

One Nation, Two Languages: Latinization and Language Reform in Turkey and
Azerbaijan, 1905-1938

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF
MINNESOTA BY

Wesley Wayne Lummus

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIERMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
Wesley Wayne Lummus
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Giancarlo Casale

May 2021

Wesley Lummus, 2021 ©

Acknowledgments

My first debt of gratitude is due to my advisor, Giancarlo Casale, for his nine years of steadfast support and guidance of my dissertation research and writing. Secondly, I would like to thank the members of my defense committee, Patricia Lorcin, Carol Hakim, Theofanis Stavrou, and Sinem Casale for the many years they spent reading my chapter drafts and providing comment and encouragement.

I am equally grateful to the immense support network I had during the research and writing of this dissertation. I would like to thank Rasool Abbaszade, Fiala Abdullayeva, Saad Abi-Hamad, Fakhreddin and Ruqiyye Ahmadov, Adam Blackler, Fikri Çiçek, Brooke Depenbusch, Jess Farrell, Jala Garibova, Melissa Hampton, Dilek Hanımefendi, Ketaki Jaywant, Orry Klainman, Matt King, Katie Lambright, Jamie and Cash Lummus, John Manke, Sara Mirkalai, Sidow Mohammed, Sultan Toprak Oker, Ibrahim Oker, Gabriele Payne, and Virgil Slade. I am very grateful for their support.

Abstract

This dissertation examines 20th-century Turkic Latinization, the process by which Turkic language reformers replaced the Perso-Arabic alphabet with the Latin-based *New Turkish Alphabet*, from a transnational perspective. Focusing on the Turkish and Soviet Azerbaijani cases, my work reconstructs the intellectual and nationalist networks that were forged across imperial and national boundaries and shaped the debates over language, modernization, and national identity in Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Central Asia. The ascendancy of Turkic Latinization, I argue, emerged with the rise of the Soviet and Kemalist states in the post-WWI period. These revolutionary states enacted far-reaching reforms to modernize all areas of life, and remake their respective societies in a Soviet or Kemalist mold. At the heart of both states' political projects was language reform, which increasingly equated Latinization with reaching modernity. Though the Soviets and Kemalists ultimately envisioned different modernities, their language reforms of the Turkic language both drew from the same pool of Turcological and nationalist literature.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	i
Abstract.....	ii
List of Tables.....	v
List of Figures.....	vi
Chapter 1 : Introduction.....	1
1a. Literature Review.....	5
1b. Dissertation Outline.....	20
1c. Sources.....	25
Chapter 2 : Turkology and the Development of “Turkic” Identity	
2a. Introduction.....	29
2b. History of Old Turkic.....	31
2c. The Journal <i>Asiatique</i>	36
2d. Vasili Radlov.....	42
2e. Léon Cahun.....	49
2f. The Orhon Inscriptions and the Ancient Turkic “Nation”.....	52
2g. Conclusion: Turkology and Language Reform.....	55
Chapter 3: Language Reform and Nationalism in the Pre-WWI Turcophone Press	
3a. Introduction.....	60
3b. Note on Terminology.....	66
3c. Early Debates over Language Reform.....	67
3d. Ismail Gaspriski and the Usul-i Jedid (New Method).....	71
3e. Calls for Social Transformation in the Russian Caucasus.....	77
3f. Turkology and the Development of Turkishness.....	89
3g. Yusuf Akçura and Ottoman Turkism.....	96
3h. Conclusion.....	103
Chapter 4 : Soviet Azerbaijan and The Revolutionary Latin Script (1923-1930)	
4a. Introduction.....	106
4b. <i>Korenizatsiia</i> : Soviet Nationality Policy.....	109
4c. Formation of Soviet Azerbaijan (1917-1936).....	114
4d. The Organization of the Baku Conference.....	123
4e. “Turko-Tatar Workers and Peasants” within Soviet Socialist Modernization.....	127
4f. Debates over Language and Alphabet.....	144
4g. Concluding Resolutions of the Baku Conference.....	149
4h. Conclusion: Legacies of Soviet Nationality Policy.....	153
Chapter 5 : Opposition to Latinization: The <i>Islahatçılar</i>	
5a. Introduction.....	156
5b. Turkish “Reformists” (<i>Islahatçılar</i>), Pre-1928.....	158
5c. Birgen’s Perceptions of Soviet Transcaucasia.....	161
5d. Birgen’s Reflections on Communism in Soviet Azerbaijan.....	164
5e. Birgen and Language in Transcaucasian Society.....	168
5f. Birgen’s Views on Turkic Language Reform.....	171
5g. The “Reformists” at the Baku Turkological Conference.....	179
5h. Enver Pasha’s Alphabet.....	192

5i. Conclusion.....	202
Chapter 6 : Constructing the Turkish Nation During the Alphabet Revolution	
6a. Introduction.....	204
6b. Kemalist Language Reform in Historiographical Perspective.....	208
6c. Historical Approach and Sources.....	217
6d. Question of Alphabet Reform or Latinization.....	220
6e. The Alphabet Revolution and the Mobilization of Turkish Society Through Populism.....	222
6f. Conclusion.....	253
Chapter 7 : Dissertation Conclusion.....	258
Bibliography.....	260

List of Figures

1. Figure 1. <i>Thomsen's Old Turkic Alphabet Chart</i>	33
2. Figure 2. <i>Thomsen's Orhon Turkic Grammar</i>	34
3. Figure 3. <i>The Opening of the Baku Conference</i>	106
4. Figure 4. <i>Molla Nesreddin, January 1926</i>	123
5. Figure 5. <i>Baku Conference Attendees</i>	133
6. Figure 6. <i>Ismail Hakki's Alphabet Manual</i>	196
7. Figure 7. <i>Ismail Hakki's Alphabet Manual 2</i>	197
8. Figure 8. <i>Enver Pasha's Alphabet Manual</i>	200
9. Figure 9. <i>Karagöz December 1928 1</i>	204
10. Figure 10. <i>Karagöz December 1928 2</i>	233
11. Figure 11. <i>Karagöz December 1928 3</i>	234
12. Figure 12. <i>Cumhuriyet January 1929</i>	246
13. Figure 13. <i>Cumhuriyet January 1929 2</i>	249

List of Tables

1. Table 1. *Turkic Language Comparison with Orhon*.....34-35
2. Table 2. Comparison of National Terminology.....66

1. Introduction

In October 2017, the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, issued a formal decree that the Kazakh language would replace its current Cyrillic-based alphabet with a Latinized script.¹ President Nazarbayev legitimized this alphabetic reform using the language of modernization (citing the need to prepare Kazakh for the digital age), national sovereignty (asserting Kazakhstan's independence from neighboring Russia), and the reinvigoration of Kazakh cultural identity. In power since 1991, Nazarbayev viewed Kazakh alphabet reform as vital for maintaining the country's cultural sovereignty. This was stressed in Nazarbayev's 2017 speech, entitled "Course Towards the Future: Modernization of Kazakhstan's Identity," where he stated that Latinization was a prerequisite of the government's "Third Modernization of Kazakhstan" program. Under this state-led transformation, Nazarbayev argued that "it is necessary to start working on a step-by-step transition of the Kazakh language to the Latin alphabet. We must approach this carefully and with sensitivity. It will require a steady and staged approach. And we have been preparing for this with caution since independence."²

Following the trajectory of other Central Asian Turkic languages and dialects, Kazakh has employed different alphabets throughout its history: Old Turkic runes, Perso-Arabic, Latin in the 1920s and 30s, and finally, Cyrillic after 1939. After two decades of independence from Russia, Kazakhstan's political leadership seeks to replace Cyrillic with Latin to carve out a more autonomous cultural identity from Russia. In his 2017 speech,

¹ BBC News, "Kazakhstan to Qazaqstan: Why would a country switch its alphabet?" <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41800186>.

² Nursultan Nazarbayev, "Course Towards the Future: Modernization of Kazakhstan's Identity," 10/16/2017, <http://www.ukgu.kz/en/course-towards-future-modernization-kazakhstans-identity>.

Nazarbayev stated that “It is a change driven by the specific requirements of the modern technological environment, of communications and science and education in the 21st century.” Furthermore, the president envisioned that a phased and gradual transition from Cyrillic to Latin: “In our schools, all children learn English. This uses the Latin alphabet. It means that there will be no problems for young people. I believe that by the end of 2017 it is necessary, with the help of scientists and the general public, to adopt a single standard version of the new Kazakh alphabet. In 2018, we should begin training for teaching the new alphabet and preparing textbooks for secondary schools.”³

Should Latinization be successfully adopted, Kazakhstan will follow previous post-Soviet Turkic states—Turkmenistan in 1991, Uzbekistan in 1992, and Azerbaijan in 1993—to switch from Cyrillic. Ostensibly, a Latinized Kazakh alphabet will render the language more intelligible to these neighboring Turkic states and could provide further momentum for Latinization in other Turkic countries, such as Kyrgyzstan. Kazakh’s Latinization, therefore, should be viewed as the latest example of a longer history of Turkic language reform. This dissertation traces that history, beginning with the collapse of the Russian and Ottoman empires after World War I (WWI). This turbulent period witnessed the rise of revolutionary states, the Soviet Union and Republic of Turkey, that constructed new forms of national identity out of former imperial and religious solidarities.

In doing so, both the Soviet and Turkish states employed the very reformist discourse that future modernizing regimes, such as Nazarbayev’s Kazakhstan, have drawn from in order to legitimize their own Latinizing alphabet reforms. State discourses inherited

³ Nazarbayev, *ibid.*

from the Soviet and Kemalist periods of which this dissertation is focused all came to center on modernization, national sovereignty, and cultural renewal. These three themes are prevalent in the writings, speeches, and actions of Soviet and Kemalist language reformers in the 1920s and 1930s. This dissertation will examine how Soviet and Kemalist reformist discourse in the post-WWI period enabled the shift from the Perso-Arabic script to the Latinized *New Turkish Alphabets* and how post-Soviet Turkic states have coopted previous reformers to re-Latinize their Turkic languages after 1991.

Using a transnational perspective, I will examine the process of twentieth century Turkic Latinization by which Soviet and Kemalist reformers replaced the Perso-Arabic script with the Latin-based *New Turkish Alphabet*. Focusing my study mostly on Turkey and Azerbaijan, I will reconstruct the intellectual and political networks, forged by language reformers across Ottoman-Russian imperial and political boundaries, that played a decisive role in shaping the debates over language, modernization, and national identity. The ascendancy of Turkic Latinization, my study argues, coincided with the rise of a new type of modernizing state from the post-WWI ashes of the Ottoman and Russian empires. These revolutionary states, the Soviet Union and Turkish Republic, enacted far-reaching reforms to transform the populations under their jurisdiction. Though the Soviet and Kemalist reformers envisioned different ends to social engineering, both viewed the discourse of modernization as a *prerequisite* for change. As such, the Bolsheviks and Turkish republicans worked to modernize all areas of life and remake their societies using Latinization to promote their ideology along the way.

During the Interwar period (1918-1939), language reformers in both the USSR and the Turkish Republic embarked upon parallel reforms to the Turkic languages under their

tutelage. In both cases, these reforms aimed to steer the Turkic-speaking communities away from Islamic-oriented identity by abolishing the Perso-Arabic alphabet, used by scholars and literary figures for over a millennium. Both Turkish and Soviet language reformers increasingly scapegoated this script as epitomizing a “stagnant” Islamic past that kept the Turkic languages “incomprehensible” and “foreign” to the vast majority of their speakers. By arguing that the Perso-Arabic script was both “incomprehensible” and “foreign,” Soviet and Kemalist reformers made the case that the Turks were a distinct ethno-linguistic group within the Muslim world, and thus, should develop a language, literature, and alphabet independent of Arabic and Persian. This push for language reform culminated in the adoption of the New Turkish Alphabet (*Yeni Türk Elifbası*) in both the Soviet Union and Turkish Republic in the 1920s. Based on a modified Latin script, the New Turkish Alphabet signaled a dramatic departure from written tradition for the Turks in Anatolia, Transcaucasia, and Central Asia whereby Islamic unity and history were displaced in favor of a “modern” Latin script which would serve as the primary tool for mass education and literacy.

In examining the transnational reformist networks that enabled Turkic Latinization in the 1920s and 30s, my work centers the public discourse over Latinization made in the 1926 Baku Turkological Conference and how the ideas coming from this venue were eventually taken up by the Kemalist Latinization project. Thus, I demonstrate how the political and ideological rhetoric on language traversed borders and operated within a larger geographic and ideological spectrum. Within this wider landscape, both Kemalist and Soviet reformers adopted common assumptions and impulses about modernity,

nationalism, and the ability of the revolutionary state to implement both through full-scale Latinization.

1a. Literature Review

This section will outline the scholarly literature and approaches that have informed this study's approach to transnational Turkic Latinization. First, this study adopts some of the broader theoretical perspectives on language reform, defining it as a project of modern states to legitimize and disseminate their linguistic objectives. Joan Rubin and Bjorn Jernudd use the term *language planning* to designate the state's deliberate "changes in the system of language code or speaking or both."⁴ They argue that this type of planning is carried "by organizations that are established for such purposes or given a mandate [by the state] to fulfill such purposes."⁵ Therefore, language planning, in Rubin and Jernudd's conception, places the modernizing state, regardless of its ideological character, at the center of the reform process. The goals of language reform, therefore, have as much to do with establishing the hegemony of the state as they do with modernizing the society along particular ideological lines.

Language reform, therefore, is inherently tied not only to issues of cultural orientation, education, and modernization, but also to the power of the modern state to enact and sustain such measures. Latinizing the Turkic idioms was a central component in the Soviet and Kemalist efforts at social and cultural change. Writing on the Kemalist reform, Yeşim Bayar argues that language reform and Latinization "essentially [became]

⁴ Joan Rubin and Björn H. Jernudd, "Introduction: Language Planning as an Element in Modernization," in *Can Language be Planned?* (Honolulu University of Hawaii Press, 1971), xiv.

⁵ Rubin & Jernudd, xiv.

a question of politics and ideology...tied to the [Kemalist] elite's concern to solidify their nationalist project in the hearts and minds of the people.”⁶ In both the Soviet and Kemalist contexts, the jurisdiction of the state was expanded under new revolutionary principles to direct the process of language reform, including Latinization, standardization, and dissemination of the new idiom through the education system and media outlets.

In his study on language reform in Soviet Uzbekistan, William Fierman demonstrates that Latinization was enacted by modernizing state elites to consolidate their political control over society. Comparing it to Turkey, Iran, Vietnam, Algeria, India, and Nigeria, Fierman argues Soviet Uzbekistan established its legitimacy among the population, garnered mass participation, and built a unique national identity through language reform.⁷ For Fierman, the Soviet experience constitutes merely one example within a larger history of modernizing states and regimes that used language reform to reach their political ends. In the Soviet and Kemalist cases, the work of planning and managing language fell to “language-planner technocrats” who operated in conjunction with the ruling government or regime.⁸

Though establishing and securing political power was paramount, Fierman mentions identity construction as another goal of Soviet Uzbek planners: “A major reason that language is more likely than any other phenomenon to become a symbol of identity is its role in transmitting history.”⁹ Ultimately, Fierman argues that the project of language

⁶ Yeşim Bayar, *Formation of the Turkish Nation-State, 1920-1938* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014), 38.

⁷ William Fierman, *Language Planning and National Development: The Uzbek Experience* (Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991), 11-26.

⁸ Fierman, 16.

⁹ Fierman, 21.

reform “reflect[s] the preferences and calculations of the elites who control the state machinery...Therefore struggles over language quickly turn into struggles for control of political institutions.”¹⁰ This struggle, however, does not take place at the state level alone, nor did the effort to legitimize Latinization. For both the Soviet and Kemalist reformers, language reform was meant to coopt the broader population into the state’s ideological project and to secure political legitimacy.

In her study of national development in Soviet Turkmenistan, Adrienne Edgar expands further on the role of national elites in constructing new forms of identity: “The nation-making efforts of modern states do not, of course, focus solely on elites; they also seek to mobilize the masses, turning them from reluctant subjects into active and concerned citizens.”¹¹ Examining the case of Soviet Turkmenistan, Adrienne Edgar emphasizes, in the vein of Fierman, that Soviet reformers enacted Latinization and purification (*tasfiye*) for the purpose of modernizing the Soviet Turkic republics and their societies. In *Tribal Nation*, Edgar argues that Soviet language reform was a powerful instrument in this process:

As a direct result of Soviet rule, aspects of nation formation that took decades or centuries elsewhere—the establishment of a national territory and government institutions, the standardization of a national language, and the emergence of a mass educational system—were accomplished in Turkmenistan and its neighbors [in Central Asia and the Caucasus] in less than a decade.¹²

Here, Edgar’s emphasizes that language standardization, as well as a mass education system, were at the forefront of Soviet efforts to build non-Russian national republics. She

¹⁰ Fierman, 16.

¹¹ Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 4.

¹² Edgar, 3.

also highlights one of the major contrasts to Kemalist Turkey in that Soviet language reform ultimately sought to construct *socialist* societies. Unlike Turkey or other nationalist movements, Edgar argues, “What is striking about Central Asian nations is not that they were constructed from above, but that their architect was a socialist state bent on bringing about a global proletarian revolution.”¹³

Despite their ideological differences, I argue that the methods used by the Soviet and Kemalist states were strikingly similar and drew from an inherited set of late nineteenth century discourses on the connection of language to national identity. This means that the Soviet and Kemalist states, despite operating according to different ideologies, deployed similar methods towards reforming the Turkic languages under their jurisdiction. This similar approach to linguistic transformation stemmed from the fact that the Soviet and Kemalist regimes came to view *Latinization* as the only method to enact a revolutionary transformation of the national tongue, construct modern and secular Turkic identities, and expand the revolutionary state’s jurisdiction over linguistic, educational, and media spheres.

Despite their shared methodological and discursive origins, scholarly studies on Soviet and Kemalist Turkic Latinization have largely examined these two movements as distinct, arguing that efforts made towards alphabetic reform, such as the 1926 Baku Turkological Conference or Turkey’s 1928 Alphabet Reform, were solely the product of internal factors and offer few comparative examples. In the historiography of Turkish Latinization more specifically, the movement has been understood by scholars as the result of the Kemalist consolidation of power through its efforts to transform Turkish society

¹³ Edgar, 3.

from one based in Ottoman-Islamic orientation into a modern and secular nation-state participating in “contemporary civilization” (*çağdaş medeniyet seviyesi*).¹⁴ Scholars of Kemalist Latinization have focused on the discursive, ideological, and political climate that gradually rendered Latinization the only viable solution in the minds of language revolutionaries.

For example, Diana Spearman and M. Naim Tufan’s article elaborates on the Kemalist conception of “contemporary civilization” and examines how “underlying the whole strategy [of alphabet reform] was the concept of ‘contemporaneity,’ which involved a knowledge of modern thought and science.”¹⁵ Ömer Gündüz and İsmail Fırat’s article stresses the ideational factors leading to the 1928 Reform by arguing that Kemalist Latinization owed its origins to the Tanzimat and Second Constitutional eras in which intellectuals and journalists abandoned identity based on the Islamic ummah (*ümmet kavramı*) and moved towards a nationalist conception of Turkish identity called *Turkism* (*Türkçülük*).¹⁶ Their article, therefore, examines how this shift towards Turkish national identity was negotiated in the area of language reform through three language conferences hosted by the Turkish Language Association in 1932, 1934, and 1936 respectively.

¹⁴ Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Frank Tachai, “Language and Politics: Turkish Language Reform,” *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Apr. 1964), pp. 191-204; Diana Spearman & Naim M. Turfan, “The Turkish Language Reform,” *History Today*, Vol. 29 Issue 2 (February 1979), pp. 88-97; İlker Aytürk, “Turkish Linguists Against the West: The Origins of Linguistic Nationalism in Atatürk’s Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 40, Issue 6 (2004), pp. 1-25; Jale Parla, “The Wounded Tongue: Turkey’s Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel,” *PMLA* 123, no. 1 (2008): 27-40; İlker Aytürk, “The First Episode of Language Reform in Republican Turkey: The Language Council from 1926 to 1931,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 18, Issue 3 (July, 2008), pp. 275-293; Zeynep Korkmaz, “Alfabe Devriminin Türk Toplumunu Üzerindeki Sosyal ve Kültürel Etkileri,” *International Periodical for the Languages, Literature, and History of Turkish or Turkic*, Vol. 4/3 (Spring, 2009), pp. 1469-1480; Kaya Yılmaz, “Critical Examination of the Alphabet and Language Reforms in the Early Years of the Turkish Republic,” *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 2[1], (2011), pp. 59-82.

¹⁵ Diana Spearman & Naim M. Turfan, 90.

¹⁶ Ömer Gündüz and İsmail Fırat, “Dil Devriminin Gerçekleşmesinde Türk Dil Kurumu Rolü” in *The Journal of International Social Research* Vol. 7, No. 34, pp. 59-71, p. 61.

Another important study by İlker Aytürk focuses on the work of the Language Council (*Dil Encümeni*) before the 1928 Alphabet Revolution arguing that “the Language Council was torn between its professional duties as a learned, semi-academic committee, on the one hand, and the politically motivated demands of the Turkish leadership, which expected to see quick results [in the area of language reform].”¹⁷ In this article, Aytürk focuses on the internal political and ideological debates that hampered Turkey’s initial attempts at alphabet change. Aytürk’s second article expands on the Kemalist conception of modernity and national identity, arguing that Atatürk’s cadre did not intend to merely mimic European civilization with their reforms but actually were quite “ambiguous” towards the West.

In this climate, the Kemalists “put the ancient Turks on the highest pedestal possible, extolled their contribution to civilization [*medeniyet*] and reminded Western nations that they had to acknowledge the Turks as part of their family, a nation which contributed most generously to their civilization.”¹⁸ Language reform was central to this process and, as such, Kemalists began to interrogate Turkish’s proximity to European languages to “prove” their membership in a common European civilization. As Geoffrey Lewis explains, “There was a pressing need to raise morale, to make the people see themselves as a nation with a great past and a great destiny, who would one day take their place among the civilized nations of the West.”¹⁹

¹⁷ Aytürk, “The First Episode of Language Reform in Republican Turkey: The Language Council from 1926 to 1931,” 276.

¹⁸ Aytürk, “Turkish Linguists Against the West: The Origins of Linguistic Nationalism in Atatürk’s Turkey,” 2.

¹⁹ Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 41.

The adoption of the Latin script, therefore, was a strategy to “prove” that the Turks were the harbingers of civilization and that their language would be freed from centuries of Islamic stagnation and reach its true civilizational potential through the abolition of the Arabic script. Also analyzing the ideological underpinnings of Kemalist alphabet reform, Kaya Yılmaz argues that “the Arabic script [was viewed] an undesirable feature of a culture that tied Turkish people to Islam and *deprived them of a nationality identity*” [my italics].²⁰ Within this conception, Yılmaz argues, “alphabet reform [was] a tool to cut off Turkish people’s ties with their Islamic past and the Muslim world” and institute a new alphabet that would *empower* secular national identity.²¹

A small number of scholars, however, have focused on the transnational influences that contributed to Latinization in Turkey. In expanding the study of the Kemalist Alphabet and Language revolutions to transnational perspectives, scholars have begun to ask new questions about the implications and impact of Turkey’s Latinization within a broader series of events occurring throughout Eurasia. Early examples of a transnational approach to Turkish language reform came from within the Turkish academic establishment itself. During the *Symposium for the 50th Anniversary of the Alphabet Reform* in 1978, convened by Prof. Dr. Afet İnan, scholars began to evaluate the transnational influence of the 1928 Alphabet Reform.

İnan was a prominent figure within Kemalist academic circles. The adopted daughter of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, she earned her Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Geneva and played an influential role in the Turkish Historical Association (*Türk Tarih*

²⁰ Yılmaz, “Critical Examination of the Alphabet and Language Reforms in the Early Years of the Turkish Republic,” 66.

²¹ Yılmaz, *ibid.*

Kurumu), established by her adopted father in 1932. By hosting the 1978 symposium, İnan's moved to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of her adopted father's alphabet reform. In her opening remarks, İnan stated that her objective was twofold. First, she sponsored research to evaluate "the results of the adoption and implementation of the New [Latin] Alphabet in the Republican era."²² These studies examined the various Turkic writing systems by arguing that they sat on a historical continuum. The adoption of Roman letters under Mustafa Kemal in 1928, according to this scale, amounted to *writing revolution* that researchers viewed as the final stage in the historical progression of Turkish writing.

Secondly, İnan called for comparative research that would highlight the influence of Kemalist Latinization on the other Turkic countries. Rather than inaugurating a full transnational approach to the study of Turkish Latinization, İnan's objectives were limited to "providing information on the *echoes of [Turkey's] revolution* in outside countries."²³ These parameters, however, forged new comparative studies and evaluations of Kemalist and Soviet Latinization from scholars such as İlber Ortaylı and Bilal N. Şimşir.²⁴

Ortaylı's speech at the symposium provides an early comparative of the Kemalist and Soviet Latinization movements. Delivering his talk thirty years after the reversal of Soviet Latinization and imposition of Cyrillic, Ortaylı stated at the Symposium "the Latin letters were accepted before Turkey in the regions of Soviet Azerbaijan and Karachay. It

²² Afet İnan, "Açış Söylevi," in *Harf Devrimi'nin 50. Yılı Sempozyumu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1981), pp. 1-2, "...Türklerin kullandıkları yazı ve şekilleri ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti devrinde Yeni Harflerin kabulü, uygulanmasının neticeleri üzerinde durulacaktır."

²³ İnan, pp. 1-2. "Aynı zamanda dış ülkelerdeki bu devrimin yankısı ve durumu üzerinde de bilgi verilecektir."

²⁴ Dr. İlber Ortaylı, "Türk Harf Devrimi'nin Dış Ülkelerdeki Etkileri Üzerine," and Bilal N. Şimşir, "Türk Harf Devrimi'nin Türkiye Dışında Yayılması: Bulgaristan Türkleri Örneği," in *Harf Devrimi'nin 50. Yılı Sempozyumu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1981), pp. 103-109, 187-207.

is necessary to handle the question of how this event influenced Turkey's own Latin alphabet reform."²⁵ For Ortaylı, "the [Soviet] reforms did not inspire the adoption of Latin letters in Turkey. The opposite in fact. Because the Alphabet reform in Turkey was realized in a fundamental and modest way, [the Kemalist reforms] were influential in several regions of the Soviet Union."²⁶ To backup this claim, Ortaylı states that it was the "failed experiment" of Latinization in Soviet Azerbaijan from 1922-23 that drove the war hero, Kazim Karabekir, who presided over the 1923 Izmir Economic Congress, to reject Latinization at this very venue. Karabekir stated that switching the Perso-Arabic script for Latin letter would mean "to fall to the awful state that the Azeris find themselves in."²⁷

Ortaylı argued that, although the Soviet Union mandated Latinization two years before the Turkish Republic, the Bolsheviks' work was marred by inefficiency and ultimately the decision to replace the Latin alphabets with Cyrillic ones in 1939-40.²⁸ Writing from the sole independent Turkic state at the time, Ortaylı concluded that Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Turkish Republic, had to draw upon his own "courage," not any external example from communist Russia, to successfully Latinize the Turkish alphabet. As such, Ortaylı questions the long-term of international impact of the Soviet efforts and the transnational dimension of Turkic Latinization.

²⁵ Ortaylı, 104. "Bilindiği gibi Sovyet-Azerbaycan ve Karaçay-Balkar bögesinde Latin harfleri Türkiye'den daha önce kabul edilmiştir. Bu olayın Türkiye'deki Latin harfleri devrimini ne yönde etkilediği sorunu ele almak gerekiyor."

²⁶ Ortaylı, 104. "Kanımca bu değişiklik Türkiye'deki Latin harfleri devrimi için cesaret verici bir örnek değildi. Hatta tersine Türkiye'deki harf devrimi köklü ve tutarlı bir biçimde gerçekleştirildiği içindir ki, Sovyetler'in bazı bölgelerinde etkili olmuştur."

²⁷ Ortaylı, 105. "Latin harflerinin kabulü halinde Azeri'lerin içinde bulunduğu kötü duruma düşüleceğini..."

²⁸ Ortaylı, 105.

Another key participant at Afet İnan's 1978 Symposium, Bilal N. Şimşir, also aimed to examine "the spread of the Turkish [Latin] letters outside of Turkey."²⁹ His study centered on the "Alphabet Struggle" (*Alfabe kavgası*) among the Bulgarian Turkish community, which divided the community into conservatives (organized under the Chief Mufti of Sofia), and modernizers associated with the Turkish Teachers Union.³⁰ Aligning themselves with the Turkish Teachers Union, the Kemalists inside Turkey promoted Latinization among the 700,000-member Turkish in Bulgaria.³¹ In this effort, the Turkish Republic played an irredentist and polemical role in the spread of Latinization among the Bulgarian Turks. With the victory of Latinization in Bulgaria, the Kemalists established themselves as the new, important force for Turkic Latinization.

Şimşir expanded his transnational perspective in his monograph *Türk Yazı Devrimi* (*The Turkish Writing Revolution*), where he argues that Kemalist Latinization was part of a broader "Turkish Writing Revolution" that swept Turkic communities in the Balkans, Anatolia, Transcaucasia, and Central Asia. Locating Latinization's origins in the Tanzimat Period (1839-1876), Şimşir sought to illustrate the broader interconnectivity of the movement across imperial and state boundaries. Here, he does not merely focus on politics or state building, but argues that Latinization came with the gradual expansion European economic, technological, and scientific structures in the Ottoman and Russian states.³² One example of this gradual expansion is through the telegraph. Using the expansion of telegraph lines throughout the Ottoman Empire in the 19th-century, Şimşir demonstrates

²⁹ Şimşir, *Harf Devrimi'nin 50. Yılı Sempozyumu*, 193. "Burada, Türk Harf Devrimi'nin Türkiye dışında yayılışına bir örnek olarak..."

³⁰ Şimşir, *Harf Devrimi'nin 50. Yılı Sempozyumu*, 188.

³¹ Şimşir, *Harf Devrimi'nin 50. Yılı Sempozyumu*, 188.

³² Bilal N. Şimşir, *Türk Yazı Devrimi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2008).

that the adoption of the Latin scrip in Turkey was an evolutionary process that responded to new technological and material conditions. As such, Latinization in Turkey, Şimşir argues, falls within in a broader geopolitical, economic, and historical context that includes a network of debates and movements emerging across Ottoman-Russian borders.

In addition to the telegraph, Şimşir also includes instances where non-Turkic Muslim groups pushed for Latinization for their respective communities before the Turks. Here, he cites the example of the Albanians in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Operating on nationalist doctrines, Albanian intellectuals began to advocate for Latinization of the Albanian language.³³ In order to build Albanian national consciousness, these intellectuals argued that Latinization could serve as a neutral alphabet that would unite both Muslims and Christians. Just as the Arabic alphabet represented Islam so too did the Greek script signify Christianity. By that token, Albanian intellectuals rejected either as the language's official alphabet.³⁴

Şimşir's states that, by 1869, the Albanian nationalist movement petitioned the Ottoman state to accept Latinization for all Albanian-speaking parts of the Ottoman Empire, intensifying their subsequent efforts to Latinize with the creation of both the Albanian Scientific Society and the Society for the Unity of the Albanian Language. The process of Latinization for the Albanians would prove controversial among the conservative Islamist groups within the empire. Thus, in 1908, the Albanian nationalists convened the Manastir Congress to officially endorse Latinization. It was only in 1911, just two years before

³³ Şimşir, 38-43.

³⁴ Şimşir, 39.

receiving independence from the Ottomans, that Latin alphabet was recognized by the Young Turk government for the Albanian nationalists.³⁵

Highlighting both the telegraph and Albanian examples, Şimşir explains that the Latin script was well-known among the Turks in the Ottoman Empire before its adoption in 1928. Furthermore, the emphasis placed on knowing French for the Ottoman bureaucracy ensured that new generations of government officials could read and write in the Latin alphabet. In fact, as Şimşir demonstrates, the earliest renderings of Ottoman into the Latin language used French orthography. This shows that, unlike what is understood in both popular and academic circles, the Latin alphabet was not a completely “foreign” one by the 1920s. The Albanians represented one Muslim nationality that had successfully adopted Latinization before World War One, although not without controversy and contestation. The Latinization debate, therefore, was not a foreign one to Turks living in either the Ottoman or Russian empires.

In the Interwar period, Şimşir argues that Baku and Ankara emerged as the major centers of Latinization. The earliest was Baku, the capital of Soviet Azerbaijan and host city to the Baku Turkological Conference in 1926. Şimşir states that “From the standpoint of the alphabet, Azerbaijan’s place is important. Azerbaijan, situated as a bridge between the North Caucasus, Central Asia, and Anatolia, ...played a pioneering [öncü] role in the general history of the Turkish writing revolution.”³⁶ Thus, while rife with standardization and implementation issues, Şimşir contradicts Ortaylı by claiming that Soviet Latinization,

³⁵ Şimşir, 42-43.

³⁶ Şimşir, *Türk Yazı Devrimi*, 362. “*Bunun ötesinde Azerbaycan, genel Türk yazı devrimi tarihinde de öncü rolü oynamış ve bütün Türk dünyasını doğrudan etkilemiştir.*” 16

especially the example from Azerbaijan, had “fundamental importance on the path towards accepting the Latin alphabet for the Turkish language.”³⁷

Subsequent scholarly studies of the Baku Conference have largely focused on the single contributions that individual participants offered to the debates over alphabet reform. These scholars have provided the groundwork that has evaluated the careers and perspectives of prominent intellectuals and academics, such as Theodor Menzel (the prominent German-born Turkologist who headed the Department of Eastern Studies at the University of Kiev and founded the influential historical periodical *Islam*)³⁸, Halid S. Hocayev (lecturer in Arabic, Persian, and Azeri at the Institute of Higher Education and Azerbaijan State University)³⁹, and Ahmet Baytursinoğlu (the Kazakh nationalist and educational reformer) to name a few.⁴⁰ Furthermore, scholars have analyzed how pre-Baku Muslim reform movements in the Russian Empire, especially the *usul-i jedid* (or *new method*), helped define the parameters of linguistic, cultural, ethnographic, and educational reform in Turkic-speaking. These antecedents, scholars such as Mustafa Öner argue, played a defining role not only in defining the parameters of language reform at Baku, but

³⁷ Şimşir, 98. “Türk dili için Latin alfabesinin alınması yolunda asıl önem taşıyan akım, kuzey Azerbaycan’da başlamıştır.”

³⁸ Samir Kazımoğlu, “Alman Türkologları ve Birinci Bakû Türkoloji Kongresi (Prof. Dr. Georg Jakob, Prof. Dr. Theodor Menzel, Prof. Dr. Paul Wittek),” in *1926 Bakû Türkoloji Kongresinin 70. Yıl Dönümü Toplantısı (29-30 Kasım 1996)* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1999), 1-5; Ömer Faruk Demirel, “I. Türkoloji Kongresi ve Theodor Menzel,” *1926 Bakû Türkoloji Kongresinin 70. Yıl Dönümü Toplantısı (29-30 Kasım 1996)* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1999), pp. 27-58.

³⁹ Mustafa Toker, “Türkistan’ın Latin Alfabesine Geçemesinde Büyük Rol Oynayan Halid Seid Hocayev ve Yeni Elifba Yollarında Eski Hatıra ve Duygularım Adlı Eseri,” in *1926 Bakû Türkoloji Kongresinin 70. Yıl Dönümü Toplantısı (29-30 Kasım 1996)* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1999), 81.

⁴⁰ Ferhat Tamir, “Ahmet Baytursinoğlu ve 1926 Baku Türkoloji Kongresi,” in *1926 Bakû Türkoloji Kongresinin 70. Yıl Dönümü Toplantısı (29-30 Kasım 1996)* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1999), pp. 115-119.

also birthed alternative and often confrontational views to Latinization on issues of Turkic language reform, orthography, and mass literacy.⁴¹

In his study of the Baku Congress, Mustafa Oral brings in a transnational view by arguing that the Baku Conference was “incredibly important from the standpoint of both the development of the knowledge/science of Turkism and in the state of affairs of relations between Turkey and Russia.”⁴² Here, Oral emphasizes both the academic contributions the Baku Conference made to the development of Turkic identity as well as its place in bringing the two revolutionary regimes closer together culturally. Oral continues, “As is known, Turkish-Russian relations gained a new momentum after the Bolshevik Revolution and especially after the appearance of the Kemalist movement. Thus, at first view, the Baku Turkological Congress seemed like a step on the path towards cultural and intellectual collaboration in addition to political solidarity between the two countries.”⁴³ Oral, therefore, captures a moment of possibility felt by the attendees of the conference that, if the various linguistic issues facing the Turkic language were resolved within an international forum, the Turkic world would move towards closer cooperation and solidarity on various political and cultural issues. Latinization of the Turkic languages, therefore, was viewed by many participants as a fundamental step towards the linguistic cohesion and cultural renewal of the Turkic populations both inside the Soviet Union and

⁴¹ Mustafa Öner, “I. Bakû Türkoloji Kongresinde İdil-Ural Türkleri,” in *1926 Bakû Türkoloji Kongresinin 70. Yıl Dönümü Toplantısı (29-30 Kasım 1996)* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1999), pp. 13-25.

⁴² Mustafa Oral, “Türkoloji Tarihinde 1926 Bakû Türkiyat Kongresi,” in *Türk Dünyası Dil ve Edebiyat Dergisi* Issue 17 (2004), pp. 107-129, p. 112. “Bu kongre, gerek Türklük biliminin gelişimi gerekse Türkiye-Rusya ilişkilerinin gidişatı açısından oldukça önemlidir.”

⁴³ Oral, 112. “Bilindiği üzere Türk-Rus ilişkileri, Bolşevik Devrimi’nden, özellikle Kemalist hareketin ortaya çıkışından sonra yeni bir ivme kazanmıştı.”

in neighboring Kemalist Turkey. It is this momentary sense of possibility that Oral evokes that greatly informs my study of transnational Turkic Latinization.

Equally important is the work of Kamil Nerimanoğlu, who published both Azerbaijani and Turkish-language editions of the Baku Conference proceedings with commentaries.⁴⁴ Unlike Oral, Nerimanoğlu viewed the Baku Conference not as a brief moment of solidarity between Turkey and the Soviet Union, but as a “tragic historical and human drama” of Shakespearean proportions that ended with the executions of many participants during the Stalinist Purges (1936-1938).⁴⁵ Within this drama, Nerimanoğlu stresses the political factors leading up to the congress. The most important was that the Turkic groups, if counted collectively, made up the second largest group within the Soviet Union.⁴⁶

Furthermore, they bordered the Republic of Turkey, where the Kemalist leadership also sought to repress these same movements. For the Soviets and Kemalists, any Pan-Turkist or Pan-Islamic irredentism was an affront to their own modernization projects that constructed separate territorial republics with distinct national identities. Thus, Latinizers, such as Azerbaijan’s Ağamalıoğlu, had to carefully navigate a solution that would universally endorse the New Turkish Alphabet and dissuade fears from both Soviet and Kemalist circles that this new script could embolden Pan-Turkic or Pan-Islamic associations.

⁴⁴ Kamil Vəli Nərimanoğlu & Əliheydər Ağakəşiyev, *1926-cı İl Bakı Türkojoloji Qurultayı (Stenoqram materialları, bibliografiya və foto-sənədlər)* (Bakı: Çinar Çap, 2006); Prof. Dr. Kamil Vəli Nərimanoğlu & Prof. Dr. Mustafa Öner, *1926 Bakü Türkojoloji Kurultayı (Tutanaklar) 26 Şubat – 6 Mart 1926* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2008). Both are translations of the original Russian transcripts.

⁴⁵ Kamil Vəli Nərimanoğlu, Ə. Ağakəşiyev, & S. Abdullayeva, “Latin Əsaslı Yeni Türk Əlifbası və I. Bakı Türkojoloji Qurultayı Bibliografiyası” (Baku: 2006), 3-4. “*Hüznü tarix, insanlıq dramıdır.*”

⁴⁶ Nərimanoğlu, Ağakəşiyev, & Abdullayeva, *ibid.*

By focusing on transnational intellectual and ideological networks, I will demonstrate that the Soviet and Kemalist language reforms of the 1920s inherited a broader set of political and ideological discourses, nurtured by the rise of nationalist movements in the Ottoman Balkans and Anatolia, as well as in Russian-controlled Transcaucasia. By situating the Soviet and Kemalist reforms within these developments, I intend not to carry out a comparative study of Kemalist and Soviet language planning so much as illustrate that the common approaches to language reform stemmed from discussion, debates, and eventual implementation of nationalist language policies in the decades leading up to World War One. I envision the Soviet and Kemalist cases to be another set of examples that serve as a sequel of sorts to the Albanian experience. I will situate the Kemalist and Soviet language reforms within the broader historical context of nationalism and its influence over language policy.

1b. Dissertation Outline

My dissertation will chart the transnational discourses over language reform and national identity that were developed by and circulated among Turkish, Azeri, Tatar, Uzbek, and Kazakh reformist and intellectual circles. In particular, I will trace the development of these discourses as they pertained to Latinization. By reconstructing transnational reformist conversations and debates over Latinization, this study will contribute to our understanding of how the Latin alphabet became the preferred vehicle of modernization for both the Soviet and Kemalist reformers of the 1920s and 1930s. I argue that the ascendancy of

Latinization owed much to a specific set of factors that emerged from early periods in the Russian and Ottoman empires.

Chapter Two argues that these reformist discourses were built on the foundation of European Turkology (often rendered Turcology). Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, European Turkology grew out of Orientalist sciences and pursued a methodology that combined ethnographic, linguistic, and historical research on the Turkic peoples. Many Turkologists to reconstruct the “lost” history of the Turanic peoples, from whom they traced the origins of the Turkic tribes. This chapter will specifically focus on the Turkologists of the mid-to-late nineteenth century, who focused on locating and deciphering pre-modern Turkic inscriptions in Inner Asia. Undertaking several expeditions to the Orhon Valley in present-day Mongolia, scholars such as Vasili Radlov and Vilhelm Thomsen first copied, transcribed, and deciphered the first inscriptions of Old Turkic. Their academic findings, the chapter demonstrates, launched key debates over the Turkic languages and their status as a distinct language family. Absorbing and then deploying the linguistic and historical findings of the European Turkologists, Azeri, Tatar, and Ottoman reformers and intellectuals sought to awaken Turkish national consciousness in the pre-WWI era in order to modernize their societies and instill a sense of pride in being Turkish.

Chapter Three examines the emergence of the Turcophone press as the powerful mouthpiece for the dissemination of reformist ideas across Ottoman-Russian borders. Established in the nineteenth century, the Turcophone press in both Transcaucasia and the Ottoman Empire remained in private ownership for most of the pre-WWI period. As such, it was largely a mouthpiece for the bourgeois members of Turkic society, who were comprised of government, military, religious, and educational officials alongside a small

intelligentsia. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Turcophone press was divided on the question of language reform. The major of voices contributing to the debates advocated for the reformist position (*ıslahatçı*). This entailed preserving the existing Perso-Arabic script by reforming its vowel harmony system. The reformists argued against abolishing the script outright. Even as the 1905-11 revolutionary wave swept the Russian, Persian, and Ottoman empires, debates over language reform largely steered clear of Latinization. Instead, the press championed the existing script as central to the Turks' religious, cultural, and literary heritage.

Chapter Four focuses on the 1926 Baku Turkological Conference to illustrate the momentum towards Turkic Latinization in the 1920s Soviet Union and its eventual victory. With the collapse of the Tsarist order in the February and October 1917 revolutions, Russian Transcaucasia entered into a brief period of independent statehood before their incorporation into the Soviet Union in 1920. Focusing on Azerbaijan, I examine how independence from Russia triggered a new phase of political nationalism in which the Latinization movement steadily grew. During the early Soviet period of Azerbaijan's history (1920-1939), this momentum was taken up by Azeri Bolsheviks to make their Soviet republic the first to adopt the Latin script. The 1926 Baku conference signaled a period where language reformers of all stripes convened to debate the Latinized *New Turkish Alphabet*. The victory of the Latinizers at this conference meant that Latinization would be official for all Soviet Turkic languages.

Chapter Five focuses on the *Islahatçılar*, or “reformists,” who opposed the New Turkish Alphabet before and after the Baku Conference. This group, continuing the discourses of their pre-WWI reformist forerunners, argued that the Perso-Arabic alphabet

was an important expression of unique Turkic culture and identity. As such, they vehemently opposed abolishing the script in favor of a “foreign” Romanized system and, instead, proposed merely reforming the existing alphabet. Itself a transnational group, the “reformist” ranks were formed with scholars from Russian Transcaucasia, Tatarstan, and Central Asia, as well as the Ottoman Empire and its Turkish successor state. Inclusion of their voices remind us that Turkic Latinization was far from a *fait accompli* even as late as the Baku Conference. Instead, the *islahatçılar* provided an alternative to Latinization that would uphold the Turks’ unique identity and promote mass literacy.

Chapter Six will examine the 1928 Alphabet Revolution in Kemalist Turkey and the state’s role in shaping modern Turkish identity. Like their Soviet counterparts, the Kemalist revolutionaries in Turkey embarked upon creating a new ideological and modernizing state out of the dead Ottoman Empire. The Kemalists, however, envisioned Latinization and language reform as serving similar functions for social reform as their Soviet counterparts. Instead of promoting a global Marxist revolution, the Kemalists sought to construct a territorial, national, and secular nation-state for the Turks of Anatolia. This chapter will examine how the Kemalists coopted reformers and intellectuals to advocate for and implement the New Turkish Alphabet in the republic. In adopting this new script, the Kemalists sought to dismantle Ottoman-Islamic identity entirely and forge a new Turkish citizen under their republican ideology.

Though the Bolsheviks and Kemalists ultimately differed ideologically, they nevertheless cooperated on many fronts, especially economic planning in the 1930s.⁴⁷ In

⁴⁷ Osman Okyar. "The Concept of *Étatisme*." *The Economic Journal* 75, no. 297 (1965): 98-111.

the same vein, both Soviet and Kemalist language reformers drew from each other as they began to enact the policies of Latinization and purification within their respective domains. To illustrate this, I will examine several ‘language congresses’ (dil kurultayları), beginning with the seminal Baku Turkological Conference of 1926, in which participants from across the Soviet Turkic world convene to debate and ultimately implement Latinization within the Soviet Union. As they debated the issue of reform at home, the Kemalists followed the Soviet language reforms with great interest, even sending Alibey Huseynzade and Fuat Köprülü as delegates to the 1926 Baku conference. The Kemalist interest in the Soviet reforms stemmed from several factors, including linguistic commonalities between Turkish and other Turkic languages that facilitated the continuation of the international Turkic reformist network both the Soviet and Turkish states inherited.⁴⁸

In conclusion, my dissertation argues that the Soviet and Kemalist language reforms came about because of new knowledge, methods, and political conditions. I do not, however, argue that Latinization was an inevitable outcome of Turkic language reform. Turkology and the Turcophone press alone were not enough to ensure that Latinization would take root in either state. They did, however, contribute greatly to the conversation on reform once state actors began to push for Latinization as the only way forward on the path towards modernization. Realizing these reforms required the right political conditions, which came with the establishment of new ideological states in Russia and Turkey. These

⁴⁸ For trans-border perspectives of Turkic intellectual activity and politics, see Jacob Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation* (Indiana University Press, 1995); Leila Karahan, “Atatürk Dönemi Dil Kurultaylarında Türk Dünyası,” in *Türk Dili* S. 574 (Oct., 1999), pp. 845-853; A. Holly Shissler, *Between Two Empires: Ahmet Ağaoğlu and the New Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003); James H. Meyer, *Turks Across Empires: Marketing Muslim Identity in the Russian-Ottoman Borderlands, 1856-1924* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

states and their actors, although coming to power through a highly contingent set of events (the 1917 Revolution and Russian Civil War as well as the Turkish War of Independence and the abolition of the Ottoman dynasty), seized upon the momentum towards language reform by instituting the most radically modernizing efforts: Latinization and purification.

1c. Sources

In researching the issue of language reform in both Soviet Azerbaijan and the Turkish Republic, I have relied on a number of Turkish, Azerbaijani, and French-language sources from the various periods central to my reconstruction of this story. I have grouped these sources according to their use in my dissertation. Chapter Two employs original editions of the *Journal Asiatique*. The official publication of France's *Societe Asiatique* (founded in 1822), the *Journal Asiatique* is important to the narrative of Turkology because it featured important articles written by Vasili Radlov. Radlov was the premier 19th-century Turkologist whose works on Altai Turkic language and literature helped naturalize the notion that a "pure" proto-Turkic language existed and, if reconstructed, could unlock the history and identity of the modern-day Turkic peoples. As the *Societe Asiatique's* membership included not just Turkologists from Western Europe, but also a few members of the growing Ottoman patriotic movement such as İbrahim Şinasi, I conclude that it was an instrumental part of how Turkology was absorbed by Turkic-speaking Muslim intellectuals in the Russian and Ottoman empires.

To chart how Turkic intellectuals and reformers began to absorb the writings of European Turkologists and tailor them for nationalist purposes, I rely on newspaper and

journal articles produced by these debating communities. The issue is that these intellectuals were prolific in their writings as the post-1905 (for Russia) and 1908 (for the Ottomans) era was once that saw limited easing of censorship in the press and the proliferation of nationalist, reformists, Islamists, and modernist newspapers. I have limited my research of these sources to articles dealing directly with questions of how language informed expressions of national identity, both culturally and politically. I have collected these sources from various previously-published anthologies. For the debates over language and identity on the Azerbaijani side, I have found the *Azərbaycan Publisistikası Antologiyası* (Anthology of Azerbaijan's Publications), published in Baku in 2007, to be a vital source for intellectual debates over language and identity.

In fact, one of the most important discoveries I have made as I collected my sources was the extent to which Baku bookshops that sell old Soviet editions of reformist literature. Therefore, like *Azərbaycan Publisistikası Antologiyası*, a lot of my sources from the reformers in question are in either Cyrillic or newly-Latinized Azerbaijani. For example, one edition of Alibey Huseynzade's periodical *Fuyuzat* I obtained was published in Baku in 1994 and still remains in the Cyrillic alphabet. Another edition I have of Ahmet Ağaoğlu's *Üç Mədəniyyət* (*Three Civilizations*), which I will use to help explore Kemalist notions of civilization and culture in Chapter 4, was printed in Baku in 2007 but includes an Azerbaijani language that is replete with Turkish words. Rather than using these editions merely because they are unique items, I will actively show that, in Baku today, these debates are being reread, rehashed, and retailored to accommodate Azerbaijan's post-Soviet future. This process began in the late 1980s, during Mikhail Gorbachev's glasnost, when Soviet Azerbaijan began reprinting long-forgotten works from Turkic intellectuals

and nationalists in order to reacquaint the Azerbaijani public with the important voiced who shaped Azerbaijani identity.

For the chapters that focus on the Language Revolution in Kemalist Turkey, I would group my sources into two categories. The first set of sources, mostly used in Chapter Five, come from newspapers and publications from the era of the Alphabet Reform, beginning in late 1928 and continuing into 1929 and 1930. Housed in Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi near Istanbul University, these newspapers, contemporary to the Alphabet Revolution, provide crucial insight into how the Kemalist state sought to spread the New Turkish Alphabet after 1928 by mobilizing different segments of Turkish society in the cause of the new script. I draw from nationally-circulated newspapers based in large cities, such as *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* and *Cumhuriyet*, but also include more regional papers, such as *Yeni Adana*, in my analysis in order to get a fuller picture of how the language revolution was disseminated in more village and rural areas outside Istanbul and Ankara.

The second set of sources I used to analyze the Language Revolution in Turkey comes from the premier state institution devoted coordinating and overseeing the revolution on the ground. Increasingly, that task fell to the Turkish Language Commission (*Türk Dili Tetkik Cemiyeti*, established in 1932 but subsequently renamed *Türk Dil Kurumu* in 1936, as the Arabic and Persian loanwords ‘tetkik’ and ‘cemiyet’ were removed and replaced with the Turkic word *kurum*). In particular, I have found the TDK’s publications *Anadilden Derlemeler (Compilations from the Mother Tongue, 1932)*, *Osmanlıcadan Türkçeye Söz Karşılıkları Tarama Dergisi (Publication of Term Equivalents from Ottoman to Turkish, 1934)*, and *Türk Dili (Turkish Language, 1932)* to be valuable primary sources. Each demonstrates the process by which the language reformers, staffed in the TDK, first

mobilized a large cross-section of Turkish society (including government officials, teachers, lawyers, doctors, and other professional groups) to first collect “pure Turkish” words from their immediate locales and then send these words back to Ankara to be processed. Ultimately, the goal was to purge the language of Arabic and Persian loanwords and, in their place, promote the use of words the reformers believe more accurately reflected the Turkish character of their national language. In studying this process of language purification, I have found that Turkology, as well as other language reform movements in other contexts, continued to play an important role in forming the basis and justification for the Turkey’s own attempt at language reform.

In addition to newspapers and publications from the TDK, I have also employed the transcripts of the important conferences that first debated matters of language and its role in forging new identities and then passed resolutions to advance the cause of language reform. The previous published and translated transcripts of the 1926 Baku Turkological Conference were particularly helpful in gaining insight into the debates centered on the issue of Latinization in the Soviet Union. In particular, I have used both an Azerbaijani and Turkish-language editions of the Baku Turkological Conference as the original transcripts are largely in Russian.

2. Turkology and the Development of “Turkic” Identity

2a. Introduction

Chapter Two will chart the influence of European Turkology on the debates over Turkic language reform. As Turkology gained influence in European, Russian, and Ottoman academic and intellectual circles, its practitioners undertook scientific, anthropological, and linguistic research to reconstruct the nationalist and historical origins of the Turks. Their contributions provided the modern foundations for Turkic identity constitution that centered on discourses of nation, race, and civilization. As Turkological discourses over Turkic language and identity began to circulate in Ottoman and Russian Turkic intellectual and reformist circles, the debates began to insist upon a unique sense of identity that reaffirmed the Turks’ centrality in the development of global language, history, and civilization.

Turkology is as an academic discipline that emerged in Europe during the mid-nineteenth century. Broadly speaking, Turkology formed a specific branch of Oriental Studies that researched the historical origins of the Turkic peoples in Western and Central Asia. This field first gained traction among European (British, French, German, Russian, and Danish) and, later, Ottoman scholars whose concern was to transliterate and decipher ancient texts and inscriptions written in the earliest variant of the Turkic language.⁴⁹ By the early 20th century, Turkological research had become specialized as Turkologists

⁴⁹ Many of the Ottoman scholars engaged in Turkological research on language and debates on Turkic identity would provide many of the tools upon which the *Dil Devrimi* in the 1930s was enacted. For an informative study of how the linguistic endeavors of this cadre of Ottoman scholars, such as Şemseddin Sâmî’s 1899 *Kâmûs-ı Türkî* [the Turkish Lexicon], endured even after the Language Revolution of the 1930s, see: Ali Özgün Öztürk, “Dil Devrimi Sonrası Türkiye Türkçesine Giren Türkçe Kelimelerin Söz Varlığına Etkileri” (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2008). For a recent edition of *Kâmûs-ı Türkî* see Şemseddin Sâmî, *Kâmûs-ı Türkî* (İstanbul, Çağrı Yay., 1996).

undertook academic expeditions into Inner Asia to study the dialects and folklore of the indigenous Turkic groups, as well as locate and decipher ancient Runic inscriptions in the earliest form of Turkic. These explorers—such as Vasili Radlov and Vilhelm Thomsen—gained near-heroic stature in the eyes of many Turkic reformist and nationalists. Heroic not only because they had uncovered the earliest forms of the Turkic language from inscriptions, but also for their extensive field research spent collecting poems and folklore from contemporary Turkic peoples in Siberia and Central Asia.

By the early 20th century, Turkology had come into its own as an academic discipline, with Turkological departments emerging in Kazan and Budapest universities and in learned societies, such as the Asiatic Society of Paris (*Société asiatique*). Within the lifetimes of Radlov and Thomsen, Turkology had successfully emerged as a respected discipline across Europe, Russia, and the Ottoman Empire. As Turkologists preoccupied themselves with the earliest traces of Turkic identity, the bulk of their research depended on mastery of the various Turkic languages and dialects. Knowledge of these languages, especially in their oldest forms, would allow them to collect a wide range of oral and written texts from the Turkic-speaking world, with a focus on literary and historical sources. Turkologists believed that these texts would reveal the authentic identity of the Turkic peoples. Using language as their point of departure, Turkologists sought to group speakers of Turkic into standardized language families.

