in search of an Oriental exoticism instead encountered a society dressed in European styles in accordance with Mustafa Kemal's reforms, as well as signs of the new writing system that had replaced the Arabic script.¹³ This transformation drew criticism from some of the students and academics on the voyage. Ángel González Palencia,

10 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 220-221.

11 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 223-225.

12 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 227.

13 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 228.

one of the prominent Orientalists of the period who took part in the journey, for example, argued that the Turks' efforts to Europeanize the country had resulted in adopting only the outer shell and appearance of European civilization, and perhaps even its less desirable aspects.¹⁴ Esmeralda Gijón Zapata, then a twenty-year-old student who would later become a specialist in the Arab world, expressed a similar sense of dissatisfaction in her diary. Her criticism of Westernization was not primarily political but was shaped by an aesthetic and cultural sense of nostalgia. While describing Europeanized and modernized spaces as "modern" and "industrial," Gijón Zapata instead emphasized İstanbul's historical identity through ideas of art, the past, and memory.¹⁵ In the travelers' accounts, İstanbul was more than a city to be visited and observed. It was a city where the traces of its Ottoman past stood alongside the visible changes of the Republican period, allowing the travelers to encounter both historical continuity and social transformation.

The place where the group experienced what they regarded as the most authentic expression of İstanbul's traditional Eastern character and Ottoman-Muslim life was the district of Eyüp, located at the northern end of the Golden Horn. Trips to Eyüp, made by different groups on 7 and 8 July, offered the passengers a view of a form of everyday life that had not yet been substantially affected by urban modernization. The journey across the Golden Horn in small boats and steam launches was itself described in the diaries as a lyrical experience.¹⁶ After crossing the almost fairytale-like waters of the Golden Horn and reaching Eyüp, the Spanish travelers found a world that seemed entirely different from the cosmopolitan and European character of Galata and Pera. The traditional whitewashed wooden houses lining the narrow, exceptionally clean streets, the cemeteries extending beneath the shade of cypress trees, and local residents who had retained traditional forms of dress gave the Spaniards the atmosphere of the "genuine and mystical East" they had imagined. The travelers visited the Eyüp Sultan Mosque and observed local people worshipping and praying. In particular, the presence of young Turkish women praying in the mosque courtyard to marry and find "a suitable husband", together with the atmosphere of faith surrounding them, reminded the Spanish travelers of the traditional village fairs and religious festivals of their own country.¹⁷ The visit to Eyüp consequently became one of the experiences recorded in the diaries in which traditional life was most clearly encountered among the different urban and social settings the Spanish travelers experienced in İstanbul.

4. Views on the Republican Reforms

The reforms introduced by the Turkish Republic became a prominent subject of observation for the Spanish academics and students aboard the *Ciudad de Cádiz* during their journey through Türkiye. The members of the group interpreted the changes they observed in different aspects of everyday life as tangible signs of the modernization efforts underway in Early Republican Türkiye. What is particularly noteworthy is that the Spanish observers did not record these reforms simply as abstract political decisions. Instead, they

14 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 228-229.

15 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 512.

16 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 516.

17 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 232.

encountered them in the ordinary details of daily life—in signs, clothing, and even the platforms of mosques.

The 1928 Alphabet Reform,¹⁸ one of the most far-reaching cultural reforms carried out by the new Republic of Türkiye under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, was among the most visible changes observed by the passengers of the *Ciudad de Cádiz* on several occasions during their journey. The Spanish travelers' accounts describe the effects of this linguistic transformation both in the streets and in religious and cultural life. After going ashore, the Spanish passengers noted that the use of signs written in the Arabic script on street signs and shop windows had been strictly prohibited. They also observed that even the use of European languages on such signs was not permitted, and that all signs had been replaced with the new Turkish letters.¹⁹ The practical consequences of the Alphabet Reform at the level of everyday life, as well as the difficulties involved in adapting to the new system, attracted the attention of the Spanish visitors. The difficulties faced by a considerable part of the population in acquiring literacy in the new alphabet had given rise to a new occupation in the streets. Arturo Ruiz-Castillo, one of the younger members of the group, recorded that itinerant petition writers (*arzuhalciler*) waited in the streets of İstanbul with portable typewriters fitted with the new Latin characters, working busily to write petitions and letters for people who were unable to do so themselves in the new script.²⁰ For the Spanish travelers, such encounters provided a direct view of how the alphabet reform was reshaping ordinary practices in the streets of Republican Türkiye.

