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# The Knife's Edge of Present: Archaeology in Turkey from the nineteenth century to the 1930s

Mesut Dinler[1]

Via Cirio 13, 10152, Torino, TO, Italy

mesutdinler@gmail.com

**Abstract**

*This paper investigates how archaeology functioned in Turkey from the nineteenth century until the end of the 1930s. In the nineteenth-century Ottoman world, there raised an awareness to acknowledge the power of 'patrimony'. Amidst intense reforms to westernize the Empire, the archaeological artifacts were used as a means of European-ness. The Greek, Roman, and Byzantine past of the Ottoman lands were the focus of this era. The foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923 marked the start of a new project to create a modern nation-state out of a centuries old Islamic dynasty. This project re-wrote the history of Turkish nation in relation with prehistoric civilization such as the Hittites and the Sumerians. Archaeology became the primary tool of the Republic to validate the renewed history.*

**Keywords:** Tanzimat, Ottoman Empire, Turkish Republic, archaeology

## Introduction

"…*we change along with events; and as we change, we construct our histories anew*. The human mind functioned like this. Humanity would continually reformulate time."

Ahmet Hamdi Tanpınar

Tanpınar, the prominent modern novelist of the Turkish literature, links the modern Turkish society with the late Ottoman era and his books and essays reflect the complexities of this transition from one past to another (Göknar, 2003). The main protagonist of his book *Huzur* (1949; *A Peace at Mind*, 2009) is Mümtaz, a young intellectual guy who has to deal with his individual problems in the everyday

[1] Department of Architecture and Design, Politecnico di Torino, Torino, Italy

life of the 1930s' Republican era, a time where the remnants of the Ottoman past of the late nineteenth century was still visible in daily life. Mümtaz is aware that the present operates on the past using cultural heritage, though such an understanding of cultural heritage came far later the years in which Mümtaz was created.

This paper will investigate the production process of cultural heritage through archaeology in the course of the passage from the nineteenth-century Ottoman Empire to the twentieth-century modern secular Turkish Republic. As will be explained further below, in the nineteenth century a serious of reforms were realized to modernize the Empire; such a tendency made use of Greek, Roman, and Byzantine artifacts to establish a European identity for the Empire, nevertheless, these precautions did not prevent the Empire from collapsing. The Turkish Republic, as a modern nation-state, carried the focus of history to an even further past. The prehistoric civilizations (Hittites and Sumerians) were suggested to be the ancestors of the Turkish nation. This formulated theory was heavily depended on archaeology.

Turkey is not a unique case that a twentieth-century founded state has found its roots in a distant past; there are many states who carefully designed the past of their nations. Smith (1991: 14) suggests that nations are evolved from *ethnie*s (ethnical communities); and defines the nation as "a named human population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members.". This definition makes the politics of national identity even more complicated, however, it also generates a certain formula of nation-making (to create a nation-state from an empire) which is also adopted by Turkey (Smith, 1991: 100-106). Archaeology has always been at the center of efforts of nation-making (Kohl & Fawcett, 1995). In fact, the whole concept of 'cultural heritage' is conceived as the main element which creates the national common past that is needed for the formation of nation-states; it is a product of the post-French Revolution political, economic, and cultural value system (Lowenthal, 1985; Choay, 2001; Glendinning, 2013). Archaeology has become the main discipline that could satisfy the need for scientific evidence that can validate the theories on the common past of a nation. It is not a coincidence that nation-states (as products of modernism) have exploited archaeology, because, archaeology is a discipline that has

emerged (or transformed from the Renaissance-born interest in antiquities) as a scientific discipline to satisfy the modern man's need to rationally understand his roots (Thomas, 2004).

Turkey is not a state emerged out of European cultural value system; however, Europe-centric narratives of the history of archaeology, as studied and told by the above-mentioned European scholars, may help us gain an insight into how this heritage was defined by who for whom, when, and for what purposes also in Turkey. Turkey case does not only exemplify how the use/manipulation of archaeology in the non-Western territories may differ from and/or resemble the Western world, but it also raises a question related with the existing scholar criticism against Europe-centrism in heritage studies. This criticism, which is manifested even in many UNESCO charters (most notable one is the Nara document of 1994), is mostly about the misfit of the European theories into the Asian context (Winter, 2012). However, there are also countries like Turkey who deliberately wanted to adopt these Europe-born concepts. Then the question is; how do these concepts (the idea of 'cultural heritage' as produced and managed through archaeology) travel to the territories they were not born in or designed for? What kind of processes are executed to adopt a phenomenon into a national context?