This approach is best seen in how Turkologists, such as Radlov and Thomsen, used the emerging field of linguistics to decipher the Orhon inscriptions located in present-day Mongolia. These inscriptions, the Turkologists estimated, preserved *the* primordial form

of the Turkic language from which all others had descended.⁵⁰ The emphasis Radlov and Thomsen placed on the earliest written form of Turkic spurred conversations among Ottoman and Russian intellectuals about the link between this early idiom and Turkic national identity. Turkology's emphasis on the primordial, and the disciplinary methods it employed to uncover the earliest known variant of Turkic, proved to be its most enduring legacy for the post-WWI language reformers.

2b. History of Old Turkic

The complete origins of the Old Turkic language remain obscure, but linguists and historians have located its geography to the Tengri Mountains (*Tian Shan* 天山) located on today's Chinese-Kyrgyz-Kazakh border. Old Turkic is sometimes referred to as "Orhonic Turkic" after the eponymous valley in outer Mongolia that houses the first inscriptions in the language. The prominent Turkologists Vasili Radlov and A. von Gabain called the language "Alttürkisch" (Old Turkish) whereas others, such as W. Bang, called it "Gök-Turkish" after the Gökturks.⁵¹ Linguists and Turkologists have debated the proper classification of Old Turkic. The majority accept that it belongs to the Altaic family, but a vocal minority of scholars posit that it is more likely an isolate whose connections to the Mongolian and Manchu languages were constructed through trade, intermarriage, and migration. Regardless, Old Turkic is the proto-Turkic language from which modern Azeri, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tatar, Turkish, Turkmen, Uighur, Uzbek, and Yakut stemmed.

⁵⁰ For an account of how nineteenth century scholars began to classify languages into Indo-European and other language families, see J.P. Mallory & D.Q. Adams, "Discovery" in *The Oxford Linguistic Introduction to Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Indo-European World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 1-12.

⁵¹ A. von Gabain, *Alttürkische Grammatik mit Bibliographie, Lesestücken und Wörterverzeichnis, auch Neutürkisch* (Otto Harrassowitz Wiesbaden, 1974).

The earliest written accounts of the Turkic confederations and states come from Chinese sources from the Han dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), which referred to the Turks as *Xiongnu* (匈奴).⁵² This name is related to the English term *Hun* and denoted the nomadic confederations that ruled the Central Asian steppe from the third century BCE to the first century CE. From the sixth to eighth centuries CE, the First (552-630) and Second (682-742) Turkic empires governed the Mongolian plateau independent of China, then under Tang Dynasty (618-907 CE). Tang historians and diplomats called this region *Tou-kioue* (突厥).⁵³ The Turks themselves referred to their independent states as *khaganates*, denoting the rule of the emperor-figure of *khan*.

The first inscriptions of Old Turkic appeared in the Orhon Valley in Outer Mongolia with the rise of the Second Turkic empire (682-742). The *Kül Tigin*, *Bilgä Kagan*, *Tonyukuk*, *Išbara Tarkan*, and *Küllü Ćor* inscriptions are bilingual in Old Turkic and Chinese and focus on military victories, heroes, and edicts from the khan to his subjects.⁵⁴ The First Turkic empire (552-630 CE) witnessed a series of succession disputes, as aristocratic families vied for the title of khan. Around the beginning of the seventh century CE, the Turkic confederation had split into western and eastern Turks as well as into the First Uighur Empire (750-840 CE). This left the Turkic tribes exposed to the Tang dynasty, which conquered inner Mongolia in 630 CE. The Tang left the khan in place and granted *Tou-kioue* autonomy, but it remained a vassal state until 682 CE.

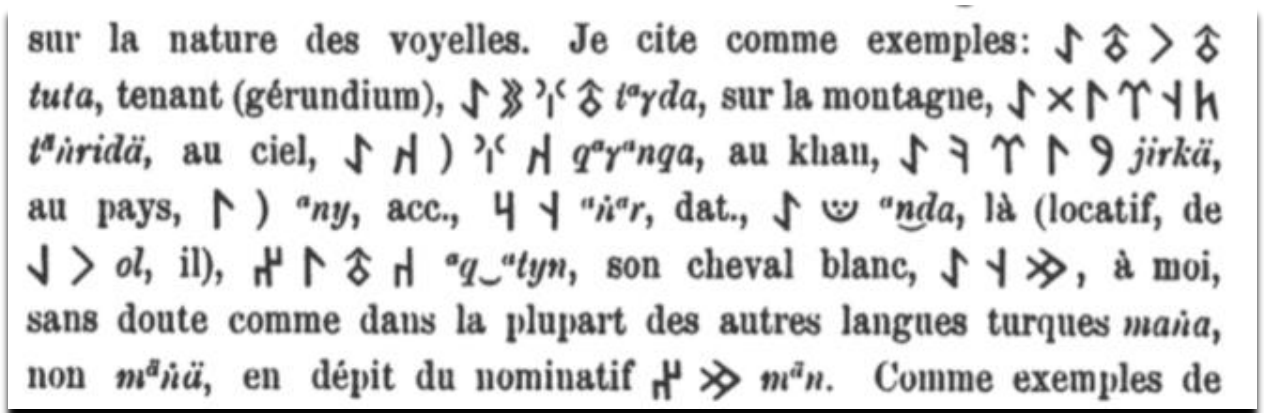
The Second or Eastern Turkic empire bequeathed the first written texts in Old Turkic. Tekin states that the Old Turkic alphabet was a mixture of Aramaic, Iranian, and

⁵² Von Gabain, 2.

⁵³ Vilhelm Thomsen, *Inscriptions de l'Orkhon Déchiffrées* (Helsingfors, Imprimerie de la Société de Littérature Finnoise, 1896), 57.

⁵⁴ Talat Tekin, *A Grammar of Orhon Turkic* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1968), pp. 9-10.

These letters, which Thomsen transcribed from the Orhon inscriptions, are a combination of vowels, consonants, and syllables. Deciphering this alphabet, which Thomsen completed with the help of the accompanying Chinese on the monuments, allowed Turkologists to examine the vocabulary and grammar of Old Turkic. Examining these inscriptions led these scholars to conclude that the continuities between Old Turkic and the contemporary Turkic languages were strong. For example, I have copied some of Thomsen’s analysis of the alphabet in the figure below.



(Figure 2. Thomsen’s Orhon Turkic Grammar)⁵⁸

Thomsen’s Examples	English Translation	Turkic Equivalent	Grammatical Features
<i>tuta</i>	“holding”	tutan	tut- “to hold”
<i>t^aγda</i>	“on the mountain”	dağda (Turkish) Tog’da (Uzbek)	t ^a γ: tog’/dağ -da: in/on
<i>t^äñridä</i>	“in the sky”	gökte (Turkish)	t ^ä ñri: tanrı (Turkish) -dä: in/on
<i>q^aγ^anqa</i>	“to the khan”	Han (Turkish)	-qa: Turkic dative
<i>jirkä</i>	“to the country”	Yerde (Turkish)	jir: yer (Turkish) -kä: Turkic dative
<i>ny</i>	“him/her/it”	Onu (Turkish)	-y: -u (Turkish accusative)

⁵⁸ Thomsen, 10.

^a n̄ ^a r	“to him/her/it”	Ona (Turkish)	-a: -a (Turkish dative)
^a nda	“on him/her/it”	Onda	-da: -da (Turkish locative)
ol	“region”	İl (Turkish)	
mañā/m ^a ñä	“to me”	Bana (Turkish) Mənə (Azeri)	Note that Turkish often swaps the –m for a –b.
m ^a n	“I”	Ben (Turkish) Mən (Azeri)	

(Table 1. Turkic Language Comparison with Orhon)

As evidenced by Thomsen’s examples and my chart, many grammatical and vocabulary features Old Turkic language are still prevalent in modern Turkic languages. The vocabulary for *mountain*, *khan*, *country*, *region*, and the pronouns are all direct from Old Turkic and are intelligible across the Turkic languages. In the same vein, Thomsen demonstrated that the grammatical features of Old Turkic, including the case system and vowel harmony, were also preserved in the modern Turkic languages. Thus, once the alphabet was deciphered, Turkologists and linguists were able to draw greater comparisons between the Turkic languages to better understand how these languages originated from the Mongolian plateau. Though much of the vocabulary and grammatical features survived into modern Turkic languages, Turkologists in the nineteenth century were puzzled over the non-Turkic elements that had entered these languages in the millennium and a half that preceded the First and Second Turkic empires and witnessed the influx of Arabic and Persian vocabulary into the language with the advent of Islam.

2c. The Journal Asiatique

In the August 1822 issue of the *Journal Asiatique*, Jean Saint-Martin, member of the *Société Asiatique* which issued the publication, wrote a literary critique of M. Garcin de Tassy's *Exposition de la Foi musulmane*.⁵⁹ The *Société Asiatique* was founded in 1822 as a scholarly community dedicated to research on Asia, the Levant, and the Maghreb. The Society's early journals reveals that its initial focus was centered on Chinese and Arabic sources. The format of journal articles usually included the original text, followed by a translation into French, and then the translator's analysis. The Society and its journal, therefore, stressed a certain rigor in language analysis that entailed both a close reading of the given text and sufficient knowledge of the language in question to produce a commentary on it.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Saint-Martin went to great lengths in his review to praise de Tassy for his preparedness "in the knowledge of the Turkish language through serious study of Arabic and Persian."⁶⁰ In fact, proper knowledge of Turkish (or what one would designate as *Ottoman Turkish* today) underscored Saint-Martin's entire review. De Tassy stated that the Ottomans had achieved such political significance and yet were often ignored by Orientalists who chose to specialize in Arabic and Persian. Part of the reason for neglect, Saint-Martin points out, is that the Ottoman language had absorbed so many Arabic and Persian features that anyone seeking to master Ottoman had to acquaint themselves with these two other languages before. He writes on this issue that

⁵⁹ The review appears in J. Saint-Martin, *Critique Littéraire*, in *Société asiatique* (France). *Journal asiatique : ou recueil de mémoires, d'extraits et de notices relatifs à l'histoire, à la philosophie, aux sciences, à la littérature et aux langues des peuples orientaux...* / publié par la Société asiatique. 1822, 109 – 115. Source: gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France.

⁶⁰ Saint-Martin, 110.

...Probably the most powerful [reason that Ottoman is understudied] is the necessity that one has to know Arabic and Persian beforehand to understand Turkish authors. These writers, in fact, are in the habit of inserting in their works not only an endless stream of Arabic and Persian words, but also entire sentences in these two languages; the sort that, in order to translate them exactly, it is necessary to know these two languages sufficiently without which one is open to committing grave errors.⁶¹

Saint-Martin's observations forecast the future reformist and scholarly debates over authenticity in the Turkic languages, particularly concerning "inauthentic" foreign elements in these languages at the time the Turkologists began to study them.⁶²

Saint-Martin's review, however, did not mention the Perso-Arabic Ottoman alphabet as a hindrance or obstacle to studying of the language. Rather, Saint-Martin, in 1822, writes that "an endless stream of Arabic and Persian words" was to blame for the difficulty of reading in Ottoman Turkish, not the fact that it is written in the Arabic script.⁶³ This distinction made between what De Tassy differentiated as "Turkic" from "Perso-Arabic" grew more acute in the story of Turkic Latinization and informed the future discourses of the Soviet and Kemalist Latinizers. Principle among this inherited rhetoric was that the Turkish language constituted a unique idiom which, throughout Islamic history, had been diluted by the influx of Arabic and Persian loanwords. The flow of Arabic and Persian loanwords into the Turkic languages was viewed by Turkologists, most notably Vasili Radlov, as a contaminant that defiled the purity of the Turkic tongue.

⁶¹ Saint-Martin, 110.

⁶² The Earliest grammars of the Ottoman language predated the nineteenth century attempts at linguistic classification. For example, in Thomas Vaughan's 1709 *A Grammar of the Turkic Language*, which predates the formation of Turkology, there is no mention of the Turks' ethnic or linguistic identity. Vaughan does mention the Ottomans' Muslim identity, but in reference to its supposed barbarity compared to Protestant Englishmen. While asserting a difference in civility between Englishmen and Turks, Vaughan's *Grammar* does not necessarily assert racial or ethnic differences between the two.

⁶³ Saint-Martin, 110.

In fact, the influx of Arabic and Persian loanwords had opened the Turkic languages up to a broader Islamic world—complete with its religious, philosophical, literary, and artistic components and sensibilities—and provided the Turkic groups with an international Islamic vocabulary set against a solidly-preserved Turkic grammatical and syntactical structure. Furthermore, many of the foreign loanwords adopted into Turkic languages were adapted to the particular pronunciation and orthographic needs of the Turks. Therefore, the early Turkologists, while making substantial advancements in deciphering and translating the earliest Turkic inscriptions (an achievement which Kemalist language revolutionaries capitalized on decades later), failed to appreciate the nuances with which the Turks brought Arabic and Persian loanwords into their languages. Instead, the influential generation of Radlov and Thomsen gravitated towards nationalistic and civilizational perspectives of Turkic identity and language that stressed the Turks’ Central Asian roots as the foundation of their national identity and viewed their conversion to Islam as the point at which they were subsumed into the Arabo-Persian Islamic civilization.

A mere ten years after Saint-Martin’s review, Arthur Lumley Davids, also a member of the *Société Asiatique*, published his *Grammar of the Turkish Language*, which he dedicated to Sultan Mahmoud II sultan, stylized “His Sublime Highness Sultan Mahmoud Khan.”⁶⁴ The impact of Davids’ *Grammar* on how European scholars wrote about Turkish and other Turkic languages was profound for several reasons. One reason, as Kushner explains, was that Davids’ *Grammar* was “the first systematic grammar of Turkish to be published.”⁶⁵ Thus, Davids used the latest scientific and linguistic methods to make connections between Ottoman and other Turkic languages. In turn, his *Grammar*

⁶⁴ Arthur Lumley Davids, *A Grammar of the Turkish Language* (London: Parbury & Allen, 1832).

⁶⁵ David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism, 1876-1908* (London & New York: Routledge, 1977). 38

placed these languages and their speakers within the same category: ‘Turkic.’ This classification, which explained how the various Turkic peoples were related, left an important mark on the development of Turkish conscious.

Although he was “imbued with respect and admiration for the Turks’ role in civilization,”⁶⁶ Davids differentiated the Ottoman Turks from European nations based on civilizational components, such as language, Islam, and the structure of Ottoman society. Ethnocentric notions of European civilization often pervaded the European Turkological approach to deciphering the Turkic languages and history. Nevertheless, European Turkologists sought to devise and apply the most accurate nomenclature for their field of investigation.

In this vein, Davids begins his *Grammar* with a discussion of the various misnomers the Turks have incurred in Europe. The term Tartar was the most glaring example of the failure of European scholars to accurately classify the Turks. Davids affirms that the Turks were quite distinct from the Tartar peoples by stating that “The term Tartar is...not only vague and indefinite, but also improper; and can only be compared to the equally undistinguishable name فرنك *Frank*, by which, as if actuated by a desire of retaliation, the Orientals designate the various nations of Europe.”⁶⁷ This insistence on the difference between the Turks and Tatars would reappear in the writings of Turkic nationalists and reformers, such as Alibey Huseynzade. Through an intensive study of Turkic languages, Davids sought to establish that the Turks constituted a distinct ethno-linguistic category, apart from other Asiatic nationalities such as Mongols and Tatars.

⁶⁶ Kushner, 9.

⁶⁷ Davids, i.

Dauids asserted the uniqueness of the Turkic tribes and confederations in the period when the Russian state expanded into Transcaucasia and Central Asia and colonial administrators applied the term Tartar to the indigenous Muslim inhabitants they now governed. There were even “Russo-Tartar” schools set up by the Russian state as it sought to integrate an indigenous cadre of Turko-Tatar Muslims into its colonial administration. These schools emphasized Russian-language education and promised placement within the local administration. The first group of Muslim intellectuals in Russia, who began to disavow the term Tartar in the late nineteenth century, emerged from these schools and worked as interpreters or language officials for the empire.

As for the Turks in the Ottoman Empire, Davids sets them up as Europe’s civilizational equal. He states that, while European civilization has surpassed the *Osmanlis* in scientific advancement, the Ottomans, in fact, “in the Belles Lettres...do not yield to us the palm of superiority.”⁶⁸ What we have, then, is a scholarly attempt to nuance the Ottoman Turks and their civilization, albeit putting both in constant competition with Europe. Davids’ introduction affords the Ottoman Turks a development that ran parallel to Europe’s: they began in obscurity and barbarism before gradually progressing into an advanced civilization. Ottoman Turkish literature, especially its poetry, was taken as evidence of the Turks’ evolution into a civilized people. In order to appreciate this literature, and hence this civilization, a systematic grammar needed to be prepared so that readers could discover the depths of the language.

Through its insistence on researching the Turks through their languages, Davids’ *Grammar* set the stage for Turkology’s pursuit of older forms of Turkic and its variants.

⁶⁸ Davids, lxv.

All nations and peoples, it was believed, had specific origins in the past and emerged through several historical stages. The Turks were no exception and, in order to discover their exact origins, one had to trace their languages all the way back to its earliest forms. As the disciplines developed in the nineteenth century, Turkologists turned to pursuit of the earliest forms of Old Turkic using the latest scientific and disciplinary methods.

The Turkologists set out, therefore, to conduct linguistic research among the various Turkic confederations and peoples living in Central Asia and the Steppes. The advent of Russian colonial ambitions in the region provided these scholars with unprecedented access to Turkic peoples and the inscriptions their supposed ancestors had left behind. For Turkologists, such as Radlov and Thomsen, the Turkic peoples of Central Asia harbored atavistic knowledge of Old Turkic language, folklore, and customs that could help them uncover the “lost” past.

The advancement of Turkology as an academic discipline had an important impact on Turkish-speaking Muslim intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire and Russian Caucasus. These intellectuals drew upon Turkology to form a scientific and historical basis for cultural and national revival among the Turkic peoples. In an age of European imperial encroachment, Turkic-speaking intellectuals and reformers believed that unlocking the Turkic national spirit could forge cross-border ties between the Turkic peoples in the Ottoman and Russian empires. For Turkic Muslim intellectuals, therefore, Turkology came with a powerful set of “historical truths” that served as the foundation for the renewal they hoped for. In other words, intellectuals in the Ottoman and Russian empires sought to forge linguistic, cultural, and religious connections based on a common shared historical past that the Turks worldwide supposedly held. These intellectuals, therefore, followed Turkology with

great interest, joined European Turkological societies, and soon made their own contributions to the field. By the end of the nineteenth century, they emerged as an integral part of the discipline.

2d. Vasili Radlov

The expansion of the Russian Empire into the North Caucasus and Central Asia also informed and aided the development of Turkology, which by the end of the nineteenth century had become a complex, polyphonic field of inquiry. As the Russian conquest of Transcaucasia and Central Asia was underway, Turkological societies began to spring up across Europe. By 1851, for example, the membership of the *Société Asiatique* boasted several important Turkologists including Ilya Nikolaevich Berezine and the Azerbaijani-born Mirza Kasem-Beg, whose own *Grammar of the Turkish-Tatar language* (1839) drew upon contemporaneous Turkological linguistic and ethnographic methodologies as it deconstructed Turkic grammar. Both of these scholars came from the Russian Empire and were employed in its educational institutions. European Turkological Societies, such as the *Société Asiatique*, also connected Russian Turkologists with Ottoman intellectuals. For example, Ibrahim Şinasi, a giant of the Ottoman literary establishment, and Kemal Ahmet Efendi, the architect of the Ottoman public education system,⁶⁹ were also recorded as official members of the *Société Asiatique* in 1851.⁷⁰ As language was a central subject of inquiry, Turkologists, Ottoman, and Transcaucasian intellectuals alike threw themselves

⁶⁹ Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 41.

⁷⁰ Société Asiatique, "Liste des Membres Souscripteurs," in *Journal asiatique : ou recueil de mémoires, d'extraits et de notices relatifs à l'histoire, à la philosophie, aux sciences, à la littérature et aux langues des peuples orientaux*, 1851. 42

head long into linguistic studies in search of rational and scientific answers to these questions.

When it came to research on the Turkic languages in the Russian Empire, the German-born Russian Turkologist, Wilhelm Radloff (hitherto referred to by his Russified name Vasili Radlov) towered above the rest in how prolific his research had become. A member of the *Société Asiatique*, and a contemporary of Kasem-Beg, Şinasi, and Kemal Ahmet Efendi, Radlov would ultimately achieve prominence through the publication of his multivolume dictionary of Turkic languages, as well as his phonological study *Phonetik der Nördlichen Türksprachen (Phonetics of the Northern Turkish Languages)*, published in 1882.⁷¹ Radlov's dictionary, entitled *Versuch eines Wörterbuches der Türk-Dialecte*, was a compilation of Turkic words with their German and Russian equivalents. In the 1960 edition of Radlov's dictionary, the reason why Radlov chose Russian Central Asia was that "the Altai Turks, who were not Muslim and thus spared before the Arab-Persian overgrowth, had the purest Turkish, and from there one should start the exploration of Turkish languages."⁷²

Thus, Radlov's study of Altai Turkic came from the fact that it had been untouched by the influx of Arabic and Persian words that came with the Islamization of the Turkic tribes. This signaled for Radlov and other Turkologists that Altai Turkic came closest to the Old Turkic language as it had been spared Islamization. Altai Turkic, Radlov believed, had largely been preserved. In privileging Central Asia, Radlov broke with Davids and other scholars by avoiding travel to the Ottoman Empire and, instead, focusing his Turkological inquiries on the Turks of the Central Asian steppe. Radlov's emphasis on the

⁷¹ Dr. W. Radloff, *Phonetik der Nördlichen Türksprachen* (Leipzig: T.O. Weigel's Verlag, 1882).

⁷² Wilhelm Radloff, *Versuch eines Wörterbuches der Türk-Dialecte* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1960), 1. ⁴³

earliest forms of Turkic languages in Central Asia would revolutionize Turkology by centering non-Ottoman Turkic languages within Turkological research. Simply put, Radlov did not view Ottoman Turkish as a “pure” form of Turkic. Instead, Radlov pursued Central Asian Turkic languages that exhibited less Arabic or Persian influence. Radlov held that Ottoman, though at its heart a Turkic language, no longer reflected the essential characteristics of Turkic peoples or their ethos. In other words, Radlov believed that “The Ottoman [language] always remained alien...as the spoiled "Efendi jargon" in this (old!) language.”⁷³ Radlov looked upon the Ottoman language with “regret...[at] the surpassing of Turkish "purity" of the Altai-Turkish” and, as such, “led to Radloff in the pursuit of the phonetics of ancient [Turkic] monuments to [avoid Ottoman’s] totally devious constructions.”⁷⁴ Thus Vasili Radlov came to the conclusion that Ottoman Turks had deviated too far from their Turkic roots.

Radlov is also most famous for his publication of the ancient Orhon Turkic inscriptions in Mongolia, an endeavor that was a major stepping-stone for deciphering them later.⁷⁵ Praised by Ottoman and Transcaucasian intellectuals and nationalists throughout his life, Radlov’s memory would ultimately be expunged during the Stalinist era of the Soviet Union for the crime of “Pan-Turkism,” something the Soviet state believed would undermine its territorial integrity. Before he had reached prominence, and later infamy, however, Radlov built his reputation by traveling throughout Central Asia and publishing acute and detailed studies of various Turkic peoples and languages he encountered there. His travels coincided with the Russian conquest and colonization of the Central Asia

⁷³ Radloff, 1.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ The inscriptions were first deciphered by Danish Turkologist Vilhelm Thomsen.

steppes, which no doubt provided Radlov with access to these often remote places as well as influenced how he wrote about the peoples he encountered.

Radlov published one of his articles in the *Journal Asiatique* entitled “Observations on the Kirghiz.”⁷⁶ The article shows the complex relation Radlov had to the Turks he was studying. On the one hand, the article reaffirms the imperial mission of the Russia state vis-à-vis the people of Central Asia. This, no doubt, hampers the supposed objectivity Radlov believed his analysis carried. For example, Radlov ends his study by discussing the economic relations between the Kirghiz and their neighbors in Bukhara and Kokand (both in present-day Uzbekistan), which, owing to their constant nomadic status, was a vital link in procuring goods such as silks, cottons, and other fineries. The nomadic lifestyle of the Kirghiz and their dependency on urban centers may very well have been the case, however, this led Radlov to conclude his entire study with the following observation: “We see, by this quick glimpse, that [the Kirghiz] are today at a degree of culture that, perhaps, is much lower to those that could be found a thousand years ago; what we can only attribute to nomadic life, that keeps a people in a mindless state, without allowing them any progress.”⁷⁷ Thus we see that, for as nuanced as Radlov’s study was, it still subscribed to European notions of civilization on whose spectrum the “nomadic” Kirghiz Turks are “found” lesser than Europeans in terms of historical, literary, and cultural development.

Despite his ethnocentric conclusion, many of Radlov’s observations actually sought to challenge preconceived notions of the Steppe peoples, particularly the erroneous labels that tended to group all of the complex confederations together. He therefore deployed

⁷⁶ M. Radloff, “Observations sur les Kirghiz,” in *Journal asiatique : ou recueil de mémoires, d'extraits et de notices relatifs à l'histoire, à la philosophie, aux sciences, à la littérature et aux langues des peuples orientaux...* / publié par la Société asiatique. October 1863, pp. 309 – 328.

⁷⁷ Radlov, 328.

these same notions of civilization to examining the erroneous labels given to the Kirghiz, including *Kazakh* by the Russian Cossacks, *Bourout* by the Chinese, and *Kara Kirghiz* by past European explorers. All of these names, argued Radlov, were baseless and completely unknown to the Kirghiz themselves.⁷⁸

Instead of relying on what he believed to be misnomers, Radlov decided to conduct an etymological inquiry of these names and, as a result, settled on *Kirghiz* after recording the origin story of the confederation. This foundation myth of the confederation held that all had descended from forty maidens (*kirk kiz* in Turkic) and thus, everyone was bound to that origin as *Kirghiz*. What we see at work here, then, is Radlov's use of oral testimonies and foundation myths, which he acquired through knowledge of the local languages, to classify this particular confederation. Furthermore, Radlov describes the confederation's folklore, customs, living arrangements, and nomadism as important components that make up a Kirghiz individual.

Nevertheless, Radlov does not view the Kirghiz as completely static or pristine in their makeup. He recognizes that, throughout the history of the confederation, there was much interaction, intermarriage, and assimilation of customs, culture, and lifestyle, though not always voluntary or peaceful, with surrounding confederations and states. In fact, Radlov documents that, despite a long history of interaction with various other peoples, the Kirghiz "are not the original peoples of this area [and that] all the other Muslim peoples distrust them and do not want to have relations with them: neither the Kazakhs, nor the Sarts of Kokand, nor the Tatars of Kachgar (Uighurs, Khou-za in Chinese) look upon them as brothers."⁷⁹

⁷⁸ Radlov, 310.

⁷⁹ Radlov, 315.

As for the Turkic components of the Kirghiz, Radlov comes down firmly on the side that, although they have a unique origin story and customs, their language can only be classified as Turkic. Trying to skirt the question of the confederation's racial origins, Radlov writes that "As for the origin of the Kirghiz, I will not dare to affirm anything. [Some scholars] classify them among the five tribes of the Germanic peoples; other writers, quite the opposite, believe they are of Finnish origin, and finally, still others [believe they] are of the Turkic race."⁸⁰ However, as much as he leaves the racial classification of the Kirghiz to the reader, Radlov does confirm that "the language the Kirghiz speak now is a purely Turkic dialect that even provides such a large resemblance with the dialect spoken in the Altay [Mountains]."⁸¹

Radlov's discussion of the language classification of Kirghiz shows that, already by the mid-nineteenth century, ideas about a single Turkic people were already taking form. These ideas would go off into several important directions: one camp would hold that the Turkic peoples were a unique group and the other would put forth the idea that the Turkic peoples were subsumed, along with Finns, Hungarians, Koreans, and Mongolians, into a larger classification of peoples called the *Turanic* peoples. At the center of these ideas was the question of language itself and, thus, Turkologists and others would focus their studies on the grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and orthography of various Turkish 'dialects' in order to piece the origins of the Turks together.

Beyond his article for *Société Asiatique*, Radlov conducted many more inquiries on the Turkic languages. One of the cornerstones of Radlov's career, and of the field of Turkology more generally, was his multivolume *Proben der Volkslitteratur der Türkischen*

⁸⁰ Radlov, 317.

⁸¹ Radlov, 318.

Stämme Süd-Sibiriens (South Siberian Oral Literature) published in 1866. For this work, Radlov collected poems, proverbs, stories and folklore from among the different Turkic peoples he lived and worked, including the Altai peoples believed to be the original Turkic peoples. Each volume of this massive work was dedicated to a different Turkic language, including Altai, Tuvin, Kazakh, Kirghiz, and Crimean Tatar.⁸²

In the first volume of his *Proben*, Radlov collected and published proverbs, epics, and stories from the Altai peoples. Collecting and synthesizing these different folkloric works meant that they had to be transcribed in a way that could be accessible to someone from outside of these societies. In other words, Radlov needed to devise a system of transcription from to set down what was an oral tradition into written form. He devised, therefore, a 40-letter alphabet for Altai and Tuvin, the languages he worked with for his first volume. Radlov's alphabet was based on Cyrillic, but included extra characters and vowel markers to correspond with all the possible sounds of both languages.⁸³

Works like the *Proben* helped Turkologists see the links between these languages better. Furthermore, these poems and stories also shed light on the very foundation of the Turkic peoples. Soon, Turkologists and Turkic intellectuals in the Ottoman and Russian empires were supplied with ample evidence of the ancient traditions and history of the Turks. By making the comparison between these works of literature, as well as the similarities between the languages, both the Turkologists and Turkic intellectuals could

⁸² V.V. Radloff, *South Siberian Oral Literature: Turkic Texts Volume 1* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967), x – xi.

⁸³ The vowels of Radlov's devised alphabet were A, Ä, E, O, Ö, Y, Ÿ, I, ы, and ŷ. The ä corresponded to a flat e (ə sound in Azerbaijani); the Ÿ to a mid-range between ü and i; the ы to the Turkish ı; and ŷ to the ü in both German and Turkish. For the more particular letters he devised, Radlov referred to the Ottoman language. For example, Radlov's letter for the Ñ, which he transcribed as an h with a diacritic mark on the lower right, was referred to as the Ottoman كڭ. What is immediately apparent when reading Radlov's *Proben* is how familiar many of the words are to speakers of other Turkic language. This is even the case for Turkish or Azerbaijani, which are the most removed from Altai.

begin to chart when a pristine, original Turkic language, Altai in this case, emerged. With Altai under their belt, both groups set out to dig deeper into ancient forms of Turkic to uncover more history and knowledge about the past.

2e. Léon Cahun

Along with Radlov, there were other late-nineteenth century Turkologists who made their own investigations into the linguistic and historical beginnings of the Turks. One important work was Léon Cahun's *Introduction à l'histoire de l'Asie* (1896).⁸⁴ Cahun begins his history, which spans from the origins of the Turks and Mongols until 1405, with several observations. First, he states that the Turks and the Mongols are "intermediaries between the Persian and Chinese civilizations."⁸⁵ Cahun's conception of the intermediary stemmed from period of the First and Second Turkic empires. However, he recognized that, in his own time, the Turks and the Mongols have subdued both Iran and China. Cahun states that the Turks and Mongols "first seized in these two neighboring societies the Persian and Chinese languages, the ideas and the knowledge they found at their disposal" and then incorporated these features into their government structures.⁸⁶ Persian and Chinese, rather than Turkic languages, became the languages of the court and of learning in the new Turco-Mongol states. What ensued, therefore, was a complex exchange of culture in which the Turco-Mongols were at once the dispensers and receivers. In other words, though they controlled the states and day-to-day politics of the regions they

⁸⁴ Nationalists, such as Ziya Gökalp, Necib Asım, and Yusuf Akçura, credit Cahun's book as one that had a large impact on Turkology and Turkish national consciousness in the late nineteenth century. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk even possessed a heavily annotated copy of the book, which he had read in his youth, and was also greatly influenced by Cahun's conclusions.

⁸⁵ Léon Cahun, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'Asie: Turcs et Mongols, des origines à 1405* (Paris: Libraires de la Société des Gens de lettres, 1896), vii.

⁸⁶ Cahun, viii.

conquered, these dynasties were ultimately conquered by the culture they had subjugated, as they had to assimilate it into their own regimes.

Cahun does not mean to say the Turks or the Mongols are somehow deficient in their “failure” to fully develop their own civilization. Rather, he was making a point about the continued separateness of the Turks and Mongols from all of those around them. They were still, in Cahun’s estimation, pure, pristine peoples who harkened back to the characteristics of their ancestors. Though he believed the Turks had not reached the cultural heights of the Chinese and Persians, Cahun does list the virtues of the Turks: “they embody the military spirit; their virtues are those of true men of war, courage, obedience, uprightness, common sense; they have been just rulers, firm administrators. Far from distrusting art and science, they have honored intellectual endeavors; they have tried to incorporate them and make them natural [to their own rule].”⁸⁷

On the question of language, Cahun categorizes the Turkic tongues within the family of “Eastern European and Continental Asia” that includes Finnish, Hungarian, Mongolian, and Manchu.⁸⁸ Cahun further divides these languages into subgroups, including Finno-Hungarian, Mongol, Manchu, and Turkic. What unified these language groups, despite not having a known common ancestor, were certain grammatical features they all shared.⁸⁹ For one, these languages shared agglutinative features in which they “...possess a particular faculty that is for nuancing action, expressing all modes of action in a single verb while introducing particles between its monosyllabic radical and its agglutinative suffix.”⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Cahun, ix.

⁸⁸ Cahun, 33.

⁸⁹ Cahun, 33.

⁹⁰ Cahun, 34.

Secondly, these languages exhibited vowel harmony, at least in the spoken variant. Cahun states that “a word such as bit-mak would be barbaric to a Turk; Bit-mek [rather] is necessary. The Turk changes the name *Mohammed* to *Mahamat* or *Mehemed* [based on the principle of vowel harmony].”⁹¹ In explaining the distinctive features of these languages, what many would call the Altaic languages, Cahun drew upon the work of past linguists. Like Radlov, Cahun believed that these languages, especially the Turkic languages, maintained their purity in the face of contact with Persian, Chinese, and Arabic. Though the Turks had been absorbed into the World of Islam, which Cahun writes at length on, and into Persian and Chinese civilization, they managed to emerge from the process still unique and with all of their original heroic, linguistic, and historical distinctions.

It is easy to see, therefore, why a work such as Cahun’s would have such broad appeal among the Ottoman and Transcaucasian intellectuals. For one, his work reinforced a growing orthodoxy that the Turks constituted their own ancient nation. It was precisely the way in which Cahun tapped into the desire to explore the ancient origins of the nation that made his work so important for Soviet and Kemalist reformers in the future. Cahun, though stressing that the Turks never quite established a full civilization, nevertheless emphasized their heroic qualities and their openness towards cultural innovation. For many nationalists, to whose societies the very doctrine of nationalism seemed an innovation, stressing the ability of the Turkic peoples to assimilate new ideas had great appeal.

⁹¹ Cahun, 34.

2f. *The Orhon Inscriptions and the Ancient Turkic “Nation”*

During an expedition funded by the Russian Geographical Society, Nikolai Yadrinstev, a prominent Turkologist of the late nineteenth century, led a team of specialists through the Orhon Valley in Mongolia. During this expedition, Yadrinstev’s team came across the famous Orhon Inscriptions (Orhon Yazıtları), which was comprised of dual Old Turkic-Chinese engravings on stone columns. Two years later, in 1891, the Russian Academy of Sciences sent a second expedition to the Orhon Valley, this time accompanied by Radlov. More Old Turkic inscriptions were discovered there and Radlov was tasked with publishing an accurate transcription of the Old Turkic and translation of the inscriptions themselves. It was Vilhelm Thomsen, the Danish Turkologist, who ultimately deciphered the Orhon Inscriptions and cracked the Old Turkic alphabet. Thomsen published these findings in French in 1899.⁹²

Thomsen’s decipherment and analysis of the Orhon Valley Inscriptions was a major advancement in Turkology. His influence was such that future Turkologists and Turkic intellectuals alike viewed these Orhon Inscriptions as an essential hallmark of their historical and national identity. From his initial publication of the Inscriptions’ decipherment, there was considerable debate among Turkologists as to the finer points of the translation Thomsen put forward. His 1916 *Studies*, published by the Finno-Hungarian Society, would give Thomsen the opportunity to clarify his work and answer some of his critics. For example, in the first section of his *Studies* entitled $\downarrow) >, un^1q, on^1q$, Thomsen posits that the Orhan Inscriptions speak of the ancient ‘Ten Tribes’ of the Turks. These ten

⁹² The Finno-Hungarian Society in Helsinki published a second edition of his work in 1916. This edition, which I use in this section, is entitled *Studies Concerning the Interpretation of the Turkic Inscriptions of Mongolia and Siberia (Etudes Concernant L’Interprétation des Inscriptions Turques de la Mongolie et de la Sibérie)*. 52

tribes were designated by the name *on oq*, meaning ‘ten arrows,’ a reference to how they were divided.⁹³

The leader of each tribe, Thomsen hypothesized, was gifted an arrow to show his tribe’s eternal connection to the greater the Turkic nation. Thomsen pushed forward his observation in contrast to Radlov’s that held *on oq* actually meant ‘ten tribes,’ rather than ‘ten arrows.’ Citing Thomsen’s failure to provide an accurate translation, Radlov explained that the significance of ‘ten arrows’ lie in the fact that the Turkic tribes were separate entities from the onset. As such, they were not primordially united into a single Turkic nation. Radlov translated the Old Turkic word ^l*q* as *uq*, meaning *tribe*, rather than *ok* meaning *arrow*.⁹⁴ Thomsen, however, was concerned that the radical (^l)’s sound had not yet been sufficiently documented and that it designated a vowel between an *o* and *u*. For Thomsen, understanding the exact vowels was crucial in understanding the underlying message of the Inscriptions themselves.

These debates over the origins of the Turks were followed by Ottoman and Russian Turko-Tatar intellectuals and reformers who coopted them to argue for more nationalistic understandings of the Turkic past. The origin story of the Turks as a single nation that had subsequently divided was more credible, in Thomsen’s view, if they had done so voluntarily, each taking an arrow to symbolize their eternal attachment to each other. Ten *tribes*, on the other hand, was too ambiguous: the question that remained with this hypothesis was one between ten distinct tribes from the beginning or a division of a single tribe into ten.

⁹³ Both the word for ten ‘on’ and arrow ‘oq’ survive in modern Turkish (*ok*) and Azerbaijani (*ox*).

⁹⁴ Vilhelm Thomsen, *Etudes Concernant L’Interprétation des Inscriptions Turques de la Mongolie et de la Sibérie* (Helsinki: Société Finno-Ougrienne, 1916), 6. 53

In addition to the ‘ten arrows’ that designated the division of the Turkic peoples into ten tribes, Thomsen wrote about the mythical land of *Tou-kiue* whose ruler was identified as “the ancestor of the Eastern Turkish chieftains.”⁹⁵ It was in this land that the first Turkic Empire, made up of both a state of Eastern Turks and one of Western Turks, first came to prominence. This empire was fractured, according to Thomsen’s translation of the Orhon Inscriptions, when the Western Turks sought complete independence from their “Eastern brethren.”⁹⁶ Nevertheless, research on the mythic land of *Tou-kiue*, the ten tribes of the Turkic nation, and the early history of the Turkic empire imbued Turkic intellectuals and nationalists with a primordial identity that was used to generate cultural and linguistic renewal.

As nationalist movements began to take root among Turkic reformers and intellectuals, the question of linguistic heritage moved into the foreground of debates and programs to modernize society. Turkic-speaking reformers read and coopted Turkological scholarship and methods of inquiry to legitimize their own linguistic and political goals. Though its origins lay in Europe, the discipline of Turkology proved instrumental in establishing Turkic ethno-linguistic identities. The central credo of the Turkologists was that the Turks belonged to a unique and primordial nation. This nation, while part of the greater Islamic community, was nevertheless distinct and its recovery levied introspection that would sideline non-Turkic Muslims. Turkic reformers in both the Ottoman and Russian empires, therefore, centered language as an essential component of their effort to disseminate this new national ethos as well as modernize society in its pursuit.

⁹⁵ Thomsen, 18.

⁹⁶ Thomsen, 18.

2g. Conclusion: Turkology and Language Reform

This chapter outlined the major contributions to Turkology as well as how this European discipline provided “scientific” foundations for Turkic nationalisms in both the Russian and Ottoman empires. Turkology’s insistence on language as an essential marker of difference influenced the drive to Latinize and purify the Turkic languages in the 1920s and 1930s in both the Turkish Republic and Soviet Union. Here, there was a direct link between the academic output of scholars, such as Radlov and Thomsen, and the subsequent movement among language reformers in the post-WWI period to enact Latinization and purification.

Their task, however, was to build a new national language for the Turkish nation. This language, they believed, should be as Turkified as possible, hence as many Arabic and Persian terms should be expunged from the official lexicon as possible. 1934, the year the Turkish Language Association published its periodical, was the height of the purification movement in Turkey. Thus, Radlov’s dictionary, far from acquiring dust on a library shelf, became an important resource for the purification movement of the 1930s in Turkey.

For example, in the mid-1930s, the Turkish Language Association published its *Collection Periodical of Terms from Ottoman to Turkish (Osmanlıcadan Türkçeye Söz Karşılıkları Tarama Dergisi)*, shortened to *Tarama Dergisi*. This publication, the product of the Central Committee Organization of the Turkish Language Association, sought to draw upon not only the contemporary Turkish dialects spoken across Anatolia, but also to utilize past scholarship on the Turkic languages in the construction of a new national Turkish idiom. The introduction of the *Tarama Dergisi* states that the TDK “considered on

the one hand a comparison of the Turkish language with the oldest Turkic dialects and with other language families and, on the other hand, creating an essential Turkish vocabulary with a lexicon of dialects and historical and comparative grammar with today's Turkish."⁹⁷

The association's use of Turkological works to access the earliest forms of Turkic served a couple of important objectives. First, as the periodical states, the Language Revolution enacted by the association was for the purpose of "collecting and producing the treasures of the Turkish language found in old books and in the people's language."⁹⁸ Thus, the TLA enacted the Language Revolution based on both academic works of Turkology and on the collection of contemporary words spoken in different parts of the country. In both cases, both combing over Turkological works and collecting vocabulary from all corners of the new Turkish nation-state, the TLA privileged words of verified Turkic origin over those who entered the language as foreign loanwords. Both elements, the scholarly and the nationalist mobilization efforts, comprised the Kemalists' plan to "purify" the Turkish language.

Radlov's work was essential to their endeavors at language purification because it housed a vocabulary from the eastern Turkic languages that was largely "preserved" from the onslaught of Arabic and Persian words that came with Islamization.⁹⁹ In fact, in a section outlining the various written sources that the association drew from in their lexical compilation, the TLA states that "The four volume *Lexicon of the Turkic Dialects*, written

⁹⁷ Türk Dil Kurumu (T.D.T.C.), *Osmanlıcadan Türkçeye Söz Karşılıkları Tarama Dergisi* (İstanbul: İstanbul Devlet Matbaası, 1934), 5.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ By Islamization, I mean the process, lasting over several centuries, in which the Turkic tribes began to convert to Islam. The conversion of various Turkic tribes happened for a number of reasons, including economic and military advantages and also the power of the Sufi movement that proselytized in Central Asia. As the Turkic tribes converted to Islam, their language was infused with a new string of loanwords from Arabic and Persian. Many Turko-Muslim states, such as the Seljuk Turks, adopted Persian as the language of their courts and of literature, whereas Arabic became the official language of religious matters.⁵⁶

by Radlov, is one of the most valuable works [upon which they drew], perhaps the most important.”¹⁰⁰ The association presents Radlov’s qualifications as an academic in Turkology, listing the Russian institutions that he taught and researched in. From there, the periodical presents an extensive bibliography of Radlov’s scholarly contributions to Turkology as well as a short description of why the particular work was consulted in the effort to collect authentic Turkic words.

Kemalist and Soviet reformers on the whole considered Turkology a *scientific (ilmi* in Turkish or *elmi* in Azerbaijani) and therefore *sound* basis upon which to construct their historical, linguistic, and cultural identity. The rise of the two revolutionary states in Russia and Turkey demonstrated that Turkology could be recycled to legitimize new nationalist or socialist objectives, especially as they pertained to language reform. As they absorbed the latest Turkological discoveries and general scholarship, both Kemalist and Soviet language reformers expanded upon and reworked it to imbue their own reformist goals with academic and scientific legitimacy.

Turkology, however, fell out of favor in the Soviet Union towards the beginning of World War Two. As such, much of the Turkological scholarship was censored by the Soviet authorities and many proponents of Turkology were imprisoned or executed as “pan-Turkist” fifth columns against the state. The once-celebrated Radlov and Thomsen soon fell out of favor and were largely forgotten. In the Turkish Republic, Turkology was also not always viewed with benevolence by the Kemalists, who increasingly sought to sever Anatolian Turks’ historical and linguistic ties with their Turkic brethren in Central Asia. Downplaying the linguistic and cultural connections with Turkic peoples outside the

¹⁰⁰ Türk Dil Kurumu (T.D.T.C.), *Osmanlıcadan Türkçeye Söz Karşılıkları Tarama Dergisi* (İstanbul: İstanbul Devlet Matbaası, 1934), 43.

boundaries of the Turkish Republic was paramount in promoting a unique sense of Anatolian Turkish identity and language that had only tangential connections. More than a mere wing of European Orientalism, Turkology's connection to Turkish nationalism, even in the mind of Soviet and Kemalist authorities, was firmly established in the Interwar Era.

Analyzing Bilâl Şimşir's work, for example, demonstrates the influence of Turkological scholarship. In his 2008 edition of *The Turkish Writing Revolution*, Şimşir relies heavily on Turkological scholarship to present this history of the Turkic language and its alphabets. He begins his history of the Turkic alphabet citing the scholarship of both Thomsen and Radlov: "Köktürk inscriptions, since the 18th century, caught the attention of scientists [bilim adamları], however, for a long time they remained unreadable. Finally, the Danish scientist Vilhelm Thomsen, in 1893, deciphered the Köktürk inscriptions and was successful in reading the Orhon inscriptions."¹⁰¹ Here, Şimşir uses the terms "bilim adamı" and "bilgin," both of which mean *scientist* or *scholar*, to characterize Thomsen. Turkology remains, even in the 21st century, to be viewed as *bilim*, science or knowledge, for certain historians of Turkey.

Following the previous generation of Turkologists, Soviet and Kemalist reformers too viewed this rediscovered primordial Turkic language as embodying the unique national characteristics and identity of Turks across Anatolia, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. Both the early Turkologists and post-WWI Soviet and Kemalist language reformers believed primordial Turkic was subsequently altered from its essential state by non-Turkic foreign cultures (the Chinese, Persians, Arabs, and Russians for example). The focus on primordial Turkic and its subsequent "degeneration" at the hands of foreigners raised questions among

¹⁰¹ Şimşir, 1.

the language reformers as to whether the Turkic variants in use at the time still reflected the unique national characteristics of Turks themselves.

The shift towards incorporating Turkology into the various intellectual and reformist programs in the Soviet and Kemalist experiences entailed the internalization of the ideas of positivism, scientism, and nationalism.¹⁰² By incorporating positivism, science, and nationalism into their various political programs, Turkic intellectuals and reformers from the Ottoman, Russian, and even Persian empires sought answer questions about the exact ethnic and cultural origins of the contemporary Turkic peoples.

¹⁰² Erik J. Zürcher & Touraj Atabaki, "Introduction," in *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).

3. Language Reform and Nationalism in the Pre-WWI Turcophone Press

3a. Introduction

This chapter begins with a letter from Namık Kemal to his associate Menemenli Rifat Bey, dated August 3rd, 1878. A prominent figure within the Young Ottoman patriotic movement, Kemal had become an intellectual and political figure who disseminated his ideas through the new literary establishment and print culture taking root during the Tanzimat reforms (1839-1876).¹⁰³ In his letter, Kemal shares his views on the issue of reforming or Latinizing the Ottoman language, noting that “this issue of change (tebdil) or reform (islah-ı hat) has become one of public discussion even since [he] entered the world of publishing.”¹⁰⁴ First, Kemal systematically compares the current Ottoman alphabet with the Latin script to determine which letters and sounds would be preserved or lost in his hypothetical switch to the Latin script. In one section, he writes

Latin letters have a *C*, an *S*, a *K*, and a *G*. As for our language, even though there are *kafs* (ك) that are read as *yâ* (ی), *nun* (ن), or *se* (ث), there is still need for the *kef* (ك) for *Teşri* (تشریح), *değildim* (دکلام), *kâtip* (کاتب) along with a *kaf* (ق) and a *sin* (س). With what letter would the *ghayn* (غ) be expressed? If *H* is used to substitute for any one of these letters, *he* (ه), *hâ* (ح), or *hı* (خ), how will the remaining two be written?¹⁰⁵

Taking aim at Europe and the Tanzimat reformers keen to blindly graft its culture and government institutions onto Ottoman society, Kemal continues:

In nations that use the Latin script, a man is not able to read everything he sees within 15 or 20 days; [Europeans'] spelling problems are much greater than ours which shows the need for years of effort just to be able to write. In French spelling, there are many who hesitate to write a word with the C

¹⁰³ Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000); Erik Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005); Carter Vaughn Finley, *Turkey, Islam, Nationalism, and Modernity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

¹⁰⁴ Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, *Namık Kemal'in Hususi Mektupları II: İstanbul ve Midilli Mektupları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1969), 190.

¹⁰⁵ Tansel, 190-191.

or the S; even the famous [Adolphe] Thiers said ‘we [French] are both the slaves to the typesetter and dictionaries.’¹⁰⁶

Namik Kemal’s letter illustrates the general climate of debate over the Ottoman language and its alphabet in the nineteenth century. As is evidenced from his letter, issues of alphabetic and language reform became pressing, as Ottoman society underwent the sweeping reforms of the Tanzimat era. These reforms were aimed primarily at establishing a shared patriotic identity for all Ottoman subjects, regardless of their religious confession. Under this new political ideology, called *Ottomanism*, the Tanzimat reformers attempted to “base the [Ottoman] state on a new kind of identity, rather than the traditional Islamic one, and so foster loyalty among all ethnic and religious groups living within the boundaries of the Empire.”¹⁰⁷

In instituting these reforms, Sultan Abdülmecit I (1839-1861), grand vizier Mehmet Reşit Paşa (who held top diplomatic and governmental posts from 1834 to 1858), and the bureaucracy at large implemented European-style reforms to bring “everyone living in Ottoman territory under a single national designation [Ottoman] and [aimed at] recognizing equal rights and responsibilities without harming the empire’s Islamic traditions.”¹⁰⁸ In achieving this, the Tanzimat reformers aimed to prevent the spread of ethnic separatist movements that were often used as proxies for the expansion of European imperial interests. The main current of thought flowing through the Tanzimat period was “Ottomanism,” namely “Ottoman patriotism [an] affirmation of the equality of all Ottoman subjects before the law regardless of religion.”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁶ Tansel, 191.

¹⁰⁷ David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism 1876-1908* (London: Frank Cass, 1977), 7; Masami Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era* (Brill: Leiden & New York, 1992), 1-2.

¹⁰⁸ Kemal H. Karpat, *Türk Demokrasi Tarihi* (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2017), 97.

¹⁰⁹ Masami Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era* (Leiden, New York: E.J. Brill, 1992), 2.

Though couched as the only way to preserve the Ottoman system, these Tanzimat reforms undermined the old paradigm and set the empire on a new course towards Balkanization and nationalism. Devised and implemented by European-educated officials called “French-knowers” (*Frankofonlar*), the Tanzimat reforms overturned the traditional institutions—the Janissaries, the timar/iltizam taxation systems, and the local power of the ayans—in favor of state centralization in the hands of the modern imperial bureaucracy and of Europeanizing the Ottoman military, government ministries, and education system.¹¹⁰ Enacted by state elites, the Tanzimat reforms sparked major controversies and debates within Ottoman intellectual circles. These debates were central to the rise in popularity of the Young Ottoman clique headed by Namik Kemal.

Kemal critiqued the Tanzimat reforms for discarding Ottoman-Islamic traditions, customs, ideals, and institutions to remake the empire in the mold of modern Europe. Furthermore, Kemal also “argued that most of the reforms implemented by the Ottoman state for the sake of seeming civilized through superficial Westernization at the expense of real “civilization,” which had to include democracy, participation, a parliament, and political freedom.”¹¹¹ Advocating for the expansion of liberal freedoms to protect traditions from state centralization, Namik Kemal and his fellow Young Ottomans contributed to debates over Ottoman language reform. This debate on language was connected to larger conversations over the interplay between modernist reform, Ottoman-Islamic tradition, and identity. The various contributors, editorialists, academics, and intellectuals debated the

¹¹⁰ William Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* 5th edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013), 76; Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* 3rd edition (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2009), 44.

¹¹¹ Cemil Aydın, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 36.

appropriate degree of Europeanization in Ottoman society, especially pertaining to borrowing French loanwords in the language. The Young Ottomans, therefore, weighed in on debates over language reform debates as part of their overall political landscape that included constitutionalism, citizenship, and equality of all Ottoman citizens under the law.

Kemal's letter, therefore, illustrates the general climate of debate and reform in the nineteenth-century Ottoman context. Conscious that the expansion of European empires necessitated reform and modernization, Namik Kemal nevertheless strove to preserve Ottoman traditions and symbols, including the alphabet, amidst the political and social transition the empire was undergoing through reform. In the case of the Ottoman alphabet, Kemal argues that "adopting the Latin letters into our language for reform is much like supposing that wearing French clothes is reason for property reform," and, therefore, amounted to a superficial change of script that would create as many orthographic issues as the current script.¹¹²

In a subsequent letter to Menemenli Rifat Bey, Namik Kemal again addressed the issue of adopting "French letters" (*Firenk harfleri*). Though the Tanzimat reformers and other Latinizers believed that adopting the script would bring benefits to the Ottoman language in terms of publishing and literacy, Namik Kemal challenge this assertion. Not only would the adoption of Latin letters pose difficulties and be inconvenient for the Muslim community, whose literary traditions were tied to the wider Islamic milieu, but Kemal also argues that the non-Muslim Greeks and Armenians would also be opposed to substituting their own alphabets with Latin letters: "even the Greeks and Armenians would not accept reading and writing with French letters as both of their alphabets are one

¹¹² Tansel, 190.

thousand times superior to the Latin letters.”¹¹³ Thus, Namik Kemal advocated for using previously-existing traditions and symbols in the modernization of the empire.

Focusing on Namik Kemal’s wider intellectual and reformist networks, this chapter will focus on how debates over language and national identity developed in the nineteenth and twentieth-century “trans-imperial Turcophone press.”¹¹⁴ This period, spanning from the 1860s through 1914, laid the intellectual and nationalist groundwork for the future Soviet and Kemalist language reforms. In the decades before World War One, a small but forceful cadre of Turkic-speaking Muslim reformers and intellectuals in the Ottoman and Russian empires began to forge intellectual and political networks within “a trans-imperial Turcophone public space.”¹¹⁵ Using print media as their primary instrument, the reformers and intellectuals, who built this “trans-imperial” network, used it to launch vigorous debates over the political, religious, and economic transformation of their societies.¹¹⁶

In these efforts, contributors to this newly-emerging public space of debate and communication “imagine[d] new kinds of ties among themselves, new collective affinities, and new modes of action” as they sought to push for a more encompassing Turkish consciousness and the modernization and strengthening of their local societies against European encroachment.¹¹⁷ The shared themes of societal transformation, mass literacy, and national identity in the trans-imperial Turcophone press centered heavily on issues of language and, increasingly, on the debate the need to reform the Perso-Arabic alphabet

¹¹³ Tansel, 236.

¹¹⁴ Adeeb Khalid, “Central Asia between the Ottoman and Soviet Worlds,” in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, 2 (Spring 2011): 451-76, 453.

¹¹⁵ Khalid, 453.

¹¹⁶ Adeeb Khalid, “Central Asia between the Ottoman and Soviet Worlds,” in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, 2 (Spring 2011): 451-76, 453.