The Spanish travelers' observations of the changes in language extended beyond everyday and public life to religious practices. In this context, the introduction of Turkish into religious worship was one of the aspects of the language reforms that attracted the attention of some of the travelers. What particularly surprised them was the use of Turkish in religious services.²¹ Ángel González Palencia, who attended the Friday prayer and sermon at the Beyazıt Mosque in İstanbul together with the Spanish group, drew particular attention to the fact that the sermon (*hutbe*) and the religious address (*vaaz*) were conducted in Turkish.²² Palencia's account thus reveals how the Spanish travelers encountered the language reforms not as an abstract state policy, but as a transformation that had begun to reshape the linguistic texture of religious practice itself. The mosque, in this sense, offered them a particularly revealing setting in which to observe how the reformist linguistic agenda was translated into lived religious experience.

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- 18 In August 1928, Atatürk announced that Türkiye would adopt a new writing system. The Law on Turkish Letters was subsequently enacted on 1 November 1928. Within a few months, the new Turkish alphabet had been introduced across state institutions, schools, and the Turkish press by January 1929. Bilal N. Şimşir, *Türk Yazı Devrimi*, 2nd ed. (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2008), 326.
- 19 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 221.
- 20 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 242.
- 21 In 1932, the process of translating the *ezan* (call to prayer) and sermons into Turkish was initiated. On January 30, 1932, the first Turkish *ezan* was recited at the Fatih Mosque, while later that year, during Ramadan, the sermon at the Süleymaniye Mosque was delivered entirely in Turkish for the first time, including its Qur'anic verses, prayers, and spoken passages. Nurhan Aydın and Elif Ergün, "Atatürk'ün Din Politikası ve Günümüze Yansımaları," *Tarih ve Günce*, no. 6 (2020): 58.
- 22 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 233.

The dress reform,²³ another highly visible and far-reaching aspect of Türkiye's modernization efforts at the time, was among the issues that attracted considerable attention from the Spanish academics and students aboard the *Ciudad de Cádiz*. The travelers observed that the ban on the fez was being strictly enforced, while they encountered a different situation in the case of women. Although the travelers observed that women were prohibited from wearing the veil,²⁴ they also noted that, under the influence of longstanding traditions, women continued to wear garments that covered much of their bodies, along with black headscarves, when appearing in public.²⁵ These observations indicated that changes in clothing unfolded alongside enduring traditional social practices despite official regulations. For the travelers, the persistence of traditional forms of attire revealed the tension between the process of modernization and established ways of life.

For the Spanish travelers, the significance of the reform extended beyond clothing itself to the changing appearance of Republican society in public life. The changing public image of women and the representation of a modern female identity were among the aspects of Turkish society that particularly attracted their attention. This evolving image of women was also reflected in the travelers' encounter with Nazire Hanım, the reigning Turkish beauty queen²⁶, whose appearance they associated with the emerging image of the modern Turkish woman. At noon on 10 July 1933, shortly before the ship was due to leave the port, Nazire Hanım visited the *Ciudad de Cádiz*, causing considerable excitement among the group. The Spanish student Jacobo Bentata, who was also a member of the organizing committee of the Miss Europe competition held in Madrid that year, welcomed Nazire Hanım aboard and spent time speaking with her. The Spanish travelers described her as a short, pale-skinned, serious, and highly intellectual modern Republican woman, dressed in an elegant white suit and wearing a smooth straw hat.²⁷ What emerges from the account was an understanding of female appearance that encompassed far more than physical features,

23 In the early years of the Republic, regulations concerning headwear and dress in Türkiye were introduced gradually. On November 25, 1925, legislation was enacted regulating the adoption of the hat, particularly among members of the Grand National Assembly, administrative officials, and civil servants. On December 3, 1934, further legislation restricted members of the clergy from wearing their professional religious attire except during religious ceremonies, requiring them to wear civilian clothing at other times. Tuncay Yıldırım, "Atatürk Dönemi Kılık Kıyafet Düzenlemeleri ve Toplum Üzerindeki Etkileri," *Atatürk Yolu Dergisi*, no. 73 (2023): 410–11.

24 In fact, as of this date, there were no regulations governing the use of the veil and the *çarşaf*, a traditional full-body covering worn by women. Later, when a proposal to address the issue in the Grand National Assembly in 1935 was rejected on the grounds that the matter should be regulated by local authorities, the first measures concerning the use of the veil and *çarşaf* were introduced regionally by local administrations during the same year (Yıldırım, "Atatürk Dönemi Kılık Kıyafet Düzenlemeleri," 412). Thus, when the *Ciudad de Cádiz* visited Türkiye in 1933, there was neither a nationwide ban on the use of the veil and *çarşaf* nor the regional restrictions that would begin to emerge later. However, women were encouraged to move away from veiling through a range of social and cultural measures, and the observations recorded by the Spanish travelers may well have reflected the effects of these efforts.

25 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 221.