¹¹⁷ Khalid, 453.

(الفبا). By the early 20th-century, editorials and news articles, which called either for reforming or abandoning the existing alphabet, appeared more frequently. This was a general trend in both the Ottoman and Russian Turcophone press and, as stated above, this period also saw an expansion of the public arena to include voices on both sides of the imperial divide.

Taking up language and identity as its central themes, this chapter examines how Turco-Muslim reformers across imperial boundaries viewed language reform as a prerequisite to broader social transformation, mass literacy, and national identity formation. Language reform, therefore, was placed at the heart of a new desire for modernization and societal transformation among the Turco-Muslim reformers in the Russian and Ottoman empires. Far from being a passive agent in this process, the pre-WWI Turcophone press contributed to a new birth of print media in which the power and construction of language served as an important tool for reformers to disseminate their ideas on modernization and language reform to a more international reading public.

Though not an exhaustive or comparative history of the rise of the Turcophone press, this chapter will nevertheless expand upon some common themes that were routinely discussed by the reformers on the topic of language. Among these were the promotion of specific forms of Turkic (either colloquial dialects or a common Turkic language), the social response to language reform from broader society, and the intersection between Islam, which represented continuity and order, and modernization, which was a process busy upending traditional patterns of Muslim life. Language, like Islam, was at the heart of these debates. The subsequent Soviet and Kemalist language planners inherited these

issues as they set about transforming their local Turkic languages through Latinized alphabets.

3b. Note on Terminology

To understand the shifting notions of nationalism and its relationship to language, it is pertinent to understand some of the common terminology used to articulate the nation. Firstly, the question for Turco-Muslim reformers was how to translate the concepts of national from their Western Europe, mostly French, context. In other words, how would conceptions such as *la nation*, *la patrie*, or *le peuple* translate to a Turco-Muslim in the Ottoman or Russian empire. Turkic reformers adopted specific terms to translate nationalist and revolutionary concepts from France to their own constituencies. All ultimately derived from Arabic, these terms nevertheless became common in both Persian and Turkic languages.

Term	Root	Meaning in Turkic
Millet	ملة (Arabic: congregation, denomination)	Nation
Tayfa	طائفة (ج طوائف) (Arabic: troop, band, group, party) (Persian: sect, denomination, religious minority)	Azeri: tribe, race, kinship Turkish: troop, party, band
Kavim	قوم (ج اقوام) (Arabic and Persian: people, nation, tribe)	A people, nation

(Table 2. Comparison of National Terminology)

What is common about these terms is that they originally denoted ethnic or sectarian divisions. What is also interesting about the incorporation of “tayfa” is that its origins as a military term meaning troop or band translates effectively in the nationalist

period. A “tayfa,” or “troop,” would build solidarity as a common people working to defend and develop their nation. These terms were constantly used in relation to the terms “lisan” or “dil,” both meaning ‘language.’ In writings across the Russian and Ottoman Turkic intelligentsia, the Turkic language was as often and tightly bound to Turkic identity and Islam. Even then, sectarian divisions between Sunni and Shia Turks were often resolved in the effort to forge larger ties based on largely-intelligible Turkic languages. Language, therefore, cut deeper for the Turkic nationalists than religion as the foundation of the Turkic nation, but also as a facet of identity that they could transform through modernization. Often, these measures were proposed in the name of the “millet,” “tayfa,” or “kavim.” In the Ottoman context, “kavim” was used by the Turkish Association (*Türk Derneği*) to denote the Turkic tribes living both within the empire and across the border in Russia.¹¹⁸

3c. Early Debates over Language Reform

As Turkology was developing in Europe, the question of language and identity took a prominent place within Ottoman intellectual and reformist circles. In a speech delivered to the Ottoman Scientific Society (*Cemiyet-i İlmiye-i Osmaniye*) in May 1862, the Minister of Education, Antepi Münif Efendi, stated that “Reading and writing Turkish with Arabic letters is difficult. Because there are no vowels to be found in that alphabet, a Turkish word can be read in several ways. It comes to where the same word can be read five or six different ways. Common words can nevertheless be read correctly. But, for a word whose definition is not known, it is not probable that it will be read correctly.”¹¹⁹ Münif Efendi

¹¹⁸ Arai, 7.

¹¹⁹ Quoted in Bilal N. Şimşir, *Türk Yazı Devrimi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2008), 20. “Arap harfleriyle Türkçe okuyup yazmak zordur. Bu alfabede ünlüler bulunmadığından Türkçe bir sözcük çeşitli ⁶⁷

was a career statesman in the Ottoman Empire: he had served as a diplomat in both Germany and Iran, as well as the Minister of Education and of Commerce.¹²⁰ As he spoke to the audience, Münif Efendi highlighted the major controversies surrounding the issue of language and identity in the Ottoman Empire. First, Münif Efendi signaled that future language reformers would distinguish between what was “Turkish” and what was “Arabic and Persian.” Based on the Arabic alphabet, the Turkish script did not, in Münif Efendi’s estimation, reflect the actual pronunciation of words. As such, Münif Efendi believed that, in its current form, the Arabic alphabet was “not sufficient for book, journal, and newspaper publishing.”¹²¹

It is doubtful that the entire audience listening Münif Efendi’s speech would have agreed on the “inadequacy” of the current Perso-Arabic script. Münif Efendi himself, according to Bilal Şimşir, favored reforming, rather than replacing, the existing script. His principle aim, as the minister of education, was to improve literacy rates within a modernized education system. He advocated for breaking up the cursive Arabic script into individualized, block letters, as well as adding diacritical marks to mark the range of Turkish vowels. Münif Efendi’s reformist suggestions would be the forerunner of the “reformist” (*ıslahatçı*) position within the debates over language reform.

Münif Efendi’s contemporary was Mirza Fethali Axundov, an Azeri social reformer living in Russian Transcaucasia but who traveled to and made extensive connections in the Ottoman Empire. Like Münif Efendi, Axundov also wrote about the

biçimlerde okunabilmektedir. Aynı sözcüğün beş-altı değişik biçimde okunabildiği olur. Ama anlamları pek bilinmeyen sözcüklerin doğru okunabilmesi hemen hemen olanaksızdır.”

¹²⁰ Hikmet Yıldırım Celkan, “I. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Modern Bir Eğitimci: Münif Paşa,” in *Gaziantep Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 7(2), 2008, pp. 399-404.

¹²¹ Şimşir, 20. “*Arap harfleri, kitap, dergi, gazete basımında da hiç elverişli değildir.*”

orthographic problems with the Arabic script. Unlike his reformist counterpart in the Ottoman Empire, Axundov advocated for total Latinization of his local Transcaucasian Turkic language.¹²² This language, called “Azeri” or “Azerbaijani” today, descended from the same Oghuz Turkic language family as did the “Turkish” spoken in Ottoman Anatolia and Istanbul. As such, both “Azeri” and “Ottoman Turkish” were both referred to as “Turkish” (*Türk dili*). Initially writing in Persian (the written and academic language of educated Muslims in Russian Transcaucasia), Axundov argued in his tracts that the Latin alphabet was necessary for the “Turkish” (ترکی) “in order for the pronunciation to [conform] to how the words actually are sounded.”¹²³ Axundov took his argument that the Latin alphabet was best suited for Turkish to various government officials in both the Russian and Ottoman empires, including giving a presentation at the Ottoman Scientific Society in 1863.¹²⁴

For both Münif Efendi and Axundov, the more formidable obstacle to either reforming or Latinizing the alphabet was its deep association with Islam. As such, any movement towards reforming or Latinizing the script remained greatly limited in the mid-nineteenth century. Both the Ottoman and Azeri Turkish alphabets (الفبا) were officially written with a modified version of the Perso-Arabic script. Though no formal standardization was enacted, both scripts often borrowed the Persian letters پ، چ، گ، ه and also followed Persian’s example in consolidating several letters: ذ، ز، ض، ظ to a Z sound.

¹²² Şimşir, 21-22.

¹²³ Quoted in Şimşir, 21. “*Huruf-i kadimenin noktaları ilga olunup (kaldırılıp) yerlerine diğer bir alâmeti muttasıla vazından (konulmasından) ve kelimelerin gereği gibi telaffuz olunması için bazı harekât-ı cedide ihtira’ı (bulumu) ile bunların mileli ecnebiye (yabancı uluslar) hututu (yazıları) misillû (gibi) huruf sırasında (Latin alfabesi biçiminde) tahririnden (yazılışından) ibaret bulunmaktadır.*”

¹²⁴ Şimşir, 21.

However, though the Persian letters provided Turkic languages with a more accurate range of consonants, they did not accurately reflect the range of vowels that existed: a, e, i, ı, o, ö, u, ü (in addition to ə for Azeri). A fundamental aspect of all Turkic grammars is vowel harmony, which sets the rules for connect morphemes to root words, a process called agglutination. These agglutinative structures are used in all aspects of the language and employ a range of vowels as their connectors. Because agglutination is fundamental to Turkic languages, both Münif Efendi and Axundov sought to reform the script Turkic languages were written in order to more accurately reflect the range of vowels that form the backbone of this grammatical system. Though they approached the question of reform differently, both Münif Efendi and Axundov argued that such changes to the language would increase literacy (*kiraat* or *okuma-yazma*) more rapidly.

As Bilal Şimşir notes, however, in expanding technologies, especially the telegraph, the Latin alphabet was used in place of the Perso-Arabic script.¹²⁵ The Ottoman Empire in the nineteenth century was not the world power of previous centuries and, thus, was subject to the expansion of European economic interests. The telegraph, imported from Europe, signaled a major shift towards the Latinization of Turkish as the messages received were transcribed in the Latin alphabet. Owing to the dominance of French as the language of the empire's new political elites, Ottoman Turkish was transcribed using French pronunciation. For example, an 1875 telegraph from the Ottoman embassy in London to the Palace Chamberlain (*başmabeynci*) in Istanbul shows that French pronunciation formed the basis for how the Ottomans conceived of their language with Latin letters. Compared

¹²⁵ Şimşir, 30-38.

with the New Turkish Alphabet that would be implemented by the Republic 53 years later, the differences are striking.¹²⁶

1875 Telegraph:

*Messoudiyé Firgatini humayounoun herchéissi yolounda oloub,
Suvarissi yola tchikmak itchoun, éyam havaya mountazidir...*

Modern Turkish Transcription:

*Mesudiye Firgatini hümayunun herşeyisi yolunda olup, süvarisi yola
çıkmaq için eyamı havaya muntazıdır...*

By analyzing Ottoman-era telegraph cables in the nineteenth century, Şimşir argues that the Latin alphabet gradually expanded across the globe to become to universal alphabet (*Latin Harflerinin Evrenselliği*). This “extraordinary expansion” (*bu olağanüstü yayılma*) happened for a number of reasons: European colonialism, international commerce, missionary activity, and scientific discoveries.¹²⁷ The Ottoman Empire became one site for the expansion of the Latin alphabet, although in limited areas such the telegraph.

3d. Ismail Gaspriski and the *Usul-i Jedid* (New Method)

One of the prominent themes in the language debates was the need for societal transformation. As stated before, the Turcophone press in both the Ottoman and Russian empires launched debates on the scope and direction of social change. However, owing to the tide of revolution sweeping the two states in the late 1910s, most intellectuals gradually advocated for some version of transformation that would modernize Muslim society and

¹²⁶ This telegraph, dated November 16, 1875, is cited in Şimşir, 35. Sent from the Ottoman embassy in London to the palace chamberlain, the telegraph affirmed the naval ship, Mesudiye, ordered by the palace. The telegraph concludes with affirming Sultan Abdülaziz’s enthusiasm for expanding the empire’s naval superiority.

¹²⁷ Şimşir, 30.

equip it with the scientific and technological concepts it needed to withstand the European powers and renew society from within. When he visited Cairo in 1907, Ismail Gasprinski gave an inaugural speech calling for “reform and the awakening of the Muslim world, blaming Muslims themselves for their crisis of military weakness, colonial despair, and economic backwardness.”¹²⁸ This speech exemplified the attitude and assumptions taken by the reformers discussed in this section. The feeling that united the voices included in this study was that the Muslim world was under grave threat from the European colonial empires. These empires had surpassed the Muslim world militarily and technologically. The push for an internal reform of Muslim societies from Gasprinski and others, spearheaded in both the Ottoman and Caucasian Turcophone press, particularly how language reform was to spearhead this change.

The 1905 Russian Revolution energized the liberal and intellectual Muslim upper-class to the *Ittifaq al-Muslimin* (the *Muslim Union*). This union was meant to represent the voices of Russia’s Muslims, especially the Tatars of Crimea who headed the Union. It would also hold sway over Muslim deputies in the newly-established Duma. Among the members of the Muslim Union were prominent intellectuals and journalists such as Ismail Gasprinski and Yusuf Akçura, a Tatar intellectual who would contribute greatly to the Language Reforms in Kemalist Turkey two decades later, as well as Əlimərdan Topçubaşov, an Azeri intellectual and politician who would serve as the future Foreign Minister and Speaker of the Parliament during the years of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic (1918-1920).¹²⁹

¹²⁸ Aydın, 85.

¹²⁹ The ADR was formed as an Azeri Muslim republic that declared its independence from Russia in 1918. Remembered in Azerbaijan as the first incarnation of Azerbaijani statehood, the ADR was nevertheless powerless without reliance on British backing based on its interest in Caucasian oil. To say that the ADR

Since the vast majority of Muslims in Russia were Turkic-speaking, the Muslim Union and its members took on a particularly Turkic flavor as they advocated for the expansion of political rights for their communities. Ismail Gasprinski's leadership of the union was particularly symbolic as his Pan-Turkic newspaper *The Interpreter (Tercüman)*, strove for a common Turkic language and the dissemination of that common language through the press in order to linguistically unite all the Turkic Muslims of Russia. Gasprinski's motto, quoted endlessly by future Turkic-language reformers in both the Soviet and Kemalist cases, was "Unity in Language, Thought, and Action" (*Dilde, fikirde, işte birlik*).¹³⁰

Using his paper as his outlet, Gasprinski's immediate audience were the Muslims of Russia, particularly the Turkic-speaking Crimean Tatars. Gasprinski's objective in printing this paper was not nationalist, but modernist and reformist. In other words, Gasprinski did not seek for the Tatars, or other Muslims of Russia, to gain independence but to gain cultural autonomy under which they could modernize. The objective of this autonomous modernization was so that Muslims could better serve the Tsar and the Russian state as equals rather than remain a subject and colonized group.

It was with an eye towards autonomy, modernization, and increased presence in Russia that Gasprinski advocated for the implementation of the "usul-i jedid," or "new pedagogical methods," in the Muslim schools (*madrasa*) throughout the Crimea. This new method entailed restructuring the curriculum and educational system to include Ottoman,

was a mere "puppet state" of the British, however, would be to underestimate the power that Azerbaijani nationalism held for the Azeri Muslim intellectual and upper classes who dominated the parliament and political establishment. The president of the ADR, Memmed Emin Resulzade, is still regarded as a national hero in Azerbaijan as well as a Pan-Turkic symbol in publications in both Turkey and Azerbaijan.

¹³⁰ Eruğrul Yaman, *Gaspıralı İsmail ve Türkçede Birlik* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 2015).

Tatar, and Russian-language instruction, Arabic and Quranic courses, Western sciences. This *usul-i jedid*, Gasprinski and his followers hoped, would foster a Muslim identity rooted firmly in modernity, science, cosmopolitanism, and rationalism.

In calling for reforms to Muslim educational systems, Gasprinski coined the famous dictum “United in Language, Thought, and Action,” which became a rallying cry for Muslim and Turkic intellectuals both in Russia and in the Ottoman Empire. Using this dictum, intellectuals, reformers, and nationalists sought to make greater connections between themselves based on common Turkic characteristics like language. As such, though the paper was based in Crimea, Gasprinski’s *Tercüman/Perevodchik* became influential across the Turkic-speaking regions of the Russian Empire and even had a following in the Ottoman Empire.

As such, the Turcophone press turned to debates over language itself. In particular, the issue of whether or not to transmit these ideas through a supranational Turkic language (usually Ottoman or Crimean Tatar) was central. One group advocated the creation of a supranational Turkic language that could be understood by Turkic peoples from Bulgaria to Western China. Championed by the adherents to Ismail Gaspiralı’s dictum *Unity in Language, Thought, and Work*, this group of reformers included prominent voices such as Yusuf Akçura and Alibey Hüseyinzade, both born in imperial Russia. In creating a commonly-intelligible Turkic idiom, these reformers elevated Ottoman Turkish by arguing that it was the most prestigious Turkic dialect and the language of the last independent Muslim empire. There were also calls for Crimean Tatar, the language of Gasprinski’s new madrasa system, to become the new Turkic standard.

Another group, however, focused their efforts more locally. Instead of emphasizing a supranational Pan-Turkic language, these reformers sought to elevate their own local Turkic language or dialect (*lehçe*) to the level of a modern, literary language. Though aware and empathetic to the plight of Turkic Muslims across both empires, these locally-minded reformers nevertheless argued that societal transformation needed to benefit, above all else, their immediate societies first. While not denying that the Turkic peoples descended from common origins, these locally-minded reformers played up the divergence of the Turks into various confederations, states, and empires. Emphasizing the local led these reformers to privilege their homegrown Turkic languages, particularly Azeri and Crimean Tatar, over a single supranational Turkic tongue.

Though these movements emphasized different aspects of religious, ethnic, and linguistic identity, all were unified in two fundamental ways. First, supranational and locally-minded reformers both held that fostering modern forms of national identity necessitated reform and renewal of the Turkic languages and cultures. In many cases, reformers and intellectuals often addressed the issue of religious and linguistic reform in the same breath, seeing the two as inherently linked.¹³¹ Renewal of language was a central program of each movement and, thus, literary figures such as novelists, poets, playwrights, and journalists took the leading role in the renewal of language. Second, these movements sought to employ modern sciences and newly emerging academic disciplines to provide a firm for this nascent national identity. Among these were the newly-emerging academic

¹³¹ One primary source of my research is a published anthology of the leading Azeri intellectuals of this period, Cəlal Bəydili Məmmədov, *Azərbaycan Publisistikası Antologiyası* (Baku: Şərq-Qərb, 2007). This volume features a number of articles in which both linguistic and religious identity are spoken about as well as includes authors who, while not writing about the two in the same article, nevertheless take up the issue of both in separate writings.

disciplines and methodologies of History, Sociology, Archeology, Anthropology and Linguistics.

Latinizers, reformists, supranationalists, and localists alike built upon the foundations laid by nineteenth-century European Turkologists as they articulated modern concepts of ethno-linguistic nationalism and identity. “Rediscovering” Turkic identity, these reformers generally argued, would lead to a cultural and national “revival.” This transformation, they argued, were prefaced on elevating the Turkic languages to the level of modern, literary idioms. As such, all camps of reformers believed in the centrality of language to others aspects of society that they sought to change, including education and printing. They often prescribed the same remedy, societal modernization, for a host of issues, including European colonialism, internal political paralysis, and Muslim-Turkic cultural and literary “renewal.” In all these areas, the reformers emphasized that the engine driving change should be the rediscovery and exaltation of authentic forms of national identity for Turkic Muslims.

There were many reformers, however, who rejected Turkicness as their primary marker of identification. Merely speaking Turkish as their primary language did not necessarily mean to them that they had to recognize solely *Turkic* bonds. In fact, these reformers often held that Turkic identity was less compelling and unifying than Islam or even Ottoman, Persian, Islamic, and Russian identities. By the beginning of WWI, the dust over these debates had not settled and it was not entirely certain that Turkism alone would win the day. The chapter will map out the various reformers calling for on language reform by analyzing where their arguments overlapped and intersected.

3e. Calls for Social Transformation in the Russian Caucasus

This section will examine the prominent currents of Turkic reformism and nationalism in Russian Transcaucasia. Home to the Azeri Turks, Transcaucasia became a crucial site for the establishment and dissemination of the Turcophone press and the reformist ideals that it bore. As these currents were developing, however, the terminology too was shifting from an emphasis on Turks as members of the greater Islamic community to Turks as a distinct national entity. Within these debates, the terms “Muslim,” “Turk,” “Tatar,” and “Turanic” were often used interchangeably to designate the Turco-Muslim communities under Russian imperial dominance. As the reform movement spread, however, its terminology became more precise and centered almost exclusively on *Turk* and *Turanic* identity.

One prominent voice of the Turcophone press in the Russian Caucasus was Məhəmmədağa Şahtaxlı (1846-1931). Born in the Transcaucasian city of Yerevan (capital of present-day Armenia), Şahtaxlı’s biography was typical of the reformist circles both in Russian Transcaucasia and the Ottoman Empire. He received primary education in local schools before graduating to the Tiflis Gymnasium. Şahtaxlı went on to study in the Collège de France and the École pratique des hautes études (1873-1875). Often, reformers such as Şahtaxlı widely traveled outside of Transcaucasia to obtain education and gain exposure to political climate of the era in Russia, Europe, and the Ottoman Empire. While studying in France, Şahtaxlı became a member of the Société Asiatique. Upon returning to Transcaucasia from France, Şahtaxlı became a committed advocate for the European modernization in Turco-Muslim society.

In his 1903 article “Our Ailment and Remedy” (*Dərdimiz və Dərmanımız*), Məhəmmədəğa Şahtaxlı wrote that the largest problem facing the future generations of Azeri Turkic in Transcaucasia was the current lack education in modern sciences and unawareness of its technology. This was a sentiment echoed across reformist networks and, in Transcaucasia, was aimed primarily at the “obstinate” Islamic madrasa system which kept the population ignorant of the latest development of science taking place in Europe. In Şahtaxlı’s judgement, this ignorance threatened to keep the Azeri Turks perpetually subservient to the colonial powers and unable to assert themselves as a distinct people. Blaming the Islamic establishment, Şahtaxlı writes “We have quite a few mollas and literate men. Older Islamic civilization remains only a name. [However], given our current conditions, they think it is sufficient to reach only this level, this perfection. And, alas, today they want to advance, to progress with their shortsighted ideas.”¹³² Along with the mollas, whom he criticized as having a myopic insistence on preserving Islamic knowledge, Şahtaxlı also castigates the blind imitators of European culture, those whom he labels debutants or coquettes (*nazəninlər*).

Şahtaxlı’s critiques of the Transcaucasian Muslim establishment reflected a greater concern within reformist circles in the Turkic world: namely, that the advent of European scientific and imperial dominance had exposed the weaknesses of Islamic civilization. Here, we witness the foundations of another assertion, the weakness of Islamic civilization, that Kemalist and Soviet reformers drew from in the 1920s. The religious establishment, in Şahtaxlı’s estimation, were guilty of obstinacy and obscurantism and were plunging the

¹³² Şahtaxlı, 25. “Bir çox mollalarımız, oxumuşlarımız var. Qədim İslam mədəniyyətinin yalnız adı qalmış. İndiki zahiri şəraitimizlə o mərtəbəyə, o kamala yetmiş-çatmış zənn edirlər və bu gün də o fəsad, kərgörməz fikirlə guya tərəqqi etmək, qabağa getmək istəyirlər. Heyhat!”

Muslim world into weakness and ignorance of the tools (science and technology) needed to maintain independence and sovereignty.

Şahtaxlı stated categorically that Muslims, especially his own community in Russian Transcaucasia, first had to admit to themselves that European civilization had eclipsed the historic achievements of Islamic civilization (İslam mədəniyyəti). So much so that, by the early 20th century, Islamic civilization “remained in name only.”¹³³ Şahtaxlı continued in his article: “We [Muslims] read the works created in the time of older, natural and devout Islamic intellectuals from books translated by the Europeans. We see what those who have civilization now are doing. We remain surprised and bewildered opening our mouths a yard-wide. Is this enough? No, let us learn from the things we observe.”¹³⁴ In order to appreciate Şahtaxlı’s insistence on copying European progress, one must understand how he—as well as his contemporaries—viewed human history and development. In Şahtaxlı’s article, the terms *mərtəbə* (مرتبة in Arabic; *stages*), and *mədəniyyət* (مدنیّت in Persian; *civilization*) constantly appear, signaling that he believed civilization was a continuum marked by various stages. Whereas Islamic civilization was once the most advanced and the top tier of literary culture, by Şahtaxlı’s own lifetime, European civilization was believed to have “surpassed” Islam in political, scientific, and technological terms.

European civilization, in Şahtaxlı’s estimation, had adopted and capitalized on much of the knowledge generated by Islamic civilization. Europe, therefore, had expanded upon this knowledge and, with it, surpassed Islam as the top civilizational tier. Though

¹³³ Şahtaxlı, 25. “*Qədim İslam mədəniyyətinin yalnız adı qalmış.*”

¹³⁴ Şahtaxlı, 25. “*Qədim, xalis, mütdəyyin elmi-islamın vaxtı ilə vücuda gətirdikləri əsərləri avropalılarından tərcümə edilən kitablarda oxuyuruş Tövbə! İndiki mədənilərin yapıqlarını görürüz. Ağzımız bir qarış aşib sərsəm, mədhuş qalırız. Bu qədərmi? Xeyr, gördüklərimizdən ibrət alayız.*”

Şahtaxtlı argued the roots of European modernity were found in Islam, the Europeans nevertheless succeeded in making indigenizing this gift of Islam and exporting their variant to the rest of the world through imperialism. In addition, Şahtaxtlı cites Japan and China as non-European civilizations that were successfully integrating European modernity in their own cultural contexts.¹³⁵ The world was changing through European modernization and Muslim societies could do nothing to prevent this change. On the contrary, Şahtaxtlı argued that Muslims should not resist but fully embrace all aspects of European modernity.

“We are proud of old Arab civilization,” Şahtaxtlı wrote, “and we are surprised, saying that Europeans borrowed civilization from Muslims. But, to start with, let’s consider how shameful this [thought] is for us. Even if Christian Europe had accepted old Islamic civilization, let us show the same persistence in learning and using our own possession.”¹³⁶ Here, Şahtaxtlı identifies civilization as a Muslim possession [*mal*, مال], something that Muslims throughout history had developed and contributed to. The problem, therefore, was that contemporary Muslim society stood complacent in the face of their own civilizational foundations being used against them by Europe. Since they believed that European civilization was based on Islam already, Şahtaxtlı and other reformers reasoned that adopting modernization from Europe would be natural and speedy. They were steadfast in the belief that, although Europe had the mantle of civilization and modernity for the moment, Islam remained the eternal essence of science and Enlightenment.

¹³⁵ Şahtaxtlı, 28-29.

¹³⁶ Şahtaxtlı, 29. “*Yeri gələndə qədim ərəb mədəniyyəti ilə fəxr edirik. Avropalılar mədəniyyəti islamlardan aldılar, deyə şişiriz. Amma bir kərə fikir edəlim ki, bu bizim üçün nə qədər ayıbdır. Avropa xaçpərəst ola-ola qədim islam mədəniyyətini qəbul etsə də, biz öz malımızı almaqda, öyrənməkdə bu dərəcədə inad göstərək?*”

Şahtaxlı was not the only figure writing in the Turcophone press to call for the adoption of European modernity within Azeri Muslim society. Həsən Bəy Zərdabi, the founder of Transcaucasia's first Turkic-language newspaper *The Ploughman* (*Əkinçi*) also advocated for the adoption of European forms of modernization. Zərdabi approached the issue from the revolutionary populist perspective he had picked up while a student of mathematics and chemistry at Moscow University.¹³⁷ This movement, called *narodnichestvo* (*народничество*) in Russian, sought to enact a populist revolution against the Tsarist regime using the peasants and their village societies as a model for societal reform. Zərdabi became famous for his 1875-1877 newspaper *Əkinçi* (the Ploughman). The first Turkic-language newspaper published in the Caucasus, *The Ploughman* advocated for the enlightenment and education of the Turkic Muslim population under Russian domination.¹³⁸

Enlightenment would come, Zərdabi argued, with the implementation of Ismail Gasprinski's *usul-i jedid*. This model, the reformers believe, would not only strengthen Turkic Muslim identity within the Russian Empire, but also provide the scientific and

¹³⁷ Turan Həsənzadə, "Birinci Azərbaycan Qəzeti," in ЧəсəнБəј Зəрдəби, *Əкинчи* (Бакы: Азəрбајчан Дəвлəт Нəшрјаты, 1979), 5.

¹³⁸ Soviet historiography, for example, presented the newspaper as an essential step in the development of the culture of the Azerbaijani proletariat. For example, in a 1979 reprinting of the newspaper by the Academy of Sciences of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic, Zərdabi was cast as a tireless reformer opposing the ills of Azerbaijani society, including "societal repression," "medieval backwardness," and "religious fanaticism and superstition." What *The Ploughman* offered, according to the Soviet historiography, was "the development of realist literature" in Azerbaijan. Realism, the ability to show life and society not as idyllic or stylized but as as they really unfolded and developed, was seen as a major contributor to the enlightenment of the proletariat. Realism, it was believed, taught the workers and peasants the true nature of their exploitation and misery.

Equally eager to co-opt the Turkic press into its own paradigm, the post-Soviet nationalist historiography emphasized *The Ploughman* as the Azerbaijani nation's first newspaper and, rather than proletarian consciousness, cast it as an essential step in the dissemination of Azerbaijani nationalism. The *Ploughman*, in Mehdi's view, was both born from these overarching changes in the structure of Caucasian Muslim society and shaped how such changes were articulated and disseminated. Mehdi casts Zərdabi and his newspaper as instrumental in "exposing the necessity of secular education" among other attributes traditionally perscribed for the development of nations.

technological tools this society needed to modernize. Far from erasing Turkic Muslim identity in Russia, Zərdabi saw Gasprinski's *usul-i jedid*, especially its emphasis on teaching modern science, as the basis upon which Muslims in Russia would build renewed, modernized identities.

In a January 1906 article for the newspaper *Həyat (Life)*, Zərdabi wrote an article entitled *İttihadi-Lisan*, or *Linguistic Unity*. One of the crucial words he repeats throughout this article is the word *tayfa*. However, Zərdabi invests the word with a new meaning: he writes about *tayfa* not so much as a tribe but as a modern people with a national identity: "we the Turkic nations in Russia."¹³⁹ When Zərdabi speaks of his own *tayfa*, he speaks with a certain historical memory: Turkic Muslims who had been incorporated into the Russian state after the Treaty of Turkmenchai in 1828. This treaty, signed with the Persian Qajar dynasty, recognized Russian dominance over the Northern Caucasus and the inhabitants therein. A little less than a century later, Russian influence was felt in all sectors of Muslim life, including Russian schools and the growing prominence of Russian as the official language of communication and interaction with the imperial administration.

With these stakes in mind, Zərdabi explains in his 1906 article that every nation (*tayfa*) possesses a soul made up of two equal halves: its religion (*mezheb*) and its language (*lisan* or *dil*).¹⁴⁰ Zərdabi affirms that "all Muslims subject the Russian state are Turks," and therefore united by both religious and national kinship. He, therefore, directed his article towards a local audience of Caucasian Muslims who were under the dominance of the Russian Empire. For Zərdabi, the strain of Russian colonialism on Turkic Muslim societies

¹³⁹ Həsən Bəy Zərdabi, "İttihadi-Lisan," in Cəlal Bəydili Məmmədov, *Azərbaycan Publisistikası Antologiyası* (Baku: Şərq-Qərb, 2007), 14. "...biz Rusiyada olan türk tayfaları..."

¹⁴⁰ Həsən Bəy Zərdabi, "İttihadi-Lisan" in Cəlal Bəydili (Məmmədov), *Azərbaycan Publisistikası Antologiyası* (Baku: Şərq-Qərb, 2007), pp. 13-15.

created the conditions by which different “currents” (*şəfəqi*) of the Turkic language emerged that threatened to divide the previously unified Muslim community.¹⁴¹ To renew their place in the world, Zərdabi argues that Turkic Muslims in Russia should unlock the true essence of their linguistic and religious identity by supporting it with “science education” (*elm təhsil*). For reformers like Zərdabi, modern sciences would both provide the tools for Turkic Muslim society to recover its authentic religious, linguistic, and national of identity and show the way towards reaching a shared civilization with Europe based on Enlightenment and rationality.¹⁴²

Science education would also perform a more fundamental function for reformers of Zərdabi’s bent, it would also develop the Turkic languages and push them towards greater linguistic unity. Zərdabi wrote in favor of complete linguistic unity among the Turkic peoples of Russia: “How unfortunate it is that we Turks have departed from each other in language and religion and are the reason for our own fall from strength. Therefore, it is now crucial for us to get behind linguistic unity...build a common language [*ümumi dil*] and read and write in this common language. Let it be the language that everyone reads and writes in.”¹⁴³ Zərdabi continues to advocate for Ismail Gasprinski’s Crimean Tatar to form the basis for this common Turkic language that would unify the Turks of Russia.¹⁴⁴ Here, Zərdabi uses the term “bəradərimiz” (from Persian برادر meaning *brother*) to refer to

¹⁴¹ Zərdabi, 13-15.

¹⁴² Zərdabi, 13-15.

¹⁴³ Zərdabi, 14. “*Heç insafdırmı ki, biz türklər bir dildə, bir dində ola-ola bir-birimizdən aralanıb artıq gücdən düşməyimizə səbəb olaq. Ona görə bizlərə vacibdir ki, indi vaxt keçməmişdən ittihadı-lisan dalıncan olub bir ümumi dil bina edib, bu ümumi dildə yazıb-oxuyaq ki, vaxtilə o dil hamının yazıb-oxumaq dili olsun.*”

¹⁴⁴ Zərdabi, 14.

Ismail Gasprinski, indicating that he had made not only linguistic links to Gasprinski, but national links based on Turkic identity.

Zərdabi explicitly speaks in nationalist terms when he argues that language and religion were both necessary components for the existence of a “tayfa” and, more importantly, its perpetuation. Furthermore, he also argues that both of these components should be taught to the new generations through a modern education system. Zərdabi writes, “We Muslims subjects of Russia...do not have our own national libraries and, upon the advice of missionaries and Russian priests in state schools, it is illegal to study our language and our literary-legal works.”¹⁴⁵ This lack of education among Muslim children of their linguistic and cultural heritage was, for Zərdabi and other reformers, the most formidable obstacle towards forming a national community.

Throughout his article, Zərdabi echoed Şahtaxlı’s sentiment that Muslim society in Transcaucasia needed transformation. He concurred that the instrument of this transformation should be European modernity—with specific attention towards learning and incorporating European sciences and technologies into Muslim life. Zərdabi, therefore, called upon Muslims in Transcaucasia to adopt science as the basis for societal order: “Truly, a nation [tayfa] that begins to teach science [*elm*, علم] is like he who opens the door of a dark room and goes outside so that the light of day, besides illuminating his eyes, will enlighten things already inside the dark room.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ Zərdabi, “Dil və Din,” in Cəlal Bəydili (Məmmədov), *Azərbaycan Publisistikası Antologiyası* (Baku: Şərq-Qərb, 2007), pp. 21-23. “Çünki bizim öz milləti məktəbxanalarımız yox idi ki, orada öz dilimizdə, öz məzhəbimizdə elm təhsil etmək olaydı və dövlət tərəfindən açılan məktəblərdə rus keşişlərindən misyonerlik edənlərin məsləhəti ilə bizim dilimizi və adabi-şəriəti oxutmağı qadağan etmişdilər.”

¹⁴⁶ Həsən Bəy Zərdabi, “İttihadi-Lisan” in Cəlal Bəydili (Məmmədov), *Azərbaycan Publisistikası Antologiyası* (Baku: Şərq-Qərb, 2007), 13-15. “Hər tayfa elm təhsil edən vaxtda lazımdır ki, öz dilini və dinini bərk saxlasın. Həqiqət, elm təhsil etməyi başlayan tayfa qaranlıq otağın qapısını açıb çölə çıxan kimidir ki, bu zaman günün işığı onun gözlərini nurlandırmaqdan başqa, otağın da içinə daxil olub orada olan şeyləri artıq işıqlandırır bir qeyri-surətə salır.”

Zərdabi likened Muslim society to a dark room, obscured by its own superstition and fanaticism and unable to accommodate the reality of modernization. Like Şahtaxlı, Zərdabi did not attribute this superstition to Islam's true or essential character, but as a result of "hillbilly mollas" (*avam mollalar*) who hindered Muslim advancement by insisting on preserving unscientific and non-rational traditions alive.¹⁴⁷ He wrote that "In this way, people's views will evolve and, even if religion is as our reactionary clerics say, the traditions we have adopted from all sides have mixed with religion. In this encounter, religion is destroyed if it does not conform to rationality."¹⁴⁸ "True religion" (*əsil din*), Zərdabi held, had nothing to fear in adopting European modernization.¹⁴⁹ On the contrary, "true religion" required that Muslim societies catch up to Europe by adopting its science and rationality.

On the subject of the Turkic language, Zərdabi argued that "all Muslims subject to the Russian state" were Turks and, thus, should strive to construct a common Turkic idiom that would be understood by Turks in the Crimea, Volga region, Central Asia, and Transcaucasia.¹⁵⁰ Like Islamic identity, Zərdabi argued that the Turkic languages should be reformed to fit into the modern age. He wrote that "Language is such that it is not possible to preserve it in its original state. The door to the dark room has been opened and things have happened that have changed our customs. The number of new words [coming into our language] will grow day by day and there is not harm to our language with the growth of the new words, it is beneficial. For, these words are the reason for our

¹⁴⁷ Zərdabi, 13-15.

¹⁴⁸ Zərdabi, 13-15. "Belədə insanın rəyi də təğyir tapa bilir və əgər din bizim avam mollalar deyən kimi olsa ki, hər bir tərəfdən götürdüyümüz adətləri də dinə qarışdırırlar, o vaxtda belə din ağıl ilə düz gəlmədiynə bərbad olur."

¹⁴⁹ Zərdabi, 13-15.

¹⁵⁰ Zərdabi, 13. "Biz Rusiya dövlətinə tabe olan müsəlmanların hamısı türkdürlər."

advancement.”¹⁵¹ Thus, he advocated for the adoption of new European words into Turkic languages that carried the concepts of modern science and technology. These words bore the mark of European civilization that Zərdabi and other reformers believed the Muslim Turks could benefit from and use to strengthen their own societies.

“Our [Azeri] Turkic language,” Zərdabi continued on the subject of language and reform, “has fallen into different types of dialects (şivə) in every area that it is spoken and has departed from different dialects. Certainly, these Turkic nations (bu türk tayfalar) have begun scientific education and they have left the dark room for the outside; and yet, they have become even more distant from one another throughout this process.”¹⁵² Thus, Zərdabi calls for the Russian Turkic peoples to unite linguistically to overcome the “disintegration” of the language into unintelligible dialects and to forge a common Turkic idiom that all could understand and use for communication. This newly-constructed Turkic idiom, for reformers in Russian Transcaucasia, should harbor the modern scientific and technological vocabulary from Europe and should be deployed within a modern educational system.

Another important Azeri Turkic reformer and major contributor to the Transcaucasian and Ottoman Turcophone press was Ahmet Ağaoğlu.¹⁵³ Born into a wealthy Shiite family in Transcaucasia, Ağaoğlu received his education in both Moscow

¹⁵¹ Zərdabi, 13. “*Dil bir şeydir ki, onu öz halında saxlamaq mümkün deyil. Elə ki qaranlıq otağın qapısı açıldı, qeyri tayfalar ilə gediş-gəliş artdı, artıq şeylər ələ gəldi və adətlər dəyişildi, təzə sözlərin qədəri günü-gündən artacaqdır, belə sözlərin artmasının dilə zərəri yoxdur, xeyri var.*”

¹⁵² Zərdabi, 13-14. “*Amma bu dil ayrı-ayrı yerlərdə carı olduğuna hər tərəfdə bir qeyri cür şivəyə düşüb, qeyrilərdən aralanıb, əlbəttə, zikr olan qayda ilə bu türk tayfaları elm təhsil etməyə başlayıb, yəni qaranlıq otaqdan çölə çıxıb tərəqqi yoluna düşəndə bir-birindən dəxi artıq uzaqlaşacaqdırlar.*”

¹⁵³ A. Holly Shissler, *Between Two Empires: Ahmet Ağaoğlu and the New Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

and Paris and became familiar with the works of European Orientalists and Turkologists. In addition, Aġaoġlu followed the latest political currents sweeping both the Russian and Ottoman empires, including the politicization of Turco-Muslims in both empires at the time of the 1905 and 1908 revolutions. Around the time of the 1908 Young Turk Revolution, Aġaoġlu moved to Istanbul where he continued his political and journalistic endeavors. This was not uncommon for Turco-Muslim intellectuals in Russia to do: other prominent figures, such as Yusuf Akçura and Alibey Hüseyinzade, also came to the Ottoman Empire as emigres and would, along with Aġaoġlu, contribute greatly to the intellectual and theoretical ideology of the young Turkish Republic in the post-war period.

In a 1905 article in *Kaspi*, entitled “Words, Words” (*Sözlər, Sözlər*), Aġaoġlu argues that attachments to an ideal Islamic past does nothing to address the problems that his contemporary generation of Turko-Tatar Muslims faced with European imperial encroachment and their annexation of Muslim territory. Aġaoġlu passionately argued that the major reason for Muslim global decline was the static social and cultural conditions in which they resided. Like his contemporary reformers, Aġaoġlu did not believe that Muslim societies were intrinsically unable to meet the conditions of the modernizing world. Islamic history had, on the contrary, proved time and again that Muslims could accommodate and even indigenize change coming from outside. Aġaoġlu therefore argued that Muslims needed to institute a transformation of their societies from within using European science and technology.

Though Aġaoġlu held solidarity among Muslims in high esteem, he nevertheless called out what he saw as empty or vapid appeals to “Muslim Friendship” (*Müsəlmanların dostu*). Evoked to promote pan-Islamist aspirations, Aġaoġlu believed that shallow appeals

to Muslim friendship ignored the dire conditions that Muslims found themselves in at the beginning of the 20th century. Ağaoğlu warned his readers of the danger of retreating into nostalgia for the Islamic past: “Ah, this past! What does it want from us anyway? Is it not enough that [this past] destroyed us in every way—materially, intellectually, spiritually as well as destroyed our language, our religion, our nation, and national character?”¹⁵⁴ If Muslims in Transcaucasia were to rescue themselves from their cultural and societal decline, as reformers like Ağaoğlu saw it, they had to discard the traditions of their past and forge a new society in which Islam would flourish amidst modernization and social transformation.

In short, Ağaoğlu summed up not only his view of Muslim society in Transcaucasia, but across the Turkic-speaking world: “in no place, in none of us exists the slightest initiative, in no place, in none of us exists any original idea...[or] fearless thoughts, no elevated feelings appear.”¹⁵⁵ The time was ripe, he thus argued, to enact a social transformation of Muslim society that would reorient it towards the sciences and technologies of Europe as well as adopt various European educational methods to buttress this process. Just as Zərdabi had argued, Ağaoğlu believed that Islam not only could accommodate European modernization, but through Islam’s insistence on rationality (‘aql), Muslims should embrace rationality on principle not matter its source. Simply put, he believed that pan-Islamism and talk of “Muslim friendship” was empty as long as Muslim societies remained behind Europe. Believing that Muslims across the world could

¹⁵⁴ Əhməd Bəy Ağaoğlu, “Sözlər, Sözlər” in Cəlal Bəydili (Məmmədov), *Azərbaycan Publisistikası Antologiyası* (Baku: Şərq-Qərb, 2007), pp. 303. “*Ah, bu keçmiş! Axı o bizdən nə istəyir? Onun bizi hər maddə-həm maddi, həm zehni, həm mənəvi baxımdan məhv etməsi, dilimizi, dinimizi, xalqımızı xəlqiliyimizi məhv etməsi yetməzmi!*”

¹⁵⁵ Ağaoğlu, 302. “*Heç yerdə, heç birimizdə zərrəcə təşəbbuskarlıq yox, heç yerdə, heç birimizdə heç orijinal ideya yox, heç yerdə heç birimizdə heç cəsarətli fikir yoxdur, heç bir ülvi duyğu təzahür etmir.*”

overcome their current status vis-à-vis Europe, Ağaoğlu nevertheless decided to concentrate on elevating Turkic societies both in Transcaucasia and the future Republic of Turkey.

3f. Turkology and the Development of Turkishness

The increasing emphasis on Turkic identity first developed in Turco-Muslim centers throughout the Russian Empire: Bahçesaray in the Crimea, the Jadids in Central Asia, and the reformers in Transcaucasia. Eventually, the awakening of Turkic identity reached into the territory of Russia's Ottoman rivals to establish trans-imperial links between Ottoman and Russian Turks. Each region produced a generation of reformers who sought to introduce modernizing changes in the educational, economic, and cultural life of their Muslim compatriots. This mid-to-late nineteenth-century generation of reformers, however, were divided over whether the reforms should produce a *Europeanized* society, ostensibly because they were mimicking Europe, or if they were to temper the totalizing scope of *Europeanization* by preserving various aspects of Turkic linguistic, religious, and cultural identity.

The initial awakening of Turkishness was not necessarily a nationalist awakening in the sense of demanding an independent Turkish nation-state. Rather, the nurturing of Turkic identity mostly came from within literary, newspaper, and intellectual societies and associations operating throughout the Ottoman and Russian empires in the late 19th-century. Thus, the study of Turkishness' transformation into the politically-minded *Turkism*

(*Türkçülük*) follows the conversations on issues, such as language reform, between various reformist publications and intellectuals in the Turcophone world.

An exemplary figure in the development of Turkic identity was the Azerbaijani intellectual and reformer, Alibey Hüseyinzade (1864-1940). Born into an ulema family in Azerbaijan, Hüseyinzade studied in the Physics and Mathematics Department of the University of St. Petersburg before relocating to Istanbul in 1889 to study at the Medical Faculty of Istanbul University. It was in the Ottoman Empire that Hüseyinzade became politicized and both became an active member of the Committee of Union and Progress and one of the leading figures for the Turkist movement emerging in the Ottoman Empire. His 1905 article, entitled “Who Are the Turks and From Whom Do They Originate” and published in the journal *Həyat* (Life), became one of the foundational works of Turkism, along with Yusuf Akçura’s *Three Political Styles* (*Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset*).

In this article, Hüseyinzade clearly draws from Turkological scholarship to forge a definition of the Turkish nation (*qövm*). This nation, for Hüseyinzade, is distinct from the greater Islamic community and, hence, a *Turk* is someone with a distinct Turkish identity and language, not merely a member of the global Islamic ummah.¹⁵⁶ Incorporating Turkological research into his manifesto, Hüseyinzade argued that, to attain an accurate understanding of Turkic identity, history, and nationhood, the Turks must begin to consider themselves a distinct national entity entirely separate from other Asiatic nationalities, such as their fellow Tatar, Mongolian, Persian, and Arab coreligionists. After berating past European—as well as Arab and Persian—historiography for falsely labeling the Turks as *Mongols* or *Tatars*, Hüseyinzade calls upon Turco-Muslim society to educate itself in

¹⁵⁶ Hüseyinzade, 127.

European sciences in order to find the accurate classification for the Turks. Playing out across Hüseyinzade's article was the tension between his critiques of the falsities of European historians regarding the origins of the Turkic nation and his recognition that concurrent European advancements in linguistics, history, anthropology, and Turkology have nevertheless provided the Turco-Muslims with new avenues to discover and assert their identity.

The application of nineteenth-century European academic disciplines, in particular, Turkology, was fundamental to how reformers and intellectuals within these communities began to promote modern Turkic identities. According to his reading of the latest scientific, linguistic, historical, and archeological studies on the subject, Hüseyinzade found it proper to divide the Turks into three categories: Siberian or Golden Horde, Russian-European, and Transcaucasian.¹⁵⁷ In dividing the Turks along geographical lines, Hüseyinzade made use of the contemporary scientific and linguistic research that placed the idiom of the Turks with Finnish, Hungarian, Mongolian, Manchurian, and Japanese into the "Altay-Uralic" or "Turanic" language family based on "commonalities that exists between them."¹⁵⁸ These common features were often juxtaposed with Arab and Persian culture, language, and civilization to demonstrate the uniqueness of the Turkish nation and its contributions to modern civilization.

For example, in one section of his article, Hüseyinzade examines the morphology of Turkic languages and argues that, because changes in Turkish words did not signal a shift in the definition of a word, they were linguistically distinct and separate from Arabic

¹⁵⁷ Hüseyinzade, 134-135.

¹⁵⁸ Hüseyinzade, 134-135.

whose morphology did, in fact, change the inherent meaning of words.¹⁵⁹ In other words, he is representative of reformers and intellectuals of the era who picked up on the academic currents from Europe and used this new knowledge to forge new understandings of the Turks as a “distinct” nation within Asia. Hüseyinzade also critiqued prominent Ottoman Turkologists and linguists, such as Şamseddin Sami, for also “falsifying” the true origins of the Turkic nation. In further issues of his article, Hüseyinzade wrote that “Sami Bey supposed that the Tatars were a small tribe (or nation) that were the first Turkic tribe and “tatar” was used for general Mongolia and for the names of all inhabitants there.”¹⁶⁰

In his exploration of Turkic identity and the need for reforms, Alibey Huseynzade concurred with Zərdabi that Russian Turco-Muslims should employ a common Turkic language. The Turkic language, for Huseynzade, had undergone drastic change since European global expansion. Not only were there now numerous Arabic and Persian words owing to Islamic influence, but Huseynzade also stressed that Turkic languages had also absorbed the Greek, Latin, French, and English terminology that accompanied European science. Thus, Huseynzade viewed the language he spoke in terms of “New Turkish” (*türkiyi-cədid*). This New Turkish was to be promoted through the expansion of education in order to give the nation its modern component. This language, for Huseynzade, should be Ottoman Turkish (*Osmanlı lisanı*): “In this manner, the Ottoman language, one of the Turkic dialects, has expanded and evolved to such a degree that the best, deepest thoughts and the most polite and delicate emotions is as smart as Arabic and Persian and rival any

¹⁵⁹ Hüseyinzade, 137.

¹⁶⁰ Hüseyinzade, 133. “*Samibəy öylə zənn etmişdir ki, tatar ən əsil türk əqvamından kiçik bir qövüm olub, bunların namına nisbətən ümum moğollara ‘tatar’ deyilmişdir.*”

language in Europe.”¹⁶¹ Thus, Huseynzade envisioned a common Turkic language that would be able to express the complexities of European scientific discoveries along with the subtleties of daily human life. Ottoman Turkish, in his estimation, was the most literary and elite form of Turkic and, as such, merited the status of being the common prototype of Turkic speakers across the globe.

Not all reformers, however, agreed with making the Ottoman language the Turks’ international standard. In fact, there was a group of reformers who actively resisted the imposition of Ottoman Turkish upon their communities. Instead of Ottoman, these reformers argued that local Turkic dialects, such as Azeri, should be promoted as they constituted the actual languages spoken by the Turkic populations. In a 1914 article, entitled *The Language Issue (Dil Məsələsi)*, Yusuf Vəzir Çəmənşəminli argued against the expansion of Ottoman at the expense of Azeri Turkish. Calling the pan-Turkist linguists “bombastic” (*qəliz*), Çəmənşəminli stressed that, when they spoke of “linguist unity,” language reformers “consider[ed] the Ottoman language and give Azerbaijani Turkish over to writing books, newspapers, and journals in this language.”¹⁶²

For Çəmənşəminli, the language that should be promoted was the language spoken by the common folk of the Turkic nation. He writes that “Our essential language is spoken in the bazaars, in places where common people congregate, in the hands of the cattle breeders. Our writers, rather than showing the way towards having the people speak with

¹⁶¹ Alibey Huseynzade, “Qəzətəminin Dili Haqqında Bir Neçə Söz” in Cəlal Bəydili (Məmmədov), *Azərbaycan Publisistikası Antologiyası* (Baku: Şərq-Qərb, 2007), 155-158. “Bu surətlədir ki, türk şivələrindən biri olan osmanlı lisanı o dərəcə tövsi və təkamiil etdi ki, ən ali, ən dərin fikirləri, ən nazik, ən rəqiq hissləri ifadəyə bugünkü ərəbi və farsı dillərindən belə müsteid və müqtədir olub bilapərva hər hansı Avropa dili ilə rəqabət edə bilir.”

¹⁶² Vəzir Çəmənşəminli, “Dil Məsələsi” in Cəlal Bəydili (Məmmədov), *Azərbaycan Publisistikası Antologiyası* (Baku: Şərq-Qərb, 2007), 643. “Buna görə də osmanlı dilini ümumi bir dil sayırlar və bu dildə de kitablar, qəzetlər və jurnallar yazıb Azərbaycan türklərinə verirlər.”

their own language, instead want to take themselves from their correct path and throttle society.”¹⁶³ Here, Çəmənzəminli launches a critique on the leaders of the Pan-Turkic movement who sidelined all Turkic languages and dialects in favor of the Ottoman idiom. With this article, he pointed out that most people throughout the Turkic-speaking world do not speak Ottoman Turkish.

Therefore, Çəmənzəminli called upon reformers not to impose Ottoman on their local societies and certainly not on his native Azerbaijan. Instead he wrote, “Let it not be forgotten that in Azerbaijan there are several million people and the majority of them are quite backwards. For this reason, they remain slaves day-in and day-out, they have fallen under the foot of foreigners. Their lands, their ploughable fields come from their hands, commerce goes, they have not news of art, they don’t know what the nation and progress even are.”¹⁶⁴ Çəmənzəminli advocated that the principles of nationalism (*milliyyət*) and progress (*tərəqqi*) be brought to the common populace through their own language, Azeri Turkish. “In which language,” Çəmənzəminli writes, “are you going to speak to others saying “Oh brother, send your children to school, don’t sell your fields, open your eyes?” Certainly with society’s own language, in Azeri Turkish. These people don’t know the Ottoman language.”¹⁶⁵

While Hüseynzadə, Çəmənzəminli, and Zərdabi focused on the issue of which dialect would unite the Turkic-speaking world, other reformers turned to the question of

¹⁶³ Çəmənzəminli, 643. “*Əsil dilimiz bazarlarda, xalqın toplandığı yerlərdə, tərəkmə elinin içində danışılmaqdadır. Qələm sahiblərimiz buralara yönəlib bunları öz dilləri ilə danışdırıb yol göstərməkdənsə, özləri düz yoldan çıxıb, camaatı da avara qoymaq istəyirlər.*”

¹⁶⁴ Çəmənzəminli, 643. “*Gərək yaddan çıxmasın ki, Azərbaycanda neçə milyon adam var və onların çoxu geridə qalıblar. Bu səbəbdən də gün-gündən əsir olub, əcnəbilərin ayağının altına düşürlər. Torpaqları, əkin yerləri əllərindən çıxır, ticarət gedir, sənətdən xəbərləri yox, milliyyət və tərəqqi nə olduğunu bilmirlər.*”

¹⁶⁵ Çəmənzəminli, 644. “*Bunları hansı dillə danışdırmalı ki, başa düşsün? Əlbəttə camaatın öz dili ilə, Azərbaycan türkcəsində. Osmanlı dilini bunlar bilməzlər.*”

orthography and which alphabet best represented the true potential of the Turkic languages. Speaking of the *millet*, Ömər Faiq Nemanzadə's 1904 article "Our Language and our Orthography" (*Dilimiz və İmlamız*) tackles the issue of Turkish orthography as reflected in the Perso-Arabic script. Like the previous reformers discussed, Nemanzadə was born into an upper-class Azeri family in the Caucasus. Having studied at the Fatih Madrasa in Istanbul, Nemanzadə nevertheless came to support secular education in the Caucasus. He worked as a journalist and newspaperman in Baku and Istanbul and was a close associate of Celil Məmmədquluzadə, the owner of Azerbaijan's most successful satirical magazine Molla Nesreddin. In his article on orthography, Nemanzadə argues that a nation without a strong literary tradition resembles a person without language.¹⁶⁶ Nations that do not preserve their literary heritage, Nemanzadə argues, are destined to die out. Language issues, therefore, were of paramount importance.

Like Huseynzadə, Nemanzadə saw the newness of the Turkic language spoken in the Caucasus. He too pointed out the Arabic, Persian, Russian, and other linguistic influences on Azeri Turkish. However, Nemanzadə also argued that the orthography, or writing system, that the Turkic languages used needed to be reformed. In this his view reflected those of Münif Paşa in the Ottoman Empire. Both men sought to reform, rather than Latinize, the Turkic languages spoken by their societies. Nemanzadə wrote that "those who soil our language are the reason for its becoming unintelligible and for adopting thousands of Arabic and Persian rules which are not necessary for us [the Turks]."¹⁶⁷ His recommendation was for the complete Turkification of all Arabic and Persian loanwords

¹⁶⁶ Ömər Faiq Nemanzadə, *Dilimiz və İmlamız* in Cəlal Bəydili (Məmmədov), *Azərbaycan Publisistikası Antologiyası* (Baku: Şərq-Qərb, 2007), 396-398.

¹⁶⁷ Nemanzadə, 398. "Böylə tək-tək sözlərin dərdinə yenə səbir etmək olar. Amma dilimizi bərbad edən, anlaşılmamağına səbəb olub bizə çox gərək olmayan (...) minlərcə ərəbcə, farsca qaydalar və ibarətlərdir."⁹⁵

as well as for reforms in how vowels are marked: “In short, I want to go through with writing [our words] in a more Turkified manner and to abandon many of the Arabic and Persian words and even rules that are not necessary.”¹⁶⁸

If Çəmənzəminli saw the Ottoman language as a threat to the continued development of local Azeri Turkish, then Nəmanzadə saw the continued and uninterrupted primacy given to Arabic and Persian words and grammatical rules as an internal threat to the development of the language. He argued that reformers no longer had a need to guard the sacred Arabic and Persian forms and that adapting the language to the modern era meant bringing out its more Turkic characteristics. Nəmanzadə was even an early advocate for language purification, or the removing of foreign (in this case Arabic and Persian) elements in a language and replacing them with those derived from the language itself. In particular, Nəmanzadə called for the vowels to be marked more explicitly in Turkish print, arguing that it would increase the speed of literacy and reading comprehension.

3g. Yusuf Akçura and Ottoman Turkism

The Young Turk movement had its origins as part of a larger secret organization, called ‘The Ottoman Union’ (*İttihadı Osmani*). The Ottoman Union was formed by members of the Ottoman military and medical academies who were all professionals and European-educated.¹⁶⁹ By Erik Zürcher’s reckoning, the core membership was comprised of Muslim Albanians, Kurds, Circassians, and Turkic émigrés from Russian Caucasia.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Nəmanzadə, 398. “Sözümün qıyası, türkcəmizin varlığını, yaşamağını hamımızın bilikli, hünerli olmamızı, avam üçün yazılan kitabların, qəzetlərin anlaşılmasını istəyirsək bacardığımız qədər ‘gərəksiz’ və ‘artıq’ olan ərəbəcə, farsca sözləri, hələ qaydaların çoxunu buraxıb...”

¹⁶⁹ İskit Yayinevi, *Resimli-Haritalı Mufassal Osmanlı Tarihi*, 3401.

¹⁷⁰ Zürcher, 99.

Actual Turks from Anatolia, Zürcher found, were not represented at all among the leadership of the Ottoman Union.¹⁷¹ Even after the 1908 Revolution, the core of the Ottoman Union comprised of Muslim men with a median age of twenty-nine whose families had already been employed in the civil service. Their geographical concentration was from the Balkans, Istanbul, and, in a few cases, from Bursa and Izmir.¹⁷²

What unified the Ottoman Union movement, and the subsequent Young Turk movement that grew out of it, was therefore not bonds of Turkish ethnicity, but common visions on how to preserve the empire as a whole. This vision included reinstating the 1876 Constitution, ensuring equality and security for all subjects of the empire regardless of religious affiliation, and promoting a sense of responsibility on the part of the empire's ruling class towards the governed. Eventually, the group changed its name to the Committee of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti*), which reflected both their desire to preserve the empire and to push it on the road towards modernization with scientific and technological progress.

The perilous state the Ottoman Empire found itself in at the beginning of the twentieth century prompted a new generation of intellectuals, activists, journalists, and military and state officials to examine what could be done to end the turmoil. It was among this generation that the first stirrings of Turkish nationalism were born. For the development of Turkish nationalism, no other contributor is as important as Yusuf Akçura, a Volga Tatar émigré to the Ottoman Empire. Akçura's presence in the Turkish nationalist movement came with the publishing of the 1904 pamphlet *Three Styles of Politics* (*Üç*

¹⁷¹ Zürcher, 99.

¹⁷² Zürcher, 100.

Tarz-ı Siyaset) in the Cairo-based newspaper *Türk*.¹⁷³ In this pamphlet, Akçura argued that the future of the Ottoman state lay in complete Turkification and that other sources of identity (including identities based on Ottomanism and Islamism respectively) would ultimately lead to a failure to consolidate society and stand up to the encroaching European powers. What Akçura sought to create then was ethnic and linguistic homogeneity out of a heterogeneous empire.

Yusuf Akçura, as stated before, was born in Russia to a Volga Tatar family. He was thus not Ottoman by birth, which is important to consider given his anti-Ottomanist sentiments in the 1904 pamphlet. Born into a distinguished Tatar family in the Volga region, Akçura grew up around industrial and intellectual elites who were well versed in Turkic languages and literatures. In fact, Akçura was related to Ibrahim Akçura, a distinguished professor of Turkic languages and literature, and by marriage to none other than Ismail Gasprinski, the founder of the influential newspaper *Tercüman/Perevodchik*.¹⁷⁴ His upbringing, therefore, afforded Akçura every opportunity to engage with scholars and activists, who had an eye towards the cultural empowerment of the Turks of Russia. Upon receiving an advanced education in both Istanbul and Paris, Akçura returned to the Volga region to take part in its industrialization. After finding this unfulfilling, Akçura accepted a teaching position in the *Mahmudiye Medresesi* in Kazan, instructing courses in history and geography. It was with teaching that Akçura became politically active and began contributing articles in various journals and newspapers. At the same time, he established

¹⁷³ Masai, 6-7.

¹⁷⁴ Enver Ziya Karal, "Önsöz," in Yusuf Akçura, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1976), 1. 98

connections with secret Turkic societies in the Ottoman Empire looking to overthrow the despotic Hamidian regime.¹⁷⁵

Akçura's 1904 pamphlet, therefore, came at a time when he was establishing himself on the political scene in the Turkist national movement. In 1904, however, this movement was largely cultural in nature and was taken up by literary circles and select government and military officials. Expounding the need for Turkification, Akçura was writing *against* the more dominant articulations of identity: Ottomanism and Islamism. Ottomanism or the *Ottoman national ideal*, Akçura held, was a product of the Tanzimat period of the mid-nineteenth century. This period witnessed the rapid modernization and westernization of the Ottoman military, state bureaucracy, and ordering of society. It also introduced the standardization of the Ottoman legal system, granted legal equality to all Ottoman citizens regardless of religious affiliation, limited industrialization, and the introduction of private land ownership. In short, the Tanzimat era was one of tremendous change that put the empire in line with the European states.

What Ottomanism, as an ideology, held was that common *Ottoman* identity and solidarity should prevail over religious, ethnic, and linguistic affiliations. Turks, Arabs, Greeks, Armenians, Slavs, Jews, and others were declared equal both legally and in property-rights within the Ottoman *vatan*, or *fatherland*. This ideology was espoused by the Young Ottoman movement, which produced numerous plays, poems, and treatises that called upon the Ottoman citizenry at large to defend the fatherland from outside powers. The apex of the Young Ottoman movement was the establishment of the 1876 Constitution

¹⁷⁵ Karal, 2.

(the first put into practice in Ottoman Empire) that formally guaranteed equality to subjects of the sultan within a constitutional framework.

Akçura defines Ottomanism in very specific terms: “[As] a fundamental goal, [Ottomanism seeks] to introduce the same political rights and impose the same obligations on the Muslim and non-Muslim people in the Ottoman lands; as such, to grant [all peoples] religious and intellectual freedom; to bring equality in particular to all.”¹⁷⁶ In this, Akçura wrote that Ottomanism imagined the empire to be similar to the United States in that it was a polity made up of a patchwork of ethnic, religious, and national communities. The final observation Akçura made about Ottomanist politics was that it “was not preoccupied with the Turks and Muslims outside Ottoman borders.”¹⁷⁷

Furthermore, Ottomanism, though a lofty ideal, was fundamentally incapable of reconcile diverse elements of society. The concept of a multiethnic fatherland, for Akçura, was preposterous because it did nothing to create a strong, unifying factor.¹⁷⁸ Instead, Ottomanism recognized the religious, ethnic, and linguistic differences in society and tried to unite them under the banner of equal rights and privileges. As such, the very differences that were tearing the Ottoman Empire apart were not address and these guarantees by the state for equality was merely a bandage for what was a gaping wound.

The next style of governance that Akçura turns to is Abdülhamit’s preferred method: Islamism. Akçura refers to this as “Islamic politics” (*İslamiyet politikası*), claiming that the term Pan-Islamism was a European misnomer.¹⁷⁹ The ideology of Islamism, according to Akçura, entailed rallying Muslims “to try and create a single

¹⁷⁶ Akçura, 19.

¹⁷⁷ Akçura, 19.

¹⁷⁸ Masai, 44.

¹⁷⁹ Akçura, 21.

nation...[which] all Muslims should be convinced of based on ‘religion and nation being one’ which every Muslim memorizes from the youngest age.”¹⁸⁰ Akçura saw that this Islamist ideology was born from the disillusionment on the part of Ottomanists who saw the failure of the Ottoman fatherland to emerge in society. These reformers rallied around Abdülhamit and the notion of Muslim solidarity as the way to strengthen the empire. They sought, therefore, to empower the core of the empire’s population of which Muslims constituted the majority.

Though Pan-Islamism claimed to be, in part, a reaction to the displacement of Islamic tradition by the modernization period of the preceding century, it in fact drew on modern notions of patriotism and state power that were unprecedented in Ottoman history. Islamism, therefore, reconstituted and refocused the direction of patriotism towards Islam. This reorientation, Akçura remarked, had led to significant changes to the Ottoman state. He claimed that schools devoted more time to Islamic studies than in the past, that “hodjas, imams, sayyids, sheikhs, and sheriffs filled the imperial palace,” and that religious pilgrims had recently become important in the eyes of the state.¹⁸¹ This was the result of the sultan and his ministers using the post-Tanzimat modern state, with its robust bureaucratic, military, and educational apparatuses, to steer society towards Islamic solidarities.

By Islam, the Hamidian state meant *Sunni Islam tied directly to imperial religious hierarchies and institutions*. Non-imperial understandings and practices of Islam were cast as heterodox and often suppressed, as was the case with the Alevi in southeastern Anatolia who were forced to attend special Sunni schools. The Sunnism of Abdülhamit’s Islamist program allowed him and his ministers to capitalize on the title of Caliph of Islam and the

¹⁸⁰ Akçura, 21.

¹⁸¹ Akçura, 22.

sultan's tenure as the Protector of Mecca and Medina. Using these titles, the Ottoman state was able to elicit political mobilization from Muslims.

Akçura's criticism of Islamism was based on his conception of the nation. The nation, Akçura believed, could not be established on the basis of sectarian or religious affiliation. As nations were products of the modern age, modern criteria (ethnicity, language, and kinship) had to be applied in their formation. Islam, in Akçura's conception, did not fit these criteria, as it did not speak directly to Turkism. Turkism would, in his view, be marginalized in a polity that was based primarily on Islamic identity. He gave proof of this claim by citing that the Hamidian regime had already moved to suppress nationalism of any kind, including Turkism. What the Ottoman state needed, Akçura argued, was to reconstitute itself on Turkism: Turkish would serve as the common language of the empire and thus everyone would assimilate into Turkism.

Akçura's concept of Turkism, however, needs to be explored to understand what exactly he was advocating. We have already stated that Akçura believed Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism as ideologies had failed to impose a uniformity on what had developed into a chaotic society. Akçura's main objective in advocating for Turkism, therefore, was to offer a convincing roadmap that would implement order in a society that was quickly disintegrating. When this chaos and disintegration are taken into account, one understands the need for ideological movements such as Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism. Both of these, in their own way, promised to restore stability by coopting certain segments of the population into notions of patriotism and devotion. They deviated from each other on the methods, but not the ultimate objective. And it is through this lens, meaning the failure of these ideologies to produce order and homogenization, that Akçura launches his critique

and calls for the fostering of ethnically Turkish solidarities. What each ideology lacked, for Akçura, was a true *national* component.

3h. Conclusion

As Turkic intellectuals and reformers pushed for modernization to transform their societies along European lines, they ran up against the pressing issue of language and its relation to national identity. This question became a major preoccupation for reformers and permeated both the regional and trans-imperial levels in both the Ottoman and Russian empires. In the Ottoman capital Istanbul, these local currents embraced aspects of Turkism, Ottomanism, or Islamism, but limited the scope to their local societal and political situation. Likewise, their counterparts in Russian-controlled Transcaucasia, a center of the Turcophone press as important as Istanbul, also debated the merits of Islamism, Turkism, but espoused more local identities that stemmed from Azerbaijan's historical connectedness to Persia and to the Caucasus. This diverse array of ideologies is seemingly contradictory and complex. It can, however, be categorized into two major camps: those ideologies that sought to privilege supranational identity (such as in Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism) and those that sought to champion more local expressions of identity (such as Ottomanism, Persianism, and Caucasianism).

For many, the mere fact that they spoke a local variant of Turkic (Ottoman Turkish and Azerbaijani respectively) did not necessarily mean that intellectuals and reformers identified as *Turks*. In fact, promoting Turkic identity to the detriment of Ottoman, Persian, Islamic, and even Russian identity took a lot of convincing. Even by the beginning of WWI,

it was not entirely certain that Turkic identity alone had won the day. This chapter has, therefore, mapped the major figures within the Turcophone press and charted where their ideas and objectives concerning language reform overlapped and intersected. This chapter has attempted to demonstrate that, far from being the dominant ideology at the time, Turkic national consciousness had to contend with formidable alternatives that were just as powerful in capturing the imagination of intellectuals and reformers in the Turkic press.

This chapter has illustrated how the Transimperial Turcophone press took up the issues of language reform and Turkic nationalism, merging them into a single debate over the future identity and modernization of the Turks. These debates occurred in the midst of tremendous political and social change in both the Russian and Ottoman empires. The issue of Turkic national identity and language became politicized like never before, with nationalists and reformers arguing that language would contribute greatly to the modernization of society. The debates between intellectuals in the Caucasus, for example, show the association of language with national identity, both at the regional and trans-imperial level. Many of the reformers themselves had traveled in between the Ottoman and Russian empires and even to Europe for various educational and political reasons. They were reacting to the shifts in Europe due to nationalism and the encroachment upon their own sovereignty through these modernized European societies.

Like Turkology, the emergence of the Turcophone press and the debates over language had important repercussions for the future language reforms in the Soviet Union and Turkish Republic. As the next two chapters will demonstrate, the early debates over language in the pre-WWI Turcophone press raised questions of orthography, language purity, and the place of Arabic and Persian words in Turkic. These questions remained

unresolved in this period, but would be taken up with vigor by the new revolutionary states that replaced the Russian and Ottoman empires. Like Turkology, the revolutionary states would capitalize on previous debates such as the ones discussed in this chapter. Here, they imagined themselves as the successors of these debates or as the logical outcome of increasing call to Latinize the Turkic languages.

4. Soviet Azerbaijan and The Revolutionary Latin Script (1923-1930)



(Figure 3. The Opening of the Baku Conference)

4a. Introduction

The photo above is taken from footage documenting the opening proceedings of the 1926 Baku Turkological Conference.¹⁸² Upon viewing this footage, totaling around eight minutes and thirty seconds, the viewer finds themselves within a conspicuously Soviet setting. In the foreground of the shot, “Turko-Tatar” workers and peasants have descended upon Baku, the capital city of Soviet Azerbaijan, to hear debates on the future of all Turkic languages spoken within the Soviet Union. Facing their proletarian constituents, a panel of Soviet experts (party leaders, Turkologists, linguists, historians, and ethnographers) have come to debate the repeal of the Perso-Arabic script and its

¹⁸² “1926 Bakü Türkoloji Kurultayı Görüntüleri,” in Prof. Dr. Kâmil Veli Nerimanoğlu & Prof. Dr. Mustafa Öner, *1926 Bakü Türkoloji Kurultayı: Tutanaklar* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2008).

replacement with the European Latin alphabet. Presiding over the entire session is the portrait of the late Vladimir Lenin, which serves as a constant reminder of the principles of the October Revolution and its efforts to establish a new socialist civilization in Eurasia.

The organizers of the Baku Conference, especially its principle organizer Səməd ağa Ağamalıoğlu, believed that replacing the Perso-Arabic alphabet with a writing system based on Latin was a revolutionary act, which would help guide the Turko-Tatar proletariat from an immobile Islamic past into a bright future of modern and socialist civilization. The Perso-Arabic alphabet symbolized the Islamic past, which had succumbed within the last century to European imperialism. The Latinizers at Baku argued that, if the Turko-Tatar peoples were to escape the devastating effects of Tsarist colonial exploitation, they had to undergo a rapid transformation that would abandon Islam as their primary source of identity and adopt secular nationalisms. This massive transformation was to take place within the framework of Soviet National Policy, itself an ideology and political program still in the process of formation at the time of the conference. The Latin script, therefore, symbolized these revolutionary aspirations.

In addition to Latinization, the speakers at the Baku Conference debated other linguistic issues. Also on the agenda the purification of the Turkic languages, which entailed a comprehensive purge of Russian, Arabic, and Persian loanwords from Turkic lexicons and replacing these foreign loanwords with indigenous and authentic Turkic equivalents. The goal, as with Latinization, of purification was to assist in the creation of standardized Turkic languages that would disseminate new nationalisms to the local populations. The Baku Conference was convened, after all, during the Soviet state's

massive endeavor to delineate territorial republics across the non-Russian regions of the Soviet Union using ethnographic, linguistic, and historical research.

The construction of Soviet republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia was the product of a long series of debates within the Soviet Communist Party about chauvinist policies in the non-Russian regions. Tsarist colonialism, the group around Vladimir Lenin and Josef Stalin argued, had long denied the non-Russians of the empire a national identity. This was especially true of the empire's largest minority group, the Turko-Tatars who comprised ten percent of the overall population. This demographic, dispersed throughout Transcaucasia and Central Asia, needed to adopt new forms of nationality within the newly-delineated Soviet republics. Within these polities, both local national identity and Soviet socialism would be promoted through local languages, as opposed to Russian. By constructing territorial republics, the Bolsheviks were working against Russian chauvinism, the belief that all nationalities should assimilate into Russian culture, that Lenin's governing faction held would prevent the spread of socialism on the non-Russian periphery.

The transcripts of the 1926 Baku Turkological Conference are therefore littered with terms such as "national," "Turkic," "revolution," "civilization," and "socialist," all invoked with similar revolutionary vision by the conference speakers. The result was a period of innovation and experimentation for the Soviet Turkic republics concerning how to reconcile Soviet socialism with their local and international identities and connections. In this effort, the conference drew from many of the Turkological findings of the past, especially those of Vasili Radlov whose honor was shared by Ismail Gasprinski's as the conference dedication.¹⁸³ Soviet leaders in the Turkic republics sought to use this

¹⁸³ Nerimanoğlu, 14.

Turkology, particular its linguistic and historical findings, to mold their populations along national lines. The different fields of research made tremendous contributions to the state's large-scale effort to create non-Russian national republics. This meant that "Turko-Tatar" proletariat was to be the main beneficiary of the resolutions regarding language, national culture and identity. They were to be brought into the Soviet system not as *Russified* subjects, but as unique nationalities fostered at the local level.

4b. *Korenizatsiia*: Soviet Nationality Policy

This section will examine the nature of Soviet Nationality Policy from April 1923, when the Russian Communist Party adopted *korenizatsiia* as its official policy towards the non-Russian nationalities, until the late 1930s, when the Soviet Union imposed a new policy of Russification.¹⁸⁴ As such, it will lay out what factors lead to the adoption of *korenizatsiia*, as well as what this new policy enabled on the Soviet periphery. Without *korenizatsiia* and the support of Moscow, the reform of the Turkic languages spoken on the peripheries of the Soviet Union would not have been possible. Soviet Nationality Policy, therefore, provided structural as well as ideological shifts in how the non-Russian nationalities were to conduct their lives and integrate into greater Soviet society.

Korenizatsiia is a word coined from Russian in the early Soviet era that means "nativization" or "indigenization."¹⁸⁵ It is a term that has largely become synonymous with

¹⁸⁴ George Liber, "Korenizatsiia: Restructuring Soviet Nationality Policy in the 1920s," *Journal for Ethnic and Racial Studies* 14, no. 1 (1991): 15-24.

¹⁸⁵ Liber, *ibid*; Terry Martin, "An Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism," in Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 74; Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001), 10-12; Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004), 71. Following Terry Martin's lead, scholars seem

“Soviet Nationality Policy” in the historiography of the Soviet periphery in the 1920s and 1930s. By enacting this policy, the Bolsheviks sought to coopt the power of the nationalist movements that had been unleashed in the wake of the Russian Civil War (1818-1922). After the Bolsheviks came to power in the October 1917 revolution, they not only fought a civil war with White Russian (anti-Bolshevik) forces, but also had to navigate the touchy subject of the empire’s ethnic minorities of the empire. Wanting to undo a century of Tsarist policies of Russification and forced assimilation, the Bolsheviks’ first policy was to proclaim the right of these “nationalities” to independence and self-determination.

This declaration was met with a wave of secessionist movements in Transcaucasia, Central Asia, and other areas of the Russian periphery. In Transcaucasia itself, Georgian, Armenian, and Azerbaijani nationalists collaborated to form the breakaway Transcaucasia Democratic Federal Republic in 1918, only to abolish this polity two months later in favor of full independence and self-determination for the three nationalities. Expediency, however, would spell doom for these republics as the Bolsheviks came to the realization that they could not survive without the resources of Russia’s former colonies, especially the oil located in Baku. The Red Army decided, therefore, to invade Transcaucasia in April 1920 and, with the help of local Bolshevik sympathizers, established a Soviet in Baku.

With Bolshevik victory over the Whites the Civil War, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was declared in 1922. The world’s first communist state, the USSR began as a coalition of the Russian, Byelorussian, Ukrainian, and Transcaucasian Soviet Socialist Republics. Launched from a revolutionary insurgency against the Tsar to the founders of a new state, Lenin, Stalin, and other Soviet leaders in Moscow found

to prefer the term ‘indigenization’ as the most direct translation of *korenizatsiia*. I will follow suit and use ‘indigenization’ as well.

themselves in a difficult situation in regard to Soviet policy on nationality. The Bolsheviks believed that socialism would emancipate the non-Russian groups from Tsarist colonialism and yet, the non-Russian nationalities once again found themselves part of the Russian state, albeit one undergoing the process of Sovietization. The debates over the best policy for the non-Russian Soviet nationalities were furious debate within the Soviet Communist party. One faction argued that, under a socialist state, nationality was an irrelevant concept. Instead, this side argued, the Soviet Union should spend its political capital on exporting Russia's proletarian revolution to the periphery. To do this, this group sought to impose the Russian language, which they stylized the "language of October," upon the non-Russian minorities.

Lenin and Stalin vehemently disagreed and argued that these "Russifiers" were in danger of replicating Tsarist colonial practices. At the party congress in 1923, Lenin proposed a program of "nationalization" whereby the Soviet Communist Party in Moscow would sponsor and subsidize local communist parties on the periphery that would operate within "indigenous" cultural and linguistic parameters. The denial of non-Russian nationalities, Lenin and Stalin argued, would put the entire Soviet system in danger and jeopardize the spread of socialism. Like the "Russifiers," Lenin and Stalin also strived to create of a socialist state that would sponsor an internationalist socialist revolution. However, as this revolution had not materialized, Lenin's Bolsheviks argued that non-Russian societies should develop along the continuum that Russia had: into modern nations. Nationalism, in Lenin's estimation, was a necessary and unavoidable step on the road towards international socialism. What his side called for, therefore, was a coherent policy

to deal with the nationality question. To this end, Lenin and his cadre devised and implemented “Soviet Nationality Policy.”

Western academic research on Soviet Nationality Policy has its origins in the early Cold War, when the United States and the Soviet Union emerged from World War Two as the two global superpowers. Early articles, mostly published in the academic journal *The Russian Review* from 1945 until the mid-1960s, assessed the contemporaneous application of Soviet Nationality Policy and evaluated this application against Soviet rhetoric. These articles were also interested in this policy as a potential model for other multiethnic states that were emerging in the aftermath of World War Two and the wave of global decolonization that followed it. Often, early scholarship traced the origins of Soviet Nationality Policy to the early declarations of the Bolsheviks after the October 1917 Revolution that brought them to power. In these early declarations, the Bolsheviks—Lenin and Stalin in particular—stressed the right of all non-Russian minority groups to “self-determination, including the right of secession from Russia.”¹⁸⁶

Realizing that the right of secession would ultimately harm the Soviet project, cutting the Bolsheviks off from Baku oil or Central Asian cotton, early scholarship on *korenizatsiia* explains that Soviet leaders decided to morph their new socialist state into “federal state of many nationalities,”¹⁸⁷ or even a “melting pot”¹⁸⁸ in which non-Russian nationalities would enjoy a degree of cultural and linguistic autonomy and Russian culture and language would be curtailed in the Soviet periphery.

¹⁸⁶ H. Seton-Watson, “Soviet Nationality Policy,” *The Russian Review* 15, no. 1 (1956), pp. 3-13, 3; Alfred D. Low, “Soviet Nationality Policy and the New Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,” *The Russian Review* 22, no. 1 (1963), pp. 3-29.

¹⁸⁷ William Henry Chamberlin, “Soviet Race and Nationality Policies,” *The Russian Review* 5, no. 1 (1945), pp. 3-9.

¹⁸⁸ V. Stanley Vardys, “Soviet Nationality Policy Since the XXII Party Congress,” *The Russian Review* 24, no. 4 (1965), pp. 323-340. 112

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 and, in particular, the subsequent independence of states in Central Asia (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan) and Transcaucasia (Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia) allowed scholars of Soviet Nationality Policy both unprecedented access to new archival sources and travel to these countries themselves. Furthermore, in addition to Russian, scholars have slowly begun to learn the titular languages of the Central Asian and Transcaucasian republics, especially Uzbek. As such, the field opened to new theoretical approaches, including those that examined the experience of non-Russian Soviet nationalities from new perspectives of gender, nationalism, Islam.¹⁸⁹ What these new perspectives have signaled is the ultimate shift in the historiography towards examining center-periphery relationships in which non-Russian Soviet society is brought into the center of the discussion. In particular, Adrienne Lynn Edgar's *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* has broken new ground in the analysis of how local communist elites in Soviet Turkmenistan received and negotiated the terms of Soviet National Policy with Moscow.¹⁹⁰ Edgar's focus on center-periphery, in particular, has inspired my own approach to researching and writing on the Turkic language reforms in Soviet Azerbaijan.

Following Edgar's example, I will limit my current chapter to addressing two vital components of Soviet Nationality Policy. The first is "the promotion of national cultures and elites in [the] non-Russian [Soviet] republics."¹⁹¹ The promotion of national cultures

¹⁸⁹ Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling Under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006); Douglass Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2004); Adeeb Khalid, *Islam After Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007).

¹⁹⁰ Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton & Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

¹⁹¹ Edgar, 71.

meant that the Russian language and Russians themselves were to be marginalized in the non-Russian Soviet republics, including Azerbaijan. The marginalization of the once-dominant Russian culture, largely imposed upon the periphery through colonialism, would, in the words of Edgar, “distance the Soviet government from tsarist colonialism and convince non-Russian nationalities that it [the Soviet government] supported their aspirations for self-determination and cultural autonomy.”¹⁹²

The Bolsheviks, therefore, imagined a federal Soviet Union made up of various territorial republics whose borders corresponded to a particular ethnic group. The Soviet Union, in this estimation, was to form individual republics for Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Turkmen, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Georgians, Ukrainians, and so on. Within these republics, the message of socialism would be spread through local languages (as opposed to Russian) and local communist parties would be staffed with native elites (as opposed to Russians) who would be able to preserve the cultural and linguistic autonomy of their particular republic. This was a policy, according to Terry Martin, that rendered the Soviet Union “an affirmative action empire” in that it would take the unprecedented step of “promoting national consciousness of its ethnic minorities and establishing for them many of the characteristic institutional forms of the nation-state.”¹⁹³

4c. Formation of Soviet Azerbaijan (1917-1936)

This section will focus on the emergence of the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic (hence Azerbaijani SSR or Soviet Azerbaijan) with special attention to the interplay between state building and language politics. Both Azeri nationalists and their

¹⁹² Edgar, 71.

¹⁹³ Martin, 1.

Bolshevik successors subscribed to a view of linguistic engineering guided by political ideology. Thus, language reform and Latinization were increasingly debated within the parameters and needs of the modern Azeri nation-state.

In the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution in October 1917, Russian-colonized Transcaucasia proclaimed independence and formed the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic. This federal union, consisting of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan, lasted only one month (from April to May 1918), after each succeeded in favor of establishing its own independent state. Thus, on May 28th, 1918, the Muslim members of the Transcaucasian *Seim* (*parliament*) declared an independent Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR). Internally, the new Azerbaijani state had a population of two million, with Transcaucasian Tatars and Turks classified as “Azerbaijani.”¹⁹⁴

It was in this brief era (1918-1920) that both the First Armenian Republic and Azerbaijan Democratic Republic formed. The Armenian Republic was locked in a war with the Turkish Nationalists, led by Mustafa Kemal and Kazim Karabekir, over claims to eastern Anatolia in the Treaty of Sèvres (1920). The Azerbaijani Republic, for its part, struggled to gain international recognition as well as mediate the interethnic tensions between Turkic and Armenian groups that often bled into pro and anti-Bolshevik partisan movements.

The new Azerbaijani republic was beset with external and internal complications from its inception. Externally, the Azerbaijanis were caught up in larger regional developments in the wake of the Russian Civil War, rise of Iranian nationalism following the Persian Constitutional Revolution, and the Turkish War of Independence. Iran, for

¹⁹⁴ Swietochowski, 129.

example, refused to recognize the new Azerbaijani republic, insisting that the toponym “Azerbaijan” constituted a province within Persia that was stolen under Tsarist colonialism in the 1810s to 1820s.¹⁹⁵ Additionally, under the direction of Nuri Pasha, the half-brother of the Young Turk leader Enver Pasha, the Ottomans formed the “Army of Islam,” from their own 5th Army, and, operating on the Pan-Turkic and Pan-Islamic rhetoric, invaded Transcaucasia in August 1918. Lastly, the new Azerbaijani state grappled with the Russian Civil War that divided its political leadership into those who strongly favored national independence and Bolshevik partisans who favored merging with Soviet Russia.

Internally, it was the Russian Civil War that preoccupied Azerbaijani politicians the most. From the onset of independence, Azerbaijan’s government was formed by Memmed Emin Resulzade of the Musavat (Equality) Party. Espousing Azerbaijani nationalism, independence, and a strong Turco-Muslim identity, Musavat struggled to keep Bolshevik, Ottoman, and Persian interference in the new republic at bay while the new nation secured diplomatic recognition from the Paris Peace Conference. Against the Musavat Party stood the Muslim Socialist Himmät (Workers) Party, made up of Mensheviks who favored Azerbaijan’s national independence but along socialist lines. The Himmät also rejected appeals to Pan-Turkism or Pan-Islamism and downplayed Azerbaijan’s ties with the Ottoman Turks. By 1919, the Himmät party had undergone a crucial merger between its old guard, led by Ağamalıoğlu, and its “Tiflis center,” made up of younger radicals, such as Mirzə Davud Hüseynov, Mir Fattah Mūsavi, and Ahsum Aliyev.¹⁹⁶ This merger between the old guard and the young radicals of Himmät would prove fateful for the future Latinization drive in Soviet Azerbaijan. Ağamalıoğlu and

¹⁹⁵ Swietochowski, 130.

¹⁹⁶ Swietochowski, 165.

Hüseynov were both to give impassioned speeches at the 1926 Baku conference in favor of Latinization.

Local Bolsheviks, desiring a full union with Soviet Russia, were the strong political force against both the Musavat and Himmät. As the Himmät's membership grew in 1919, so too did the local All-Russian Community Party-Bolsheviks (ARCP-B), which pushed for full union with Soviet Russia. Represented by the Baku Committee, the ARCP-B was headed by an Armenian Bolshevik named Anastas Mikoyan and Nariman Narimanov. Mikoyan held the view that the Himmätists were, in fact, "right-wing socialists" who were secretly promoting "chauvinistic" nationalists like pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism under the guise of socialism.¹⁹⁷ From exile in Russia, the Azerbaijani Bolshevik Nariman Narimanov proclaimed "Let the Soviet power be brought to all states and nationalities professing Islam: in ten years, they will achieve what they were unable to accomplish in a century."¹⁹⁸ Thus, local Bolsheviks like Mikoyan and Narimanov worked to spread the revolution within the young Azerbaijani nation and argued that communism was the only path towards advancement for Azeri Muslims.

In the midst of revolutionary turmoil, early Azeri politicians debated the issue of Turkic language and identity. At the forefront of these debates were educators who, under the Director of Education H. Şahtahtlı, debated the issue of the Azeri alphabet, which they referred to as "Turkish." These debates over the alphabet were held at the Congress of Inspectors of the Higher and General Education, Peoples Schools, and the Teachers Training Directorates in December of 1918.¹⁹⁹ In the ADR, the major debate over language

¹⁹⁷ Swietochowski, 168.

¹⁹⁸ Swietochowski, 168.

¹⁹⁹ Betül Aslan, *Azerbaycan'da Latin Alfabesi'ne Geçiş Sürecinde Yeni Yol Gazetesi* (Latin Alfabesi ile Çıkan İlk Türk Gazetesi) (Erzurum: Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Yayınları, 2004), 19.

reform dealt with the question of reforming or changing the script completely. Those who wanted reform (*islahatçılar*) argued that the Arabic script represented the Azerbaijani people's historical and cultural links to the greater Muslim world and that, with slight reforms, the present script was best suited to serve the new Azerbaijani state and its national ideals. Historically connecting Azeri Turks to the greater Muslim world, the reformers believed that overturning the Arab alphabet meant severing the nation from its religious and cultural roots. The so-called "reformers" came largely from the Musavat Party rank and file and from the influence of the remaining Young Turks in Azerbaijan, who wished to maintain linguistic connections to Ottoman Anatolia.²⁰⁰

Their opponents, the Latinizers, argued that the Arabic script stifled the Azeri language, as it was not equipped to represent the full range of vowels and consonants in the language. Wishing to cut Azerbaijan free from pan-Turkic and pan-Islamic associations, the Latinizers argued that the Arabic alphabet represented the Turks' past Islamic identity that they believed was the source of their societies' stagnation and obstinacy in the face of modernizing change. Doing away with the Arabic script, the Latinizers argued, would mark a fresh beginning for the Azeri nation to reconstruct a modern and unique Azeri that would allow the country to advance in the modern modern, Europeanized world. Hailing this new age, early Azeri Latinizers called their proposed script the New Alphabet (*Yeni Elifba*).²⁰¹

The Red Army invasion of Transcaucasia in 1920 spelled the end of Azerbaijan's independence from Russia and its incorporation into the Soviet Union. When the Bolsheviks took control of Baku in early 1920, they had to strike a compromise with the Himmät, now organized under the name Azerbaijani Communist Party-Himmät, in contrast

²⁰⁰ Aslan, 23.

²⁰¹ Aslan, 21.

to their own faction. According to Swietochowski, this compromise entailed that “There was to be one Communist organization for all nationalities inhabiting Azerbaijan, and all references to its Muslim or Turkic character were to be dropped, as was the name Himmät. The party would be called Azerbaijani, a term carrying both territorial and national connotations.”²⁰² With the forging of a single Azerbaijani Communist Party, former Himmätists, such as Ağamalıoğlu and Hüseynov, merged with Azeri Bolsheviks like Narimanov and formed the core of the Azeri Bolshevik faction that would push for and host the Baku Conference.

The Bolshevik invasion of Transcaucasia in 1920 meant the abolition of the Armenian and Azerbaijani independent states and their absorption into the Soviet Union. Bolshevik control of Transcaucasia signaled important shifts in the political arrangement of the region. Firstly, Bolshevik leadership in Moscow sought to support the Turkish Nationalist movement against the division of Anatolia by the British, French, Italian, and Greek states. Their control of Transcaucasia facilitated the Treaty of Kars (1920-21) that ended the war between Turkish nationalists and the First Armenian Republic, ceded eastern Anatolian territory lost to the Turks since the 1876-77 Russo-Turkish War, and paved the way for official recognition from the Bolsheviks of the Turkish Nationalists as the legitimate government of Turkey. The signatories of the Treaty of Kars were the Russian, Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Georgian Soviet republics and the Turkish Grand National Assembly, with Kazim Karabekir acting as its delegate.

When it was brought into the Soviet Union in 1920, Soviet Azerbaijan was technically designed as a “sub-republic” of the greater Transcaucasia Federative Soviet

²⁰² Swietochowski, 171.

Socialist Republic (TFSSR, 1922-1936), which also included the Armenian and Georgian SSRs. The TFSSR was a federated Soviet republic in the North Caucasus and the successor state to the independent Caucasian republics that emerged with the Russian Civil War (1918-1923). In 1936, the Soviet Transcaucasian Federation was abolished and the three republics were granted “independence” from one another. Thus, the 1926 Baku Turkological Conference was held in the period when Azerbaijan strove to make differentiate itself by taking on Soviet Nationality Policy by hosting the conference and projecting Baku as the center of Soviet linguistic modernity in the new socialist order.

The formation of national republics in the Soviet Union was seen by Lenin and his associates as “a natural and essential stage of historical development,” especially if non-Russian groups were to progress towards socialism.²⁰³ Nationalism, for the Bolsheviks, was the spark for the modernization of European societies, as it led to the emergence of both capitalism and industrialization. The Bolsheviks, therefore, believed that the nationalist stage of human development was a regrettable, yet necessarily, one through which all nations had to pass on the road towards socialist internationalism. It was best practice, in their estimation, to promote national consciousness within Soviet territorial republics so that the non-Russian nationalities would develop, modernize, and industrialize under socialist conditions. Socialism was the Soviet’s ultimate objective; national consciousness and territorial republics were merely a means to that end.

The second component this chapter will address is the actual implementation of this policy in the area of language reform in Soviet Azerbaijan. It was one thing to espouse the principles of indigenization, but quite another to enact these policies in real life. In the

²⁰³ Edgar, 44.

1920s, this task seemed almost insurmountable in areas such as Central Asia where there were many ethnic groups that did not have a “necessary relationship to specific geographical locations.”²⁰⁴ Transcaucasia, I maintain, presented the Bolsheviks with less problems in that nation-states and national boundaries existed briefly before the establishment of the Soviet Union. Though the experience of nation-states in Transcaucasia’s was brief and highly contested, Bolshevik leaders were able to draw upon this past experience in the formation of territorial republics during the 1920s and 1930s. In Soviet Turkestan (Central Asia today), a program of “national delimitation,” defined by Edgar as process whereby the Soviets drew “administrative borders [corresponding] as closely as possible to the boundaries between ethnic groups,” was enacted to physically bring national republics into being. Azerbaijan, due to its brief experience with independent statehood, presented a more straightforward case for Soviet Nationality Policy.²⁰⁵

In addition, in Azerbaijan local identity was fluid and alternated between Islamic, Persian, Turkic, and local Azerbaijani, Georgia, and Armenian particularities. Furthermore, like other national republics of the Soviet Union, the Azerbaijan SSR was far from ethnically homogenous. Azerbaijan was technically one “sub-republic” in the greater Transcaucasia Federative Soviet Socialist Republic (formally abolished in 1936), which also included Armenian and Georgia.

Azerbaijani society was transformed dramatically by incorporation into the Soviet Union. Seeking to invest in oil production, Soviet leadership quickly launched industrial and urbanization campaigns in Baku. At the same time, the local government was tasked with expanding the benefits of socialism (schooling, services, housing). In all this change,

²⁰⁴ Edgar, 42.

²⁰⁵ Edgar, 41-42.

Azerbaijani society grappled with several components of its identity, namely Persian, Turkic, and Islamic. Furthermore, all of these identities were intimately intertwined and mutually reinforcing. As Soviet Nationality Policy became Soviet practice in the 1920s, Soviet Azerbaijan moved to subordinate Persian and Islamic elements to Turkic identity. Furthermore, the official language of the Soviet Azerbaijan until the 1930s was referred to as “Türk dili” (*Turkish*).

From Moscow’s standpoint, Islamic and Turkish identity both posed a problem for the formation of Soviet identity. After all, Islamism and Turkism continued to claim primordial links to groups outside of both Azerbaijan and the Soviet Union proper. These links, the Bolsheviks feared, would provide the Muslim Turks of the Soviet Union with an alternative and directly oppositional ideology. If Islamic or Turkic identities were allowed to follow their natural courses then greater adherence to and participation in the Soviet project would be impossible to come by.

Nevertheless, the 1926 Baku Conference did appeal to the “Turko-Tatar nations” of the Soviet Union to come together to decide the future of their own languages. Implicit in this arrangement is the assumption that “Turko-Tatars” across the Soviet Union represented foremost a distinct *national* entity, rather than a familial, village, urban, tribal, or religious one. This was the assumption among the Soviet Turkic, European, and Turkish reformers present at the conference. They there operated within nationalist paradigms to decide the future of the Perso-Arabic script.

4d. The Organization of the Baku Conference

The lead-up to the Baku Conference was widely reported in the Bolshevik press, including the periodical *Molla Nesreddin*.²⁰⁶ In a January 1926 issue of the newspaper, the cover ran a caricature that illustrated the exact stakes of the conference.



(Figure 4. Molla Nesreddin, January 1926)

²⁰⁶ As stated in the previous chapter, Molla Nesreddin was the most popular satirical newspaper in Transcaucasian Muslim society. Furthermore, its biting humor and attacks on the obstinacy of Muslim elites powerless in the face of European colonialism made it popular across the entire Muslim world. See: Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 37-84; Konul Khalilova, “How Muslim Azerbaijan Had Satire Years Before Charlie Hebdo,” BBC Azeri, February 28, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31640643>; Elizabeth Minkel, “The Magazine That Almost Changed the World,” *The New Yorker*, May 26, 2011, <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-magazine-that-almost-changed-the-world>.

In the illustration, members of the Azerbaijani proletariat are throwing both the Arabic letters and books printed in this script out of the window and into the trash. The act of “trashing” the old script represented the views of the Latinizers, who sought to use the upcoming conference to institute the New Turkish Alphabet across the Soviet Turkic republics. The caption of the image reads “Azerbaijani worker—search and dispose of this your oldness. We will clean house, we will have a conference.”²⁰⁷ Whether or not the editors of *Molla Nesreddin* supported Latinization, this image speaks to the growing popularity of the movement on the eve of the conference. Soviet modernization meant that the non-Russian periphery needed to be transformed both materially and culturally. The association of the alphabet with writing, books, and ultimately literacy, meant that switching alphabets would require a large educational infrastructure to train the population in reading the new script. Thus, the Baku Conference convened not only linguists and Turkologists, but also educational officials as well as local party leaders.

As the conference attendees entered Ismailiyya Palace, the conference venue, they would have passed through an entry exhibit, spanning several rooms, dedicated to Turkology. There were rooms in which “books, charts, and placards [were] in Turkish; [as well as] a special pavilion dedicated to special Turkic epigraphs possessing different models of Turkic writing from the 7th century up until the present day and up to the new Turkic alphabet in Latin characters.”²⁰⁸ The attendees, just by moving around in this space, could discern which way the wind of the conference was blowing. Not only were the Turkic epigraphs, books, and manuscripts on display for intellectual or academic interests, but

²⁰⁷ Taymur Kərimli & Bəkir Nəbiyev, editors, *Molla Nəsrəddin VI* edition, Hüseynov, Əliheydər, translator, (Baku: Çinar-Çap Nəşriyyatı, 583.

²⁰⁸ Castagné, 19.

they were positioned in a continuum in which one could clearly mark the progression of the Turkic languages. This continuum ran from the earliest Turkic alphabets, embodied in photographs of the Orhon Inscriptions, with the Perso-Arabic script, still marking a significant historical contribution to these languages, and ended with the Latin script.

The location of Baku was significant in this presentation: the Azerbaijan SSR had decided, three years before the current conference in 1923, to Latinize Azeri Turkish (called “Türk dili” or “Turkish” at the time). But even this was three years after the first Turkic language, Yakut (Sakha) was latinized in 1920, thereby making it the first Turkic language to undergo this process.²⁰⁹ Azerbaijani Bolsheviks, such as Ağamalıoğlu, Musabeyov, and Hüseyinov, could claim that the Latinization of the Turkic languages, even as the conference was underway, was an undeniable fact and one that seemed to be propelled by the winds of modernization. The Baku Conference’s choice, therefore, was whether or not to coopt what was seen as an inevitable process into the official program of Soviet National Policy.

To the 131 attendees to the conference, the Turkological displays in the Ismailiyya Palace added to the gravitas of the event itself, not the least of which was due to the extensive coverage the Soviet press afforded the arrival of the delegations. Joseph Castagné,²¹⁰ an esteemed French ethnographer and historian of the Russian Turks, published a contemporary report of the 1926 Conference, stating that “For its part, the Soviet press seized upon this idea [to hold the conference] and devoted some articles on

²⁰⁹ Şimşir, 97.

²¹⁰ For more of Castagné’s bibliography, see Joseph Castagné, « Étude historique et comparative des statues babas des Steppes Khirghizes et de Russie en général » in *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1910), pp. 375-407 ; Joseph Castagné, “Monuments cyclopéens dans le Ferghana,” in *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d’anthropologie de Paris* VI^e Série, Tome 5 fascicule (1914), pp. 7-10.

this grand event. In the first days of January [a month before the conference was to take place] *Zaria Vostoka* in Tiflis announced the opening of the Congress of Turkology in Baku, the capital of Soviet Azerbaijan.”²¹¹ The attendees came from different ethnic backgrounds: by Castagné’s account, 98 of the 131 attendees were “Turko-Tatar,” and the remaining 33 comprised of different nationalities. The Presidium of the conference was broken down into, in the estimation of Castagne, “22 members of whom six Russians, three Azerbaijanis, two Turkmens, two Bachkirs [a Turkic group residing on either side of the Ural mountains], and seven Turko-Tatars of different nationalities, and one Anatolian Turk.”²¹²

What is interesting about Castagné’s breakdown of the Presidium’s ethno-national makeup is his hesitation with the concept of “nationality” itself. Not merely a default in his observation, this confusion over nationality versus ethnicity was widespread both in the Soviet Union and abroad. True, he does mention specific nationalities—Russian, Azerbaijani, Turkmen, and Bachkir—he also does not see it fit to mention several other nationalities of the “Turko-Tatar” group he mentions. Who exactly was “Turko-Tatar” as opposed to “Azerbaijani” or “Bachkir” remained fluid not only in the account given by Castagné, but in the very speeches given by the “Turko-Tatar” participants. This ambiguity reflected the constantly-shifting national delineations that accompanied Soviet nation building.

²¹¹Castagné, 19.

²¹²Castagné, *ibid.* For a second breakdown of the participants, see Kamil Veli Nerimanoğlu, “1926-Bakü Türkoloji Kurultayı Üzerine,” in Kamil Veli Nerimanoğlu & Mustafa Öner, *1926 Bakü Türkoloji Kurultayı Tutanaklar* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2008), pp. 11-21. 126

4e. “Turko-Tatar Workers and Peasants” within Soviet Socialist Modernization

Səməd ağa Ağamalıoğlu

The principle protagonist in the Baku Conference was no doubt Səməd ağa Ağamalıoğlu.

Serving as both People’s Commissar for Azerbaijan and on the all-Union Presidium of the Central Executive Committee (1922-1929), Ağamalıoğlu had risen high in Bolshevik ranks in the 1920s. During the formative period of Soviet Azerbaijan, Ağamalıoğlu and his associates directed the course Soviet modernization in Azerbaijan through the expansion of education and print media sectors to achieve mass literacy. Ultimately Sovietization in Transcaucasia and Central Asia aimed to transform a society based from one based on the rural peasantry to a modern, urbanized, and socialist society.

Included in this massive transformation of society was the issue of language and language education. Not only did Sovietization seek to achieve mass literacy, but it also sought to equip the non-Russian republics with modernized, national languages. In seeking to transform his own Turkic dialect, Azeri Turkish, Ağamalıoğlu pushed for complete Latinization. He helped to establish the *New Turkish Alphabet Committee (Yeni Türk Elifba Komitesi)* in Soviet Azerbaijan in 1922, four years before the Baku Conference.²¹³ This committee successfully drafted a modified Latin alphabet for the Azerbaijani Turkish language. Subsequently, Ağamalıoğlu’s committee set to work “with an unshaken belief and a clean conscience” disseminating the New Turkish Alphabet (Yeni Türk Elifba) through educational and print media channels.²¹⁴ To help in the dissemination of the New Turkish Alphabet, the Soviet Azerbaijani government commissioned a weekly periodical,

²¹³ Bilal N. Şimşir, *Türk Yazı Devrimi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurum Yayınları, 2008), pp. 98-154.

²¹⁴ Quote from Şimşir, 98. “...sarsılmaz bir iman ve temiz bir vicdan ile bakmalarıdır.”

Yeni Yol (The New Path) as well as 15,000 pamphlets and 12,000 booklets all printed in the new alphabet.²¹⁵ In 1923, the Azerbaijani SSR gave equal status to the Arabic and Latin alphabets and abolished the Arabic script outright the following year. Included in these publications was an explanation of “why the Arabic alphabet was not sufficient for Turkish.”²¹⁶

As such, Ağamalıoğlu intended for the Baku Conference to serve as the ideal platform to promote Latinization not only for Azeri Turkish but for all the titular languages of the newly-established Soviet Turkic republics: Uzbek, Turkmen, Kyrgyz, and Kazakh respectively. Latinization would endow these newly-standardized languages with modern, efficient alphabets. This entailed a transformation not only of the print media sphere, but also of educational and governmental institutions as well. Latinization, in Ağamalıoğlu’s estimation, would underpin the entire project of Soviet modernization in the Caucasus and in Central Asia.

“The East sleeps no longer,” Ağamalıoğlu proclaimed as he opened the first session of the Baku Turkological Conference in 1926.²¹⁷

The beneficent waves of the Russian Revolution have enveloped the cities of the old East, they have spread from seas to oceans, have called the people from ignorance to the establishment of a new life, have broken the chains of bondage for the peoples of the once colossal empire, and have prevailed over death itself.²¹⁸

²¹⁵ Şimşir, 98.

²¹⁶ “Yeni Elifba Komitesi’nin görmüş ve göreceği işler,” *Yeni Yol*, Haftalık edebi, içtimai, bitaraf Türk gazetesi, Bakü, 7.10.1922, yıl I, No. 3, s. 1-2.” Cited in Bilal Şimşir, *Türk Yazı Devrimi, 2. Baskı* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2008), 99.

²¹⁷ Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 51.

²¹⁸ Kamil Vəli Nərimanoğlu & Əliheydər Ağakışiyev, *1926-cı İl Bakı Türkoloji Qurultayı (Stenoqram materialları, biblioqrafiya və foto-sənədlər)* (Bakı: Çınar Çap, 2006), 17. There are two published versions of the conference proceedings I will employ in this chapter. The 2006 version, compiled by Nerimanoğlu and Ağakışiyev is an Azerbaijani language translation of the Russian-recorded proceedings. The second is a Turkish translation published by the Turkish Language Commission (Türk Dil Kurumu): Prof. Dr. Kamil Veli Nerimanoğlu & Prof. Dr. Mustafa Öner, *1926 Bakü Türkoloji Kurultayı (Tutanaklar) 26 Şubat – 6 Mart 1926* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2008). According to the TDK version, Nerimanoğlu

Ağamalıoğlu spoke of a new dawn for the peoples of the East in which they would finally take control over their own cultural affairs and decide their own destinies.²¹⁹ If the old Tsarist Empire had forced policies of assimilation, Christianization, and Russification, then the Soviet state promised a *new* era of socialism where the ethnic minorities—particularly Turco-Muslims of the Caucasus and Central Asia—would enjoy a large degree of economic and cultural autonomy. As he stood in front of the attendees seated inside Ismailiyya Palace, Ağamalıoğlu claimed that rhetoric was being matched with action in the convening of the conference itself.²²⁰

At first glance, it might seem strange to us in the present that Bolshevik leaders would choose the Latin script, especially given its association with capitalist Europe. In the Caucasus and Central Asia of the 1920s, however, the Latin alphabet was viewed mostly as a *neutral* script that did not carry the baggage of either the Arabic or Cyrillic scripts. The Arabic alphabet, Ağamalıoğlu’s group proclaimed, was synonymous with Islam, superstition, and ignorance. And yet, they also associated the Cyrillic script with Russian culture forced upon the Turkic peoples through the violence of colonialism. For the participants of the Baku Conference, neither of the Arabic nor the Cyrillic alphabet could assist the Soviet Turkic peoples in their advance towards socialist modernization and cultural autonomy promised by Soviet Nationality Policy. The pervasive feeling leading

translated the proceedings from Russian into Azerbaijani, which comprised the 2006 version. Öner, in turn, translated Nerimanoğlu’s Azerbaijani version into modern Turkish.

²¹⁹ Photograph is of Ağamalıoğlu speaking at the opening ceremony of the conference. Taken from “1926 Bakü Türkoloji Kurultayı Görüntüleri,” in Prof. Dr. Kâmil Veli Nerimanoğlu & Prof. Dr. Mustafa Öner, *1926 Bakü Türkoloji Kurultayı: Tutanaklar* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2008). “*Büyük Rus İnkılabının şefkatli dalgaları koca Şark’ın şehirlerine yayıldı, denizlerden okyanuslara kadar yayıldı, cehalet içinde olan halkları çağdaş hayata çağırды ve ilk olarak geçmişteki dev imparatorluğun halklarının cesaret zincirlerini kırdı, ölümü ölümlle üsteledi.*”

²²⁰ J. Castagné, *Le Congrès de Turkologie de Bakou (Mars 1926)* (Editions Ernest Leroux: Paris, 1926), 24.¹²⁹

up to the 1926 Conference was that the Latin alphabet, largely free of the cultural baggage of the other two scripts, would provide a neutral basis upon which modernization of language, and society, could occur.²²¹

In surveying the speeches given at the first session of the conference, it is clear that exactly who comprised “the peoples of the East” was constantly shifting. Ağamalıoğlu himself, as well as the speakers after him, used several terms interchangeably: *Turko-Tatar peoples* (Türk-Tatar halkları), national designations such as *Azeri*, *Turkmen*, and *Uzbek*, or simply *the East* (Şark). Ağamalıoğlu’s use of national designations coincided with the program of national delineation that was underway across Soviet Central Asia. During this process, Soviet ethnographers were charged with scouring genealogical and historical records pertaining to the various tribal confederations in Turkestan and, in turn, using these records to mold Turkestan into a region of individual national republics based on ethnicity.²²² Ağamalıoğlu, being a Soviet official in Azerbaijan himself, began to use these national categories, where they had previously not existed, in order to help naturalize the idea among the Soviet ruling and intellectual cadres.

The naturalization of national categories did not mean that Soviet officials at the Baku Conference lost sight of class issues. On the contrary, Ağamalıoğlu, and other participants in the first session, did not merely concentrate on newly-created national categories, but also reinforced and even privileged the class element of their concerns. As

²²¹ Jala Garibova & Betty Blair, “Arabic or Latin? Reform at the Price of a Battleship” in *Azerbaijani International*, Spring 2000, pp. 56-61, https://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/81_folder/81_articles/81_turkology_congress.html, last accessed October 1, 2017.