26 Nazire Hanım had been crowned Türkiye's beauty queen at a ball held at the Tokatlıyan Hotel a few months earlier, in February 1933. Filiz Yıldız, "Türkiye'de İlk Güzellik Yarışmaları ve Basının Öncü Rolü: Genç Cumhuriyet'in Asri Güzelleri," *Etkileşim*, no. 4 (2019): 81–82.

27 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 240.

extending to clothing, demeanor, and intellectual qualities. Taken together, these elements were presented as markers of the modern woman associated with the new Republican society.

5. Observations on Republican Nationalism

During the Mediterranean voyage of 1933, one of the most prominent themes encountered by Spanish intellectuals and students in Early Republican Türkiye, and one that prompted considerable reflection among them, was Turkish nationalism and its manifestations in public life. Although the Spanish travelers themselves came from a progressive and secular republic, they did not always view the Kemalist reforms and the rise of Turkish nationalism in positive terms. On the contrary, they often examined this ideology with a mixture of suspicion, concern, and surprise. This unease took different forms among the travelers, depending on their political and intellectual perspectives.

The young traveler Carlos Alonso del Real, for example, was particularly critical of the new revolutionary and nationalist current in Türkiye. Describing the atmosphere in the streets of İzmir and İstanbul as a revolutionary climate in which “the winds of Soviet Russia” seemed to be blowing, Real characterized the construction of the new national identity as a strained combination of religious detachment, technologization, and “aggressive patriotism.”²⁸ The conservative scholar González Palencia, meanwhile, found the impression created by Türkiye “perplexing.” In his view, the Turks had adopted only the outer shell and formal aspects of European civilization, while attempting to compensate for what he regarded as deficiencies in technical preparation and literary tradition through “fierce nationalism.” Palencia further argued that this extreme nationalist attitude could pose a serious danger for the future.²⁹

The unease evident in these accounts also shaped Jaume Vicens Vives’s reading of the new Türkiye, although he approached it through the lens of Ottoman history and European memory.³⁰ His perspective on the rebirth of modern Türkiye was marked, like that of some other Spanish travelers, by a sense of “rejection and apprehension.” Observing the Monument to Atatürk in İzmir,³¹ Vives interpreted the Gazi’s outstretched arm toward the sea not simply as a gesture symbolizing the establishment of the new Türkiye, but as a sign of an intention to reclaim in the future the territories that the Ottoman Empire had lost on the European continent after the Balkan Wars. From this perspective, Atatürk became, in Vives’s account, less the founder of modern Türkiye than a historical figure who evoked once again the “Turkish Danger,” which had been a source of anxiety for European diplomacy until the end of the First World War. Vives consequently regarded Mustafa Kemal as a historical successor to Ottoman rulers such as Selim I and Suleiman the

28 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 220-221.

29 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 228-229.

30 Still a university student at the time, Vives would later establish himself as a prominent historian in Spain.

31 The monument, located in Cumhuriyet Square, one of the city’s most central public spaces, was erected in 1932 as an expression of gratitude to Atatürk for the city’s liberation from foreign occupation and as a means of commemorating this event. Kıvanç Osma, “İzmir’in Ata’ya Teşekkürünün Görsel İfadesi: Atıl Atatürk Anıtı,” *Sanat Tarihi Dergisi*, no. 11 (2001): 105.

Magnificent, placing the founder of the Republic within a line of continuity with the Ottoman Empire's military and expansionist past.³² In this reading, the political rupture represented by the establishment of the Republic was overshadowed by a presumed continuity with the Ottoman imperial legacy.³³

6. Final Visits and Encounters Before Leaving Türkiye

The visit of the Spanish academic group to İstanbul University (then the Darülfünun) on 9 July 1933, and the events that followed, constituted one of the most impressive and ceremonious moments of the Mediterranean voyage. Despite a severe storm that broke out suddenly after lunch that day, the Spanish academics and students made their way to the university in hired cars, where they received a warm welcome from the university rector,³⁴ members of the university senate and a large group of Turkish student representatives. In his speech, delivered in French, Tevfik Recep Bey expressed his admiration for Spanish culture, literature, and art. He emphasized that, although the Spanish and Turkish nations were located at opposite ends of the Mediterranean, they shared certain moral and cultural qualities, including hospitality, generosity, idealism, and a strong sense of honor. He also expressed the hope that this historic visit would strengthen academic and intellectual ties between the two young republics. In his response, the head of the Spanish delegation, Dean García Morente, spoke enthusiastically of the far-reaching educational and modernization reforms undertaken by Gazi Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his government.³⁵