²²² For more about this process, see: Francine Hirsh, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005); Adrienne Lynn Edgar, “Chapter One: Sources of Identity Among the Turkmen,” and “Chapter Two: Assembling the Nation: The Creation of a Turkmen National Republic,” in *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

such, they made constant reference to revolutionary terms such as *proletariat*, *masses of workers and peasants*, or *the working class*, in order to underscore the overall object of the Soviet Union of creating national republics not for their own sake, but for the sake of Soviet socialist developmentalism in which national identity was seen as a prerequisite for proletarian identity. As Gazanfer Musabeyov, a prominent Azerbaijani Bolshevik participant at the conference, stated “our singular goal is forming a new socialist society and doubtless, to aim for a widespread indigenous civilization in this [non-Russian Soviet] society.”²²³

The main point of entry as far as identity was concerned, however, was the *Turko-Tatar proletariat and peasants*. This category, both national and class-based, encompassed the group the conference participants sought to empower in the new Soviet dispensation. As such, the conference portrayed the Turko-Tatar proletariat and peasants as a particularly marginalized group continually struggling to overcome centuries of Tsarist Russification and colonial policies. Ağamalıoğlu himself pointed to two factors that prevented this group from advancing towards modernization. The first fact was indeed past Russian colonialism (*Rus mutlakiyeti* or *Romanov imperyası* in the Turkish and Azerbaijani translations of Ağamalıoğlu’s speech).²²⁴

The legacy of colonialism had left a devastating legacy for the Turko-Tatar peoples, something that speech after speech emphasized during the first session of the conference. The grip of the Tsarist colonial policies had prevented the Turko-Tatar proletariat from realizing their own destiny as a national entity. In this regard, the Bolshevik Revolution of

²²³ Kamil Vəli Nərimanoğlu & Əliheydər Ağakışiyev, 17; Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 56. “*Bizim tek amacımız yeni sosyalist toplumunu oluşturmak ve bu toplumda, şüphesiz, yaygın bir şekilde yerleşmiş medeniyeti amaçlamaktır.*”

²²⁴ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 21; Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 51.

1917 was championed by Ağamalıoğlu and others as the event that finally broke Tsarist control over the Turkic world and ushered in a new era of socialism and self-determination. Now that the empire had collapsed under the might of a socialist revolution, the new Soviet state's principle mission was to reverse colonialist policies and allow the Turko-Tatar workers and peasants to acculturate to the new order on their own terms and through their own languages.

The second factor that prevented the Turko-Tatar peasants and workers from advancing towards modernization was the prevalence of “ignorance” and “superstition” among the Turko-Tatar workers and peasants. One of the prominent speakers of the Congress' first session, Gazenfer Musabeyov, the ASSR's People's Commissar of Nationalities as well as a member of the Central Executive Committee of the of the USSR, who detailed the problems that such an “unscientific” and “ignorant” mentality could have for the future development of the Turko-Tatars of the new Soviet order.²²⁵ His attendance and participation in the Baku Conference was captured and he shows up in the footage as the second man from the right in the still below. Stating that the ultimate objective of the Congress was to assist in the process of bringing socialism to the non-Russian groups, Musabeyov affirmed that “Our single goal is to create a new socialist society and, doubtless, to aim for a flourishing civilization as broadly as possible.”²²⁶

²²⁵ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 21; Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 51, 55.

²²⁶ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 22; Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 51, 55. In the Azerbaijani edition, the sentence reads “...geniş inkişaf etmiş mədəniyyət nəzərdə tutur...” whereas in the Turkish translation, the same sentence is translated as “...yaygın bir şekilde yerleşmiş medeniyeti amaçlamaktır.”



(Figure 5. Baku Conference Attendees)

In order to achieve this goal, Musabeyov argued, past superstitious and religious mentalities needed to give way to a scientific view of society under the guise of state socialism. The Baku Conference, therefore, signaled an instrumental step towards this process. In this sense, therefore, it was more of a Conference on how to proceed with socialist modernization than it was about the merits of this modernization in and of itself.

Musabeyov's speech, therefore, lays out two important stakes. The first is that the Baku Conference should assist in the process of creating and empowering the non-Russian nationalities to develop their own thing at stake was using science to help direct all Soviet society—Russian and otherwise—towards a common socialist future where ignorance, backwardness, and superstition would be overcome. Musabeyov highlighted these two stakes in his speech

The Turkological Conference, which proceeds from these fundamental conditions, will specify the new roads for the Eastern peoples' complete scientific transition. We, comrades, have witnessed great scientific achievements in this field. However, today I should say that we still have a lot of deficiencies and [this] Turkology Congress should specify the ways and the fundamental stages of investigation of these subjects in the

future. The agenda of the Conference is completely suited to all of these demands.²²⁷

Without the complete leap of the Eastern peoples—especially the Turko-Tatar workers and peasants—towards a modernity rooted in the latest scientific and technological innovations, the transition from national to socialist identity, upon which the entire rationale and justification of the Bolshevik’s nationality policy rested, would be called into question. It was thus dire that the participants at the Baku Congress discuss the issue of the alphabet—the very vehicle that was to bring this scientific socialist modernization to the population—in as much of a scientific and rational manner as possible.

Not only would the conference settle important Turkological issue regarding language reform and Latinization, but it would also recreate the very methodology used to approach Turkological issues in the future. In addition to fostering a social revolution whereby in the very script of the language was embedded the socialist modernization desired, the conference would mark the beginnings of a disciplinary revolution within the field of Turkology meaning that Turkological methodology would be determined by academic institutions in the Soviet Turkic republics, Baku, for example. In a sense, therefore, the stakes of the 1926 Baku Turkological Conference included taking command of the very discipline that had come to define its “Turko-Tatar” participants as well as, though in different ways, their Russian colleagues. This meant that the lines between

²²⁷ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 22; Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 56. “*Qurultayımızın gündəliyi bütün bu tələblərə tamamilə cavab verir.*” “*Bu temel şartlardan yola çıkan Türkoloji Kurultayı, Şark halklarının her yönlü ilmi çerçevesi için yeni yollar belirleyecektir. Biz, yoldaşlar, bu alanda büyük ilmi başarılarla şahit olduk. Fakat bugün onu da söylemem gerekir ki, daha birçok eksikliğimiz var ve Türkoloji Kurultayı bu konuların gelecekte araştırılmasının temel aşamalarını ve yollarını belirlemelidir. Kurultayımızın gündemi tüm bu gerekçelere tamamen uygun düşmektedir.*”

Russian and non-Russian were to be dissolved during the conference, which was the very thing Soviet Nationality Policy was trying to achieve in the first place.

Musabeyov indicated the last point in his speech:

Comrades, it is not a coincidence that the Inaugural Turkological Conference of the Soviet Union has chosen the city of Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, as its work site [çalışma yeri olarak]. Azerbaijan, with its geographical situation as the gate to the East as well as great cultural and economic successes which the workers achieved within the last five years, deserved this great honor to host Turkology's scientific representatives as well as the representatives of our brother republics.²²⁸

There is no doubt from this that Musabeyov intended Baku, with its relatively well-established universities and oil industry, to be the new center of Turkology. Azerbaijan, according to him, was the “gate to the East” upon which the Soviet socialist modernization would pass.

Other speakers emphasized Azerbaijan's unique location for different ends. In the opening speech of Mirzə Davud Hüseyyov, serving simultaneously as the People's Commissar for Economic Affairs and Foreign Affairs, said

As all of us know, in this Baku, in which we have organized our current session, Tsarist politics was carried out with specific attention. The politics carried out here were manifest in an effort to eradicate the [Turko-Tatar] nations by their own hand. Now you all possess a brotherly federation of three republics—Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Georgia—and an independent union of Caucasian nations in these same Caucasus today.²²⁹

²²⁸ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 21; Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 56. “Yoldaşlar, I. Sovyetler Birliđi Türkoloji Kurultayı'nın, Azərbaycan'ın başkenti Bakü şehrini çalışma yeri olarak tercih etmesi tesadüfi değildir. Şark'ın giriş kapısı gibi coğrafi durumuyla ve son beş yıl içinde emekçilerin kazandıkları büyük kültürel ve iktisadi başarılarıyla Azərbaycan aziz konuklarını, Türkolojinin ilmî temsilcilerini ve bize kardeş olan cumhuriyetlerin temsilcilerini ağırlamak gibi yüksek şerefli hak etmiştir.”

²²⁹ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 26; Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 61. “Hepimizin bildiđi gibi Azərbaycan'ın başkentinde, şu an oturumumuzu gerçekleştirdiđimiz bu Bakü'de Çarlıđın politikası özel bir dikkatle gerçekleştirildi. Burada yürüttüğü siyaset Çarlıđın esarete olan bir halkı diđerine düşürerek, bu halkları birbirlerinin eliyle yok ettirmeye çalışması şeklinde tecelli ediyordu. Şimdi ise aynı Kafkasya'da sizler Kafkasya halklarının bağımsız ittifakına, 3 cumhuriyetin, Azərbaycan, Ermenistan ve Gürcistan'ın kardeş federasyonuna sahip bulunuyorsunuz.”

In this, Hüseyov highlighted the particular experience of Russian colonialism in Transcaucasia and particularly in Baku. To him, colonialism was not an abstract enemy, but had led a direct assault on all the peoples of Transcaucasia with the expressed aim of “eradicating the Turko-Tatar nations.”²³⁰ Like Ağamalıoğlu, Hüseyov gives a territorial definition of the “Turko-Tatar” nations, stating that they encompass the peoples residing “In a general area beginning from the Altay mountains to the great Volga, from the lonely deserts of Turkestan, and from the snowy peaks of the Caucasus and ending with beautiful Crimea.”²³¹

The conference offered for revolutionaries like Hüseyov an opportunity to rescue the impoverished Turko-Tatar workers and peasants from the brink of eradication. Not surprisingly, Hüseyov advocated in his opening speech for the material improvement in the lives of Transcaucasia’s nationalities in addition to their cultural advancement. In this, Hüseyov seemed to echo Musabeyov, who advocated for the implementation of science in the daily lives of the Turko-Tatar nationality. Though the application of science in all sectors of life would no doubt transform and even modernize the traditional patterns of life in Transcaucasia, it would not inherently seek to redress the past wrongs of Tsarist colonialism.

Inherent in Hüseyov’s political ambitions for the conference, therefore, was material redress or reparations for the Turko-Tatar peoples.²³² Only with material redress, which would be allocated to the Soviet periphery, could the greater project of

²³⁰ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 26; Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 61.

²³¹ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 26; Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 61. “...*Atlay dağlarından büyük Volga’dan, Türkistan’ın tenha çöllerinden, Kafkasya’nın karlı zirvelerinden başlayan ve güzel Kırım ile sona eren geniş bir araziyi kaplamaktalar.*”

²³² Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 26-27; Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 61-62.

modernization and cultural transformation take place. The issue of the alphabet for Hüseyov was intimately tied to this overall project. Looking towards the future, he stated that the issue of the alphabet would no doubt result in “a strong break” with the past. Not only would the new alphabet be implemented in Soviet schools, but it would be the very vehicle by which the Turko-Tatar workers and peasants would finally achieve this material and cultural transformation. For Hüseyov, the stakes of the debate over changing the alphabet could not be higher.

However, rather than stating a preconceived opinion either way, he called on the conference participants to analyze the issue of alphabet reform not from an ideological standpoint, but from scholarly expertise and as neutral and objective as possible. He wrapped up his speech by stating “I think our Turkological Conference, in which the representatives of the entire Turkic peoples of our great Union and talented scholars are participating, will approach this subject [of alphabet reform] with complete objectivity and neutrality and will reach a solution in which our people will reap great benefits [çıkarları/mənafor].”²³³ Stating that the Azerbaijani SSR had successfully implemented its own Latin-based alphabet three years prior, Hüseyov alerted the participants to the fact that, three years in, the implementation had yielded good results.

Representatives from the “Turko-Tatar” Soviet republics were not the only ones to advocate for the revolutionary nature of the Baku Conference. Nor were they the only ones to advocate for both Soviet modernization of the Turkic periphery and material redress for the past wrongs of Tsarist colonialism. One such figure was Mikhail Pavlovich, a

²³³ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 27; Nərimanoğlu & Öner, 62. “Bence, yetenekli âlim Türkologların ve büyük ittifaqımızın tüm Türk halklarının temsilcilerinin katıldıkları Türkoloji Kurultayımız bu konuya tarafsız ve tam bir objektiflikle yaklaşacak ve onu kitlelerin, halkımızın çıkarılarının gerçekleştirdiği bir şekilde çözüme kavuşturacaktır.”

representative of the Moscow-based All-Russian Association of Oriental Sciences [Umumrusiya Şərqsunaslarının Elmi Assosiasiyası] and a member of the Baku Conference's presidium.²³⁴ The roster included in the Azerbaijani version of the conference proceedings lists Pavlovich's nationality to be 'Jewish' and his academic affiliation to be with the All-Russian Association of Oriental Sciences.²³⁵ He therefore spoke not as a local of Transcaucasia or Central Asia, but from his own Jewish Russian nationality, which, like the Turko-Tatar peoples in the past, had suffered great persecution at the hands of Tsarist colonial authorities.

What emerges from Pavlovich's speech, therefore, is a sense of solidarity with the non-Russian Soviet peoples who were struggling to recover from the hardship of Tsarist colonialism. What bound Pavlovich and participants such as Ağamalıoğlu, Müsabeyov, and Hüseynov together was a common conviction that the Baku Conference represented the next step in the Soviet revolution in the Turkic republics in which the Turko-Tatar peoples would finally achieve both modernization in the form of Soviet socialism as well as last material improvements in their lives.

Like the other speakers in the first session, Pavlovich believed that the conference represented the merger of the nationality question with the overall proletarian revolution. The two were synonymous in his speech and, as such, Pavlovich saw Soviet Azerbaijan as a vanguard of the revolution in the east: "The convocation of this conference in the Azerbaijan [Soviet] Republic, which is included in the structure of the Soviet Union, is evidence of the magnitude of the Soviet government's principles of the worker-peasant

²³⁴ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakişiyev, 19, 444. Among the members of the The Presidium of the Baku Conference included Ağamalıoğlu, Fuat Köprülü, an academic from Kemalist Turkey, Pavlovich, and Bakir Çobanzade.

²³⁵ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakişiyev, 19, 444.

sovereignty; oppositely could such a conference take place in another country?”²³⁶ For Pavlovich, the answer was no. Azerbaijan’s place at the forefront of the implementation of Soviet Nationality Policy for the Turkic peoples in the Soviet periphery was of great symbolic significance.

Azerbaijan, and Baku in particular, had played a leading role in the development of Turkic nationalism before the World War One when intellectuals such as Alibey Hüseyinzade (present at the Baku Conference) and Ahmet Ağaoğlu led the charge towards fostering a sense of common Turkic identity that could be shared among Turkic-speaking peoples both within and outside the former Russian Empire. Pavlovich, therefore, reiterated the great symbolic significance of the moment as a Sovietized Azerbaijan would harness its past prestige within the Turkic world in order to empower a new generation of Turko-Tatar workers and peasants towards realizing the bright socialist future that awaited them.

The goal of the Azerbaijani SSR was now to set down the criteria for how this future was to play out. Like Hüseyinov, Pavlovich concurred that the reallocation of industrial material from the Russian center to the Turkic periphery was a necessary requisite for the realization of Soviet Nationality Policy. In other words, he agreed that matters of cultural reform, including the alphabet, would be incomplete if they were not considered alongside questions of material reparations for the Turko-Tatar peoples. Azerbaijan, therefore, stood out as an example where cultural matters and material progress were interwoven. Not only had the Azerbaijan SSR implemented a Latin-based alphabet three prior to the conference, but, according to Pavlovich, it had also undergone

²³⁶ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 23; Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 58. “*Bu kurultayın büyük Sovyetler Birliđi’nin terkbine dahil olan Azərbaycan Cumhuriyeti’nde toplanması de Sovyet hükümetinin, işçi-köylü hakimiyetinin millî siyasetinin prensiplerinin büyüklüğüne delildir; aksi takdirde böyle bir kurultay başka bir ülkede olabilir miydi?*” 139

breathhtaking material, economic, and industrial advances since its integration in the Soviet Union in 1920. “I was in Azerbaijan several years prior,” Pavlovich told the audience as he spoke in the İsmaliyyə Sarayı:

I have seen major changes in the city of Baku. In Azerbaijan there is a new industrial center, as well as in Ganja [Azerbaijan’s second largest city]. Let us see the matters that need to be implemented in your neighbor Dagestan, which even yesterday has not developed from a patriarchal and feudalist economy. The Dagestan Eagles [a symbol of courage and heroism in Dagestani culture] which has remained at the head of the struggle against Tsarism for sixty years...has now expended all of its energy for Dagestan’s economic and cultural problems.²³⁷

To this assertion, the conference records show that Pavlovich received applause when he invoked both Soviet Azerbaijan’s successes in industrialization and in remembering neighboring Dagestan’s—itsself a Muslim society— “heroic” struggle against sixty years of Tsarist oppression.

For Pavlovich, therefore, Azerbaijani and the Caucasus in general represented a success story in the struggle against Russian colonialism. To finalize their dominance over their oppressive colonial past, both Azerbaijan and its Transcaucasian neighbors needed to undergo both cultural revolution, a hallmark of which was to be the new Latin script for Azerbaijani and other Turkic languages, and material redress in the form of reallocation of industrial goods and technology. These cultural and material reforms would ensure that the Soviet Turkic periphery would be removed permanently from of its colonial subservience and degradation and move into the realm of empowerment under Soviet socialism.

²³⁷ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 25; Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 59. “*Ben Azerbaycan’da bundan birkaç yıl önce bulundum. Bakü şəhərində böyük dəyişikliklər görməkteyim. Azerbaycan’da yeni sənaye merkezi Gence də var. Sizin komşunuz, daha dün bile pəderşahi və feodal, ekonomik yöndən gelişmemiş Dağıstan’da nelerin gerçəkləştiğine bakalım. 60 yıl Çarlığa karşı mücadele eden bu ülkədə şimdi ise halk kitlelerinin zamanında Çarlığa mücadelesinin başında duran və buna enerjilərini harcayan Dağıstan kartalları...şu anda tüm gücünü Dağıstan’ın ekonomik ve kültürel problemlerine harcamaktalar...*”

Echoing Ağamalıoğlu's sentiments was one a Kazan Tatar delegate, Qaziz Qubaydullin (more commonly referred to as Əziz Ubeydullin), who served as a docent in the Azerbaijan State Scientific Research Institute.²³⁸ Ubeydullin came to the conference to give an overview of the history of the Turkic languages. In this, he served as both a Bolshevik revolutionary and as an academic historian. His speech at the conference represents the merger of Soviet socialist politics with Turkology thereby changing some of the meaning of Turkological research and work. If the Conference sought to renew Turco-Turkic identity and foster a new cultural era, it would have to, Ubeydullin believed, better understand the historical and linguistic roots of the Turkic peoples. This was a necessary condition for the development of national consciousness.

Ubeydullin, therefore, sought to detail the historical development of Turkic writing culture and of the importance of ethnographic approaches to the study of Turkic languages. He attributed the pre-Soviet historiographic tradition, as well as the studies on Turko-Tatar identity that it produced, as belonging to a bygone bourgeois era. As such, writings on the subject tended to either serve the interests of the Tsarist colonial authorities “whose will, in the end destroyed the magnificent and unique Tatar government and, beginning with that moment, advanced Russian domination step-by-step in Tatarstan.”²³⁹

As such, much of the ethnographic and historiographic studies on Turko-Tatar identity were produced by the Tsarist colonial authorities and their institutions. Though Ubeydullin showed sympathies with the nationalist responses to this colonial intrusion, even stating to the early “bourgeois” Turkic nationalists as producing “lovely” and “fantastic” works, he nevertheless did not credit them with establishing the foundations for

²³⁸ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakişiyev, 442.

²³⁹ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakişiyev, 51.

true national identity. This sentiment, one that he would continue to perpetuate after the conference, was based on the fact that these nationalists, such as Ismail Gasprinski, were often seduced by pan-ethnic movements Ubeydullin and other Soviet-era scholars found an anathema to the development of genuine national identity.

It was only with the success of the Bolshevik Revolution that “a new range of possibility was opened to historians” in the pursuit of discovering and ascribing genuine national identity to the various Turko-Tatar groups.²⁴⁰ Responding to the universalist message of Bolshevism, as well as its promise to liberate all the workers and peasants of the East, the post-revolution period was one in which, according to Ubeydullin, scholars “encountered the subject of determining their own destinies” and, as such, “learning the historical origins [of their nations] was in demand.”²⁴¹ Ubeydullin, in his capacity as a historian, believed the Bolshevik Revolution presented the opportunity to both build and empower indigenous nationalities in the Soviet periphery and allow them to reach Soviet socialism through their own cultural channels.

The revolution, and the subsequent Bolshevik policies aiming to create national republics, gave Turkology, language reform, and historical research on the origins of the various Turkic national identity a new sense of urgency and importance. For Ubeydullin, Turko-Tatar Bolsheviks had already seized the opportunity to remake their national identities according to the precepts of Soviet indigenization: “beginning from this period [of the revolution] Turko-Tatar revolutionaries have begun to write histories within the revolutionary movement among the Turko-Tatar peoples. They felt the practical demands for the research of the nations of the Turkic peoples who were transformed [by the

²⁴⁰ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakişiyev, 56.

²⁴¹ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakişiyev, 56.

revolution] into the undisputed masters of their own countries.”²⁴² Like Pavlovich and Hüseyinov, Ubeydullin argued that the current moment was not merely one in which the cultural questions of the alphabet would be solved, but also one in which a new, Latin-based alphabet would assist in the “social-economic evolution” of the non-Russian nationalities of the Soviet Union.²⁴³

Following Hüseyinov and Ubeydullin’s speeches advocating for cultural renewal was Bekir Çobanzade. One of the leading Tatar delegates at the conference and the head of the Turkology department at Baku State University, Çobanzade believed this renewal demanded the creation of a purely Turkic scientific and technical vocabulary. So ardent was Çobanzade in advocating for purging Arabic and Persian scientific terms and creating a pure Turkic vocabulary that he alienated most of the moderates at the conference.²⁴⁴ In his speech on terminology, he offered justification on the basis that the Europeans and the Russians all had their own separate scientific and technological terminology. If the Turks were to form great nations, they must follow suit and adopt a terminology based on Turkic root words. He therefore called upon the conference to assist in the modernization of Turkic societies by adopting what he called “pure indigenous terms” for scientific and technological concepts.²⁴⁵ Çobanzade argued that such a project was not outside of the realm of possibility. The Kazakhs, he stated, had already made the leap towards this goal. The Kazakhs, therefore, could serve as a source of emulation for the rest of the Turkic world as it moved to indigenize scientific and technological terminology. Indigenization,

²⁴² Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 57.

²⁴³ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 57.

²⁴⁴ Martin, 193.

²⁴⁵ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 181.

in Çobanzade's conception, meant that Turks would assist other Turks in the formation of this new terminology.

4f. Debates over Language and Alphabet

By the time the Baku Conference was underway, the classifications of the Turkic languages into various branches (Oghuz, Karluk, Kirgiz, and Uighur) was common among Turkologists and linguists. The participants at the congress, for example Bekir Çobanzade, referred to these designations and divisions of the Turkic dialects.²⁴⁶ This section will demonstrate exactly how language fit into the revolutionary goals of the Baku Conference.

The attendee to make the clearest link between linguistic and socialist development was Artur Zifeld-Simumyaqi (referred to as Zifeld in the conference records). Zifeld was an Estonian Turkologist and historian who had made his career in Azerbaijan. A member of the People's Education Commissariat, Zifeld focused his attentions on historical and ethnographical work on Turkic populations in the former Russian Empire. As he participated in the Baku Conference, therefore, Zifeld stood as an academic voice espousing Marxist developmentalism through the lens of language reform and Soviet Nationality Policy.

In his speech delivered on March 2, 1926, Zifeld argued that language reform had benefits from a Marxist materialist perspective. "The stages of linguistic development," Zifeld stated, "overlap to some extent with the stages of economic and cultural development of human societies. Every type of technological and socio-economic reform

²⁴⁶ Bekir Çobanzade, "Türk Lehçelerinin Yakın Akrabalığı Hakkında," in Nerimanoğlu & Öner, pp. 147-154.

naturally pursues language reform.”²⁴⁷ For Zifeld, therefore, the Turko-Tatar languages of the Soviet Union were already going to be transformed through socialist technology. The 1920s were, after all, the time of Lenin’s great electrification campaigns that he laid out in a speech dated December 1920.²⁴⁸ Proclaiming that communism meant Soviet power plus the electrification of the entire Soviet Union, Lenin put forth a bold new plan to rapidly modernize Soviet society. Zifeld, and the other conference participants, no doubt carried that spirit with them to the debating floor. Zifeld claimed that Russian had prominence in the Turko-Tatar regions simply because of the on-sided exploitation of the Turks by Tsarist colonialism. In fact, Zifeld states that this is the reason who so many upper-class Turks have turned away from their native languages and have adopted Russian.²⁴⁹

Linguistics in the socialist era, according to Zifeld, should be concerning with the development of the language to meet the requirements of modernization and mass literacy. As such, any reform taken in the domain of language, according to Zifeld, should be do so with the input of native speakers. Native speakers, meaning the Turko-Tatar workers and peasants, should be consulted to determine that language reform does not stray from its intended path to advance mass literacy. In this Zifeld reminded the conference to be ever conscious whom the reforms would target and transform. Recommending that the Educational Commissariats should consult with the people, Zifeld argued that consultation

²⁴⁷ Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 235. “*Dilin gelişme aşamaları insan topluluklarının kültürel-ekonomik gelişme aşamaları ile bir ölçüde örtüşmektedir. Her bir teknolojik ve sosyo-ekonomik reform istisnasız olarak dil reformu da peşinden getirmiştir.*”

²⁴⁸ Vladimir Lenin, “Communism is Soviet Power Plus the Electrification of the Whole Country,” in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5th ed. (Moscow, 1975-79), Vol. 36, pp. 15-16, accessed through *Seventeen Moments in Soviet History: An Online Archive of Primary Sources*, <http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1921-2/electrification-campaign/communism-is-soviet-power-electrification-of-the-whole-country/>, last accessed October 2, 2017.

²⁴⁹ Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 235.

on language reform “would ensure that the Educational Commissariats would not commit mistakes” on matters as important as language.²⁵⁰

With those recommendations in mind, Zifeld endorses the reformist program of the Baku Conference, especially pertaining to foreign vocabulary in the Turkic languages. Stating that foreign words in Turkic are akin to “barbarian language,” Zifeld divides Turkic dialects along class lines: on one side stood “literary Turkic” with its “literary jargon” of incomprehensible Arabic, Persian, and French words.²⁵¹ This dialect of Turkic, in Zifeld’s estimation, reflected the upper-class politics of Muslims which divided them into “Pan-Islamists” and “Westernizers.”²⁵² What is striking about Zifeld’s classification is that it reflects in large part how the early Turkish nationalists in both the Russian and Ottoman empires had stated decades prior. Reformers such as Yusuf Akçura and Ziya Gökalp, viewed literary Ottoman in a similar way as a remnant of upper-class Ottoman politics and aspirations. In the Turkish case, it was between Ottomanists and Islamists that the political struggle of the upper-classes was made manifested. Nevertheless, the negative association of literary Turkic as being incomprehensible and riddled with foreign vocabulary and grammatical elements was a common talking-point in Latinizing circles.

Zifeld saw the Ottoman language as a threat to the Turkic languages in the Soviet Union. Firstly, Ottoman had, since the emergence of the Turcophone press, dominated pan-Turkic publications. Zifeld argued that Ottoman Turkish represented a strand of this “literary Turkic” which should be discarded for the development of local dialects.²⁵³ In this way, he echoed Yusuf Vəzir Çəmənzəminli’s writings that stressed the elevation of Azeri

²⁵⁰ Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 237.

²⁵¹ Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 235-241.

²⁵² Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 238.

²⁵³ Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 238.

Turkish over Ottoman as the Transcaucasian Muslim reformers' standard of communication.

Zifeld argued that, although past reformers who relied on literary Turkic or Ottoman “wanted to become closer to the people because they were revolutionaries or democratic in thought, they [were in fact] creating division between people in Enlightenment and arriving at negative results with their incomprehensible terminology.”²⁵⁴ In order to turn away from this stratification of society based on language, Zifeld proposed that the “people’s language,” (*halk dili*) be promoted over “literary Turkic.” “I am against Arabic and Persian words,” Zifeld declared in his speech, “I do not consider them any more than religious relics and therefore I see it as possible to save terms expressed in religious concepts in the Turkish language.”²⁵⁵ He did not advocate, however, for the sudden removal of Arabic and Persian by arbitrary means, again deferring to his idea that the populace should be consulted at every stage of the reform.

In addition to Zifeld, a delegate from Kazakhstan, Omarov, echoed anti-literary Turkic and Ottoman sentiment as he pushed for reform. In this speech, Omarov played up his Kazakh identity, asserting that the Kazakh language actually required less reform than the Western Turkic languages. “I don’t want to comment on the etymological or orthographical preferences, but the Tatar and other Turkic languages did not develop as our [Kazakh] did...[these languages] have an inclination to flaunt the pronunciation and vocabulary of the foreign Arabic or French languages.”²⁵⁶ Like Zifeld, Omarov concurred

²⁵⁴ Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 235-241. “

²⁵⁵ Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 235-241. “*Şimdi ise Arap ve Fars kelimeleri hakkında...Ben bu kelimelerin aleyhindeyim. Ben bunları din mirasından başka bir şey saymıyorum, dolayısıyla da Türk dilinde sadece dini kavramları ifade eden terimlerin korunmasını mümkün görüyorum.*”

²⁵⁶ Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 225-227. “*Ben etimolojik yazı kaidelerinin üstünlükleri veya eksikliklerinden söz etmek istemiyorum, ama Tatar ve diğer Türk dillerinin bizim dilimiz gibi gelişmemesi, zannımca, onlarca yazının bizden ortaya çıkması ile açıklanabilir.*”

that languages such as Tatar or Azeri mirrored Ottoman Turkish in that they too borrowed extensively from Arabic and Persian and, in the present-day, French.

This high-brow Turkic prevented, in Omarov's estimation, the emergence of "language democracy," in which language would largely reflect the common worker and peasant.²⁵⁷ Inherent in Omarov's estimation, therefore, is the idea that language reform, including an evaluation of Arabic, Persian, and French terminology, should proceed democratically with the consultation of the general public. Omarov, thus, followed Zifeld's call to foster the "people's language" (halk dili) as the official standard for educational and state functions: "It help[s] to separate the literary language and its etymological foundations from the popular language."²⁵⁸

When it came to alphabet reform, Şamil Usmanov, another participant to the congress, threw his lot in with the Latinizers: "We know that vowels are not makred in the Arabic Alphabet," Omarov reminded his audience, "People learn that when the و and the ز are side-by-side, that a 'vz' sound results. However, place a گ in front and you have 'guz.' We can see that this is a complication, not an easing, of the language."²⁵⁹ Usmanov ridiculed Oghuz Turkic languages for adopting all of these vocabulary and orthographical complications. Here, Kazakh became an object of praise for its simplicity as a Turkic language and its distance from the "corrupting" influences of Arabic, Persian, French, or even Ottoman. This negative influence, for Usmanov, even extended into the script: "Comrade Ibrahimov requests that the Conference not give new signs to the Arabic

²⁵⁷ Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 225-227.

²⁵⁸ Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 225-227. "Bu edebi dil demokrasi için ulaşılmazdır. Etimoloji yazı kaideleri de işte bu edebi dilin halk dilinden tecrit edilmesine yardım ediyordu.

²⁵⁹ Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 225-227. "Arap Alfabesinde ünlüleri gösteren harfleri olmadığını biliyoruz. Burada ise "vav" harfi olduğunu "vav" ve, "z" harfleri yan yana gelince "vz" alındığını öğretiyorlar. Fakat bunların önünde "g" harfi gelirse, "güz" olur, "vav"ın üstünde virgül konulduğunda "göz," virgül önceki harfin üstünde olunca "guz" okunur."

alphabet, but I think the Conference will promote new signs. However, adopting the Latin alphabet will solve in a fundamental way all of the problems of orthography.”²⁶⁰

Zifeld, Omarov, and Usmanov were backed by Professor Lev Shcherba (referred to as Şçerba in the conference records), who argued that the Arabic and Persian alphabets were an “unnatural” one to base Turkic orthography.²⁶¹ Furthermore, Shcherba also reinforced the idea of unique nationality when speaking about language reform. It was dangerous to borrow from another nation’s alphabet, Shcherba argued, because that nation’s language has been built upon its particular foundations. To adopt another language’s alphabet, in this estimation, meant to adopt some of foreign foundations. On the other hand, Shcherba ridiculed languages that had not undergone any serious state reform, singling English out for derision: “English orthography is truly torturous even for English-speakers themselves. This is undeniable and a known truth.”²⁶² While he did not want Turkic speakers to adopt Latin to take on English, or any Western European language’s, particular pronunciation, he nevertheless advocated for a modified Turkic variant of the Latin alphabet to solve the spelling and writing difficulties Turkic speakers currently faced.

4g. Concluding Resolutions of the Baku Conference

With the conclusion of the Baku Turkological Conference, several resolutions (qətnamə) were passed. Among these was the endorsement of *complete* latinization for all

²⁶⁰ Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 225-227. “Yoldaş İbrahimov Kurultaydan Arap alfabesine yeni işaretler vermesini rica ediyor ve Kurultayın da onları vereceğini zannediyordu. Fakat bunlar hiç de virgüller, ötreler olmayacak ve yeni Latin alfabesinin kabulü ile yazılışın tüm problemleri köklü biçimde çözülecektir.”

²⁶¹ Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 228-229.

²⁶² Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 228-229.

Turkic languages in the Soviet Union. The resolution leaves no ambiguity about the conference's endorsement:

...the fact is recorded which belongs to the immense affirmative importance as Azerbaijan and the provinces of republics of the USSR (Yakutia, Kirghizstan, Ingushetia, Karachay-Cherkez, Kabardin, Balkar, Ossetia, and Chechnya) undertake the general movement towards accepting the Latin-based alphabet in the province of Adıgey-Çerköz and in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Bashkortostan.²⁶³

In other words, the conference endorsed that Latin-based alphabets be implemented for all of these locales and languages. What is interesting is that, although the conference was communicated as a *Turkological* conference, its resolutions covered various groups residing in Transcaucasia and Central Asia that were not Turkic, including Ingush, Circassians, Ossetians, and Chechen. In addition, Tajik—a Iranian language closely akin to Dari and Farsi—was also marked for Latinization. Nevertheless, the Turkic languages of the Soviet Union, including Uzbek, Turkmen, and Kazakh, were to be Latinized and their vocabulary reformed to handle both the influx of technological and industrial terminology that would accompany the reallocation of resources and to be useful titular languages for the non-Russian national republics.

In a subsequent decisions, the Baku Conference laid the groundwork for how the orthography of the Turkic languages was to be reformed. The Conference placed heavy emphasis on the etymology of words in order to determine their reformed spelling. For many republics, as Adrienne Edgar demonstrates in her chapter “Dueling Dialects,” there

²⁶³ Nerimanoğlu & Özer, 456. “Bununla ilgili Kutultay, Azerbaycan'ın SSCB'nin vilayet ve cumhuriyetlerinin (Yakutistan, Kırgızistan, İnguşetiya, Karaçay, Çerkez, Kabardin, Balkar, Osetya ve Çeçenistan) yeni alfabe kabul etmelerinin, Başkurtlardan, Türkmənistan, Özbekistan'da ve Adıgey-Çerkez vilayetlerinde Latin esaslı yeni alfabe yolunda geniş harekâta başlanması gibi büyük öneme sahip delili kaydediyor.”

was not so much a single, unified national language.²⁶⁴ Instead, most national republics were home to a variety of Turkic dialects, sometimes mutually intelligible but often having large variations across dialects. To address the problem of disparate dialects existing in a single national republic (dialectical variation was a problem for the Bolsheviks because they believed it would hinder national cohesion and the spread of the Soviet Nationality Policy), the Baku Conference recommended that linguists “should rely on documenting in some degree orthographic rules for those who speak another variation [of that language].”²⁶⁵ In other words, etymological research on vocabulary and terminology, coupled with the effort to standardize the spelling rules of each titular language, would make progress in unifying all of the disparate dialects in a republic into a single, national, and finally “indigenous” language.

To achieve these measures, the Baku Conference established the *Committee for the New Turkish Alphabet* that was to coordinate both the efforts to standardize the titular Turkic languages and to assist in etymological and pedagogical measures needed in the standardization process. Ultimately, this new committee, which would be convened a year after the Baku Conference in 1927, would oversee all these projects. By 1929, three years after the Baku Conference, the Arabic script was outlawed across the Turkic republics and the New Turkish Alphabet was implemented in every Turkic-speaking national republic.

3h. Soviet Azerbaijan: Latinization to Cyrillization and Back Again

What became of the alphabet reforms in the Soviet Turkic republics? As the premier symbol of Soviet indigenization, the Latin-based alphabet was tied directly to overall

²⁶⁴ Edgar, “Dueling Dialects: The Creation of the Turkmen Language,” in *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), pp. 129-167.

²⁶⁵ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 427.

support for korenisatsiia. Until the late 1930s, Latinization and language engineering under Soviet Nationality Policy continued with the blessing of both Moscow and of local Bolshevik leaders. In the late 1930s, however, greater political conditions changed across the Soviet Union as the Stalinist system sought to push forward collectivization and even more rapid industrialization. In this effort, older Bolshevik programs of the 1920s, including Soviet Nationality Policy, were sidelined and even reversed for fear that they actually obstructed the internal coherence of Soviet society. This was especially true of indigenization policies, which were reversed during the Great Purge of 1936 – 38. Amidst the backdrop of mass arrests and executions, many of the participants in the Baku Conference, including Hüseyinov and Çobanzade, would be accused of ‘pan-Turkism’ and executed. Between 1939-40, Latinization would be reversed completely and all the languages of the Soviet Union were made to adopt a modified Cyrillic alphabet.

As for Turkey, the language reforms increasingly focused on internal conditions and factors as the Kemalist state itself became uneasy with pan-Turkic associations. Not wanting to alarm their Soviet neighbors and increasingly seeking to promote a Turkish identity tied to the boundaries of the state, Kemalist leaders opted to suppress any organization with even the slightest pan-Turkic association. Turkey’s future, the Kemalists came to believe, lay firmly in Europe and the West, not in the East.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, however, as the post-Soviet Turkic states sought to revive Turkic identity, there was a new interest in promoting Turkic identity through language. Let’s take our previous example, Heydar Aliyev. As president of an independent Azerbaijan after 1991, Aliyev stressed the fact that Azerbaijanis were, in fact, *Turkic*. This new-found interest in the Turkic roots of the nation was due, in part, to the

emergence of Turkey as the ‘big brother’ of the newly independent states. Using its clout, Turkey pushed for both the re-Latinization of all Turkic language languages and the creation of institutions dedicated to research on common Turkic culture and history. The end of the Soviet Union and the beginning of 21st century, therefore, has been an era where Latinization, and along with it the conception of common Turkic identity, have reemerged in full force.

4h. Conclusion: Legacies of Soviet Nationality Policy

The Baku Turkological Conference and the subsequent victory of the Latinization movement in the Soviet Union ran parallel to the Turkish Republic’s own language reform. In fact, Turkey was a major focus of the Baku Conference as it sought to extend Latinization beyond the borders of the Soviet Union.²⁶⁶ When the Kemalist state abolished its own Arabic script in favor of Latin letters in 1928, it was considered “a major triumph” for the Latinization movement in the Soviet Union.²⁶⁷ There was the sense that Turkic language reformers and intellectuals on both sides of the divide were working in tandem towards a new era of literacy and modernization. This was a sentiment echoed by Muharrem Feyzi, a reporter for Turkish newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, in an August 1929 column entitled *What is Happening in the Eastern World*. In this column, Feyzi reported on Soviet Latinization, now three years in, and claimed it was “an enormous and widespread revolutionary wind sweeping the East.”²⁶⁸ Feyzi’s enthusiasm for the Soviet adoption of the Latin alphabet was tied directly to his own country’s decision to enact similar measures.

²⁶⁶ Martin, 192.

²⁶⁷ Martin, 192.

²⁶⁸ Muharrem Feyzi, “Rusyada Latin harfleri taammüm ediyor: 30,000,000 nüfusu otuz millet yeni alfabeyi kabul etti,” in *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*, August 3, 1929, p. 4. 153

In fact, Feyzi argued that the common alphabets between Turkish and the Turkic languages in the Soviet Union would better provide Turks in Turkey with a window into the modernization and societal transformations occurring across Turkey's eastern border.

Though Bolshevik leaders from Soviet Transcaucasia and Central Asia played a leading role in convening the conference, the actual debate proceedings reveal a wide range of participants from different ethnic, national, and linguistic backgrounds.²⁶⁹ Latinization was, by 1926, becoming an international movement that had adherents in the neighboring Turkish Republic. Turkey, in fact, sent three delegates to the Baku conference.²⁷⁰ At home, Kemalist officials, reformers, and intellectuals concurred with their Soviet counterparts that Latinization would pave the way for a rapid rise in literacy among their own citizens. Like many Soviet language reformers, the Kemalists believed that the Perso-Arabic alphabet actually prevented the leap towards literacy, which would, in turn, help lead to the breakdown of traditional patterns of life and set the stage for modernization.

This chapter has sought to demonstrate that Soviet Azerbaijan in particular became the center of the Latinization movement from the Baku Conference onward. In both the Soviet Union, as this chapter has sought to demonstrate, and in the Turkish Republic, modernization meant abandoning superstition, religiosity, and subnational identity (those based on tribal or sectarian affiliations) and adopting an identity based on nationality, secularism, and positivism. Islam, and all of the cultural symbols that accompanied it—

²⁶⁹ Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, 413. According to the conference's records, there were 131 participants in all: 93 were 'Turks,' 38 were 'non-Turks,' including representatives from Russia, Armenia, and Western Europe. In addition, 119 participants were from Soviet member states, whereas 12 were from non-member states, including Turkey. Finally, 130 were men and one was female. See also Bilal N. Şimşir, *Türk Yazı Devrimi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2008), pp. 119 – 120.

²⁷⁰ These delegates were Hikmet Cevdetzade, Mehmet Fuad Köprülüzade, and Ferid Xurşid. Nərimanoğlu & Ağakışiyev, pp. 442, 443, 446. 154

including the Perso-Arabic script—was to be soundly rejected as it was singled out as the main culprit that held past Turkic peoples back, making them all the more susceptible to European imperialism and domination. The Bolsheviks and the Kemalists, therefore, were similar in their belief that language reform would cause the breakdown of ignorance and superstition and usher their citizens towards modernization.

5. Opposition to Latinization: The *Islahatçılar*

5a. Introduction

This chapter will examine the political discourses and arguments of the *Islahatçılar*, or “reformists.” This group constituted a powerful bloc within the Turkic language reform movement and the Latinizers’ main ideological rivals. Comprised of academics, religious officials, former Young Turks, and newspapermen, the “reformists” argued that Latinization was not the solution to the orthographic and other linguistic issues facing the Turkic languages and their speakers in the post-WWI era. Instead, they sought to “reform” (islakat) the existing Perso-Arabic script to better reflect the spelling and pronunciation of Turkic. This chapter will examine the key post-WWI “reformist” voices and analyze how they presented an alternative to the New Turkish Alphabet.

Focusing on the brief period between 1918 and 1926, I will weave the writings of “reformists” from Turkey, including Muhittin Birgen, Fuat Köprülü, and Necip Asim, with those from the Soviet Union, particularly I. Jirkov, Ahmad Bayturnsunoglu, and Alimcan Şeref. In putting these sources in conversation, I will reconstruct the “reformist” debates and networks on the eve of the Baku Turkological Conference. I will show that, far from conservative thinkers, the “reformists” framed their defense of the Perso-Arabic script within the discourse of nationalism and Soviet indigenization to argue for the Turkic people’s “independent” path towards modernization. Nor do I argue that the “reformists” were invested in preserving the Arabic and Persian grammatical structures in Turkic. As we will encounter in this chapter, the “reformists” viewed these foreign language elements as more dangerous to the integrity of the Turkic languages than the existing Ottoman alphabet.

A much broader group within the Turkic-speaking reformers and intelligentsia, the *Islahatçıs* published in Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Central Asia to support other aspects of language reform, including purification of Turkish vocabulary, syntax, and grammar rules. They did not, however, extend their support to changing the orthography of the Turkic languages. As such, they were called the *ıslahatçılar* (“reformists”), in contrast to the *Latinizers*, because of their belief that reform of Turkic languages should not include abandoning the Perso-Arabic script. I will examine the prominent members of this group in order to demonstrate how the opposition to the Latinizing projects of Baku and Ankara envisioned different horizons for Turkish language reform.

Writing before the Baku Turkological Conference, the “reformists” in both Azerbaijan and Turkey argued that the Ottoman script was a facet of Turkic national culture and made the Turks unique among world civilizations. For many, this alphabet also had religious significance as the one of the Qur’an and Arabic. In the reformist view, adopting the Latin script was merely a “cosmetic” change that would fail to address the larger problems preventing the Turkish language from becoming a modernized and nationalized idiom. Merely changing the alphabet, this faction within the reform movement argued, would do nothing to address the language’s reliance on Arabic and Persian grammatical elements and was not convincing as a means towards greater Turkification that many of the reformists sought.

5b. Turkish “Reformists” (Islahatçılar), Pre-1928

This section will examine the writings of Muhittin Birgin and Necib Asim, two “reformist”-minded individuals who argued passionately for the preservation of the Ottoman script. Analyzing Birgin’s travelogue through Soviet Azerbaijan and Asim’s editorials in the early nationalist magazine, *Anatolian Revue (Anadolu Mecmuası)*, I will demonstrate how both thinkers sought to fashion a unique Turkish national identity based on opposition to the New Turkish Alphabet, instituted in Soviet Azerbaijan in 1923. Asim’s writings, published in 1924, convey a sense of urgency in seeking to defend the Ottoman script from the Latinizers. Likewise, Birgin argues at very points in his memoir that the Ottoman Turks were best positioned to serve as a cultural and literary beacon to the non-Ottoman Turkic nationalities. Latinization, he argued, would undo this rich legacy and undermine the national project that seeks to create a unique sense of identity based on language and culture.

Muhittin Birgin

Muhittin Birgin (1885-1951) was a prominent political and journalistic figure within the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress (CUP). An ardent supporter of the Young Turk revolution, Birgin served as the chief editor of *Tanin (Dissemination)*, the principle organ of the CUP. After the collapse of the Young Turk government after WWI, Birgin briefly served as the head of the Turkish General Ministry of Publishing and Intelligence (1920-21) before embarking upon his journey through the Soviet Transcaucasia the following two years. After his return to Turkey in 1923, Birgin served

as the chief editor of *Meslek* (1924-25), *Halk* (1925-26), *Turkish Cooperation* (1930-1934), and, finally, *Son Posta* (1936-39). In addition to his contributions to Turkish publishing, Birgen was also elected to the Ottoman parliament as a deputy from Çorum in 1914 and, in the republican period, to the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 1936 as the deputy from Mardin.

This section will focus on Muhittin Birgen's extensive travels throughout the Soviet Union from 1922 to 1923 by examining his observations on three principle subjects: Azerbaijan's political and social situation, the dissemination of Bolshevik ideals in Azerbaijan, and the discourses on language reform and Latinization that Birgen helped to shape while in Baku. I will employ the sections of Birgen's memoir, entitled *10 Years in the Committee of Union and Progress (İttihad ve Terakki'de On Sene)*, serialized from 1936-37 in his periodical *Son Posta*. This document records many of the Soviet discourses on and approaches to Turkic language reform that Birgen encountered and debated. Written during Turkey's own Language Revolution, Birgen's account of the debates in Azerbaijan over language and identity would have been familiar, minus the communistic aspect, to his readers in the 1930s.

Birgen's accounts of Bolshevik Azerbaijan were written approximately a decade after the Baku Turkological Conference and during the most radical phase of Atatürk's own Language Revolution (*Dil Devrimi*), which moved beyond mere orthographic reform to intensive "cleansing" (*tasfiye*) of Arabic and Persian loanwords from Turkish. Writing during this cultural upheaval, Birgen's observations of Azerbaijan, therefore, offered his readers unique insights into the discourses on language reform and national identity operating within Soviet Azerbaijan during the early years of its Sovietization. 159

Birgen documented this process not as a passive observer, but an active participant in the process. He recounts his dealings with leading communist figures, his students, and everyday Azeris through the lens of nationalism.

Azerbaijan, in Birgen's memoirs, is a society striving to realize its unique culture and language under the banner of Soviet socialism. Birgen, therefore, is a link between reformist discourses and ideas on Turkic language reform that circulated between the Soviet and Kemalist worlds. In addition, Birgen's experience as a member of the CUP also influenced his experiences of Transcaucasia, as well as how he engaged with the debates over Turkic language and identity in Azerbaijan and in Anatolia.

Birgen was recruited by Baku Commissar of Education, Mustafa Quliyev, to teach Turkish language and Ottoman literature at several universities from 1922 to 1923. During his sojourn in the Soviet Union, Birgen observed the early workings of the Bolshevik revolution on different facets of Azerbaijani society. An admirer of Azerbaijani culture, Birgen sought to highlight to his Turkish readers that the Azeris were their Turkic brothers and that their political, social, and economic challenges under Soviet rule greatly mirror that of Turkey under the Kemalist regime. As he traveled and worked during this period, Birgen continued to identify politically with the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), Enver Pasha, Cemal Pasha, and, finally, Mustafa Kemal. He brought the reformist outlook of the CUP to Soviet Transcaucasia and molded them as he came into contact with Bolshevik ideas and programs he admired.

5c. Birgen's Perceptions of Soviet Transcaucasia

Muhittin Birgen set sail with his family for Tiflis via Batum in May 1921 in what would be a two-and-a-half-year journey through the Soviet Union. Anatolia during this period was in the grips of the War of Independence (1919-1923), led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. A member of the now-defunct CUP, Birgen embarked upon his trip at a time when Turkey was transitioning between the end of CUP rule and the consolidation of the Kemalist bloc that would found the republic in 1923. Though perhaps not as drastic a shift in terms of political ideology and outlook, the transition towards Kemalism prompted Birgen to self-consciously, yet unsuccessfully he would write, attempt to shed his former CUP identity in favor of “new ideas in his mind and new feelings in his heart.”²⁷¹ What we encounter in his memoirs, therefore, is a CUP reformist who witnesses the ideological and social realities of Bolshevik rule and how these new experiences under communism help shape Birgen's own reformist narrative.

As Birgen traveled and worked for two and a half years in Baku, he was able to document the life around him from different perspectives. He describes Azerbaijan as a “bridge” between the Ottoman Turkish, Iranian, and Russian worlds.²⁷² Birgen characterizes the local Azeri Turks as being descended from different Turkic tribes, mostly Yörük and Turkmen, who came together to forge a unique Transcaucasian Turco-Muslim identity centered on the Azeri language. Nevertheless, the unique positioning of Transcaucasia has meant that Iranian, Ottoman, and Russian influences have left their

²⁷¹ Muhittin Birgen, *İttihat ve Terakki'de On Sene: 2. Cilt İttihat ve Terakki'nin Sonu*, ed. Zeki Arıkan (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2006), 706; Mühitdin Birgen, *İttihad və Tərəqqidə 10 İl Azərbaycan 1922-1923-cü İllərdə*, ed. Vilayət Quliyev (Baku, Qanun Nəşriyyatı, 2015), 30.

²⁷² Arıkan, 709; Quliyev, 37.

impression on the people and cultures. In addition to Azeri and other local languages, he documents that Ottoman Turkish, Persian, Russian are also widely spoken by the people. Nevertheless, Birgen does see Transcaucasian Turkish (Azeri as he calls it) as a unique idiom from which the Azeri people draw their own identity and history.

The portrait that Birgen paints of Transcaucasia is a region undergoing Sovietization and a reshuffling of its administrative and educational institutions. He arrived in Baku during the era of the New Economic Program (NEP, 1921-28), instituted by the Bolsheviks after the Russian Civil War. This program sought to maintain state control over the urban industrial sector while allowing for the countryside to buy and sell grain according to private pricing mechanisms. Despite limited privatization of agriculture, Birgen describes the NEP policy as one in which “the government places restrictions on free trade by employing limiting measures.”²⁷³ He complains that this policy has caused seventy percent inflation in Tiflis and Baku.²⁷⁴ Although resented by many staunch communists on the grounds that it encouraged “private trade and a revitalized urban nightlife,” NEP was successful in bringing the Russian countryside to economic recovery after the harsh years of War Communism and grain requisition.²⁷⁵ This temporary release of control over the Soviet agricultural was meant to strengthen the industry and signal a laxer approach to Bolshevik governance after the war.

²⁷³ Birgen, ed. Quliyev, 143. “*NEP siyasətinə üstünlük verən hökumət yenidən məhdudlaşdırıcı tədbirlər tətbiq edərək azad ticarətə qadağa qoymuşdu.*”

²⁷⁴ Arıkan, 783; Quliyev, 143.

²⁷⁵ Randi Cox, “NEP without Nepmen! Soviet Advertising and the Transition to Socialism,” in Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman, *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside* (Bloomington & Indiana: Bloomington University Press, 2006), 122.

For Azerbaijan specifically, Birgen sees Baku's oil as a major component of the country's economic life and the driver of its urbanization and modernization. At the time that he lived and worked in the city, Birgen wrote that Baku had a population of three hundred thousand of which two-thirds were Turks. He states that "Jobs connected to the oil sector were privatized [in the Tsarist period] or else the Turks [Azeris] were generally under the surveillance of the oil companies. The splendid palaces of the oil millionaires adorned the city in a particular way. However, in coming to Baku for the first time, there remain no wealthy people or palace owners."²⁷⁶ In addition, Birgen speaks about the collapse of the entire oil sector after the revolution. He writes that most Baku inhabitants are not able to procure kerosene for their street lamps in the supposedly oil-rich province. Nevertheless, he reports that the Bolshevik authorities were attempting to restart the collapsed oil industry and to draw people from the countryside to live and work in Baku.

Birgen also examines the various facets of Azeri identity in his memoirs, analyzing the religious divisions between Sunni and Shia Azeris. He writes that all Azeri Turks are Muslims, but they are neither fundamentalist in their beliefs nor united under the same sect. Religion, therefore, is a source of division among the Azeris. Using the Kur River as his demarcation, Birgen divided Azerbaijan between the Shia Azeris living south of the river and the Sunni Azeris who settled in the north.²⁷⁷ To illustrate this division, Birgen includes an anecdote about the Azeris living in Iran who answer, "Thanks be to God, I am a Kizilbash," when asked if they are "Turkish or Muslim."²⁷⁸

²⁷⁶ Arıkan, 751; Quliyev, 98. "*Bakı tam mənası ilə bəhrəsiz, sadəcə neft və qazla zəngin bir torpaq üzərində bina edilmişdi. Amma mən ilk dəfə Bakıya gələndə orada nə zəngin qalmışdı, nə də saray sahibi!*"

²⁷⁷ Arıkan, 710; Quliyev, 39.

²⁷⁸ Arıkan, 710; Quliyev, 39. "*Allaha şükürlər olsun, qızılbaşam.*"

The term *Kizilbash* denotes the Turkic warrior elite of the Safavid Empire who forcefully spread the Shia faith throughout the domains of Shah Ismail in the early 16th century. In Birgen's time, the term had come to signal strong cultural affiliation with Iran, based on shared Safavid-Shia history and literature.

The Azeris north of the Kur River, majority Sunni, were closely affiliated with the Sunni Turkic world, including Central Asia and the Ottoman Empire. It is in the then Sunni north that Birgen spent most of his time in Azerbaijan. Nevertheless, like other reformers of his period, Birgen sought to overcome sectarian divisions among the Azeri Turks by emphasizing and seeking to reform their ethnic identity and language towards forging a modern national community. In fact, Birgen states later on in his memoirs that the Azeris adhere to Turkism as an identity and see themselves as the same "nation" as the Turks in Anatolia. However, he also states that the Azeris have a strong desire for independent nationhood. This desire for an independent Azerbaijan, in Birgen's view, takes precedence over intercommunal or sectarian divisions.

5d. Birgen's Reflections on Communism in Soviet Azerbaijan

Himself a Young Turk ideologue and revolutionary, Muhittin Birgen's perceptions of Russia's 1917 Revolution and of Bolshevik rule in Transcaucasia were mixed. Living and working in Baku from 1922-23, Birgen's experience took shape as the Bolsheviks were just consolidating their military, political, and revolutionary victory over their various enemies in the aftermath of the Russian Civil War (1918-1922). As a teacher and intellectual, Birgen was enlisted by the Azeri Bolshevik government to help

transform the Azeri education system by modernizing its teaching methods (*usul*) and theoretical basis. What he witnessed during his stay in Baku, therefore, was the greater Sovietization of Azerbaijani society.

In his memoir, Birgen states that, even though he is not a Bolshevik follower, his intention in writing about the revolution is to evaluate its results in a “neutral” (*bitərəf*) and “friendly” (*səmimi dostluq*) manner.²⁷⁹ “I think that,” he writes, “the observations that I have made without pursuing any political objective, [and] from as neutral a position as possible, can somewhat pertain the matters of Azerbaijani politics.”²⁸⁰ Birgen’s first insight into Bolshevik rule is that the communist party’s presence was “minimal” (*çox az*): “I saw Baku for the first time only two and half years after the revolution. The Azeris, who were joining the Communist Party in small numbers to not at all, had fallen into a very dispirited state because of the revolution.”²⁸¹

He goes on to write that “The revolution abolished Azerbaijan’s political existence, brought its economic power to ruin, and destroyed ‘men of culture’ [*mədəniyyət adamları*].”²⁸² Birgen’s negative evaluation of the revolution’s effects in Azerbaijan, however, does not extend to the actual Bolshevik leaders themselves. For example, Birgen is quite impressed with Soviet commissar Nariman Narimanov upon meeting him during his journey. Describing him as the most adept political figure in

²⁷⁹ Quliyev, 250.

²⁸⁰ Quliyev, 250. “*İnqilab dövründəki Azərbaycanı siyasi işlərdən kənar qalmağım oradakı hadisələrə bitərəf nəzəri ilə baxmağıma səbəb olmamış, müşahidə və tədiqatlar aparmağıma əngəl törətməmişdi.*”

²⁸¹ Arıkan, 751; Quliyev, 99. “*Mən Bakını ilk dəfə yalnız inqilabdan iki il yarım sonra görə bildim. Kommunist partiyasına çox az, hətta yox deyiləcək sayda üzv vermiş Azərilər inqilabdan çox mütəəssir vəziyyətdə düşmüşdülər.*”

²⁸² Quliyev, 102. “*İnqilab milli Azərbaycanın siyasi mövcudluğunu aradan qaldırmış, iqtisadi qüdrətini tənəzzülə uğratmış, mədəniyyət adamlarını məhv etmişdi.*”

Azerbaijan, Birgen sees Narimanov, the individual, in a good light while believing that the regime he has come to represent has enacted many destructive and regressive [tənəzzül] measures. The first step back, according to Birgen, came when the Bolsheviks destroyed Azerbaijan's hopes of independent statehood in 1920.

While he says that Azerbaijan did not put up the fierce military resistance to Soviet rule as in neighboring Georgia, Birgen states that the unfolding revolution has prompted a massive upheaval in Azerbaijani society. Firstly, he notes that the Azerbaijani intellectuals and literary figures have either been executed or sent into exile by the Baku Soviet.²⁸³ This has created, in Birgen's recounting, an indifference on the part of Azeris that he encountered in the shops and bazaars of the city for Soviet politics and for the ideals of Vladimir and Lenin and Lev Trotsky. In fact, he describes the ideological reach of the Bolshevik party over Baku's bazaars and shops as nothing more than a "vitrine." Instead, Birgen writes that the Azeri merchants and shopkeepers he encountered followed Mustafa Kemal, Enver Pasha, and the political developments happening in Turkey very closely and asked him endlessly about them.

Like Birgen, the Bolshevik party was all too aware that its reach in society was greatly limited during the initial years of Sovietization. Furthermore, there was a need to recover from the militant policy of War Communism that was enacted during the Russian Civil War. Under this arrangement, Baku's oil and agriculture output was placed under tight control in order to assist the Red Army in the war. When Birgen arrived in Baku after the war, he was also witnessing the Bolshevik regime's transition from War

²⁸³ Arkan, 753; Quliyev, 101.

Communism to the ‘New Economic Policy’ (NEP), which allowed for agricultural producers to set the selling price of their products to the state. Nevertheless, Birgen says that this new policy has “outlawed private enterprise” by placing heavy restrictions on merchants. In addition, he complains of the high prices in Baku: “A monthly hotel expenditure of thirty liras was raised to one hundred liras.”²⁸⁴

In the midst of economic and political uncertainty, the Bolsheviks attempt to institutionalize their rule through the education system. Birgen writes that “the [Azeri] communists in this difficult position sought to win affection from the people by at least developing the national education system.”²⁸⁵ Birgen states that the question over language and identity were central to the building of this new Soviet education system. Birgen comments that, when the Soviet Commissar of Education hired him to teach, he “knew that one of the reasons that is insufficient on the path towards creating a national education system in Azerbaijan was that there was no cadre of teachers who were able to give instruction in philosophy and sociology in [Azeri Turkish].”²⁸⁶ Believing that Azeri language instruction was essential for the preservation of Azeri national culture and history, Birgen sought to craft a network of teachers and students who were dedicated to learning in their mother tongues over Russian or French.

²⁸⁴ Arıkan, 783; Quliyev, 143. “Əvvəllər 30 lirə ilə həll edilən aylıq otel xərcləri qısa zamanda yüz lirəyə qalxdığından oteldən çıxıb xüsusi evə danışırdıq.”

²⁸⁵ Arıkan, 783; Quliyev, 143. “Çətin vəziyyətdə qalan ölkə kommunistləri heç olmazsa milli maarifi inkişaf etdirməklə kütlə arasında müəyyən rəğbət qazanmaq istəyirdilər.”

²⁸⁶ Quliyev, 144. “Bilirdim ki, Azərbaycanca milli maarif siyasətini dolğun şəkildə həyata keçirmək yolunda çatışmayan cəhətlərdən biri də fəlsəfə və ictimai fənləri ana dilində tədris edə biləcək müəllim kadrlarının olmasındır.”

5e. Birgen and Language in Transcaucasian Society

In traveling and working in Soviet Transcaucasia, Birgen devotes much of his memoirs to the discussion of language politics in Soviet Azerbaijan. Hired by Baku's Commissar of Education, Mustafa Quliyev, to teach at both the Advanced Pedagogical Institute and Baku University, Birgen's hiring letter stated that he was being called upon to help reform the Baku educational system.²⁸⁷ Over the next year, 1922-1923, Birgen taught Turkish language and Ottoman literature and served on the High Council of the Educational Commissariat to help reshape the Soviet education system in Azerbaijan.

Birgen supported and enacted two points of reform in this period. Firstly, he pushed for a new educational approach based on Western social sciences (*ictimai fənlər/ixtisaslar*).²⁸⁸ In arguing for Western social sciences to take center stage in a revitalized education system, Birgen consciously patterned his arguments off Ziya Gökalp. A fellow member of the Ottoman CUP, Gökalp helped to cultivate the early stirrings of Turkish nationalism by arguing, from a Western sociological perspective, that the Turks constituted a distinct national entity with a unique language. Transposing this sociological perspective onto his classes in Baku, Birgen stressed that his students obtain a modern and sociological education and apply it to Ottoman and Turkish literature and history. Like other educational reformers of his generation, Muhittin Birgen believed that replacing traditional pedagogical methodologies and approaches, which were closely linked to the madrasa system, with modern "scientific" ones would lead to a renaissance of Azeri culture and knowledge.

²⁸⁷ Arıkan, 783; Quliyev, 143.

²⁸⁸ Arıkan, 783; Quliyev, 143.

There are insightful moments in Birgen's description of his pedagogical duties and of faculty life that demonstrate the warm reception of his reformist ideas and praxis in these universities. Amidst greater reforms to these institutions of higher learning, Birgen operated amidst an influx of Russian academics to help oversee the transition to the new schooling system. With the increase in Russian-speaking academics, the debate over whether Russian or Azeri should serve as the official language of instruction heated up. For Birgen's camp, the use of Russian in the Azeri system signaled a continuation of the Tsarist colonial policies, particularly of Russification. Reminding his readers that the Bolsheviks had promised self-determination for the non-Russian nationalities after 1917, Birgen argues that using Azeri Turkish in higher education was a step towards realizing the ideals of the revolution.

The multilingual nature of Transcaucasia presented a challenge to Soviet leadership in the 1920s and 30s. Within the Soviet Communist Party, as outlined in the previous chapter, there was debate about the future of the non-Russian nationalities of the Soviet Union. On the one hand, there were Bolsheviks that wanted to adopt Russian as the sole language of the new Soviet state. This faction argued that shared Russian language throughout the entire Soviet Union would unify the society better around the ideals of the October 1917 Revolution. Birgen writes about the debate over Russian, called the "Language of October" (*Oktyabr dili*), versus Azeri Turkish. He writes that "The revolutionaries want to strengthen Russian, the language of October, not various national languages [such as Azeri]" as an essential unifying element within Soviet borders.

The issue over language reflected the greater challenges facing the Bolsheviks once they had emerged victorious in the civil war. As they moved to consolidate communist control over the former Tsarist empire, their rule was at first concentrated in urban centers with varying degrees of control over the countryside. According to Birgen, Azeri Bolsheviks were still in process of consolidating Soviet rule over Baku and, in many parts of the city, their authority was nothing more than a “vitrine.”²⁸⁹ The new Soviet commissars therefore pursued a policy of winning the population’s “affection” (rəğbət) over to the cause of socialism, in part through the education system and use of the local language. In Baku, these Soviet reformers argued that, in order to gain the support of the population, the local Azeri language should become the official language, as it was during Azerbaijan’s brief independence (1918-1920).

Birgen threw his support behind those who wanted to make Azeri Turkish the official language of instruction. He argued that all the social, economic, and cultural problems facing Soviet Azerbaijan stemmed from the fact that the Azeris were prevented from learning in their own language. In pushing for Azeri-language education, Birgen aligned himself with a larger network of reformers, journalists, and intellectuals in Baku, including Nariman Narimanov and Samed aga Agamalioglu. For this group, the official use of Azeri Turkish in Azerbaijani governmental, educational, and cultural affairs was a basic demand from the 1917 revolution that had yet to be delivered. To push for this change, the pro-Azeri reformers challenged the use of Russian as a “pre-revolutionary” hangover from the Tsarist period.

²⁸⁹ Arkan, 867; Quliyev, 251.

5f. Birgen's Views on Turkic Language Reform

As he taught Ottoman language and literature in Baku, Birgen also played an active role in the debate over language reform and national identity. In a series of articles, serialized in the journal *Maarif ve Medeniyet (Education and Culture)* in 1923, Birgen outlined his thoughts on how an Azeri language reform should proceed and what principles should guide such a movement. Coupled with his observations on the state of the Azeri language in his memoirs, Birgen's writings offer key insights into Bolshevik and communistic discourses on language and identity, as they operated the Azerbaijan in the 1920s. He also records many of the pre-reform speech patterns of "Turkish" speakers in Baku. I will summarize his observations on language, identity, and reform to provide a fuller picture of the pre-1926 Azeri Turkish language

A valuable insight that Birgen offers is the multilinguistic nature of Soviet Transcaucasian society in the 1920s. Not only was this region home to several indigenous languages—including the titular languages of Azeri, Armenian, and Georgian—but Russian, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish were also widely spoken and dominant in print and media sectors. Of this, Birgen states that Russian and "Turkish" (Azeri Turkish) were the dominant languages when he was working in Baku. During the Tsarist period, Russian had become the language of higher education and the colonial administration and Azeri was used as the lingua franca between local ethnic groups. For example, Birgen observes that when Georgians or Armenians converse outside of their communities, they often did so in Azeri Turkish, rather than in Russian, Persian, or their native languages.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ Arkan, 710; Quliyev, 39.

As he analyzed the Azeri Turkish language, however, Birgen noted that Persian and Russian exerted heavy lexical and grammatical influences: “The influence of Iranian culture is more strongly felt among the Caucasians. For example, while we say *mavi* [ماوی] for *blue*, which in Arabic means ‘the color of water,’ the Azeri Turks gravitate towards the Turkified word *abi*, based on the Persian word for water, *ab* [اب].”²⁹¹ Birgen attributes the Azeri’s preference for Persian words to their shared Shia religion stemmed back to the Safavid dynasty (1501-1736). Led by Shah Ismail Xetayi, the Safavid shahs converted large swathes of their subjects in Persia, Mesopotamia, and Transcaucasia to Twelver Shiism. Bitter rivals to the Sunni Ottomans, the Safavid shahs battled their counterparts in Istanbul for control over Mesopotamia and Transcaucasia. In the 1920s, Birgen notes that Shah Ismail’s Turkic-language poetry has formed the basis of Azeri literature and infused it with Shia mores that are largely absent from Ottoman literature.

As he circulated around Baku in the Soviet era, however, Birgen noted that the Azeri Turkish spoken around him had fallen in prestige from the literary idiom of Shah Ismail. “The basest dialect of Turkish,” Birgen wrote, “is in Baku. However, I heard similar charges many times from the tongues of the Bakuvians [about our Turkish]. [They say] ‘You Istanbulites speak very bombastically.’”²⁹² In documenting this exchange, Birgen picks up on a key difference in perception between Azeri’s “crudeness” versus Istanbul Turkish’s “refinement” that many language reformers from Turkey harbored for the extra-Anatolian Turkic languages.

²⁹¹ Quliyev, 38. “Məsələn, biz su rəngi mənasında ərəb dilindən su mənasını birdirən kəlməni alaraq *mavi* dediyimiz halda, Azəri türkü farsca su mənasını ifadə edən *ab* sözünü əsas götürərək *abi* deyir və bu zaman kəlməni daha da türkləşdirərək *abi* şəklinə salır.”

²⁹² Quliyev, 99. “Türkcənin ən kobud tələffüz şəkli Bakıdadır. Amma bununla belə bakıların dilindən dəfələrcə belə ittiham eşitmişdim. Aydın məsələdir ki, hər kəs danışdığı dili daha çox bəyənir.”

Nevertheless, in the same manner as the Bolshevik language reformers, Birgen used the general term *Turkish* (*Türkçe/türkcə*) to refer to both Anatolian, Caucasian, and Central Asian Turkic languages. One prominent current of reformist thought, to which Birgen's writings ascribe, held that there was a single Turkish language that unified the pan-Turkic peoples. These same reformers viewed *Azeri* and *Anatolian* Turkish not as separate languages, but as dialects of a common Turkish idiom that was shared by Turkey and Azerbaijan alike. "There is not doubt," Birgen wrote as he launched his reformist articles in *Maarif və Mədəniyyət* [*Education and Culture*] in 1923, "that *Turkish* will become one of Europe's most beautiful languages. However at present, *Turkish* is still undergoing a turning-point and, within a very short amount of time, is changing by a process of continually evolving [itself]."²⁹³ These articles are all entitled "Methods in Turkish Reform" (*Türkcəyi Düzəltməkdə Üsul*) and operated on Birgen's conception that the Turkish language was an Indo-European idiom undergoing necessary reforms to modernize.

Believing that all Turkic languages constituted the same idiom with various dialects, Birgen nevertheless sees the Istanbul variant as the most eloquent and best equipped to lead the Turks into the modern world. This is because, as Birgen explained that "within ten years, Istanbul Turkish has been greatly changed, rejuvenated, compiled, and purified" of much of its Arabic and Persian elements. Furthermore, he makes the argument that Istanbul Turkish should be emulated because of "a team of young poets, authors, and teachers who are being cultivated in Istanbul and who have committed

²⁹³ Quliyev, 267. "Şüphəsiz, türkcə gələcəkdə Avropanın gözəl dillerindən biri olacaqdır. Ancaq bugünlük türkcə hənuz bir böhran keçirməkdə və qayət az bir zaman içində, mütəmadiyən təkamül edərək sürətlə dəyişməkdədir."

themselves to the *duty* (vəzifə)” of language reform and dissemination (my italics).²⁹⁴

Thus, it is the reformist cadre, based in Istanbul, that best equips this particular dialect to become standardized throughout the entire Turkic world.

The role of the language reformer was paramount for Birgen. In the same article, he goes on to argue for a cross-border “union of experts” (*ittifaq*) whose “first objective is to rescue Turkish from bondage so that it is not completely destroyed by the tyranny and attachment to other languages. The power that brings us to this conclusion is the conviction that Turkish is based on sound roots, a clean serif, and an essential syntactic structure. [With these characteristics], Turkish will beautify, perfect, and enrich itself in a short amount of time.”²⁹⁵ Thus, the prime objective and duty of the language reformers was to wage a “war of independence,” as Birgen puts it, against the foreign elements from Arabic, Persian, and Russian. An advocate for language purification, Birgen argued that Turkish should be purged off all the “needless Arabic and Persian words” (*lüzumsuz ərəbi və farsî kəlmələrdən*) that it had collected since the Middle Ages.²⁹⁶ In a subsequent article for the same publication, entitled *The New Literature* (*Ədəbiyyati-Cədidə*), he uses the verb *təmizləmək/temizlemek*, meaning to clean or, politically, to purge, to refer to the process of “language purification.”

Among the literary generation in Istanbul at the turn of the 20th-century, there was a tremendous effort to purify the Turkish language. In a general sense, these

²⁹⁴ Quliyev, 267. “*Son on sənədən bəri İstanbulda yetişən bu taqım gənc şairlər və ediblər və bir taqım gənc müəllimlər bu vəzifəyə xeyli diqqət ediyorlar.*”

²⁹⁵ Quliyev, 268. “*Bizi buna götürən qüvvət, türkcənin sağlam kökləri, təmiz bir sərfi, çox əsaslı bir nəhviniin bulunması qənaətdir. Bu sağlam köklərə malik olan türkcə bu təmiz sərff bə bu əsaslı nəhv sayəsində çox az zaman içində kəndi-kəndinə gözəlləşir...*”

²⁹⁶ Quliyev, 318.

reformers sought to purge the language of its *needless* foreign elements and push for a nation idiom that would reflect the speech of commoners. The emphasis on those words or phrases that are “needless” absolved the reformers from having to commonly-used Arabic and Persian words, such as *kitab* (book), *pazar* (market), and *kalem* (pen). What they regarded as “needless” (*lüzumsuz*) were archaic Islamic loanwords that had fallen out of usage by the 20th-century. The language reformers in Istanbul sought to replace these out-of-date words with words from Turkish or a heavily Turkified Arabic or Persian equivalent.

Though he advocated for the purification of the Turkish language, Birgen passionately argued against Latinization of its alphabet. In a follow-up article in *Maarif və Mədəniyyət*, entitled *The Subject of the Alphabet (Əlifba Məsələsi)*, Birgen publically addresses Ferhad Ağazadə, an Azerbaijani intellectual, founder and editor of the popular periodical *Azerbaijan*, and a leading pro-Latinization voice. Ağazadə was also a participant in the 1926 Baku Turkological Conference, siding with Səməd ağa Ağamalıoğlu’s faction. Calling Ağazadə his “dear colleague” (*əziz məsləkdaş*), Birgen writes, “You attribute all the evil of the world to the [Perso-Arabic] alphabet and, if nothing else, those who possess these troubles to the Turks. I am sorry to see that you have fallen into excess in a very important scientific matter.”²⁹⁷ Accusing Ağazadə of allowing his pro-Latin fanaticism to obscure a scientific inquiry into the question of

²⁹⁷ Quliyev, 330. “Öylə gördüm ki, mədə pozulmaq, yaxud havanın iyi və ya fəna olmağı gibi hadisələrdən sərif-nəzər, siz də dünyanın bütün fənalıqların türklərə aid olanlarını...Əziz məsləkdaş, çox mühüm bir elm məsələsində bu qədər müfrit olmaq ən birinci müvəffəqiyyət şərti olduğu halda, sizi ifrata düşmüş görməklə mütəəssirəm.”

alphabet reform, Birgen calls upon his “esteemed colleague” to “examine the reality [of the alphabet] with scientific, methodical, verified, analytical, and critical means.”²⁹⁸

For Birgen, denying the Perso-Arabic alphabet was tantamount to disowning large elements of Turkic national identity. Like other alphabetic “reformists,” Birgen argued that the Perso-Arabic script (الفبا) preserved the national culture of the Turks. In fact, his article addresses the issue of culture (*mədəniyyət*) and language by addressing two points. Birgen argues that the Latinizers’ assumption is that “Culture is not made with the Arabic alphabet” and that the “Turks have remained cultureless and uneducated” as a result of their adoption of this alphabet.²⁹⁹

Necib Asim

Muhittin Birgen was not the only language reformer to advocate preserving the Perso-Arabic alphabet. Outside of the Soviet Union, many of his Turkish contemporaries also argued that getting rid of the Arabic script would be detrimental to the development of Turkish language and literature. Necib Asim, a leading founder of the Turkish Association (*Türk Derneği*) during the Young Turk era and professor of Turkish Language History at Istanbul University during the Kemalist period, was one of the leading Turkologists in Ottoman/Kemalist Turkey. In the early 1920s, Asim had contributed a series of articles to the short-lived publication *Anadolu Mecmuası* (The Anatolian Periodical), which sought to instill a unique sense of Turkish national identity

²⁹⁸ Quliyev, 331. “Fəqət, əgər həqiqəti aramaq tərəfini iltizam etmiş olsaydınız, yəni məqsəd yalnız latin əlifbası davasını müdafiə etmək oluyub da türklərin ən mühüm bir həyat məsələsi haqqında elmin, üsullu, kontrollu, təhlilçi və tənqidçi yolları ilə həqiqəti görüb ona görə bir yol tutmaq bulunsaydı, əlbəttə, başqa dürlü yollar arar və başqa dəlillərə də təsadüf edərək bizi bu qədər ağır ittihamlar altında əzməzdiniz.”

²⁹⁹ Quliyev, 331. “Ərəb əlifbası ilə mədəniyyət yapılamaz. Türklər mədəniyyətsiz və maarifsiz qalmışlardır.”

within the new Kemalist state based on a shared Anatolian, as opposed to Pan-Turkic, characteristics.

In the second issue of *Anadolu Mecmuası*, published in May 1924, Asim wrote an article entitled “Our Letters” (*Harflerimiz*) in which he argued in favor of preserving the Ottoman script and charged the Latinizers with not understanding that their reform would dislodge Turkish identity, not reinforce and strengthen it. “In the immediate aftermath of every revolutionary movement in Turkey,” Asim writes in this article, “the amendment of our alphabet becomes a topic of either artificial or genuine conversations. A lot of people, hiding behind the façade of [language] regeneration, are suggesting that we write our Turkish language with the Latin letters, instead of the ones we use now.”³⁰⁰ Thus, Asim recognizes from the outset of that the national revolution that birthed the Kemalist republic was in tune with past movements in Turkey’s history where a certain segment of reformers call for the adoption of the Latin script. In arguing for a change in alphabets, these Latinizers have invoked the “preference for “regeneration” (*teceddüdperverlik*) to argue for their cause.

Though he comes out against Latinization, Asim also proposes reforming the current Ottoman script to better reflect the written language. Juxtaposing Turkish with Farsi, Asim writes that “the Iranians added the letters ژ، چ، پ and گ، which are found in their own language, among those of the time when they adopted the Arabic script. We Turks have [also] adopted the Arabic letters. However, we have not adapted these letters

³⁰⁰ Necib Asim, “Harflerimiz,” in *Anadolu Mecmuası*, ed. Arslan Tekin and Ahmet Zeki İzgöer (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2011), 68. “Zâhiri veya hakikî olsun bizde her inkılap hareketinin akabinde harflerimizi tebdili mevzubahis oluyor. Kim bilir nasıl bir fikir ile birkaç kişi teceddüdperverlik perdesi arkasında saklanarak Türkçemizi şimdiki harflerimiz yerine Latin harfleriyle yazmamızı tavsiye ediyor.”

to the structure of our language.”³⁰¹ Further stating that the Turks have not changed their script since the eleventh century, Asim’s reformist vision continually referenced Farsi, not European languages, as the model for a modernized Turkish language.

In addition to being the source of many loanwords into Turkish, the Farsi alphabet represented a successful case of adapting the outside Arabic alphabet to Iran’s specific linguistic particularities. In addition to citing the new letters invented when Iranians adopted the Arabic alphabet, Asim also states that Iran never adopted a character for a sound not authentically in its language and, as such, assimilated many letters into the same sound. Asim hoped that, ostensibly, Turkish language reform would achieve the same results.

Like Birgen, Asim viewed the principle goal of language reform as “modifying” (*ta’dil*) and “improving” (*ıslah*) the language in order to promote national literacy. He conveyed the Turkish language as one that was rooted in its origins (*manşe*) but continually undergoing a process of evolution (*tekamül*). Asim’s term for evolution is *tekamül*, from the Arabic تکامل, meaning “to mature” or “become perfected.” This choice in terminology provides insight into Asim’s argumentation, as he saw the purpose of reform as *perfecting* or *evolving* a previously existing thing, specifically the Ottoman alphabet. Thus, looking for alternative alphabet was not a “reform” to Asim, but a radical break from the past.

³⁰¹ Asim, 68. “İranîler, Arap harflerini kabul ettikleri vakit bunların arasına kendi lisanlarında bulunan p, ç, j, g harflerini ilâve etmişlerdir. Biz Türkler Arap harflerini almışız. Fakat lisanımızın bünyesine uydurmamışız.”

Thus, for Asim, Latinization meant substituting a new alphabet, rather than merely reforming the existing one. Furthermore, he associates the Latinizers with the process of “Westernization” (Garplılařmak) that began in the nineteenth century. By the Kemalist period, Turkish Westernization had become an indigenous movement, with its homegrown intellectuals, political cadre, and reform program. Not completely critical of Westernization in spheres such as journalism, education, and science, Asim and others who sought to preserve the Ottoman alphabet believed that adopting the Latin script too obvious a move for the Westernizers. Concluding his article for *Anadolu Mecmuası*, Asim writes that “Westernization and renewal does not mean isolating [ourselves] from our nationalism and our national customs. We are obligated to make sure that our societal organization is not grieved as we attempt to westernize and change our eastern garments.”³⁰² At the time of this article’s publication, the Kemalists were in the process of abolishing the Caliphate and instituting the Hat and Clothing reforms that would outlaw the fez and other Ottoman dress and, in their place, mandate European attire for the Turks.

5g. The “Reformists” at the Baku Turkological Conference

This section will examine “reformist” discourses as they intersected with the 1926 Baku Turkological Congress. Focusing on Turkish, Kazakh, and Russian voices, this group of *ıslahatçılar* made use of the press and the conference venue itself to argue

³⁰² Asim, 69. “*Garplılařmak ve yenileřmek, milliyetimizden, millî an’anelerimizden tecerrüd etmek demek deęildir. Üzerimizdeki řark libâsını deęiřtirir ve Garplılařmaya çalıřırken bünyemizin müteessir olmamasına dikkat etmek boçrumuzdur.*”

against adopting the New Turkish Alphabet and, instead, in favor of adopting a “reformed” Perso-Arabic alphabet for the Turkic languages. Though the Baku “reformists” came from diverse political and ideological backgrounds, they were united in their call for the “independent path” of development for the Turkic languages. In arguing for each language’s right to develop *sui generis*, the “reformists” resisted the all-encompassing approach of the Latinizers on swift and wholesale linguistic engineering. Examining diverse voices, such as Kazakh SSR leader Ahmad Baytursunoğlu, Turkish academic Fuat Köprülü, the Tatar Turkologist and academic Alimcan Şeref, and the Russian Turkologist and ardent Bolshevik, Professor Jirkov, I will reconstruct the “reformist” movement at the Baku Conference and show how it drew from transnational links to move forward.

The 6th session of the congress was convened on the subject of “The Fundamental Principles of Spelling and its Social Importance” (İmlanın Temel Prensipleri ve Sosyal Önemi). Presided over by the Cəlaləddin Qorxmazov (or Korkmazov), leader of the Dagestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, this particular session was noted for the number of speeches against Latinization, led by Kazakh SSR leader Ahmad Baytursunoğlu, as well as the number of speeches given in a Turkic language, rather than Russian. Focusing on this particular session and its discussants, I will examine the *İslihatçı* (“reformist”) bloc of the Baku Conference and the alternative to Latinization that they proposed for Turkic language reform.

One of the speakers in that session, the Azeri intellectual and academic Fərhad Ağazadə, outlined the three roads laid out before the conference participants. “The first of the three existing alphabets in the Turko-Tatar world,” Ağazadə proclaimed 180

as he made his case for Latinization to the sceptics, “is the unchanged Arabic alphabet that does not meet the request for a phonetic writing system for Turkish [and] the second reformed Arabic alphabet that also does not recognize this request.”³⁰³ Only the third option, the New Turkish Alphabet devised in Azerbaijan, would be able to make the Turkic languages more phonetic and spark mass literacy. He stated that “the third [option] answers without exception all the requirements of phonetic writing.”³⁰⁴ The İslahatçısı, who spoke before and after Ağazadə, would use this session to make the case for an alternative approach to these issues other than Latinization.

Galimcan Şeref

One important ıslahatçı at Baku was the Crimean Tatar Turkologist and delegate to the Baku Conference, Galimcan Şeref. Even before the Baku Conference, Şeref had argued in previous language conferences that, if the Turko-Tatar nationalities of the Soviet Union had to adopt the Latin script, then all the Soviet nationalities, including Russians, should also transition to the new alphabet as well.³⁰⁵

After the Conference was convened, Şeref had penned and submitted for publication a report entitled “In Defense of Our Alphabet” (Harflerimizin Müdafaası). Published as a book in 1926, Şeref addressed his Turkish colleagues at the Baku Conference, Fuat Köprülü and Alibey Hüseyinzade, in order to rally opposition against

³⁰³ Nerimanoğlu and Öner, 218. “*Türk-Tatar dünyasında mevcut üç alfabenin ilki, şeklini değiştirmeyen eski Arap alfabesi Türkçenin fonetik yazı taleplerini karşılamıyor, ikincisi, ıslah olunmuş Arap alfabesi bu talepleri tam karşılamıyor; üçüncüsü, Azerbaycan’da kabul edilmiş yeni alfabe ise fonetik yazının istisnasız gereklerine cevap veriyor.*”

³⁰⁴ Nerimanoğlu and Öner, 218.

³⁰⁵ Barış Metin, “Sovyet Belgelerine Göre Tataristan’da Kiril Alfabesine Geçiş (1939),” 138.

the now-Soviet project of Latinization for the Turkic languages. In his quest to preserve the Perso-Arabic alphabet used by the Crimean Tatars, Şeref forged connections with scholars and academics from Turkey, such as Köprülü and Hüseyinzade, who were still hold-outs after the Baku Conference decided to ratify the Latin script.

In his treatise, one can detect Şeref’s apprehension about the mandate from Baku to Latinize all Soviet Turkic languages, including his own Crimean Tatar tongue. In his 1926 treatise, he recognized that “Changing the alphabet has great importance for a country’s cultural, economic, and societal features” and, based on the effect to these other areas of national life, did not agree with the wholesale switch of all the Turkic languages to the Latin alphabet.³⁰⁶

Like other “reformists” (ıslahatçılar) at the Baku Conference, Şeref argued that each Turkic language should be free to pursue its own path towards development as well as the writing system that best suited its needs and those of its speakers. In arguing for independent development, Şeref grounded his principles in the 1917 revolution by arguing that the different Turkic nationalities of the Soviet Union have already pursued separate paths towards linguistic reform. For example, he writes that “The Kazan Turks, after the revolution, in deciding in their own conferences, officially threw out the Russian alphabet and began to use the Turco-Arabic script; as for the Yakut Turks, they officially transitioned to the Latin letters. This means that they are the first Turkic nation to accept the Latin alphabet for its people [my italics].”³⁰⁷ He even recognizes that the issue of

³⁰⁶ Şeref, 7. “بوندن ما عدا الیفیه سی ده کیشد بریلین قومک کنیش کتله لرینک اجتماعی حالت روحیه سینده عظیم بر صار صینتی ... وقوعه کله چکدی...”

³⁰⁷ Şeref, 7. “برونکله برابر خریستان قازاتلیبلر انقلابدن سوکرا کندیلرینک قونفرانس و قونغره لرنده قرار ویره رک بالفعل روس ... حرفلرینی اندیلر و عرب-تورک حرفلرینی قوللاتمغه باشلادیلر، باقوتلر ایسه روس حرفلرندن بالفعل لاتین حرفلرینه انتقال ایتدیلر.”

language reform has formed large divisions among the Turks themselves, as one group advocates for Latinization, another for preserving the Arabic script, and a third smaller faction in favor of adopting the Russian Cyrillic script.

Equally against the adoption of Cyrillic, Şeref makes a savvy defense of the former alphabet by stylizing it the “Turco-Arabic” script to give it more of an indigenous feel. His treatise is “savvy” in my view because Şeref recognized the logic at work in Soviet Nationality Policy, namely the effort to indigenize communism through local languages, and cast his arguments to preserve the old alphabet within this new Soviet ideological idiom. Labeling the former alphabet as “Turco-Arabic,” a unique move in the general reformist literature of the era, Şeref makes the case that this script is the indigenous Tatar alphabet and harbors the essence of their national identity and literary traditions.

At the tenth session of the Baku Conference, Şeref’s fellow ıslahatçı, the Russian Turkologist Prof. Y. Jirkov, expounded on the question of the alphabet for the Soviet Turkic languages and that question’s centrality within the larger scheme of Soviet indigenization. Crediting the 1917 revolution with delivering the Turkic peoples a new way of living, Jirkov hailed the coming decades as constituting a “springtime” of economic, cultural, educational, and political uplift for the non-Russian minority nationalities of the Soviet Union. Invoking the principles of indigenization, Jirkov stated in his speech that “This early springtime of national life is not nationalism, [rather], it is tied our perspectives and hopes for a beautiful future where national culture will develop and flower. The products of this culture will nourish its own people above all; however, they hope for more beyond that. Throughout the history of culture, there is no

unimportant or small nation that has not produced some sort of cultural achievement that is beneficial to all of humanity.”³⁰⁸

With this main point in mind, Şeref spoke subsequently, affirming multiple times in his speech Jirkov’s view of language as a “technology.” As a tool for society, Şeref stated that “the topic of alphabetic change has great importance for people who have had a lot of cultural success, such as Turkey’s Turks, Azerbaijanis, Kazan Tatars, Uzbeks, Kazakh-Kirgiz both in the past and presently.”³⁰⁹ Şeref’s concern with Latinization is that the New Turkish Alphabet had no cultural and historical precedent in Turkic history and, as such, was not the correct “technical tool” to renew the education, literacy levels, and literature of the Soviet Turkic peoples.

In arguing that the alphabet and language of a country reflect the greater facets of its identity and personality, Şeref presented a counter argument to the modernization drive of the Latinizers. In the previous chapter, we discussed how the Latinizers viewed alphabet reform and Latinization as a means to modernize the Soviet Turkic nationalities. For them, the very act of Latinization was a step on the road towards fostering new secular identities within Soviet Nationality Policy. Şeref, on the other hand, does not see change in such a sweeping and uniform way. For him, it was counterproductive to insist that all Turkic languages should adopt the same Latinized script when they already used a standardized Perso-Arabic script. This transition from the older to the Latin script, in his

³⁰⁸ Narimanoğlu & Öner, 283. “*Milli hayatın bu erken baharı milliyetçi değil, milli medeniyetin gelişeceği ve çiçekleneceği güzel geleceğe ümit ve görüşümüzle bağlıdır. Bu medeniyet ürünleri ile ilk başta kendi halkını, kendi kavimi besleyecek; fakat onların daha çok şeye de ümidi var. Kültür tarihleri süresince hem maddi medeniyet alanında, hem de halk masalları, manileri, tezhibi vs. alanda tüm insanlık için değerli olan her hangi kültürel bir başarı ortaya koymayan küçük veya önemsiz bir halk yoktur.*”

³⁰⁹ Narimanoğlu & Öner, 294.

estimation, would destroy this alphabetic “harmony” between the Turkic nationalities “who have close relations from the standpoint of economics and geography and who speak related languages.”³¹⁰ He viewed the existing Perso-Arabic script, therefore, as the truly international one for the Turkic, and great Muslim, world within the Soviet Union. Addressing Ağamalıoğlu, Şeref concluded his speech by stating that “replacing Arabic with Latin writing will not help cultural and economic progress; on the contrary, [Latinization] will stall our economic and cultural progress by a couple of years. Thus, let us not deviate from the true path which has taken us, the Turko-Tatar nationalities, to cultural and economic progress.”³¹¹

Ahmet Bayturnsinoğlu

Taking the side of Şeref at the Baku Turkological Conference, another vocal opponent of the New Turkish Alphabet was Ahmet Bayturnsinoğlu, a renowned scholar and professor of Turkic literature and language at the Kazakh Pedagogical Institute in Tashkent from 1922-1928. Born in present-day Kazakhstan in 1873 Bayturnsinoğlu studied in a Russian-Kazakh language school where he was introduced to the revolutionary and liberal atmosphere sweeping the Russian Empire during the era of the Norodnichestvo movement. Like his contemporaries, Bayturnsinoğlu turned to political agitation against Tsarist colonial exploitation. In taking up this political cause, Ferhat

³¹⁰ Narimanoğlu & Öner, 309.

³¹¹ Narimanoğlu & Öner, 312. “...*Arap yazısının Latin yazısıyla değiştirilmesi kültürel ve ekonomik ilerlemeye hizmet etmeyecek tam tersi kültürel ve ekonomik ilerleyişimizi birkaç, yıl daha geciktirecektir. Böylece gelin bizi Türk-Tatar halklarının kültürel ve ekonomik terakkisine götürün doğru yoldan ayrılmayalım.*”

Tamir states that Bayturnsinoğlu's attention was drawn to "enlightening" his local Kazakh society in their national and cultural identity and to the pressing issue of language and alphabet reform.³¹²

A pioneering figure in the development of Kazakh nationalism, Bayturnsinoğlu's mission was to awaken the Kazakh people's national identity through reforming and uniting the languages and dialects they spoke. Prior to the 1926 conference in Baku, he had devised his own reformed Kazakh alphabet, based on the Perso-Arabic script. At the Baku Conference, therefore, Bayturnsinoğlu argued for the separate development of each Turkic language that would untether his reformed Perso-Arabic alphabet for Kazakh to the demands of the Azeri language reformers who pushed for the abandonment of this alphabet in favor of Latinization. At the 6th session of the Baku Conference, Bayturnsinoğlu warned that Latinization would not be appropriate for Kazakh and that the Turkic languages were distinct from one another and did not constitute dialects of a international Turkish language.

One of the central arguments that Bayturnsinoğlu makes with regard to Latinization is that blindly adopting a foreign writing system would expose the Turkic languages to all the orthographic and spelling problems that these alphabets harbor. In his speech, he focuses on the problems of the Cyrillic alphabet and the reasons why such an alphabet would not be appropriate for Kazakh. For example, he lists the lack of letters in the Cyrillic alphabet to represent the full range of sounds in Kazakh. Citing three Russian words to make his point, Bayturnsinoğlu argues "let's look at the words "tene," "çtenie,"

³¹² Ferhat Tamir, "Ahmet Bayturnsinoğlu ve 1926 Bakû Türkoloji Kongresi," in *1926 Bakû Türkoloji Kongresinin 70. Yıl Dönümü Toplantısı (29-30 Kasım 1996)* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1999), 115. 186

or “dobroe. At the end of these words there is an “e” sound, but when we say “tebe,” it’s as if one says “tobie.””³¹³ By citing this example from Russian, Bayturnsinoğlu was making an allusion to Latinization, which he believed would import many of the deficiencies of that script to the Turkic domains. In arguing for reforming the existing Perso-Arabic script, Bayturnsinoğlu drew upon his experience with Kazakh to make the case that it would be more beneficial to fix what was already familiar to the Turks than to import a little-known alphabet with many kinks to be worked out.

For Bayturnsinoğlu, the first principle to be observed was phonetics. He stresses that “if an alphabet is not good, this will influence the foundations of writing; it is an entirely different issue to have each letter correspond to every sound in an alphabet and for an alphabet to be perfect.”³¹⁴ He goes on to state that “In my view, phonetics is the most ideal foundation for writing. If the appeal is made to another writing system, then it evolves completely based on different principles. The foundations of writing are tied to more than the characteristics of a language.”³¹⁵

Commenting on his own experience reforming the Persianized Kazakh-Kyrgyz alphabet, Bayturnsinoğlu stated that “We Kazakhs have been implementing phonetic writing for several years and we are achieving good results... Thus, from the standpoint of social importance, it is necessary that education be disseminated and that it be eased for society. A phonetic system [as in Kazakhstan] eases what education offers not only to

³¹³ Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 219.

³¹⁴ Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 219. “Eğer alfabe iyi değilse bu yazı kaidelerini etkileyecektir, alfabede her ses için uygun harf olması ve hiçbir zaman değişmemesi bakımından alfabenin mükemmel olması ise başka bir mesele.”

³¹⁵ Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 219. “Fikrimce en ideal yazı kaidesi fonetik kaidedir. Eğer başka yazı kaidelerine müracaat edilirse, bu tamamen başka esaslara göre oluyor. Yazı kaideleri ise daha çok dile, dilin özelliklerine bağlıdır.”

children, but also to adults.”³¹⁶ In his estimation, the Persianized alphabet was best able to achieve these objectives due to its literary and cultural heritage for the Kazakhs, as well as embodying Islamic culture. He argued, therefore, that Turkic Perso-Arabic alphabets should be reformed, in the manner that he had done in Kazakhstan a few years prior, not discarded for an outside system. The current script was not “perfect,” as Bayturnsinoğlu stated, but it was familiar and had roots in the local cultures. The answer to the challenges of modernization, especially mass literacy, could be met by modifying the Persian script to show the range of sounds in the various Turkic languages.

In contrast to this vision, Bayturnsinoğlu identified the rival faction of Latinizers at the conference as “those wanting to sever the Turkish people from their traditions.”³¹⁷ Navigating between this faction and the conservatives, who saw the alphabet as a “holy one” connected to Islam, Bayturnsinoğlu stressed again that the principle should be towards phonetics and ease of reading for the masses. As such, Azeri Latinization was viewed as a foreign imposition on all the Turkic languages as an all-encompassing solution to the problem of literacy and education in the Soviet Turkic republics. In a subsequent session at the Baku Conference, he promoted Kazakhstan’s recent alphabet reform as a model that the rest of the Soviet Turkic nationalities could use. “Works were undertaken,” he stated, “towards establishing a reformed grammar according to the

³¹⁶ Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 220. “Biz, Kazaklar fonetik yazıyı birkaç yıldan beri uygulamaktayız ve güzel sonuçlar da kazanıyoruz. Bizim alfabemizi bir yılda öğrenenler dört yıllık Rus okulunu bitirenlere, dört yıllığı bitirenler ise dokuz yıllık Rus okulunu bitirenlere eşit düzeyde bilgili yazıyorlar.”

³¹⁷ Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 220-21.

phonetic requirements of the alphabet. In a word, within a short period of time, [Kazakhstan] established conscious control of its language.”³¹⁸

For Bayturnsinoğlu, the key idea to advocate at the Baku Conference was one of “separate development.” In this same speech, he outlined the work of Tashkent’s own language conference, convened in 1924, on which he successfully pushed for a reform of the Kazakh alphabet. The best way to argue for separate development was to demonstrate that Kazakhs had already taken it upon themselves, independently of Baku, to address the linguistic and orthographic problems of Kazakh. One of his major arguments for separate development was that the needs of a particular language do not necessarily correspond to those of another language. Furthermore, he extends this reasoning to the education levels of the Soviet Turkic nationalities. This discrepancy between the different Turkic peoples required, in Bayturnsinoğlu’s view, separate and independent methodologies for language and alphabetic reform.

Emphasizing Kazakhstan’s own problems, Bayturnsinoğlu stated that “Among us [Kazakhs] the education level is very low [and] presently no social organizations or conferences are to be found.”³¹⁹ Since the Sovietization of Central Asia, local Bolsheviks were faced with the task of delineating territorial republics according to the principle of Soviet Nationality Policy (or indigenization).

³¹⁸ Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 258. “Aynı zamanda Kazak dilinin özelliklerinin fonetik ve gramatik açıdan öğrenilmesi alfabenin fonetik taleplere uygun şekilde ıslah edilmesi gramerin oluşturulması yönünde çalışmalar yapılıyordu. Bir sözle, kısa süre içinde Kazak dili kendi üzerinde şuurlu kontrole yol veren, üzerinde çalışılmış durumunu aldı.”

³¹⁹ Nerimanoğlu & Öner, 258. “Bizde halkın eğitim düzeyi çok aşağıdadır, halk için iyi teşkil edilmiş içtimai kıraat ve konferanslar şimdilik bulunmuyor; bizim hem dinleyicilerimiz, hem de okuyucularımız kelimenin tam anlamıyla tesadüfî kişilerdir.”

İsmail Şükrü

Two years after Asim’s article, another anti-Latinization treatise, called *Let’s Find Better than the Latin and Arabic Letters (Latin ve Arap Harflerden Daha İyisini Bulalım)* was published by İsmail Şükrü. A deputy to the National Assembly from Izmir, Dr. İsmail Şükrü Bey, as he is referred to in both the primary and secondary literature, had been a staunch opponent of Latinization, arguing as other “reformists” did that such measures were cosmetic and ideological, rather than really addressing the linguistic obstacles of Turkish. Before his 1926 treatise, Dr. Şükrü had published his anti-Latinization views in various national newspapers, including *İçtihat* and *Akşam*.

In the opening of his 1926 treatise, Şükrü addresses “his distinguished comrade Dr. Alibey Hüseyinzade,” one of Turkey’s three representatives to the Baku Turkological Conference.³²⁰ As discussed in the previous chapter, Hüseyinzade was an Azeri émigré to Turkey who was the foremost theorist of Turkish nationalism and the founder of the Turkic newspaper *Füruset*. By the establishment of the Turkish Republic, Hüseyinzade was a citizen of the new state and continued to advocate for Turkification of language, education, and national identity. As Turkey’s representative to the conference, Hüseyinzade’s status as a leading nationalist intellectual and reformer merited him a spot as an honorary guest of the Baku Conference as a voting participant. Before his colleague attended the proceedings, Şükrü sought to influence him through this treatise to promote other areas of language reform that veered away from the question of the alphabet.

³²⁰ İsmail Şükrü, *Latin ve Arap Harflerden Daha İyisini Bulalım* (Istanbul: Kadir Matbaası, 1926), 1.

As with Birgen and Asim, Şükrü advocated for the Baku attendees to view the question of the alphabet “with a more modern, thorough, and scholarly” lens than what he viewed as the approach and discourses of the Latinizers. This type of approach, in Şükrü’s view, would “facilitate a path [to literacy] for the common villager” whom the reformers invoked as the mainstay of their efforts.³²¹ Believing that the Baku Conference as an “event that witnesses a lot of progress for the world’s future,” Şükrü’s advice to Hüseyinzade was to avoid the decisive issue of Latinization and, instead, focus on other aspects of language reform. Specifically, he sought to advocate for the “purification of the Ottoman language” and “the correction of our orthography.” Thus, Şükrü uses the same term as Birgen, *tasfiye*, to denote the need for Turkification of the existing Ottoman language.

Extending his reformist platform further, Şükrü argued that Turkey’s representative to the Baku Conference should advocate for the following reforms in lieu of Latinization:

First, let us correct our alphabet and orthography.

Secondly, let us take complete control of the grammar of our dear language.

Thirdly, let us cleanse our pronunciation from foreign lexicons as much as possible.³²²

For Şükrü, as with Birgen, the task of language reform in the post-Ottoman era was to improve upon the existing Ottoman language by solving the orthographical issues that

³²¹ Şükrü, 7.

³²² Şükrü, 7. “ثالثاً، “اولاً، حروف و املازی دوزه لته لم. ثانياً ديقسيونلرمزى ممكن الديغى قدر ياپانجى لغتلردن تميزله به لم. ثالثاً، “شيمدليك بالكزحروف و املاز حقنده دوشوندىكرمدن بر قسمى به تيشدره بيلدم.”

was blamed for mass illiteracy and carrying out Turkification to Ottoman vocabulary and grammar. From the beginning, Ismail Şükrü is not sure how, if at all, his three-point program would be received at the conference. He asks Alibey Hüseyinzade to “bring up these points just once as the congress debates the issue of the alphabet, even if they are not successful.”³²³ Şükrü’s reformist agenda thought beyond the boundaries of Anatolian Turkey to address the entire “Turkic world” (umum Türklük alemi). In fact, like Birgen, Şükrü’s conception of the Turkic languages was that they were dialects of a single Türkçe dili to which all Turkic peoples spoke fluently and naturally.

In his articulation, Şükrü echoed fellow reformists in representing the Ottoman language as the most “evolved dialect” of single Turkish language, due to its historical and literary development in the Ottoman period. In doing so, he viewed Ottoman Turkish as the native language of all Turkic peoples and the “dialect” that would best be universalized throughout the Turkic world. This argumentation enabled reformists, such as Şükrü and Birgen, to find an exalted place within nationalist paradigms for the Ottoman language. They sought to standardize and Turkify Ottoman, purging it of its Arabic and Persian accoutrements, in order to universalize the idiom to Turks outside of Anatolia. With these objectives in mind, Şükrü argued that Latinization would destroy the historical and literary legacies of Ottoman and render them obsolete to the next generation of Turks.

5h. Enver Pasha’s Alphabet

We continue our examination of the “reformists” but turning to the Young Turk period and the 1917 treatise of Dr. Milaslı İsmail Hakkı, entitled *The Alphabet with New*

³²³ Şükrü, 6-7.

Letters (Yeni Harflerle Elifba). Published during the end of the First World War, Hakkı's treatise was dedicated to presenting and disseminating Enver Pasha's reformed Ottoman alphabet. According to Bilâl Şimşir, Milaslı İsmail Hakkı was an academic and intellectual who joined the "reformist" (*ıslahatçı*) camp within the Turkish language reform movement. As they debated linguistic and alphabetic issues, reformers who argued for Latinization, meaning abolishing the Ottoman Perso-Arabic script and implementing the Roman alphabet, were led by Hüseyin Cahit Yalçın, and referred to themselves as *Latinciler (Latinizers)*.³²⁴ In opposition to the Latinizers stood the *ıslahatçılar (reformers)*, led by Milaslı İsmail Hakkı, Prof. Mecmettin Arif, Cihangirli M. Şinasi, and İsmayıl Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, who argued that, instead of abandoning the Ottoman script for Latinization, the Perso-Arabic alphabet should be reformed to better reflect Turkish pronunciation and that Persian and Arabic loanwords should conform to Turkish pronunciation and spelling.³²⁵ As Şimşir writes, "Nearly everybody saw that the Arabic letters did not fit with the Turkish language. [So] They exerted energy to adjust [the Arabic alphabet]."³²⁶

Within the *ıslahatçı* camp, there were diverse opinions as to how this adjustment of the Ottoman script should proceed. Milaslı İsmail Hakkı's side advocated for abandoning the cursive structure of Perso-Arabic letters in favor of writing them separately. Furthermore, they sought to introduce new markings to indicate the Turkish vowels. This program, both writing the Ottoman letters separately and creating new vowel markings, distinguished Milaslı İsmail Hakkı's faction within the *ıslahatçı* camp.

³²⁴ Şimşir, 47.

³²⁵ Şimşir, 44-45.

³²⁶ Şimşir, 45.

In his 1908 *Circular on Education and Alphabet Reform (Tamim-i Maarif ve Islah-ı Huruf)*, İsmail Hakkı maps out his vision of separating the Arabic letters. Introducing his reformed alphabet, he writes that his circular is “the solution to teaching reading and writing to the nation and to our women.”³²⁷ Under the Young Turk regime, Ottoman women—particularly middle and upper class women—witnessed a period of social reforms that established the *Society for the Employment of Women (Kadınları Çalıştırma Cemiyeti)*, which sought to bring women into the workplace, instituted compulsory female primary education, and amended the family code to give women divorce rights, raised the marital age to sixteen, and legislated that marriages be conducted in front of a secular state magistrate.³²⁸ This meant that, as Turkish nationalism and debates over language reform gained steam, they melded with the debate over Ottoman women and their place in a modernized national community.

Thus, by stating that the reformist alphabet should be disseminated to both “the nation and our women,” İsmail Hakkı displays an organic, if masculinist, understanding of the Turkish nation that argued for women’s full participation in public and civic life. As the future Latinizers would claim at the end of the 1920s, the Young Turk *ıslahatçılar* of the 1910s argued that women played an integral role in the nurturing of the Turkish nation and the education of its citizenry at home. Thus, İsmail Hakkı and other language reformers advocated for women’s literacy as a necessary supplement to the transformative social legislation they embarked upon. Thus, İsmail Hakkı views women

³²⁷ Milaşi İsmail Hakkı, *Tamim-i Maarif ve Islah-ı Huruf*, 1.

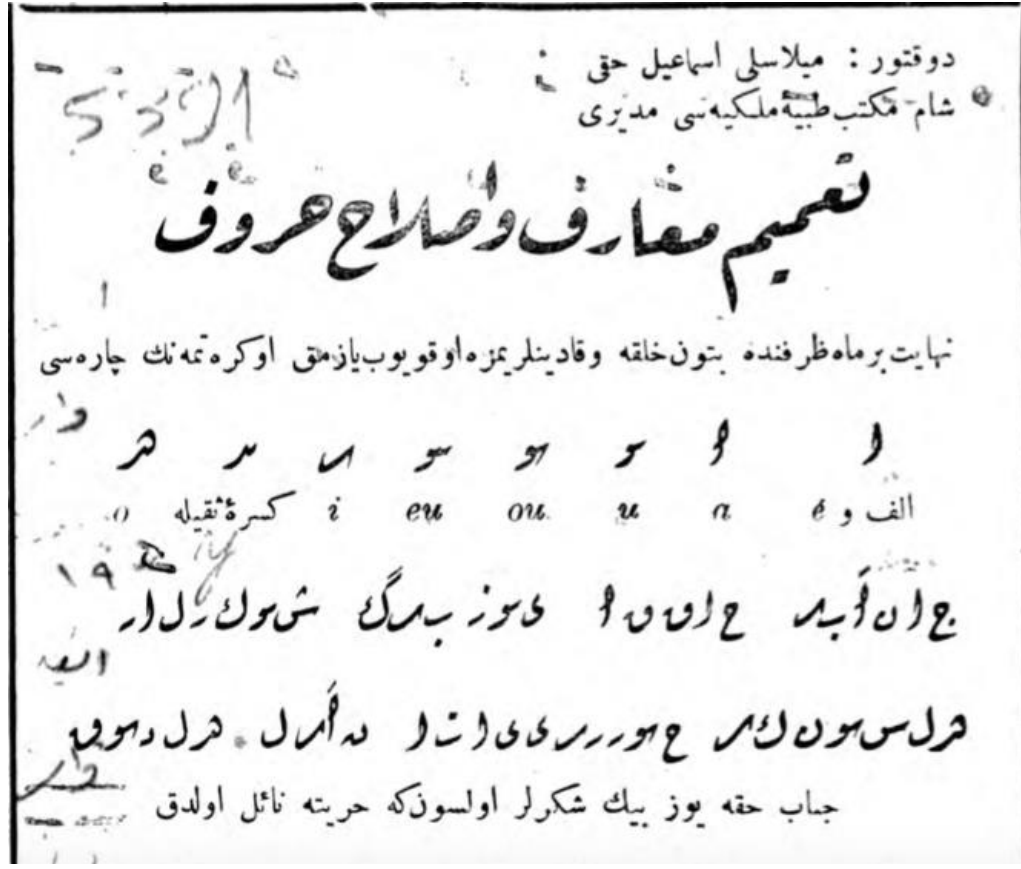
³²⁸ Zürcher, 122.

as an integral and special category *within* the greater *halk* (*people* or *nation*) to be emphasized in discussions over alphabetic reforms and its beneficiaries.

In order to analyze İsmail Hakkı's proposal for the reformed Ottoman alphabet, I have included the first page of his *Circular* in Figure 1 below. The top half of the page is written in the Ottoman script and states the author, publisher, title, and pledge of the *Circular*. The bottom half explains the author's proposals for separating the Perso-Arabic letters. In this section, İsmail Hakkı demonstrates how to write each Perso-Arabic letter separately and uses the French phonetic system to indicate his reformed vowel markings. Under the French letters, the page concludes with an example sentence in the reformed Ottoman alphabet, distinguished by separate letters, and, underneath, its transliteration into the current Ottoman script. The sentence reads, according to İsmail Hakkı's own chart,

Cenabi haqqa youz biñ shoukrlar olsun ki hourriyete nail olduq

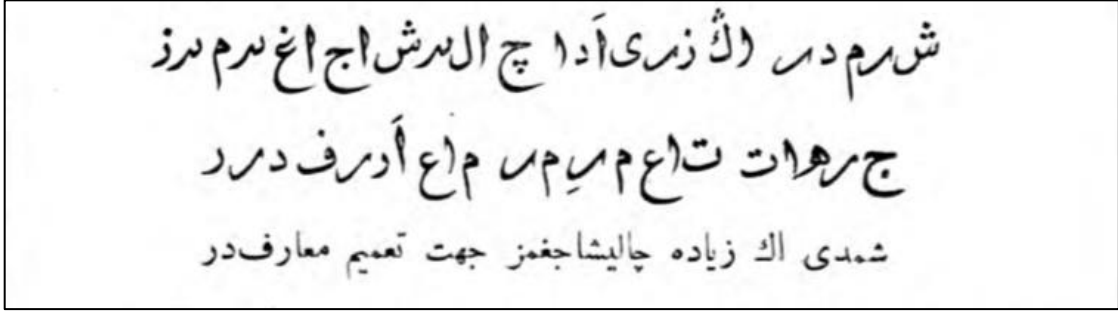
*(Let there be one hundred thousand thanks to God that we have achieved
freedom).*



(Figure 6. Ismail Hakki's Alphabet Manual)³²⁹

Thus, in his example sentence, İsmail Hakki instructs the reader both in the reformed alphabet and in the political rhetoric of the Young Turk regime. He invokes the concept of freedom (hürriyet) in keeping with the discourse of the Committee of Union and Progress that the Second Constitutional Era was one in which the principle of liberty abounded and guided social transformation. He follows this up with another message centered on education.