Following the official reception, all the Spanish guests were invited to a tea reception at the renowned Tokatlıyan Hotel in Tarabya, hosted by the university in their honor. The guests made their way to the pier at the Galata Bridge and boarded a ferry specially chartered by İstanbul University for the occasion. During the journey, which took place in light rain, the Spanish students admired the historic waterfront mansions along the Bosphorus, the buildings housing foreign embassies, and the imposing palace of the Khedive of Egypt. In the halls of the Tokatlıyan Hotel, the new flag of the Spanish Republic was officially raised for the first time in Türkiye. The Governor of İstanbul, Muhittin Bey, and senior officials of the province also attended the reception and engaged in diplomatic conversations with Dean García Morente.³⁶ Given the scale of the reception and the people who attended, the Turkish leg of the voyage ended as a warm and symbolic diplomatic encounter between the two states, despite the tensions and contrasting impressions evident in the travelers' individual accounts. Indeed, on behalf of the travelers, García Morente later conveyed through the Spanish consulate his thanks to the people and public officials of İstanbul for the cordial

32 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 401.

33 Vives thus fell into a significant historical and analytical misjudgment by attempting to fit the founder of a modern, territorially defined, largely status-quo-oriented nation-state, which rejected expansionism, into his own archaic image of the "expansionist Ottoman Sultan."

34 The name "Tevfik Emin Bey," as given in the source, was in fact a mistaken reference to Tevfik Recep Bey, who was serving as Acting Rector at the time. Since the Acting Rector was referred to in those years as the *emin vekili*, the error most likely stemmed from a confusion between this title and the individual's name.

35 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 237-238.

36 Gracia Alonso and Fullola Pericot, *El sueño de una generación*, 237-239.

reception extended to the group during their stay, a gesture that was subsequently reported in the Turkish press.

7. Conclusion

The Mediterranean University Cruise of 1933 provided university students and academics during the Second Spanish Republic with an important opportunity to observe Türkiye at first hand. The diaries, notes, and assessments of the group members who traveled to İzmir and İstanbul aboard the *Ciudad de Cádiz* offer a range of impressions of how Early Republican Türkiye appeared to Spanish observers at the time. In these accounts, Türkiye was considered not simply for its historical and touristic features, but also in terms of the reforms introduced by the Republic and their effects on everyday life.

The observations of İzmir and İstanbul show that the travelers paid particular attention to the physical appearance of the cities and their social atmosphere. In İzmir, the traces of destruction left by the War of Independence and the 1922 fire occupied an important place in their accounts, while in İstanbul they drew attention to the historical texture inherited from the Ottoman past alongside the new urban appearance emerging during the Republican period. Districts such as Eyüp, where traditional ways of life were more readily observed, were considered alongside the European character of areas such as Galata and Pera. Elements associated with the past and visible changes associated with the new period could therefore be found side by side within the same city.

The Republican reforms were another important part of the group's experience in Türkiye. The Alphabet Reform appeared in their accounts as a visible change that could be observed in various settings, from street signs to everyday writing practices. The delivery of the sermon in Turkish at the Beyazıt Mosque provided a particularly notable example of how the language reforms had entered religious life. Changes in dress were likewise observed through the public appearance of Turkish society, ranging from the use of the fez to women's clothing and the portrayal of the beauty queen Nazire Hanım as a modern Republican woman. These observations indicate that the Spanish travelers generally encountered the reforms not as abstract political measures, but as changes that could be seen directly in everyday life.

The travelers' assessments of Türkiye, however, were far from uniform. While the modernization and secularization policies of the Republic attracted the interest and admiration of some members of the group, others expressed reservations, particularly concerning Turkish nationalism, Westernization, and the transformation of traditional ways of life. The accounts of Carlos Alonso del Real, Ángel González Palencia, and Jaume Vicens Vives reveal differences of emphasis rather than fundamentally divergent interpretations of Türkiye. Their observations varied in tone and focus, reflecting the particular aspects of the country's transformation that drew their attention.

The reception at İstanbul University and the gathering that followed during the final part of the visit added another dimension to these observations: the close contact established between Spanish and Turkish academic circles. The exchanges between Turkish and Spanish academics, the raising of the flag of the new Spanish Republic during the ceremony, and the participation of local officials in the reception indicate that the voyage also provided an opportunity for academic and diplomatic contact.

The Spanish accounts of the 1933 Mediterranean University Cruise thus constitute a rich body of material for examining how Early Republican Türkiye was viewed from abroad. At the same time, these accounts reflected a twofold perspective: they recorded aspects of Republican Türkiye as observed by foreign visitors, while also revealing the political and intellectual frameworks through which those observations were interpreted. Their descriptions bring together the historical appearance of İzmir and İstanbul, everyday life, religious practices, clothing, language reforms, and the atmosphere of nationalism. Türkiye appears in these accounts as a country in which elements inherited from the past existed alongside the new social and political landscape taking shape under the Republic. The voyage therefore offers a means of examining the transformations of the early Republican period through the direct observations of Spanish academics and students, while also tracing how their perceptions were informed by the intellectual and political perspectives they brought with them.

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