³²⁹ Milaslı İsmail Hakki, *Tamim-i Maarif ve Islah-ı Huruf*, 1.



(Figure 7. İsmail Hakkı's Alphabet Manual 2)³³⁰

Shimdi eñ ziyaade chalishacaghimiz cehet ta'mimi maarifdir

(Right now, the course that we will work the most towards is the generalization of education).

Like the concept of *freedom*, İsmail Hakkı draws upon education as a social force that will ensure freedom to all Ottoman citizens, including women. A reformed Ottoman alphabet, therefore, was central to İsmail Hakkı's efforts to institute a modern education system (*tamimi-i maarif*) and promote mass literacy.³³¹ For this objective, İsmail Hakkı writes that his reformed alphabet will give the Turks "possession of a more perfect script than the Latin letters all for [their] needs."³³² Thus, İsmail Hakkı's 1909 treatise demonstrates that debates over Ottoman alphabet reform were connected to larger educational and political projects in the Young Turk period.

It was under the authority of Enver Pasha, leader of the Three Pashas regime that came to power after the 1913 coup d'état and, subsequently, Ottoman Minister of War (1913-1918), that İsmail Hakkı's reformed alphabet would gain prominence within governmental and military circles. During his tenure as war minister, Enver Pasha attempted to institute İsmail Hakkı's alphabet within the military. The alphabet, therefore,

³³⁰ Milaşı İsmail Hakkı, *Tamim-i Maarif ve Islah-ı Huruf*, 1.

³³¹ İsmail Hakkı, *Tamim-i Maarif ve Islah-ı Huruf*, 3.

³³² İsmail Hakkı, *Tamim-i Maarif ve Islah-ı Huruf*, 2.

became known as “the new writing” (*hattı cedit*), “the Army alphabet” (*Ordu elifbası*), and “Enver Pasha’s script” (*Enver Paşa yazısı*) and manuals were distributed throughout the military.³³³ Though Enver Pasha’s efforts were unsuccessful, his experiments with the ıslahatçı script within the army was a turning point in the debate over institutionalized alphabet reform and its connection to educational reform.

According to a 1917 manual, entitled *The Alphabet with New Letters (Yeni Harflerle Elifba)*, the ıslahatçı script was prepared by the Society for Alphabet Reform and Arrangement (*Tertip ve Islah-ı Huruf Cemiyeti*) and ratified by the medical, scientific, and national defense divisions.³³⁴ After introducing the writing system, focusing on its consonants and vowels, the 1917 manual featured a section on vocabulary and example sentences. In addition to animals, household items, the vocabulary section featured military and patriotic terminology, including *flag (bayrak and sancak)*, *mosque (cami)*, *crescent (hilal)*, *cannon (top)*, *soldier (asker)*, *sword (kılıç)*, *rifle (tüfek)*, *officer (zabit)*, and *gendarme (jandarma)*.³³⁵

In the *Sentences* section (Figure 3), İsmail Hakkı provides some examples of simple sentences in the ıslahatçı alphabet. Like the vocabulary section, these sentences largely focus on military and patriotic concepts. Some example sentences read:

Askerlerimiz Kafkas dağlarına sancağımızı diktiler.

(Our soldiers will plant our flag in the Caucasus).

Mısır bizimdir.

(Egypt is ours).

³³³ Şimşir, 53.

³³⁴ Milaşı İsmail Hakkı, *Yeni Harflerle Elifba* (İstanbul: Matbaa-yı Hayriye ve Şürekası, 1917), 1.

³³⁵ İsmail Hakkı, 1917, 11-41.

Karadeniz Osmanlılarıdır.

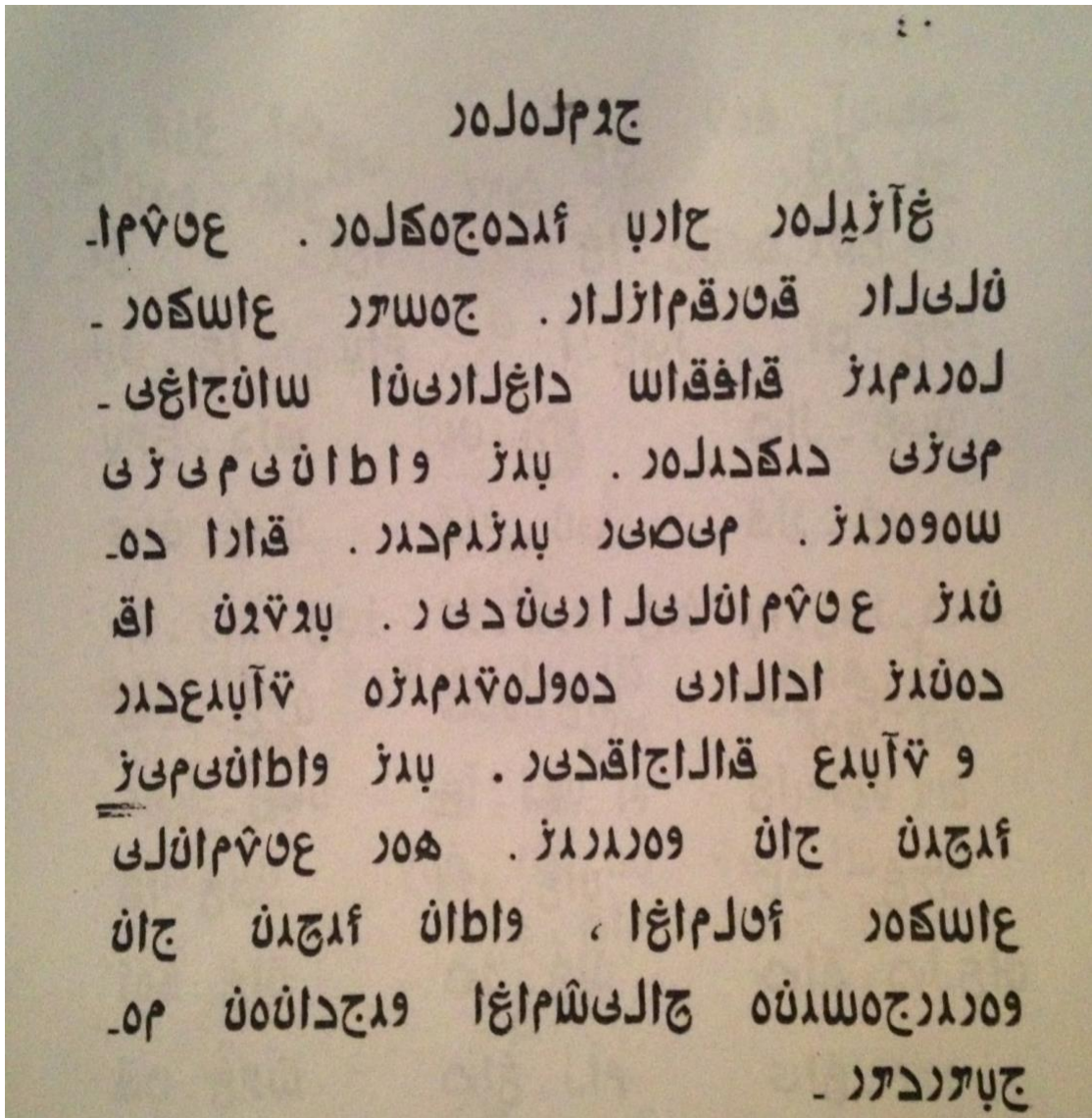
(The Black Sea belongs to the Ottomans)

Bütün Akdeniz adaları devletimize tabidir ve tabi kalacaktır.

(Each one of the Mediterranean islands are subject to our state and remain subject).

Her Osmanlı asker olmağa, vatan için can verircesine çalışmağa mecburdur.

(Every Ottoman is required to be a soldier and to work to sacrifice his life for the fatherland).



(Figure 8. Enver Pasha's Alphabet Manual)³³⁶

These example sentences provide insight into how the Ottoman military was to be educated with “Enver’s Alphabet,” namely that literacy was meant to enhance loyalty to the Ottoman state and its war effort. These sentences also show the lingering desire of the Young Turk regime to reconstitute many of the lost Ottoman Muslim domains. Both Egypt and the Mediterranean islands are claimed as rightfully Ottoman, despite having

³³⁶ Milash İsmail Hakkı, *Yeni Harflerle Elifba*, 45.

lost them to the European empires. In addition, the sentence about the Caucasus betrays many of the Pan-Turkist proclivities of the Young Turk leadership and their strategy to expand the Ottoman borders to encompass the Azerbaijani Turks in Transcaucasia.

5i. Conclusion

This chapter has analyzed the vision of language reform as espoused by the ıslahatçılar (“reformists”). In contrast to the Latinizers, the “reformists” sought to modify the existing Perso-Arabic alphabet, rather than adopt the Romanized New Turkish Alphabet (Yeni Türk Alfabesi). This wing of the Turkic language reform movement defended the traditional script using appeals to national identity and the unique Turkic culture. The Perso-Arabic script, both Turkish and Azeri “reformists” argued, preserved the unique historical development of the Turkic peoples, in addition to being the alphabet of centuries of Turco-Islamic literature. To change the alphabet, these “reformists” reasoned, would mean discarding the national, culture, and literary traditions of the past and undermine the project of nationalism itself.

This chapter has demonstrated how a substantial number of ıslahatçılar appealed to modern notions of nationalism, rather than religious traditionalism, in their defense of the old alphabet. Tellingly, they generally supported other, and more radical, programs of language reform. Among these was a general endorsement on the part of the ıslahatçılar for tafsiye, or the purification, of the Turkic languages from cumbersome Arabic and Persian grammatical and lexical elements in favor of Turkification. This is to say that this wing of the reform movement thought two ways about the connection to the outside Islamic world. First, it sought to maintain cultural and literary connections to the Arabic

and Persian classics. Secondly, however, this group sought to “free” Turkish from the conventions of these other two languages in order to foster independent development in the era of national states.

The *islahatçılar* and their discourse should be included when evaluating the progress of Turkic language reform for a number of reasons. Firstly, analyzing their writings complicates our understanding of the factions in the language reform movement. The “reformists” sought to achieve everything the Azeri Bolsheviks and other Latinizers did: mass literacy, modernization, and indigenization. They attended and argued at the Baku Conference not because they were skeptical of language reform in toto, but of Latinization and its ability to deliver on these promises.

Secondly, their arguments demonstrate that not all language reformers associated the Perso-Arabic script with “backwardness” or “medieval conditions.” Instead, the “reformists” viewed their script to be superior in many ways to the Roman and Cyrillic alphabets. Their speeches at the Baku Conference are rife with examples of inconsistencies in Russian, English, and French spelling, pronunciation, and grammar. They, therefore, did not look to Europe in terms of language reform as the Latinizers did. Instead, the “reformists” viewed their alphabet to be no more or less “deficient” than any other and, therefore, able to be salvaged through minor variations of the existing script.

As with the case of Ahmad Bayurnsinoğlu, the “reformists” could prove just as open to innovation in the realm of alphabet reform. Rather than shunning the Perso-Arabic script entirely, Bayurnsinoğlu’s work before the 1926 Baku Conference had been to reform, indeed invent, a new Kazakh alphabet based on the existing Arabic letters. Likewise,

Ismail Şükrü, Necib Asim, and Muhittin Birgen all wrote in favor of modifying the existing “Ottoman” script to better mark authentic Turkish pronunciation. The “reformists,” therefore, were wedged between the Latinizers and those who felt it imprudent, even sacrilegious, to change the Arabic script at all. For the “reformists,” the question was not if language reform should be enacted. Instead, their fight against the Latinizers was over the method of reform.

With the victory of Latinization in 1926, the “reformists” in the Soviet Union largely fell silent. In neighboring Turkey, however, the new Kemalist state was still carefully weighing the issue of alphabetic and language reform. Figures such as Fuat Köprülü, the Turkish deputy to Baku and an ardent supporter of the Ottoman script, would return home to stand against any potential Latinization of Turkey’s own alphabet. As they did in Baku, the “reformists” couched their critiques of Latinization in terms of hindering the national project of forming a unique Turkish community.

The tide after Baku, however, was with Latinization and, a mere two years after the declaration to Latinize all Soviet Turkic languages, the Kemalist state embarked upon its own Latinization movement with the 1928 Alphabet Reform, covered in the next chapter.

6. Constructing the Turkish Nation During the Alphabet Revolution



(Figure 9. Karagöz December 1928)³³⁷

6a. Introduction

On 1st of Birinci Kanun (December) 1928, the satirical periodical *Karagöz* printed a caricature of its namesake characters: the comical Karagoz and Hacivat duo from the traditional shadow plays once popular across the Ottoman Empire. Like the anecdotes of

³³⁷ Ali Fuad, editor, “Bu Günden İtibaren Arap Harfleri Tarihe Karışıyor!”, in *Karagöz*, Istanbul, 1 Birinci Kanun (December) 1928, 1. Source: Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi [Beyazıt State Library]. Catalog number: 1856.

Nesreddin Hoca, the Karagöz-Hacivat stories were popular among the Turkish public for their satire and humor that operated on the fact that both characters were perfect foils of each other. Hacivat's character represented piety, intellectualism, and spoke in the high Ottoman language of the sultan's palace. Karagoz, on the other hand, embodied the common man: worldly, literal-minded, quick to temper, and a scrappy fighter. Karagoz, as befitting his character, did not speak in the high Ottoman language but in the Turkish idiom of the common man in Anatolia. This was a language held in contempt by the upper echelons of the Ottoman Empire and, thus, considered ignorant, uncultured, and crass.

This December 1928 issue of *Karagöz*, however, was released in political conditions that had greatly shifted since the founding of the Turkish Republic five years prior. The Ottoman Empire had collapsed in 1922 after a decade of warfare spanning the Italo-Ottoman War (1911), Balkan Wars (1912-13), First World War (1914-1918) and War of Independence (1919-1922). Filling the void caused by imperial collapse, the new nation-state of Turkey was declared and its Kemalist leadership worked vigorously to uproot all former remnants of the Ottoman past. By 1928, the Kemalists had set their sights on the high Ottoman court language of the now defunct sultanate-caliphate. Operating on its nationalist ideology, the Turkish Republic sought to elevate the Istanbul dialect of Turkish to the level of the state's official language. This idiom was spoken by the common people whom the state considered to be indelible members of the new Turkish nation. The Republic's first step towards discarding the Ottoman language was to enact the Alphabet

Revolution, which abolished the Ottoman alphabet (based on Arabic and Persian) and, in its place, instituted the *New Turkish Alphabet*, composed of Latin-based letters.³³⁸

The headline of this edition of *Karagöz* introduced the New Turkish Alphabet and signaled the formal end of the old Ottoman alphabet: “From this Day Forward, the Arabic Letters Become a Thing of the Past.”³³⁹ In the image, Karagöz and Hacivat are depicted as gravediggers at the Arab alphabet’s graveside interment. This graveyard scene is not melancholy as Hacivat, ever the optimist, points to a glowing sun and declares, “Look Karagöz, at how brightly the sun of the Turkish letters is born after the burial of the Arabic letters.”³⁴⁰ Karagöz responds to Hacivat in his characteristic worldly and literal manner of thinking, “God willing, there will remain no corner of our nation that we did not illuminate with this light.”³⁴¹

What was remarkable about this particular exchange between Hacivat and Karagöz was that both the idealistic and the pragmatic had, for the first time, both endorsed the New Turkish Alphabet as necessary for the enlightenment and betterment of the Turkish nation. As such, the periodical played on the familiar juxtaposition of Hacivat and Karagöz to show that everyone, from intellectuals and bureaucrats to workers and peasants, should

³³⁸ The Kemalist leadership was quite pragmatic as they abolished the Ottoman Alphabet and instituted a Latin-based alphabet in its place. As Sinan Meydan states in his five volume examination of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s intellectual project during the Kemalist period (1923-1945), the Kemalists officially used the term “New Turkish Alphabet” (Yeni Türk Alfabeti) or “Turkish Letters” (Türk harfleri) rather than “Latin alphabet” or “Latin letters.” By insisting that the new alphabet was essentially a *Turkish* one, the Kemalists were able to deflect criticisms that the Alphabet Revolution was a westernizing one that sought to sever the Turkish people from their Islamic roots. Instead, the Kemalists argued that the “New Turkish Alphabet” would better reflect Turkish pronunciation and bring the written and spoken languages together. See, Sinan Meydan, *Türk Aydınlanması Akl-ı Kemal: Atatürk’ün Akıllı Projeleri* (Istanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi Yayın Sanayi ve Ticaret AŞ, 2014), 130-132.

³³⁹ Fuad, “Bu Günden İtibaren Arap Harfleri Tarihe Karışıyor!”, *ibid.*

³⁴⁰ Fuad, “Bu Günden İtibaren Arap Harfleri Tarihe Karışıyor!”, *ibid.*

³⁴¹ Fuad, “Bu Günden İtibaren Arap Harfleri Tarihe Karışıyor!”, *ibid.*

strive to adopt the New Turkish Alphabet as soon as possible. The adoption of the Latin alphabet signified a “new dawn” for the Turkish government and society at large.

The character of Hacivat had always represented the more pristine and educated class that sought to civilize the common man through appeals to progress. Ingeniously, the periodical associated him with the state and with the alphabet reformers. Turkey, in Hacivat’s view, suffered from a great “darkness” characterized by illiteracy and lack of education. The Alphabet Revolution played to his concerns by promising a rapid turnaround of illiteracy. Karagöz, representing the common man, also had a stake in the success of the Alphabet Revolution because it was he and others like him who were to be the main beneficiaries. Literacy and education, the new Republic promised, promised to improve the standard living for rural peasants and urban workers alike.

The only question that remained was how exactly the state was to enact the spread of the New Turkish Alphabet in an efficient and practical way. As such, this particular issue of *Karagöz*, anticipated an important shift in state-society relations brought about by the implementation of the New Turkish Alphabet. This shift reformulated the interaction and relationship between the republican elites and the society at large. For the New Turkish Alphabet to be successfully and rapidly disseminated, both groups would have to work together in *solidarity*. This called for mass mobilization of the Turkish population on an unprecedented scale not only to learn the new alphabet but to take up the responsibility of making sure society at large internalized it.

6b. Kemalist Language Reform in Historiographical Perspective

The article in *Karagöz* was published a month after the Grand National Assembly in Ankara voted to authorize the full adoption of the New Turkish Alphabet as nation's official script (November 1st, 1928). The implementation of the New Turkish Alphabet, referred to as the *Alphabet Revolution* or *Reform*, signaled the first phase of Turkey's more comprehensive Language Revolution (*Dil Devrimi*), which was to continue in various phases over the course of the 1930s and 1940s.

This chapter will focus on the Kemalist alphabet reform by relating it to larger themes of state-directed nation building and identity formation. I will, therefore, analyze the 1928 Alphabet Reform within the nexus of state-society relations to demonstrate that their success was determined by the political hegemony of Kemalist leadership and its ability to coopt key groups in Turkish society to fulfill its goals. In order to disseminate the *New Turkish Alphabet* throughout the republic, the Kemalist cadre mobilized all arms of the state, as well as key independent groups within society. Together, they forged a new coalition of Latinizers who publically argued that nation's future hinged on mobilizing the entire nation to achieve mass literacy. Mass literacy, this coalition held, would serve as the catalyst for social transformation and the redefinition of the ideal citizen and their place within the nation. By disseminating the New Turkish Alphabet throughout the country, the Kemalist leadership sought to mold the population according to its own ideology, seeking to forge a new collective consciousness about what it meant to be Turkish.

The 1928 Alphabet Reform formed part of a larger statist project of nation-building and modernization. Scholars have located the origins of Kemalist modernization to earlier

epochs of Ottoman history: beginning with Selim III's attempts to institute a modern, European-style army (*Nizam-i Cedid*) and continuing with the reign of Mahmud II (1808-1838), the era of the Tanzimat Reforms (1839-1876), which restructured the Ottoman state and its relationship to its subjects through reforms in private property, land tenure, military conscription, and limited constitutionalism.³⁴² By the establishment of the Turkish Republic in 1923, these scholars contend, the Kemalist leadership inherited a state that had been subject to extensive and sweeping modernizing reforms. The problem, however, was that Ottoman modernization was enacted to protect and preserve a multiethnic, multiethnic, and multilingual empire. This empire had collapsed, however, after World War One. The task facing the Kemalists, therefore, was how to mold the existing state and society into a homogeneous *nation-state* based on exclusive Turkish ethnicity. The Kemalists set to work transforming both the logic and structure of the state they inherited into one that would foster the development of a homogeneous society of Turks. This was the underlying factor in Kemalist nation-building in the 1920s and 1930s.

Nation-building in early republican Turkey marked a tremendous shift in continual reconstitution of the state and the society in Anatolia. Historiographic debates over the continuity of the Kemalist modernization project with previous Ottoman efforts, or lack thereof, often gloss over the fact that the attempt to forge a modern nation-state out of a multiethnic empire itself marked a significant rupture in Turkey's modernization process. The abolition of the Ottoman caliphate in March 1924 decisively shifted the political focus

³⁴² Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961); Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1998); Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000); Erik Jan Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 1993); Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

to the *form* this new Turkish nation-state would take. As such, the Kemalists were successful in legitimizing the nation-state as the paradigm reorienting Turkey's political, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic future. The reaction to the Kemalist project of nation-building, and to the Alphabet Revolution in particular, was in keeping with divisive splits on exactly *which type* of nation should be built.

Scholars have proposed many reasons for the adoption of the Latin alphabet: the Kemalist drive towards modernization and westernization, the desire to foster mass literacy using an alphabet that could be learned “easily and quickly,” and the need to make a rupture with the Ottoman past by forging a new linguistic course for the young Turkish nation.³⁴³ In addition, the Kemalist implementation of the New Turkish Alphabet has been analyzed by scholars as a tool to separate the new Turkish state from Islam as a force for social cohesion and identity.³⁴⁴ As S.N. Eisenstadt argues, the Kemalist revolution in Turkey entailed most of all “a shift in the bases of political legitimation and the symbols of political community.”³⁴⁵ The New Turkish Alphabet, therefore, served multiple roles for the

³⁴³ Books: Bilal N. Şimşir, *Türk Yazı Devrimi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 1992); Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Nergis Ertürk, *Grammatology and Literary Modernity in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011). Articles: Scholarly Articles include: Frank Tachai, “Language and Politics: Turkish Language Reform,” *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Apr. 1964), pp. 191-204; Diana Spearman & Naim M. Turfan, “The Turkish Language Reform,” *History Today*, Vol. 29 Issue 2 (February 1979), pp. 88-97; İlker Aytürk, “Turkish Linguists Against the West: The Origins of Linguistic Nationalism in Atatürk’s Turkey,” *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 40, Issue 6 (2004), pp. 1-25; Jale Parla, “The Wounded Tongue: Turkey’s Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel,” *PMLA* 123, no. 1 (2008): 27-40; İlker Aytürk, “The First Episode of Language Reform in Republican Turkey: The Language Council from 1926 to 1931,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 18, Issue 3 (July, 2008), pp. 275-293; Zeynep Korkmaz, “Alfabe Devriminin Türk Toplumuna Üzerindeki Sosyal ve Kültürel Etkileri,” *International Periodical for the Languages, Literature, and History of Turkish or Turkic*, Vol. 4/3 (Spring, 2009), pp. 1469-1480; Kaya Yılmaz, “Critical Examination of the Alphabet and Language Reforms in the Early Years of the Turkish Republic,” *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 2[1], (2011), pp. 59-82.

³⁴⁴ Amin Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic: Agents of Change and Guardians of Tradition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); M. Brett Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

³⁴⁵ S.N. Eisenstadt, “The Kemalist Revolution in Comparative Perspective,” in Ali Kazancıgil and Ergun Özbudun, ed., *Atatürk: Founder of a Modern State* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1981), 135.

Kemalist revolutionaries as they began to enact societal transformation. The expansion of literacy meant the proliferation of schools to teach citizens the new alphabet, the majority becoming literate for the first time. This newly-established literacy, in turn, allowed for new symbols of political legitimacy—the Turkish nation, the flag, portraits and sculptures of Atatürk, and the New Turkish Alphabet—to take root within the new nationalist paradigm.

As examined in Chapter Three, pre-republican debates over language reform and identity was largely confined to a group of Russian and Ottoman Turco-Muslim intellectuals who expanded their platform through the trans-imperial Turcophone press. What demarcated the republican period of language reform from the nineteenth century was the statist and revolutionary orientation of the Kemalist movement. Previous debates over language reform divided the Latinizers from reformers (*ıslahatçılar*). The Kemalist period, however, injected an altogether new current in the conversation on language. In addition to directing language reform to serve the interests of the Turkish nation-state in shaping an ideal citizenry, the Kemalist intervention in the debates over language reform was to apply a self-described *revolutionary* component to it. In other words, unlike their Ottoman predecessors, the Kemalists steered language reform towards revolutionary objectives of breaking down Ottoman-Islamic symbols and replacing them with ones based in the Turkish nation.

The New Turkish Alphabet, therefore, served multiple roles for the Kemalist revolutionaries as they began to enact societal transformation. As Yeşim Bayar notes, “It was only during the Kemalist era that the language issue was brought to center stage and

its relationship to nation-building clearly articulated.”³⁴⁶ Soon after legislating the Alphabet Reform, the Kemalists sought to use the new script to expand literacy through the proliferation of *national schools* (*milli mektepler*) that would teach all adult and child citizens the new alphabet. This newly-established literacy, in turn, allowed for new symbols of political legitimacy—the Turkish nation, the flag, portraits and sculptures of Atatürk, and the New Turkish Alphabet—to take root within the new nationalist paradigm.

Though the Kemalist Alphabet Revolution, and greater modernizing reforms, were enacted from above, it is also valuable to understand how the Turkish Republic and the Kemalists themselves were, to use Joel Migdal’s words, “constructed and reconstructed, invented and reinvented, through [their] interaction as a whole and of [their] parts with others.”³⁴⁷ In other words, it is crucial to historical understanding of the Kemalist period to analyze the state’s relationship with various groups in society as well as its relationship with its own parts: the bureaucracy, educational institutions, the military, etc. Along this vein, this chapter will examine how the Alphabet Revolution marked one such moment of reinvention for both the state and societal groups. What this chapter argues, therefore, is that the Alphabet Revolution relied not only on the Kemalists’ ability to use force in advancing the New Turkish Alphabet throughout the country, but also on their ability to coopt, convince, and accommodate various groups within society in the process. As such, the Kemalist leadership believed that mass participation in the reform process was a crucial way not only to advance the new alphabet, but, at the same time, to build and develop a Turkish identity whose ultimate loyalty lay within the new Turkish nation. As S.N.

³⁴⁶ Bayar, 38.

³⁴⁷ Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 23.

Eisenstadt argues, the Kemalist revolution in Turkey entailed most of all “a shift in the bases of political legitimation and the symbols of political community.”³⁴⁸

This chapter will examine how the Alphabet and Language revolutions determined state-society relations in the Kemalist period (1923-1938). By doing so, I demonstrate that the Alphabet Revolution was determined not only by the political will of the Kemalist leadership, but also operated and was advanced through the active participation of key groups in Turkish society. By disseminating the New Turkish Alphabet throughout the country, the Kemalist leadership sought to mold a collective consensus about what it meant to be the ideal Turkish citizen. In order to achieve this, the Turkish Republic sought to mobilize all arms of the state and various groups within society in the pursuit of learning and internalizing the New Turkish Alphabet and then to disseminate it throughout the country. The New Turkish Alphabet was viewed as a tool to achieve mass literacy, which would bring momentous societal changes and help define the ideal citizen within the new nation-state.

In examining this pivot towards nationalism and revolutionary thinking, I will explain the key concepts used to describe the Kemalist language reforms: *inkılap* and *devrim*. The former term was used before the Arabic and Persian vocabulary purges of 1930s. Coming from the Arabic term *inqalaba* (انْقَلَبَ) meaning *to be changed* or *transformed*, the Turkish word *inkılap* denoted a change that would bring about a fundamental change in the system. This, therefore, was to be distinct from the previous *ıslahat* that sought to enact a reform to the existing structure and strengthen its efficiency.

³⁴⁸ S.N. Eisenstadt, “The Kemalist Revolution in Comparative Perspective,” in Ali Kazancıgil and Ergun Özbudun, ed., *Atatürk: Founder of a Modern State* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1981), 135.

In adopting the term *inkılap*, the Kemalists were staking their claim within the debates over language and identity by insisting, after 1928, that the path towards merging to the two and deploying them for nationalist ends was to completely *revolutionize* the Turkish language. This began with the *Harf İnkılabı*, the English equivalents of which are *the Letter Revolution* or, hence, *Alphabet Reform*.

The second term, *devrim*, was coined in the 1930s from the Turkish word *devirmek*, meaning *to topple, take down, subvert*. Of the two terms here, *devrim* is a closer approximation to the word *revolution* in that, in the political sense, it refers to a complete reversal of the previous regime and its replacement by a new political force. Hence, revolutionary groups, such as the Jacobins, Bolsheviks, Maoists, and Khomeinists have been referred to in Turkish-language literature as *devrimci* or *revolutionary*. Beginning with the 1928 Alphabet Reform, the Kemalists began to expand the idea of revolution to encompass all areas of Turkish life. Thus, they began to conceive of their language program as a *devrim*.

Nation-building in early republican Turkey constituted a revolutionary shift in the development of Anatolian society. By the time the New Turkish Alphabet was declared, the Kemalists were indeed working towards the image of the Turkish Republic as the dominant force for modernization and restructuring of society and identity.³⁴⁹ The

³⁴⁹ My conception of the Kemalist single-party state is largely informed by the Introduction of Mete Tunçay's *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek-Parti Yönetimi'nin Kurulması (1923-1931)* (Ankara: Olguç Matbaası, 1981), pp. 9-27. In Tunçay's study, the single-party regime during the early Kemalist period was differentiated from contemporaneous totalitarian and authoritarian regimes. This differentiation was based on the *pragmatism* of the Republican People's Party that trumped ideological orthodoxy. The rule of the CHP (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, Republican People's Party) was also different from authoritarian and totalitarian regimes in that it tried twice to create a loyal opposition party in order to speed up the process of implementing parliamentary democracy.

Kemalists had transformed the Republic into a single-party state by enacting the *Law for the Maintenance of Order (Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu)* in February 1925 to grant the state extraordinary powers to prosecute all internal dissent in the wake of the Sheikh Sait Rebellion.³⁵⁰ Once the rebellion had been crushed, the state revived the ad hoc Independence Tribunals (*İstiklal Mahkemeleri*), first established during the War of Independence (1919-1922), to root out all internal dissent coming from newspapers, intellectual circles, academic institutions, and disenfranchised clerical establishment. The tribunals shut down the only legal opposition party, the Progressive Republican Party, and tried and imprisoned its leaders for treason.³⁵¹ Likewise, the Kemalist state suppressed all socialist, communist, and trade unionist organizations it believed sought to divide the new Turkish nation into warring classes. Thus, the Kemalists launched an attack on all religious,

³⁵⁰ The Sheikh Sait Rebellion broke out in February 1925 as a reaction against the abolition of the Ottoman Caliphate a year earlier in March 1924. Upon the establishment of the Turkish Republic in October 1923, the Kemalist cadre in power sought to limit the power of the ulema as they were the only group organized well enough to counter Kemalist power. The abolition of the caliphate, and subsequently the Ministry of Shariah, the pious endowments, and the Sheikh ul-Islam, was a crushing blow to the organizational power of the ulema. The Caliph and his family were exiled from the new Turkish Republic and the new republic took sole control of the educational institutions, which were formerly in the hands of the ulema. As a reaction against these measures, a rebellion broke out in the southeastern part of Turkey. Though the rebellion had a distinctly Islamic objective (to restore the Caliph and the Shariah), it was also marked by a surge of Kurdish nationalism reacting against the empowerment of Turkish national identity over Islamic unity. Once the rebellion was put down, the leaders, including Sheikh Sait himself, would be tried and hanged publicly, and Kurdish populations would be resettled in western Anatolia to promote assimilation into Turkish nationalism. Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (London, Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1961, 1968), 2662-266; Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London: Routledge, 1993), 58.

³⁵¹ The Progressive Republican Party, which was founded by former military officers such as Ali Fuad Cebesoy and Rauf Orbay, was created as an alternative to the increasingly centralized and dominant Republican People's Party. The abolition of the caliphate in March 1924 fostered increasing opposition to Atatürk and his RPP from deputies in the parliament who saw the caliphate as the only institution that could stem the tide of increasing Kemalist centralization and dominance over the state. The party ran on platforms to respect religious beliefs, thereby promising to slow the secularization reforms of the RPP. It also endorsed full liberal democracy and keep state intervention in economic and social matters to a minimum. Ahmad, 56-57;

political, intellectual, and socialist opponents believed to be an anathema to their vision of a single nation in solidarity working as an organic whole.

To establish, and then entrench, their position as the sole guide of this new nation-state, the Kemalist leadership established itself as a vanguard responsible for facilitating the spread of Turkish national identity among the Anatolian masses. By adopting Turkish national identity, the Kemalists believed that the new nation would be propelled towards “contemporary civilization” that would bring rapid modernization of all sectors of life, including technological, economic, legal, educational, and social advancements. The Kemalist current of populism (*halkçılık*), which would be enshrined in the constitution as one of the six core principles (*Altı Ok*) of Atatürk’s ideology, ensured the state’s trusteeship over the masses. The Kemalists were to lead “the people” towards modernization and self-identification as a Turkish national community. At the same time, Kemalist-style populism offered idealized images of the Anatolian peasant as the true representative of the Turkish *halk*, or nation. In all, as Feroz Ahmad states, “Populism suited the new [Kemalist] ruling classes because it legitimized their power by making them trustees of ‘the people’; at the same time populism neutralized the concept of class conflict and class struggle...”³⁵²

Suppressing all internal dissent, however, would not be sufficient for fostering solidarity among the members of the new Turkish nation. During the Alphabet Revolution, the Kemalist leadership focused its energies on creating new forms of political engagement for various groups within society. Not merely seeking to repress dissidents, the leadership within the state sought to secure the loyalty, through a process of accommodation, of

³⁵² Ahmad, 63.

different societal actors for the spread of the new alphabet throughout the Turkish nation-state. This chapter will analyze, therefore, Kemalist attempts to forge relations with other groups during this period to mobilize all of society to adopt and disseminate the new alphabet. The ultimate success of the Alphabet Revolution hinged on the participation of all elements of the new Turkish nation, including peasants, urban workers, landlords, teachers, civil servants, newspapermen, the military.

Though the Kemalist Alphabet and Language reforms were enacted from above, it is also vital to understand the state's relationship to various groups in society through the bureaucracy, educational institutions, and the military. Along this vein, this chapter will examine how the Alphabet Revolution marked one such moment of reinvention for both the state and societal groups. What this chapter argues, therefore, is that the Alphabet Revolution relied not only on the Kemalists' ability to use force in advancing the New Turkish Alphabet throughout the country, but also on their ability to coopt, convince, and accommodate various groups within society in the process. As such, the Kemalist leadership believed that mass participation in the reform process was a crucial way not only to advance the new alphabet, but, at the same time, to build and develop a Turkish identity whose ultimate loyalty lay within the new Turkish nation.

6c. Historical Approach and Sources

In order to analyze state-society relations during the Alphabet Revolution, and focus specifically on how the state sought to transform various social groups into loyal political actors, I will focus on three separate social groups—intellectuals, women, and

peasants—as case studies to illustrate the process of political transformation under the Kemalist Language Revolution. The first set of sources I will employ come from contemporaneous newspapers, published during the period of the Alphabet Revolution (1928). These newspapers were at the forefront of the Alphabet Revolution because it was their duty to not only make a rapid transition to the New Turkish Alphabet, but also to report on the status of the building and functioning of national schools (*milli mektepler*).

I have obtained these newspaper periodicals from Beyazit State Library (*Beyazit Devlet Kütüphanesi*), located near Istanbul University. Beyazit State Library houses most of the newspapers issued during the early years of the Alphabet Reform, including the leading government organs (*Cumhuriyet* and *Hakimiyet-i Milli*) and more regional newspapers, such *Yeni Adana*. In addition, Beyazit State Library houses the first issues of *Karagöz*, *Son Sanat*, *Vakit*, which also provide insight into the early years of the Alphabet Revolution. By examining these periodicals, this chapter will demonstrate how the Turkish Republic was able to implement its linguistic measures in the realm of print media, as well as show how the readership was mobilized to learn the new alphabet, as well as internalize the “purification” of Turkish vocabulary, through a network of national schools and people’s houses.

In addition to newspapers from Beyazit, I will use a number of newspapers from the period before the actual implementation of the New Turkish Alphabet to show how various intellectuals began to use their public voices to argue for the state’s reforms. These articles, written in the Ottoman script, demonstrate that, for many intellectuals, the process of language reform offered unprecedented opportunities to restructure educational institutions, including schools and libraries. Many intellectuals argued that the new

alphabet would grant Turkish society unprecedented access to these institutions and would be instrumental for any societal modernization. Various intellectuals, therefore, lent their voices to this effort in order to promote the idea of a literate society that would lead to greater involvement of the masses in the work of the state. These articles were made available through the Ottoman Language Articles collection in the Islamic Research Center (*İslam Araştırma Merkezi* or İSAM for short), affiliated with affiliated with 29 Mayıs Üniversitesi in Üsküdar.

Analyzing journals and newspapers from the period of the Alphabet Revolution will also shed light on the effort to mobilize women through literacy campaigns and schooling. In fact, in the sources I have located, women—much more than men—were a central focus of the Kemalist efforts to disseminate the New Turkish Alphabet throughout society. Newspapers reported tirelessly on the progress of women’s literacy and often measured the success of the Alphabet Revolution itself by women’s enrollment in the *millet mektepleri* as well as the rates of their graduation from these institutions. Women, therefore, became one of the most important targets of the state’s language reforms. Simultaneously, newspapers reported on the development of some women’s groups into political actors—a process shaped by street demonstrations and convening political meetings. Along with intellectuals, therefore, the Alphabet Revolution marked a moment in which women were transformed into political actors through interaction with the state.

The Islamic Research Center also houses various periodicals of the *halkevleri*, or *people’s houses*, established to provide villagers and peasants with locations and materials both to continue readings and to stay connected to the state and its ideologies. Various *people’s houses* published their own periodicals that supplied peasants with a steady stream

of state ideology. Among these were *Ülkü: Halkevleri Mecmuası (Ideal: The Periodical of the People's Houses)* and *Kaynak (The Source)*, which was produced by the Balıks ehir People's House beginning in 1933. I will draw upon these periodicals to foster a discussion of how the peasants were intended to be molded into political actors through the ideologies of nationalism and populism.

6d. Question of Alphabet Reform or Latinization

Though the issue of alphabet reform (islahat) or Latinization was a feature of the pre-WWI Turcophone press, the earliest implementations of alphabet reform came with the establishment of the Committee of Scientific Reforms (*Istilahât-ı İlmiye Encümeni*) by the Ottoman Education Ministry. This institution, which was divided into a subcommittee in 1911 called The Society for Alphabet Reform (*Islah-ı Huruf Cemiyeti*), began to debate a central platform within the reformist camp: should the Ottoman script remain joined together (as in Arabic and Persian) or should the letters be written separately to better denote the sounds of the Turkish language.³⁵³ Leader of the reformers who wanted to break up the Ottoman alphabet and write the letters individually and separately was Dr. İsmail Hakkı (also referred to as Milaslı İsmail Hakkı). Born in 1870 in the city of Milas, province of Muğla, İsmail Hakkı became a doctor of medicine and took up residence in Istanbul. Here, he became an important voice of the alphabet reformers, not only publically advocating for *huruf-u manfasıla* (writing Ottoman letters separately) but also

³⁵³ Ercan Uyanık and İrfan Davut  am, "Arap Elifbası'ndan Latin Alfabetesine Geiř Sresinde Garpçı Sylemler," in *Journal Of Modern Turkish History Studies* [ağdař Trkiye Tarihi Arařtırmaları Dergisi] XIV/29 (2014-Gz/Autumn), ss.189-221.

systematizing this “New Writing” (Yeni Yazı) in 1917 with the publication of *The Alphabet with New Letters* (Yeni Harflerle Elifba).³⁵⁴ This would prove to be an important step in the direction of alphabet reform as, during the First World War, the Ottoman Minister of War, Enver Pasha, adopted İsmail Hakkı’s alphabet for all military manuals. Under Enver’s leadership, this new alphabet adopted from İsmail Hakkı’s model was called the “Military Alphabet” (*Ordu Yazısı*) or “Enver Writing” (*Enveri Yazı*).³⁵⁵

Examining the 1917 manual *The Alphabet with New Letters* (Yeni Harflerle Elifba) confirms that the new script was adopted by the Committee of Scientific Reforms (referred to as the *Encümen-i İlmîye*) “for Ottoman national defense.”³⁵⁶ Changing the alphabet used by the Ottoman military, it was believed, would make communications harder to decode for people who were not privy to the new script. Furthermore, adopting so-called “Enver Pasha” allowed for the waning Young Turk regime to make a decisive break with the Perso-Arabic script and forge a new, unique alphabet for the Turkish language. Though this break would not be as decisive as the 1928 Alphabet Reform, it marked a brief yet important intervention in the debates over alphabet and language reform.

Not only were the Ottoman letters separated in this new script, but diacritics were abolished in favor of extra letters to denote vowels. For example, the word *basket* (sepet in modern Turkish) was written سبت in the Ottoman alphabet. Yet İsmail Hakkı’s system spaced the letters out, the ت taking on a new form and the sound E moving from a diachritic to its individual letter.

³⁵⁴ Resul Çatalbaş, “Milaslı Dr. İsmail Hakkı’nın Hayatı, Eserleri, ve İslam İlgili Görüşleri,” [The Life and Works of Dr. Milaslı İsmail Hakkı and His Views On Islam], 2014/1 (1), 99-129.

³⁵⁵ Uyanık and Çam, 193.

³⁵⁶ İsmail Hakkı, *Yeni Harflerle Elifba* (Istanbul: Matbaa-yı Hayriye ve Şerikası, 1917).

6e. The Alphabet Revolution and the Mobilization of Turkish Society Through Populism

From its inception, the Alphabet Revolution (Harf İnkılabı, حرف انقلابی) was intended to reconstitute the relationship of the Turkish Republic with the society it governed. This reconstitution was to take place along the lines of mobilization of the population under the direction of the Kemalist state. This mobilization, which was to be transformative for society, was a major step in the state's revolutionary vision for the complete overhaul of Turkish society through language reform. By adopting the new Latin letters, Kemalist officials and language reformers saw the potential to mold society into that which was 'enlightened' 'educated' and thoroughly 'modern.' Achieving these aspects of what the Kemalists termed 'contemporary civilization, in turn, would strengthen the nationalist sentiment of the population and push them towards identifying themselves solely by Turkish markers.³⁵⁷

Mobilization of Intellectuals for Widespread Social Change

One of the most crucial groups the new republic deployed in the effort to justify and then enact the New Turkish Alphabet were the intellectuals. As stated before, no social group was coherent in the political objectives it sought to pursue and the intellectuals (writers, poets, academics, scientists, linguists) were no exception. In fact, the intellectuals were by far the most divided group when it came to debating, accepting, and disseminating the New Turkish Alphabet. This had to do with their particular interaction with the Kemalist state in the wake of the Law for the Maintenance of Order (1925) and the revival

³⁵⁷ Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London & New York: Routledge, 1993), 53.

of the Independence Tribunals to prosecute all internal dissent. The ultimate relationship between the Kemalist state and the intellectuals was ambiguous: sometimes they converged in their objectives, at other times they were in opposition. The Alphabet Revolution was no exception. Nevertheless, the Kemalist elite did seek to mobilize loyal intellectuals through patronage and sponsorship which provided them a public voice to advocate for its particular brand of societal modernization.

For many intellectuals, the belief in the power of a reformed Turkish language to enact massive social change was too important an opportunity to pass up. Since the mid-1800s, Ottoman intellectuals had vigorously debated the project of sweeping social reform and modernization. These concerns over the form modernization should take gave rise to fierce debates about the Ottoman language and, in particular, if the Perso-Arabic alphabet was an appropriate one to represent all of the sounds in the language. Now, with the establishment of the Turkish Republic, intellectuals sympathetic to the Kemalist brand of modernization seized upon the opportunity to advocate publically for instituting the Latin-based *New Turkish Alphabet*. They therefore set to work arguing for the merits of the new alphabet in various government publications, newspaper entries, and book, pamphlets, and treatises that were in circulation throughout 1928. Their objective was to align their intellectual voices with Kemalist populism, and its stress on national solidarity, to assist the state in its call for the mass mobilization of Turkish society to implement the new alphabet.

On main arena where the alignment of intellectual voices with Kemalist populism was print media. Consequently, print media was also to serve as a “ground zero” for the dissemination of the New Turkish Alphabet. A striking example of this alignment came

with a May 1928 issue of *İçtihat* in which the periodical's editorial board argued for mass mobilization in disseminating the New Turkish Alphabet. *İçtihat* took its name from a concept in Islam called *ijtihad* (اجتهاد), which refers to the deployment of independent reasoning in making legal decision on matters of law. The term was subsequently secularized in the 19th and 20th centuries to carry the meaning of intellectual, cultural, scientific, and national *renewal*, or break from “superstitious” religious traditions believed to prevent inherently *rational* Muslim societies from achieving Enlightenment modernization. *İçtihat*, following this trend of thought, promoted itself as a “scientific, literary, economic, and artistic periodical,” and, as such, sought primarily to reach an intellectual and academic audience sympathetic to discarding tradition and restore and even rehabilitate Islam in secularist Turkey.³⁵⁸

In *İçtihat*'s May 1928 editorial, entitled “The Decision Was Made for the Acceptance of the Latin Letters” (Latin Harflerinin Kabulüne Karar Verildi; لاتین حرفلرينك قبولنه قرار ويريلدى), the editorial board “welcomed with sincere respect the brightest triumph pertaining to the area of [national] renewal as well as to the revolution of the [Turkish] government.”³⁵⁹ Both national renewal and revolution would hinge, in *İçtihat*'s view, on “the Educational Ministry and the work of state authorities [both] subject to the desires of [modern] life which come from the soul of the nation.”³⁶⁰ The article, therefore, drew strong connections between the adoption of the new alphabet and the demands of Turkey's modernization drive. Modernization (the attainment of scientific, technological, and

³⁵⁸ *İctihad*, “Cumhuriyetimizin Hars Sahasında Bir Feth-i Mübini: Latin Harflerinin Kabulüne Karar Verildi,” (جموريتمزك حرس ساحسنده بر فتح ميبني), İstanbul: İctihad Matbaası, cilt: XXIII, 15 Mayıs 1928, sayı: 252, sayfa: 4787. Source: Islamic Research Center (İslam Araştırma Merkezi, İSAM), Osmanlı Makaleler Veri Tabanı.

³⁵⁹ *İctihad*, *ibid.*

³⁶⁰ *İctihad*, *ibid.*

cultural renovation) was propagated not as a mere desire of the Kemalist elite external to the nation, but instead as originating from within the soul of the nation itself.³⁶¹ The role that both the Kemalist elite and sympathetic intellectuals were to play, therefore, was the vanguard in implementing the desires of the nation. As such, adopting the New Turkish Alphabet would take both the dedication of government officials, its intellectuals, and the commitment of the masses that embodied Turkey's national spirit.

With an eye toward the soul of the nation, *İctihat* came out strongly in favor of the effort to revolutionize the alphabet and urged state ministries and state employees to play a leading role in the rapid dissemination of the New Turkish Alphabet among the populace. In achieving a full revolution of the alphabet, *İctihat* believed that more than just the language would be transformed; rather, because the Alphabet Revolution originated from “a will deep within the nation,” the state and its intellectuals, in acting according this will, were “instituting measures to bring the nation to social welfare, ascendancy, and [even] to life.”³⁶² *İctihat*, therefore, envisioned that a revolution of the alphabet would not remain within the realm of the civil servants or the government officials. Instead, it would spread to all corners of the country and transform the lives of all Turkish citizens. To ensure the successful dissemination of the new alphabet, the article argued that “in order to be able to obey the dictates [of the state] no one had any boundaries.”³⁶³ Every Turkish citizen, therefore, was free to take necessary measures to ensure the new alphabet spread throughout the country.

³⁶¹ İctihad, *ibid.*

³⁶² İctihad, *ibid.*

³⁶³ İctihad, *ibid.*

For the editors *İctihat*, the stakes of the Alphabet Revolution for individual citizens in the new Turkish Republic were high. Literacy, they believed, would be the key to an individual's advancement in education and their participation in social life as citizens. Without literacy, the Turkish state would be unable to transform the Anatolian population into a nation of Turkish citizens. The editors of *İctihat*, therefore, wrote with a sense of urgency in advocating for the Alphabet Revolution. In particular, they focused on children in their estimation of how remaining illiterate would be dangerous for Turkish society. They stressed that the Alphabet Revolution would primarily benefit the children and future generations of the new republic: "A person who does not know how to read and write, for example, is never considered a child of the nation or even a child of humanity by those who are Turkish..."³⁶⁴ The Alphabet Revolution was to alleviate this marginalization by promising access to citizenship for everyone through literacy. The first step towards delivering on this promise was "to register the number of literate people" and, in turn, deploy them in "the national endeavor" of bringing the New Turkish Alphabet and literacy to the masses.

İctihat, in short, used its intellectual platform to advocate not only for the adoption of the New Turkish Alphabet, but also for the widespread societal changes it would foster. The Alphabet Revolution was to be a momentous task that would redefine the relationship between the populace and the state through notions of citizenship and modernization. It would also help the Turkish Republic cement its authority and legitimacy in Anatolia, as the republic was to bring the new alphabet, and new patterns of life, to the masses through literacy campaigns. The New Turkish Alphabet, the editors of *İctihat* argued, would be the

³⁶⁴ İctihad, *ibid.*

best way to ensure this necessary step toward nationhood. In addition to their literacy skills and ability to make rapid shifts in the actual type of their publications, intellectuals sympathetic to the Kemalist brand of modernization had an important role to play in communicating to the masses why such momentous changes were necessary. This was a task that *İçtihat* took up with vigor.

In addition to the editorial board at *İçtihat*, other intellectuals published articles touting the necessity of full social mobilization to accept the New Turkish Alphabet. For example, in an August 1928 article in the newspaper *Hayat* (حيات), Mehmed Emin (Erişirgil) argued that the new Turkish letters had to potential to mobilize Turkish society to recreate all educational and cultural intuitions in the pursuit of scientific and contemporary knowledge. Mehmed Emin's attention to the reform of educational institutions stemmed from his tenure as a professor of sociology and philosophy at Istanbul University, and subsequently, head of the Department of Language History and Geography at Ankara University. Mehmed Emin proved to be instrumental figure in the Alphabet Revolution: he even served on the Language Commission (*Dil Encümeni*), established by order of Mustafa Kemal in June of 1928, that was tasked with drawing up and then implementing the New Turkish Alphabet.

Mehmed Emin's interest in the Alphabet Revolution, however, went beyond mere reform of the language. The Alphabet Revolution, he argued in his article for *Hayat*, called for a complete renewal of the entire education system in Turkey, including all libraries, universities, schools, and curriculum. This overhaul would entail nothing less than a social, institutional, and cultural revolution to usher in the new educational, institutional, and societal order. Emin begins his article, entitled *The Educational Mobilization of the* 27

Alphabet Revolution (Harf İnkılabı Maarif Seferberliğidir, حروف انكلابی معارف سفربرلیکیدر), by stating that “in order to spread the new alphabet to the masses of halk and of intellectuals, it is not sufficient to merely have them read the new forms of [the letters].”³⁶⁵ Instead, Emin argued, an entire program of mobilization (*seferberlik* in Turkish, سفربرلیک in the Ottoman alphabet) was needed to coopt the masses into the literacy program of the state. This cooption of the masses, however, would not be an easy task according to Emin and, as such, the intellectuals of the new Turkish Republic should act selflessly, tirelessly, and even heroically to spread the new alphabet to all corners of the nation. Emin wrote in his article that “it is necessary to institute [good] habits for the ignorant that will establish in everyone an intellectual link between these letters and [voluntarily learning them] as well as accustom their eyes to words written with the [new] letters.”³⁶⁶ By ‘ignorant,’ Mehmet Emin meant ‘illiterate’ and, thus, trapped in backwards lifestyles and poverty. The intellectuals, therefore, had a duty to work tirelessly to overcome illiteracy and set the masses, the entire nation, on the course towards modernization and betterment.

In advocating for the participation of intellectuals in the process of revolutionizing the alphabet, Mehmed Emin also played into Kemalist notions of populism and national solidarity. The intellectuals, in his estimation, were not the only social group to work tirelessly for the adoption of the New Turkish Alphabet. Instead, their participation was to be part of a greater mobilization of all segments of the society (government officials, intellectuals, newspapermen, and citizens alike) to engage in learning the new letters with

³⁶⁵ محمد امین، "حروف انكلابی معارف سفربرلیکیدر،" حیات، اداره مرکزی استانبول بوریسی، ۱۶ اغستوس، ۱۹۲۸ [Mehmed Emin, "Harf İnkılabı Maarif Seferberliğidir," *Hayat*, cilt: IV, sayı: 90, sayfa: 225, İdare Merkezi/İstanbul Bürosu, 17 Ağustos 1928]. Source: Islamic Research Center (İslam Araştırma Merkezi, İSAM), Osmanlı Makaleler Veri Tabanı.

³⁶⁶ Emin, 225. The sentence reads: ۲۲۸ بو حرفلره یازیلان کلمه لره کوزلری آلیشد یرمق و هر کسده بو شکلرله معنا آراسنده ذهننا ارتباط تاسیس ایتدیره جک و جهله اعتیاد تاسیس ایله مک لازم.

revolutionary zeal. “This has come to mean,” Emin wrote in his article, “that everyone who believes in the great and bountiful revolution, which our new alphabet will bring about [tevlid], is required to increase the time they will dedicate towards studying how to implement [good] habit[s] needed for everyone [to succeed].”³⁶⁷ It would be only through this revolutionary zeal, the result of which was dedication and persistence to increasingly literacy, that the populace would internalize the new alphabet and disseminate it through cultural, scientific, and literary works. The spread of the new alphabet both among the halk and the country’s intelligentsia would, in turn, foster the cultural and educational revolution the new republic sought. The New Turkish Alphabet would be the catalyst for perpetuating the Turkish nation on the path towards the modernity and contemporary civilization.

Emin argued that national duty [*vazife*, وظيفه] went hand-in-hand with revolutionary zeal. Without a sense of national duty, the entire project of the state-sponsored language revolution would fail. “The duty which has befallen every citizen,” Emin argued, “is to continually publish useful periodicals and books for every level [of society] in the task which belongs to the government and to show zeal [*tehalük*, تهالك] for continual reading of newspapers, journals, and books which will be written with these [new] letters.”³⁶⁸ Here, Emin called on publishers and book printers in particular to play recognize their role in the shift towards the New Turkish Alphabet and act according to their national duty in helping to implement it. Instituting the New Turkish Alphabet would, after all, demand that all print media be transformed through abandoning Ottoman type and switching to a completely new type for print materials. In calling upon all print media to be overhauled, Emin wrote

³⁶⁷ Emin, 90.

³⁶⁸ Emin, 90.

quite optimistically that such changes would be beneficial for both the populace and the publishers themselves as these changes would “increase the determination to sponsor publications [by the state] in order to enrich national ideals and to achieve positive results [in the direction of literacy] directly from the Turkish Alphabet.”³⁶⁹

The Mobilization of the Halk during the Alphabet Revolution

Mehmed Emin’s call for instilling a sense of “national duty” (*vazife*, وظیفه) and “good habits” (*itihad*, اعتياد) for the population at large was essential one which required the state and the intellectuals would work in tandem to achieve. After all, as Mehmed Emin declared in his article, “unifying our alphabet mean[t] instituting popular education,” which would take the solidarity of both state actors and intellectuals to achieve.³⁷⁰ In arguing for “popular education,” Emin employed the term *halk-i maarif* (خلق معارف). The key term in this phrase is the word *halk*, which Emin and other intellectuals used to signify the *members* of the new Turkish nation-state. The revolutionary discipline Emin and others advocated meant that the *halk* would be thrust into the spotlight of the Kemalist project of mass mobilization. The *halk*, in the estimation of the language revolutionaries and other Kemalist reformers, would simultaneously be the bearers and beneficiaries of the new alphabet.

For this reason, Emin mentions the *halk* numerous times in his article. The word *halk* came to Turkish from the Arabic trilateral root خلق, a verb meaning ‘to create, to shape,

³⁶⁹ Emin, 90.

³⁷⁰ Emin, 90.

or to form.³⁷¹ In its noun form, marked by a sukun over the ل, خلق designates *creature* or *people*. According to Sir James W. Redhouse's authoritative 1890 *A Turkish and English Lexicon*, the term خلق was defined in Ottoman as "1. A man's body, his substance; also his figure, form, proportions. 2. Created, all created things; especially mankind. Hence, 3. The common people."³⁷² It was only the fifth definition in Redhouse's dictionary in which خلق was taken to mean "A people, a nation," but that definition was followed by "خلق الله God's creatures; creation," indicating that the term was only tenuously used to mean the members of a specific nation.³⁷³ Finally, Redhouse's dictionary defines *halk dili* (خلق دلی) as "The idiom of the vulgar."³⁷⁴

Thus, by the time Emin and other nationalists employed the term *halk* in 1928 and beyond, the meaning and usage of the term had been revised significantly to denote the 'integral members of the nation (*vatan*).'³⁷⁵ As such, the term *halk dili* had also been transformed from the "idiom of the vulgar" or vernacular to the "national language."³⁷⁶ Though *halk* was an Arabic loanword, the Turkish nationalists Turkified it and built new concepts according to the conventions of the national idiom. For example, they were able to articulate the position of a *halkçı*, or *partisan of the people*, hence a populist, as well as the Kemalist principle *halkçılık* (populism).

³⁷¹ To help trace the etymology of the term *halk*, I used the online etymological dictionary Nişanyan Sözlük: Çağdaş Türkçe'nin Etimolojisi. Entries: *halk*¹ and *halk*². July 10, 2016, <http://www.nisanyansozluk.com/?k=halk1&lnk=1>.

³⁷² Sir James Redhouse, *A Turkish and English Lexicon* (1890), 861.

³⁷³ Redhouse, 861.

³⁷⁴ Redhouse, 861.

³⁷⁵ The term *vatan* (وطن) is also an Arabic word and its trilateral means "to dwell, to reside." Thus, its noun form connotes a place where one dwells or resides.

³⁷⁶ My previous chapter explains how nationalist writers, including Ziya Gökalp, brought new meanings to the term *halk* through concepts such as *halka doğru* (going towards the people).

By using the term *halk*, the Turkish nationalists and language revolutionaries imagined at once both the primordial embodiment of the nation and the blank canvas upon which they sought to continually form or shape the character of this nation. These two ways of understanding the populace would play an integral role in the unfolding of the Alphabet and Language revolutions. Being the primordial embodiment of the Turkish nation meant that the language the *halk* spoke became the standard for the construction of the new national idiom.

As the Alphabet Revolution progressed, the primary concern of the state and intellectuals vis-à-vis the *halk* centered on how to mobilize them for the cause of learning and then disseminating the New Turkish Alphabet. Returning to the periodical *Karagöz*, we can see that the mobilization of the *halk* to learn the New Turkish Alphabet became a preoccupation. In the 22nd Birinci Kanun 1928 issue, the periodical depicted on its front page the mass mobilization of the Turkish nation towards the learning of the new alphabet.



(Figure 10. *Karagöz* December 1928 2)³⁷⁷

The caption of this caricature boldly states that “Everyone from 15 to 45 years’ old will read!” The mobilization of the population was depicted as a military mobilization: Mustafa Kemal, as president of the new Turkish Republic, stood stoically in the foreground pointing to the bright sunlight, which symbolized the New Turkish Alphabet in earlier issues. All around him marched the Turkish halk, not in military garb, but instead equipped with backpacks and large pencils used as sabers as they made their charge towards the sun. On the horizon stood a factory, its chimney bellowing smoke, which was a symbol of Turkey’s modernization through rapid industrialization. Below the caption, there is an address

³⁷⁷ Ali Fuad, editor, “15 yaşından 45 yaşına kadar herkes okuyacak!”, in *Karagöz*, Istanbul, 22nd Birinci Kanun (December) 1928, 1. Source: Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi [Beyazıt State Library]. Catalog number: 1856.

directly to Mustafa Kemal himself: “Dear Gazi Father, the direction is [towards] reading and writing, the light, knowledge, [and] civilization, march!”³⁷⁸

The imagery of military mobilization for the cause of the Alphabet Revolution was extended in a second caricature printed below the first.



(Figure 11. *Karagöz* December 1928 3)³⁷⁹

This depiction, entitled “Weapons of the Army of Knowledge,” sought to use the image of military mobilization in advocating for the Turkish Republic’s “war” against ignorance and illiteracy. Such a war, it was conceded by the Kemalists, was not a conventional one. The weapons of the war on illiteracy and ignorance, therefore, had to be redefined, as was

³⁷⁸ Ali Fuad, editor, “15 yaşından 45 yaşına kadar herkes okuyacak!”, *ibid.*

³⁷⁹ Ali Fuad, editor, “İrfan Ordusunun Silahları,” in *Karagöz*, Istanbul, 22nd Birinci Kanun (December) 1928, 1. Source: Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi [Beyazıt State Library]. Catalog number: 1856.

depicted in the caricature: “the pen [was equated to] a bullet, the typewriter a machine gun, the ink well a bomb, the pencil a bayonet, and books ammunition.”³⁸⁰

The imagery of military mobilization was furthered in the companion article to both of these caricatures. This article took the form of a dialog between Karagöz and Hacivat in which Karagöz instructs Hacivat to prepare to war: “Ey Hacivat, there is a mobilization, prepare!”³⁸¹ Hacivat responds that he fears war. Karagöz, in turn, eases his friend’s fears by explaining that this particular mobilization is not for war against an external enemy, but against the internal threat of illiteracy: “It is a mobilization for reading and writing, a mobilization to rescue [the nation] from ignorance, each of us will put our hearts and souls into this mobilization.”³⁸² When Hacivat agrees to prepare for the mobilization of the alphabet, Karagöz declares “Be sure that the entire nation, like you, is prepared. This nation, which has broken the chains of servitude and shown miracles under the command of our Great Gazi Father [Mustafa Kemal], will defeat ignorance by traveling on the road our great savior has shown.”³⁸³

Both caricatures and the accompanying article sought to communicate the Alphabet Revolution in terms that would be familiar to the halk. *Karagöz*, therefore, sought to use the imagery of a military mobilization to convince the Turkish nation that spreading the new alphabet and eliminating illiteracy would take place on a scale that previous wars were played out on. As such, the Alphabet Revolution—just like in the First World War or the War of Independence—would require that all citizens of the republic mobilize for the cause

³⁸⁰ Ali Fuad, editor, “İrfan Ordusunun Silahları,” *ibid.*

³⁸¹ Ali Fuad, editor, “Muhavere,” in Karagöz, Istanbul, 22nd Birinci Kanun (December) 1928, 2. Source: Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi [Beyazıt State Library]. Catalog number: 1856.

³⁸² Ali Fuad, editor, “Muhavere,” *ibid.*

³⁸³ Ali Fuad, editor, “Muhavere,” *ibid.*

of the new alphabet. This mobilization would be directed by the Kemalist leaders with the assistance of sympathetic intellectuals. It was to be a “state-directed mobilization” in which the halk would demonstrate their commitment to the new alphabet in specific forums. Of these forums, the emerging network of national schools (*millet mektepleri*), which were set up specifically to teach the new alphabet to all Turkish citizens, became the most important site of mass mobilization.

Because mass mobilization was to take place through the network of national schools, the press during the Alphabet Revolution reported almost daily on the progress of building the schools and then opening them for enrollment. In addition to *Karagöz*, other periodicals and newspapers began both to call for and report on the mass mobilization of Turkish society centered around the establishment of *national schools*. The *national schools* focused primarily on adult literacy and, with the adoption of the new alphabet by the parliament, rapidly spread throughout the country. In addition to the network of *national schools*, existing educational institutions—including primary and secondary schools, colleges, and universities—began to open *national classrooms* (*dershaneler*) to assist in the effort to teach the new alphabet to the population.

What emerged, therefore, was a situation in which the parameters of engagement with the Alphabet Revolution were being established. By the end of 1928, therefore, state actors and the population at large were expected to operate within the confines of these parameters. There was not chance, by the end of 1928, of the alphabet remaining in the Ottoman script. Any engagement on that front, while not being obsolete, was nevertheless suppressed and relegated to the private sphere. Public discourse and engagement, therefore, operated on the assumption that the new alphabet was the desired alphabet of the new 236

Turkey and that the entire population should endeavor to spread this new alphabet. The terms of engagement now became *how* to spread the new alphabet and Turkish citizens—from intellectuals as we have seen to ordinary peasants—should publically engage in that cause. Most, if not all, contemporary newspapers and publications in Turkey shifted their focus to engagement within the parameters set by the state. This was a shift that took place in the large cities of Istanbul and Ankara, but also at a more local level.

To demonstrate commitment to the shift in alphabet, regional newspapers and other publications were eager to report not only on the large numbers of people attending classes, but also on the cooperation of all sectors of the state to accommodate the growing enrollments. Cooperation between all segments of local government, it was believed, would produce a more efficient dissemination of the New Turkish Alphabet. It would also demonstrate the engagement of both local governments and populations in the parameters set by the Alphabet Revolution. For example, the first issues of the regional newspaper *Yeni Adana* (New Adana) printed a series of articles reporting not only on the local authority's progress in setting up the learning facilities (schools, classrooms, libraries, and reading rooms) for the population, but also focused on the cooperation of various segments of the local government in reaching these goals.

Yeni Adana's leading headline, in fact, from its 2 Kanunu Sani 1928 issue, entitled “National Schools: Students Met Last Evening in Namik Kemal School; Speeches Made,” focused on the collaboration of the regional governor (*Vali Bey Effendi* in Turkish) with the local education officials and even with the police to establish local branches of national

schools.³⁸⁴ Subsequent articles cited the “fervency” (*hararetle*) of the population to quickly disseminate the alphabet as well as their eventual “success” (*muvaaffakiyet*) in meeting the demand of growing enrollments in local schools.³⁸⁵

Any deficiencies or shortcomings in the work of spreading the alphabet were also raised by *Yeni Adana*. However, like the stories of triumph, these concerns were framed within the parameters set by the state. One problem that became a preoccupation was that, initially, local governments struggled to provide facilities that could absorb the growing number of adults enrolling in the alphabet classes. What is more, there was a disparity in the gender breakdown of enrollments. For example, by February of 1929, just four months after the declaration of the New Turkish Alphabet, *Yeni Adana* reported that “15 thousand people were [now] reading” thanks to the establishment of national schools in the region.³⁸⁶

This was taken as a major success given the short duration of time local actors had to organize the facilities. The article then proceeded to break down the number of men and women enrolled in classes as well as the number of students in surrounding villages. As of February 1929, the number of men’s schools, according to the article, numbered seventy-four. This however outnumbered the number of women’s schools (estimated to be fifty-

³⁸⁴ Ahmet Remzi, editor, “Millet Mektepleri: Talebesi Dün Akşam Namık Kemal Mektebinde içtima etti; nutuklar irat edildi,” in *Yeni Adana*, 2 Kanunu Sani 1928, 1. Source: Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi [Beyazıt State Library]. Catalog number: 1563.

³⁸⁵ Ahmet Remzi, editor, “Tedrisat Hararetle Devam Ediyor” in *Yeni Adana*, 11 Kanunu Sani 1928, 1. Source: Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi [Beyazıt State Library]. Catalog number: 1563; Ahmet Remzi, editor, “İlk Mekteplerin Yeni Harfler Tedrisati Hitam Buldu,” in *Yeni Adana*, 11 Kanunu Sani 1928, 2. Source: Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi [Beyazıt State Library]. Catalog number: 1563.

³⁸⁶ Ahmet Remzi, editor, “Tedrisat Hararetle Devam Ediyor,” in *Yeni Adana*, 2 Şubat 1929, 1. Source: Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi [Beyazıt State Library]. Catalog number: 1563.

four).³⁸⁷ The disparity of men and women's schools stemmed from the fact that the number of male students surpassed the number of female students by only sixty enrollees.³⁸⁸

The article did not state the reason for the disparity in the number of men and women's schools, but report that "several teachers, along with school officials, were hired for inspection [positions] many of the national schools in Adana were found lacking."³⁸⁹ The promotion of teachers into inspectorate positions was meant to address infrastructure and enrollment issues. The article printed the names of the teachers who were promoted to inspectorate positions who all came from different high schools, secondary and primary schools, and even from a commerce school (*ticaret mektebi*). Hiring inspectors from among these diverse schools was intended to make the process of enrolling, as well as administering the exams, more efficient and reach a broader segment of the population. Promoting teachers to the level of inspectors ensured that they worked closely with officials in the local educational ministry to reach these objectives.

Contemporary papers to *Yeni Adana* focused on different segments of the society that were participating in the Alphabet Revolution. For example, nearly a year after the initial drive for literacy, the Istanbul-based newspaper *Akşam* (Evening) ran a story about the establishment of *reading rooms* (*okutma odaları*) in every village of the country. The *reading rooms* were set up to provide a space for the peasants (*köylüler* in Turkish) to

³⁸⁷ Ahmet Remzi, editor, "Millet Mekteplerinde Faaliyet: Vilayetimizde ve mülhakatında 15 bin dört kişi okuyor," in *Yeni Adana*, 7 Şubat 1929, 1. Source: Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi [Beyazıt State Library]. Catalog number: 1563.

³⁸⁸ Ahmet Remzi, editor, "Millet Mekteplerinde Faaliyet: Vilayetimizde ve mülhakatında 15 bin dört kişi okuyor," in *Yeni Adana*, 7 Şubat 1929, 1. Source: Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi [Beyazıt State Library]. Catalog number: 1563.

³⁸⁹ Ahmet Remzi, editor, "Millet Mekteplerinde Faaliyet: Vilayetimizde ve mülhakatında 15 bin dört kişi okuyor," in *Yeni Adana*, 7 Şubat 1929, 1. Source: Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi [Beyazıt State Library]. Catalog number: 1563.

continue putting their knowledge of the New Turkish Alphabet into practice. As the state began mobilizing peasants for the Alphabet Revolution, it sought to find outlets where they could read and congregate even after receiving a certificate from the national schools. The *reading rooms*, therefore, were a forum through which peasants could be continually mobilized for the cause of the Alphabet Revolution and could continue to read in the New Turkish Alphabet. The mobilization of peasants was especially important as they formed the backbone of the Turkish *halk*. Any ideology of populism or national solidarity, therefore, hinged on the participation of the peasants in the state's modernization programs. The Alphabet Revolution was an important example of the effort to reach the villagers and coopt them into the program of building a new Turkish nation.

The article, entitled "The Peasants Will Read: The Education Ministry Will Open Reading Rooms," proclaimed that such spaces "would motivate the peasants to read by having newspapers, periodicals, and books dispatched" to reading rooms around the country.³⁹⁰ The establishment of the reading rooms became a priority for the Education Ministry, the article state, "[as] it [was] understood that 350 thousand people would continue their education at the national schools."³⁹¹ The enrollment of 350 thousand people, however, would only be the beginning. Soon, both the Education Ministry and the newspapers increased their estimate for the number of people enrolled in alphabet classes. To successfully complete the alphabet course, those enrolled had to pass an exam (*imtihan*) that would certify them in the new alphabet.

³⁹⁰ Ahmet Remzi, editor, "Millet Mekteplerinde Faaliyet: Vilayetimizde ve mülhakatında 15 bin dört kişi okuyor," *ibid*.

³⁹¹ Necmettin Sadık, editor, "Köylüler Okuyacak: Maarif Vekaleti Okutma Odaları Açacak," in *Akşam*, 13 Kanunuevvel 1929, 2. Source: Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi [Beyazıt State Library]. Catalog number: 0010.²⁴⁰

Increased enrollment would eventually bear fruit as the number of people able to read steadily increased. However, facing increasing levels of literacy did not mean that the state was always able to provide facilities such as libraries and reading rooms. Critique of the state came in the form of pressuring it to expand, update, and improve its libraries so that people could use them more efficiently. *Akşam* reported on the 12th of Kanunuevvel 1930, two years after the Alphabet Revolution was launched, the state was struggling to keep up with the growing literacy rate. In an article entitled “The Pleasure of Reading is Increasing: General Libraries Are Becoming Very Crowded,” *Akşam* reported that two of Istanbul’s main libraries (Beyazıt and Ali Emiri Efendi, both located in the Fatih district of Istanbul) were facing a situation in which “there were no financial allotments to keep up these libraries’ book publishing.”³⁹² As such, both libraries were unable to meet the demand of “more than 150 readers” who used both facilities daily.³⁹³

The reason for the popularity of these two libraries, the article reported, was that they housed reading materials (books, magazines, newspapers) that were recent (yeni): “together with the Ali Emiri Efendi Library, the reason why Beyazıt Library has become crowded is that recent works are found in them.”³⁹⁴ Having recent works was important for the spread of the Alphabet Revolution because literacy’s sustainability depended in part on finding the “pleasure of reading” (*okuma zevki*) and incorporating time to read into one’s daily life.

³⁹² Necmettin Sadık, editor, “Okuma Zevki Artıyor: Umumi Kütüphaneler Çok Kalabalık Oluyor,” in *Akşam*, 12 Kanunuevvel 1930, 1. Source: Beyazıt Devlet Kütüphanesi [Beyazıt State Library]. Catalog number: 0010.

³⁹³ Necmettin Sadık, editor, “Okuma Zevki Artıyor: Umumi Kütüphaneler Çok Kalabalık Oluyor,” *ibid.*

³⁹⁴ Necmettin Sadık, editor, “Okuma Zevki Artıyor: Umumi Kütüphaneler Çok Kalabalık Oluyor,” *ibid.*

In many ways, *Akşam*'s critique of the lack of facilities and materials played on the same ideas about nationalism that intellectuals such as Mehmed Emin proposed. The state and the intellectuals in society were supposed to be acting as the vanguard for this national revolution. As the vanguard, as Emin wrote, intellectuals should model the ideal citizen, stressing a sense of national duty, commitment to nationalist values, and demonstrating "good habits" that could teach the halk how to conduct themselves in the new Turkey. However, as *Akşam* so acutely pointed out, "Beyazit Library is a little dark [to read in]. The city needs a spacious and brighter library. The Education Ministry and the municipality should supply this."³⁹⁵ In other words, without the proper facilities, lighting, and up-to-date materials available modeling the ideal citizen in terms of literacy and reading would be almost impossible. It was the tangible and physical aspects of the Alphabet Revolution (reading facilities, books, etc) as well as access to them that, in *Akşam*'s view, would really determine the success or failure of the movement.

Without the proper facilities, the mobilization of the halk in the cause of the Alphabet Revolution would not be possible. This was a danger far greater than any resistance to the Alphabet Revolution that could come from various segments of the population. The speed with which the new alphabet was disseminated through a network of national schools and reading rooms was staggering; however, the state's insistence on a speedy transition also opened it up to problems of funding new schools and keeping up with infrastructure demands to support its vision of a society literate in the New Turkish Alphabet. Though the state had set the parameters for political engagement, newspapers such as *Akşam* nevertheless found room to manoeuvre within these parameters by

³⁹⁵ Necmettin Sadık, editor, "Okuma Zevki Artıyor: Umumi Kütüphaneler Çok Kalabalık Oluyor," *ibid.* 242

reporting on the deficiencies in actualizing the Alphabet Revolution. Their push-back was not against the Alphabet Revolution, but, instead, stemmed from a frustration centered on the limited capabilities of the state to reach all corners of the nation.

Women as an Integral Component of the Alphabet Revolution

From the very beginning of the Alphabet Revolution, the Turkish press reported on the progress of the milli mektepler, or national schools, that were charged with teaching the new alphabet to the Turkish nation. The objective of the national schools was to disseminate the new alphabet to every citizen; as such, every citizen of the Turkish Republic was required by law to attend classes and earn a certificate to prove they were now competent in the new official alphabet. Women—in particular—were a major focus of the national schools and the Kemalist-controlled press followed women’s advancement in learning the new alphabet with considerable attention. In a front page article in *Cumhuriyet* dated the 4th of Kanunu Sani [roughly the equivalent to January] 1929, the newspaper reported on the successes and shortcomings of women’s enrolments in the national schools in Istanbul. The headline of the article, “National Schools are on the Move: Starting Yesterday, Classes in the National Schools [Now] Open to Women Have Begun,” hinted that the system for teaching new alphabet had been expanded to encompass Turkish women.³⁹⁶

Yet the expansion of the schooling system to include women meant that the state now had to deal with overcrowding. In Istanbul, the problem of overcrowding was an

³⁹⁶ Yunis Nadi, editor, “Millet Mektepleri taşıyor: Kadınlar için açılan mekteplerde dün derslere başlandı,” in *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*, Friday 4 Kanunu Sani [January] 1929, Istanbul. Source: Bayezit Devlet Kütüphanesi [Bayezit State Library]. Catalog number: 0001.

especially difficult problem to address. The article reported that “A lot of schools were required to reject people who had applied to be enrolled” in classes and that, in one instance, “even a person from the Christian *halk* was not enrolled in school upon request.”³⁹⁷ To solve the problem of overcrowding in Istanbul national schools, the Education Ministry (the very same *Maarif Müdüriyeti* that was to act as the vanguard of the Alphabet Revolution in the estimation of Mehmed Emin and the editors of *İctihat*) was forced to make other arrangements to accommodate the mass of people seeking enrollment in classes. One solution was to allow women students to take day classes and to schedule those classes on Monday and Thursday afternoons.³⁹⁸ These classes would be held two days a week for a quarter of the year [*çeyrek fasıla*] and would help free up the space for other classes scheduled for longer durations.³⁹⁹ Another solution, which the same article reported, taken by the Educational Ministry was to simply make room for more classrooms in each national school. The article reported that the ministry had already taken steps to do this in both the School of Commerce and the national school located in the Bezezya neighborhood in Istanbul.

Despite the overcrowding that came with the influx of women’s enrollments, the state remained committed to the spread of the alphabet among the female members of the nation. In Istanbul, *Cumhuriyet* reported that in the neighborhood of Üsküdar, on the Asian side of the city, space in the local girls’ school was being allotted for women to take alphabet courses. The opening of courses for women carried with it great optimism about the direction the Alphabet Revolution was taking. The article reported that the head

³⁹⁷ Nadi, *ibid.*

³⁹⁸ Nadi, *ibid.*

³⁹⁹ Nadi, *ibid.*

of the local school, an administrator by the name of Aliye Hanım, “by giving a speech, applauded and mentioned the importance of the national schools and of the greatness of the Alphabet Revolution,” during the opening of one national school in Üsküdar.⁴⁰⁰ Finally, as the article states, “the ceremony came to an end after the pupils of the girls’ school sang a series of marches and recited poems” in celebration of the opening of alphabet courses for women.⁴⁰¹

⁴⁰⁰ Nadi, *ibid.*

⁴⁰¹ Nadi, *ibid.*



(Figure 12. *Cumhuriyet* January 1929)⁴⁰²

The Turkish press made sure to bring women to the forefront of the Alphabet Revolution by printing pictures of women attending classes, taking exams, and meeting

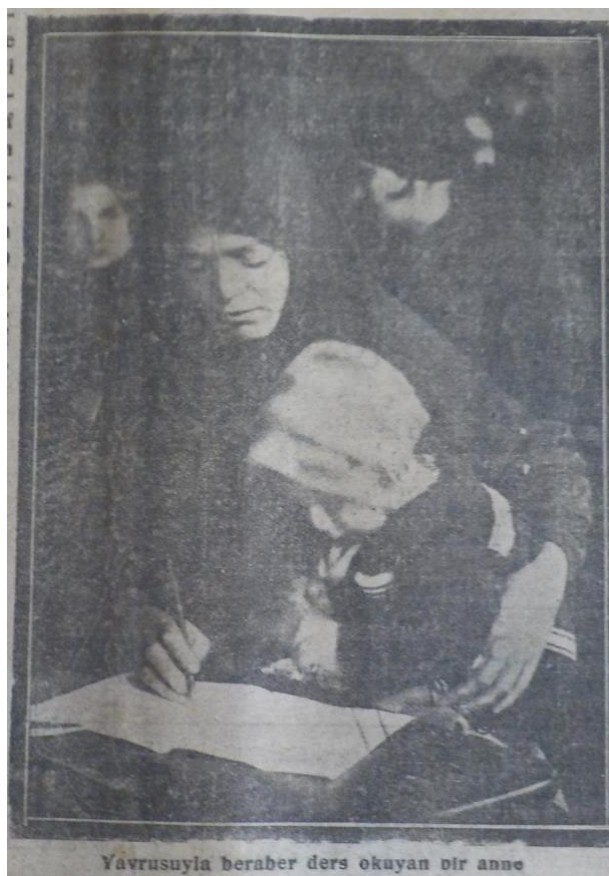
⁴⁰² Nadi, *ibid.*

with educational officials. This gave women unprecedented visibility in the public realm and demonstrated the commitment of women to fulfilling what was, after all, a national duty: internalizing the new national alphabet. The first picture was taken in a women's classroom as the New Turkish Alphabet was being taught. This photograph was juxtaposed with the middle photograph of a civil servant taking an exam to prove his competence in the new alphabet.⁴⁰³ The two photographs reflected the very call that Mehmed Emin and other nationalists had called for, namely, to use populism as a mobilizing force in bringing about cultural and social change in Turkey. In this light, the proliferation of women's classes served to ensure women's participation in the project of the state and of the linguistic revolution it sought to enact.

The third picture depicts women showing up for class with children. This picture represented the realities of the Alphabet Revolution: women were to play an integral role in the dissemination of the new alphabet partially in the role of mothers. This ethos, that women were to serve the nation through mothering, was not a deviation from secular nationalism as it was experienced in Europe or the United States before Turkey. In fact, nationalism had often envisioned the nation itself to be a feminine, mother-like entity. The word *nation* is, after all, a feminine concept and stems from the Latin word *natio* meaning birth. Though this concept of the nation as feminine was grafted upon a Turkish linguistic context that had no grammatical gender, the idea of the role of women as the bearers of national culture and traditions absolutely transferred.

⁴⁰³ Nadi, *ibid.*

The Turkish press was quick to promote this image of women's roles in the new nation and in learning the new alphabet. The photograph below is one of many that depict women learning the new alphabet in the presence of their children. The caption, which reads "A mother who is studying along with her child," demonstrates the exact role women were expected to play in the new national revolution. The modernization of society, therefore, was to transform the public role of women into active participants in the internalization and dissemination of the Turkish national identity. Modernization, however, was not intended to extract women from their duties as wives and mothers so much as reconfigure those duties for the state's ends. Here, learning the new alphabet almost becomes a sacred act, a birthright that is passed down from mother to child. This was exactly the type of powerful imagery the state and intellectuals sought to evoke: that internalizing the New Turkish Alphabet meant relying on mothers to pass it along to their children.



(Figure 13. *Cumhuriyet* January 1929 2)⁴⁰⁴

The Turkish state's priority of disseminating the New Turkish Alphabet to women coincide with the development and expansion of the overall public sphere in the Turkish Republic. It was the expansion of the public sphere that the ideology of populism sought to govern. The public sphere is defined as "a modern institution and set of values that bring persons together in public to engage in a context of reasoned debates."⁴⁰⁵ As Moghadam

⁴⁰⁴ Yunis Nadi, editor, "Bu Sene 250 Bin Kişi Okuma Öğrenecek," in *Cumhuriyet Gazetesi*, Friday 10 Kanunu Sani [January] 1929, Istanbul, 1. Source: Bayezit Devlet Kütüphanesi [Bayezit State Library]. Catalog number: 0001.

⁴⁰⁵ This definition is taken from Jürgen Habermas (1989) by Valentine M. Moghadam and Fatima Sadiqi, "Women's Activism and the Public Sphere: An Introduction and Overview," in *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Special Issue: Women's Activism and the Public Sphere (Spring 2006), pp. 1-7, 1.

and Sadiqi state, the public sphere is traditionally studied within the context of the emergence of nation-states. Public spheres, however, from their inception were understood to be male-dominated spaces as the very notion of public sphere was tied to citizenship and belonging to the nation. In the 20th century, however, the public sphere was greatly “expanded, democratized, and [even] feminized” as the definitions of citizenship and membership in the nation-state gradually opened to include a larger demographic.⁴⁰⁶ In the case of the Turkish Republic, the Kemalist state sought to expand its public sphere to incorporate women in the society. This made the state, in the words of Jenny B. White, a “feminist” state, meaning a “a male-dominated state that made women’s equality in the public sphere a national policy.”⁴⁰⁷ The equality of women in the public sphere, the Kemalists believed, would propel Turkish society forward on the path towards modernization and allow it to take its place among the “advanced” nations of Europe. In reality, the Turkish state’s mobilization of women as a cornerstone of its modernization movement was a forerunner for many countries in Western Europe.

The Alphabet Revolution, therefore, became the state’s optimal vehicle to begin mobilizing women as an integral part of the Turkish halk. By internalizing the new alphabet, Turkish women would begin, the state hoped, to internalize the values of the new republic: modernization, secularism, and Turkish nationalism. As White explains, the state was not interested in women’s mobilization for emancipatory ends, but instead, to craft the ideal “citizen woman” who could pass on the values of the revolution to her children.⁴⁰⁸ This

⁴⁰⁶ Moghadam and Sadiqi, 2.

⁴⁰⁷ Jenny B. White, “State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman,” in *NWSA Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 3, Gender and Modernism Between the Wars, 1918-1939 (Autumn, 2003), pp. 145-159, 145.

⁴⁰⁸ White, 146.

meant that the Kemalists were not interested in reforming the private sphere of the family and the home that was taking place in Western Europe and the United States.

In fact, the Kemalists remained highly suspicious of changes in the private sphere, especially when it concerned women's status in this domain. For many Kemalists, "the young Republic need not look to the West, with its dangerous notions of romance and individualism, for a model for feminism and egalitarianism, but could look to its own semi-mythic past in pre-Islamic Central Asia."⁴⁰⁹ In other words, the Kemalist Republic's mobilization of women was to achieve its own revolutionary ends—the mass literacy of the greater population—rather than to lead Turkish women towards personal emancipation.

Women were, after all, part of the greater Turkish halk and, as such, had an integral part to play in the functioning of the nation as a whole. As emancipation in the private sphere was thought to jeopardize women's participation in the functioning of the nation, the Kemalists did not pursue measures that would change their situation at home. Kemalists saw women as a totality, not as set of individuals and, as such, affirmed women's equality in terms of the collective rather than the personal or individual. In this pursuit, the Kemalists invoked the pre-Islamic Turkic past to "prove" how Turkic society had always been based on egalitarianism between the sexes.

The ideology of populism—which sought to foster mobilization based on nationalist solidarity rather than divisions based on class, gender, or status—had its first experience of mass mobilization through the mobilization of women during the Alphabet Revolution. This was to be a controlled mobilization in which women would show their

⁴⁰⁹ White, 147.

appreciation—and more importantly their *loyalty*—to the state for granting them the opportunity to advance by learning the New Turkish Alphabet. Individual women could even play larger roles in the dissemination of the new alphabet by becoming teachers, or in the case of Aliye Hanim in the local girls' school in Üsküdar, serving as administrators of girls' schools charged with teaching girls and women the new alphabet.

Within seven days of Cumhuriyet's article on women's enrollments in alphabet class, the newspaper ran an article tallying the number of schools open in Istanbul as well as the number of enrollees based on gender. The number of schools was counted to be 2,197 throughout Istanbul.⁴¹⁰ The official estimate for the number of students was tallied at 87,895 with 48, 453 female students and 39, 442 male students.⁴¹¹ The result of the state's mobilization of women to internalize the new alphabet was that, within a week of new women's schools opening in Istanbul alone, the number of women students greatly outnumbered the number of male students. Though different factors most definitely contributed to this, for example men's responsibilities to support their families financially, the state was nevertheless successful in quickly mobilizing a demographic that, with the exception of women from elite family backgrounds, had previously resided primarily within the domestic sphere. Much of the historiography of the early Kemalist period has focused on the limitations of the state to enact social change outside of the large urban centers.⁴¹² However, the mobilization of the halk—and especially the women for whom the Alphabet Revolution was a prelude to their further presence in the public sphere—I

⁴¹⁰ Yunis Nadi, editor, "2197 Millet mektebinde 48453 kadın, 39442 erkek ders görüyor," in Cumhuriyet Gazetesi, Friday 11 Kanunu Sani [January] 1929, Istanbul. Source: Bayezit Devlet Kütüphanesi [Bayezit State Library]. Catalog number: 0001.

⁴¹¹ Nadi, *ibid.*

⁴¹² See White, "State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman."

believe, demonstrates both the power of the Kemalist state to mobilize people from diverse segments of the society and to expand membership into the nation and open the nationalist project up to these differing segments. Thus, by extending its linguistic objectives to segments of the population that were previously absent from the public sphere, the Kemalist state demonstrated the legitimacy and the monopoly of power that is characteristic of the modern state.

The Alphabet Revolution, especially in Istanbul itself, fostered the unprecedented mobilization of the halk to achieve mass literacy. These numbers, Cumhuriyet reports, were staggering to the language revolutionaries and “in order to supply the course materials in the newly opened national schools, the Ministry of Education [was now] running at full capacity.”⁴¹³ This meant, in part, that the Ministry of Education received weekly reports that poured in from across the nation that brought updates on the Alphabet Revolution’s progress. These reports “announced that the halk was flocking to classes with longing and zeal [*heves ve iştihakla*] and that teachers were working, always with attention towards the halk’s different levels, with an idealistic passion.”⁴¹⁴

6f. Conclusion

The Alphabet Revolution was a pivotal event in the formation of the Turkish nation-state and for the propagation of nationalism throughout the country. In the space of several years (1928-1930), the Kemalist leadership, along with intellectuals committed to their

⁴¹³ Nadi, *ibid.*

⁴¹⁴ Nadi, *ibid.*

brand of nationalism and modernization, sought to enact a complete overhaul of the language in order to make it appear more “Turkish.” A more self-consciously *Turkish* language meant one in which remnants of the Ottoman court language, written in a Perso-Arabic script, would be abolished and a language reflecting the new national ethos would be disseminated throughout the new Turkey. To achieve this, the Kemalist sought to elicit the participation of society more broadly. They did this by appealing to various social groups—intellectuals, women, and ordinary members of the *halk*, including peasants—and redefine the public role for each. The Kemalist state, therefore, sought to politicize these groups through mobilization. But politicization, as seen in the case of women, was to happen within paradigms the Kemalists had predetermined. Everyone was encouraged to spread the New Turkish Alphabet; no one was free to oppose it. Thus, Kemalist expectations for political engagement were limited only to the state’s ultimate goals.

Using the lens of state-society relations, this chapter has sought to argue that the Alphabet Revolution, while still enacted from the top, was one that engaged with these societal groups to foster genuine enthusiasm for and acceptance of the new script. In adopting the new script, the population was to see their own transformation into citizens of a modern nation-state that was based exclusively on Turkishness. Though the Ottoman past had enacted far-reaching modernizing reforms, the shift from a multiethnic empire into a singularly *Turkish* nation-state constituted a major shift in the process of modernization. The Alphabet Revolution, and the attempts to bring the population into the fold of the state’s linguistic program, demonstrate that Kemalist modernization, while inheriting past attempts at reforms, ultimately broke from the past with the adoption of the nation, as opposed to an empire, as the object of reform. In the next chapter, I will extend this argue

further to discuss the second phase of the Language Revolution that came when the New Turkish Alphabet was successfully adopted: the purification of Turkish vocabulary.

7. Dissertation Conclusion

Turkic Language Reform and Latinization have often been presented in the historiography as events unique to the Turkish or Soviet locales they were enacted in. As such, the common networks of reformers and intellectuals as well as the international nature of Turkic language debates is lost amidst these narratives. My dissertation has sought to place the Turkic language reforms within a more global history, taking into consideration the trans-national and trans-imperial networks that debated the issue of orthography, grammar, and language purification for Turkic. By placing the history of the Soviet and Kemalist language reforms within a global frame, I sought not only to highlight the interactive nature of the reforms themselves, but to show that reforms as drastic and revolutionary as these were nevertheless situated within a specific moment. That moment was the advent of European modernity and its spread across the globe through empire. Modernization—and by extension the creation of modern nations—preoccupied the Turkic language reformers from both sides of the Russo-Turkish border. They nevertheless launched debates, and eventual measures, to lead their societies into the modern world. Language reform, they believed in both Turkey and the Soviet Union, was an essential component of this process.

My dissertation first traced the origins of Turkology, a European academic discipline aimed at researching the ancient Turkic languages, and its influence on the next generation of nationalists and reformers. Turkology provided for them “scientific” and disciplinary proof that the Turks were first distinct from the rest of the Muslim World and that, secondly, this distinction was based on unique language. Turkology, I have shown, provided the vocabulary for future reformers to inject their remedies onto the Turkic languages.

Next, I examined the rise of the Turcophone press at the end of the nineteenth century and its connect to the language reforms in the post-World War One period. It was in this “space of discussion” that issues such as Latinization and purification were debated. Implicit in these debates was the idea that the Turks constituted a global linguistic entity (thanks to Turkology) and that Turkic distinctness should be reflected in both the writing and the vocabulary of the Turkic languages. Furthermore, the Turcophone press also called attention to the need to establish a modern education system for the Turkic peoples in order to disseminate their national language widely and follow the path towards acquiring a national identity.

Chapters Four and Six focus in on the Soviet and Kemalist reforms themselves. Taking each as a case study, I show how Latinization and purification in the 1920s and 1930s largely inherited both the Turkological and Turcophone debates. Operating on assumptions about the History of the Turkic language and their uniqueness within the Muslim World, language reformers in both the Soviet Union and Turkey strove to push for Latinization, which they both held would break the Turkic languages from their Islamic past and free them to develop within a new era of national consciousness. For the Soviets, language reform buttressed their Nationality Policy which held that non-Russian groups should form ‘national republics’ and disseminate the communist message through local languages.

For the Kemalists language reform freed the Turks from the Ottoman imperial past and the multiethnic considerations of the late Ottoman period. Instead, the Kemalists sought to use language reform to modernize Turkish society and achieve the status of being a nation-state in the mold of Europe. In order to achieve this, the Kemalists—like their

Bolshevik counterparts—argued that Turkish had to be freed from Arabic and Persian vocabulary and alphabet and, in its place, develop its own unique linguistic components. Like the Soviets, the Kemalists settled on the Latin alphabet as the best reflection of Turkish orthography.

This dissertation, I hope, will contribute to the study of linguistic nationalism by focusing on how the Turkic languages underwent widespread and similar reforms in roughly the same period. This meant that reformers and nationalists in both Turkey and the Soviet Union had reached similar conclusions about the connection between modernization and nationhood. In their minds, the two would reinforce each other. They both also spoke to each other through the press and conferences to push for Latinization and for the purification of grammar and vocabulary. It was modernizing ideologies, especially nationalism, that contributed greatly to this project.

Bibliography

Feroz Ahmad, *The Making of Modern Turkey* (London: Routledge, 1993).

Masami Arai, *Turkish Nationalism in the Young Turk Era* (Leiden, New York: E.J. Brill, 1992).

Betül Aslan, *Azerbaycan'da Latin Alfabesi'ne Geçiş Sürecinde Yeni Yol Gazetesi* (Latin Alfabesi ile Çıkan İlk Türk Gazetesi) (Erzurum: Atatürk İlkeleri ve İnkılap Tarihi Enstitüsü Yayınları, 2004).

Cemil Aydın, *The Politics of Anti-Westernism in Asia: Visions of World Order in Pan-Islamic and Pan-Asian Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

İlker Aytürk, "Turkish Linguists Against the West: The Origins of Linguistic Nationalism in Atatürks Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 40, Issue 6 (2004), pp. 1-25.

İlker Aytürk, "The First Episode of Language Reform in Republican Turkey: The Language Council from 1926 to 1931," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 18, Issue 3 (July, 2008), pp. 275-293.

Yeşim Bayar, *Formation of the Turkish Nation-State, 1920-1938* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

BBC News, "Kazakhstan to Qazaqstan: Why would a country switch its alphabet?" <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41800186>.

Amin Bein, *Ottoman Ulema, Turkish Republic: Agents of Change and Guardians of Tradition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

Niyazi Berkes, *The Development of Secularism in Turkey* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

Muhittin Birgen, *İttihat ve Terakki'de On Sene: 2. Cilt İttihat ve Terakki'nin Sonu*, ed. Zeki Arıkan (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2006).

Mühitdin Birgen, *İttihad və Tərəqqidə 10 İl Azərbaycan 1922-1923-cü İllərdə*, ed. Vilayət Quliyev (Baku, Qanun Nəşriyyatı, 2015).

Resul Çatalbaşı, "Milaslı Dr. İsmail Hakkı'nın Hayatı, Eserleri, ve İslam İlgili Görüşleri," [The Life and Works of Dr. Milasli Ismail Hakki and His Views On Islam], 2014/1 (1), 99-129.

Joseph Castagné, "Étude historique et comparative des statues babas des Steppes Khirghizes et de Russie en général" in *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1910), pp. 375-407.

Joseph Castagné, “Monuments cyclopéens dans le Ferghana,” in *Bulletins et Mémoires de la Société d'anthropologie de Paris* VI^e Série, Tome 5 fascicule (1914), pp. 7-10.

Joseph Castagné, *Le Congrès de Turkologie de Bakou (Mars 1926)* (Editions Ernest Leroux: Paris, 1926).

Léon Cahun, *Introduction à l'histoire de l'Asie: Turcs et Mongols, des origines à 1405* (Paris: Libraires de la Société des Gens de lettres, 1896).

Hikmet Yıldırım Celkan, “I. Meşrutiyet Döneminde Modern Bir Eğitimci: Münif Paşa,” in *Gaziantep Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 7(2), 2008, pp. 399-404.

William Henry Chamberlin, “Soviet Race and Nationality Policies,” *The Russian Review* 5, no. 1 (1945), pp. 3-9.

William Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East* 5th edition (Boulder: Westview Press, 2013).

Randi Cox, “NEP without Nepmen! Soviet Advertising and the Transition to Socialism,” in Christina Kiaer and Eric Naiman, *Everyday Life in Early Soviet Russia: Taking the Revolution Inside* (Bloomington & Indiana: Bloomington University Press, 2006).

Arthur Lumley Davids, *A Grammar of the Turkish Language* (London: Parbury & Allen, 1832).

Ömer Faruk Demirel, “I. Türkoloji Kongresi ve Theodor Menzel,” in *1926 Bakû Türkoloji Kongresinin 70. Yıl Dönümü Toplantısı (29-30 Kasım 1996)* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1999), pp. 27-58.

Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004).

S.N. Eisenstadt, “The Kemalist Revolution in Comparative Perspective,” in Ali Kazancıgil and Ergun Özbudun, ed., *Atatürk: Founder of a Modern State* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1981).

William Fierman, *Language Planning and National Development: The Uzbek Experience* (Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1991).

A von Gabain, *Alttürkische Grammatik mit Bibliographie, Lesestücken und Wörterverzeichnis, auch Neutürkisch* (Otto Harrassowitz Wiesbaden, 1974).

Jala Garibova & Betty Blair, “Arabic or Latin? Reform at the Price of a Battleship” in *Azerbaijani International*, Spring 2000, pp. 56-61, https://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/81_folder/81_articles/81_turkology_congress.html, last accessed October 1, 2017.

Ömer Gündüz and İsmail Fırat, “Dil Devriminin Gerçekleşmesinde Türk Dil Kurumu Rolü” in *The Journal of International Social Research* Vol. 7, No. 34, pp. 59-71.

Turan Həsənzadə, “Birinci Azərbaycan Qəzeti,” in *Чэсэн Бэј Зэрдаби, Әкинчи* (Бакы: Азәрбаиҷан Дөвләт Нәшријаты, 1979).

Milashlı İsmail Hakkı, *Yeni Harflerle Elifba* (İstanbul: Matbaa-yı Hayriye ve Şürekası, 1917).

Francine Hirsh, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

Afet İnan, “Açış Söylevi,” in *Harf Devrimi'nin 50. Yılı Sempozyumu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1981).

Marianne Kamp, *The New Woman in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling Under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).

Leila Karahan, “Atatürk Dönemi Dil Kurultaylarında Türk Dünyası,” in *Türk Dili* S. 574 (Oct., 1999), pp. 845-853.

Enver Ziya Karal, “Önsöz,” in Yusuf Akçura, *Üç Tarz-ı Siyaset* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1976).

Kemal H. Karpat, *Türk Demokrasi Tarihi* (Istanbul: Timaş Yayınları, 2017).

Samir Kazımoğlu, “Alman Türkologları ve Birinci Bakû Türkoloji Kongresi (Prof. Dr. Georg Jakob, Prof. Dr. Theodor Menzel, Prof. Dr. Paul Wittek),” in *1926 Bakû Türkoloji Kongresinin 70. Yıl Dönümü Toplantısı (29-30 Kasım 1996)* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1999).

Adeeb Khalid, *Islam After Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007).

Adeeb Khalid, “Central Asia between the Ottoman and Soviet Worlds,” in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 12, 2 (Spring 2011): 451-76.

Konul Khalilova, “How Muslim Azerbaijan Had Satire Years Before Charlie Hebdo,” *BBC Azeri*, February 28, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-31640643>.

Zeynep Korkmaz, “Alfabe Devriminin Türk Toplumunu Üzerindeki Sosyal ve Kültürel Etkileri,” *International Periodical for the Languages, Literature, and History of Turkish or Turkic*, Vol. 4/3 (Spring, 2009), pp. 1469-1480.

David Kushner, *The Rise of Turkish Nationalism, 1876-1908* (London & New York: Routledge, 1977).

Jacob Landau, *Pan-Turkism: From Irredentism to Cooperation* (Indiana University Press, 1995).

Vladimir Lenin, “Communism is Soviet Power Plus the Electrification of the Whole Country,” in *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5th ed. (Moscow, 1975-79), Vol. 36, pp. 15-16, accessed through *Seventeen Moments in Soviet History: An Online Archive of Primary Sources*, <http://soviethistory.msu.edu/1921-2/electrification-campaign/communism-is-soviet-power-electrification-of-the-whole-country/>, last accessed October 2nd, 2017.

Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961).

Geoffrey Lewis, *The Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

George Liber, “Korenizatsiia: Restructuring Soviet Nationality Policy in the 1920s,” in *Journal for Ethnic and Racial Studies* 14, no. 1 (1991): 15-24.

Alfred D. Low, “Soviet Nationality Policy and the New Program of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union,” in *The Russian Review* 22, no. 1 (1963), pp. 3-29.

J.P. Mallory & D.Q. Adams, “Discovery” in *The Oxford Linguistic Introduction to Proto-Indo-European and the Proto-Indo-European World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 1-12.

Şerif Mardin, *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000).

Terry Martin, “An Affirmative Action Empire: The Soviet Union as the Highest Form of Imperialism,” in Ronald Grigor Suny and Terry Martin, *A State of Nations: Empire and Nation-Making in the Age of Lenin and Stalin* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923-1939* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2001).

Cəlal Bəydili Məmmədov, *Azərbaycan Publisistikası Antologiyası* (Baku: Şərq-Qərb, 2007).

Sinan Meydan, *Türk Aydınlanması Akl-ı Kemal: Atatürk'ün Akıllı Projeleri* (İstanbul: İnkılap Kitabevi Yayın Sanayi ve Ticaret AŞ, 2014).

James H. Meyer, *Turks Across Empires: Marketing Muslim Identity in the Russian-Ottoman Borderlands, 1856-1924* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Elizabeth Minkel, "The Magazine That Almost Changed the World," *The New Yorker*, May 26, 2011, <https://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/the-magazine-that-almost-changed-the-world>.

Valentine M. Moghadam and Fatima Sadiqi, "Women's Activism and the Public Sphere: An Introduction and Overview," in *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 2, Special Issue: Women's Activism and the Public Sphere (Spring 2006), pp. 1-7.

Nursultan Nazarbayev, "Course Towards the Future: Modernization of Kazakhstan's Identity," 10/16/2017, <http://www.ukgu.kz/en/course-towards-future-modernization-kazakhstans-identity>.

Kamil Vəli Nərimanoğlu & Əliheydər Ağakişiyev, *1926-cı İl Bakı Türkoloji Qurultayı (Stenoqram materialları, bibliografiya və foto-sənədlər)* (Bakı: Çinar Çap, 2006).

Prof. Dr. Kamil Veli Nerimanoğlu & Prof. Dr. Mustafa Öner, *1926 Bakü Türkoloji Kurultayı (Tutanaklar) 26 Şubat - 6 Mart 1926* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 2008).

Kamil Vəli Nərimanoğlu, Ə. Ağakişiyev, & S. Abdullayeva, "Latin Əsaslı Yeni Türk Əlifbası və I. Bakı Türkoloji Qurultayı Bibliografiyası" (Baku: 2006).

Douglass Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2004).

Osman Okyar. "The Concept of Étatism." *The Economic Journal* 75, no. 297 (1965): 98-111.

Mustafa Öner, "I. Bakü Türkoloji Kongresinde İdil-Ural Türkleri," in *1926 Bakü Türkoloji Kongresinin 70. Yıl Dönümü Toplantısı (29-30 Kasım 1996)* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1999), pp. 13-25.

Mustafa Oral, "Türkoloji Tarihinde 1926 Bakü Türkiyat Kongresi," in *Türk Dünyası Dil ve Edebiyat Dergisi* Issue 17 (2004), pp. 107-129.

İlber Ortaylı, "Türk Harf Devrimi'nin Dış Ülkelerdeki Etkileri Üzerine," in *Harf Devrimi'nin 50. Yılı Sempozyumu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1981).

Ali Özgün Öztürk, “Dil Devrimi Sonrası Türkiye Türkçesine Giren Türkçe Kelimelerin Söz Varlığına Etkileri” (PhD diss., Gazi University, 2008).

Jale Parla, “The Wounded Tongue: Turkey’s Language Reform and the Canonicity of the Novel,” in *PMLA* 123, no. 1 (2008): 27-40.

J. Saint-Martin, *Critique Littéraire in Société asiatique : Journal asiatique : ou recueil de mémoires, d'extraits et de notices relatifs à l'histoire, à la philosophie, aux sciences, à la littérature et aux langues des peuples orientaux... / publié par la Société asiatique*. 1822, 109 - 115.

Wilhelm Radloff, “Observations sur les Kirghiz,” in *Journal asiatique : ou recueil de mémoires, d'extraits et de notices relatifs à l'histoire, à la philosophie, aux sciences, à la littérature et aux langues des peuples orientaux... / publié par la Société asiatique*. October 1863) pp. 309 - 328.

Wilhelm Radloff, *Phonetik der Nördlichen Türkischen Sprachen* (Leipzig: T.O. Weigel’s Verlag, 1882).

Wilhelm Radloff, *Versuch eines Wörterbuches der Türk-Dialecte* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1960).

Wilhelm Radloff, *South Siberian Oral Literature: Turkic Texts Volume 1* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1967).

Michael A. Reynolds, *Shattering Empires: The Clash and Collapse of the Ottoman and Russian Empires, 1908-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Joan Rubin and Björn H. Jernudd, “Introduction: Language Planning as an Element in Modernization,” in *Can Language be Planned?* (Honolulu University of Hawaii Press, 1971).

Şemseddin Sâmî, *Kâmûs-ı Türkî* (İstanbul, Çağrı Yay., 1996).

Bilal N. Şimşir, “Türk Harf Devrimi’nin Türkiye Dışında Yayılması: Bulgaristan Türkleri Örneği,” in *Harf Devrimi’nin 50. Yılı Sempozyumu* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1981).

Bilal N. Şimşir, *Türk Yazı Devrimi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2008).

A. Holly Shissler, *Between Two Empires: Ahmet Ağaoğlu and the New Turkey* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

Diana Spearman & Naim M. Turfan, "The Turkish Language Reform," *History Today*, Vol. 29 Issue 2 (February 1979), pp. 88-97.

Selçuk Akşin Somel, *The Modernization of Public Education in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1908* (Leiden: Brill, 2001).

İsmail Şükrü, *Latin ve Arap Harflerden Daha İyisini Bulalım* (Istanbul: Kadir Matbaası, 1926).

Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920: The Shaping of National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

Frank Tachai, "Language and Politics: Turkish Language Reform," *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 26, No. 2 (Apr. 1964), pp. 191-204.

Ferhat Tamir, "Ahmet Baytursinoğlu ve 1926 Baku Türkoloji Kongresi," in *1926 Bakû Türkoloji Kongresinin 70. Yıl Dönümü Toplantısı (29-30 Kasım 1996)* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1999), pp. 115-119.

Fevziye Abdullah Tansel, *Namık Kemal'in Hususi Mektupları II: İstanbul ve Midilli Mektupları* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1969).

Arslan Tekin and Ahmet Zeki İzgöer ed., *Anadolu Mecmuası* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 2011),

Talat Tekin, *A Grammar of Orhon Turkic* (Bloomington: Indiana University, 1968).

Vilhelm Thomsen, *Inscriptions de l'Orkhon Déchiffrées* (Helsingfors, Imprimerie de la Société de Littérature Finnoise, 1896).

Vilhelm Thomsen, *Etudes Concernant L'Interprétation des Inscriptions Turques de la Mongolie et de la Sibérie* (Helsinki: Société Finno-Ougrienne, 1916).

Mustafa Toker, "Türkistan'ın Latin Alfabesine Geçemesinde Büyük Rol Oynayan Halid Seid Hocayev ve *Yeni Elifba Yollarında Eski Hatıra ve Duygularım* Adlı Eseri," in *1926 Bakû Türkoloji Kongresinin 70. Yıl Dönümü Toplantısı (29-30 Kasım 1996)* (Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları, 1999).

Mete Tunçay, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Tek-Parti Yönetimi'nin Kurulması (1923-1931)* (Ankara: Olguç Matbaası, 1981).

Türk Dil Kurumu (T.D.T.C.), *Osmanlıcadan Türkçeye Söz Karşılıkları Tarama Dergisi* (İstanbul: İstanbul Devlet Matbaası, 1934).

Ercan Uyanık and İrfan Davut Çam, “Arap Elifbası’ndan Latin Alfabesine Geçiş Süresinde Garpcı Söylemler,” in *Journal Of Modern Turkish History Studies* [Çağdaş Türkiye Tarihi Araştırmaları Dergisi] XIV/29 (2014-Güz/Autumn), ss.189-221.

V. Stanley Vardys, “Soviet Nationality Policy Since the XXII Party Congress,” *The Russian Review* 24, no. 4 (1965), pp. 323-340.

H. Seton-Watson, “Soviet Nationality Policy,” in *The Russian Review* 15, no. 1 (1956), pp. 3-13.

Jenny B. White, “State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman,” in *NWSA Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 3, Gender and Modernism Between the Wars, 1918-1939 (Autumn, 2003).

M. Brett Wilson, *Translating the Qur'an in an Age of Nationalism: Print Culture and Modern Islam in Turkey* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Eruğrul Yaman, *Gaspıralı İsmail ve Türkçede Birlik* (Ankara: Akçağ Yayınları, 2015).

Kaya Yılmaz, “Critical Examination of the Alphabet and Language Reforms in the Early Years of the Turkish Republic,” in *Journal of Social Studies Education Research*, 2[1], (2011), pp. 59-82.

Erik Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (London & New York: I.B. Tauris, 2005).

Erik J. Zürcher & Touraj Atabaki, *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Atatürk and Reza Shah* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004).