In Turkey, the power of archaeology is discovered in the nineteenth century by the ruling class of the Ottoman Empire. The same community also took initiative to release a political agenda to westernize the Empire. As will be elaborated below, this elite community exploited archaeology in their project of westernization; they had already personally witnessed such use of archaeology in Europe.

Archaeology is an imported discipline in the nineteenth-century Ottoman world (Özdoğan, 1998). Even though the Ottoman ruling class was well-informed and familiar with the post-French Revolution concepts, Ottomans have never been successful to form a group identity (a nation) out of the multi-lingual, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic population -despite some unsuccessful attempts just before the foundation of the Republic- (Lewis, 1961). The theorization and implementation of a state initiated project to construct the nation was possible only after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Archaeological activities accelerated to accompany an ideological agenda in the service of constructing the Turkish national identity (Tanyeri-Erdemir, 2006).

The main curiosity of this paper is to understand the role of archaeology amidst intense transformations in the state structure of Turkey (that is the passage from a centuries-old Islamic empire to a secular state of parliamentary republic). To achieve its goal, the paper covers almost a century-long history from the nineteenth century to the late 1930s. The key moments of this large time-span are studied to understand that the role of archeology has constantly changed in Turkey depending on who has hold enough power to define the cultural heritage.

## Westernization era of the Empire

The beginnings of the westernization of the Ottoman Empire can be dated back as early as the conquest of Constantinople in 1453 by Sultan Mehmed II. The confrontation with a multicultural cosmopolitan marine culture marked a new era in the cultural life. Therefore, the conquest of Constantinople marks the first stage of the westernization of the Ottoman Empire. This stage was a period of cultural exchanges; the relationship of the Ottoman Empire with Europe (especially with Italy) had accelerated following the conquest, and the Ottoman cultural life was transformed almost contemporarily with the Italian Renaissance (Necipoğlu, 2007). Unlike the second and third stages that were deliberate attempts of modernization, the first stage was a less ambitious adoption of European life where many things in the Christian Europe "were useful enough and attractive enough to borrow, imitate, and adapt" (Lewis, 1961: 45). The second stage came in the eighteenth century through military rearrangements. These arrangements were a response to the successive military failures. With the third stage, it was aimed to restructure not only the army, but the whole state structure. The third stage came with *Tanzimat* (the Arabic word *tanzimat*, literally translates as rearrangement) reforms in 1839 (İnalcık, 1998).

The westernization of the empire was also the official acknowledgement of the West superiority over the East. This acknowledgement was already well-established even in the seventeenth century among the Ottoman ruling class through failures on various military expeditions. However, until 1839, the westernization goal was limited to the military reforms through emulation of the Western technical, scientific, and educational reforms (Çelik, 1986: 32).

In the nineteenth century, with the European expansion onto the new territories over the globe, the Ottoman Empire was already left outside the new global economic system. Several sultans had unsuccessfully attempted to carry the empire to its former glory realizing reforms that would modernize both the military system and the society. However, these reforms always carried the danger of straining the delicate cultural, religious, and social balance of this centuries-old Islamic dynasty (Shaw, 2003: 15-16). With the *Tanzimat*, these attempts became -relatively- more successful. Mustafa Reşit Paşa, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Grand Vizier (it was common for the period that ministers serve as vizier) was one of the key figures who penned the Charter. The extensive reforms of the *Tanzimat* have included almost all aspects of the life; military, education, health, foreign relations, administrative structure, architecture and city planning, industrial design, literature, etc. *Tanzimat* was the first steps of the secularization of the Empire, it promised equality for all Muslim and non-Muslim individuals, ending the corruption, no punishment without trials, and the beginning of a new age (Feroz, 2003: 33).

*Tanzimat* had an enormous effect on the built environment. Especially in İstanbul urban projects that were implemented especially after the fires in the historic quarters had changed the character of the city. Even these urban projects helped the ruling class transform İstanbul into a seemingly-European city; the organic Ottoman urban fabric that was dominated with *cul-de-sac*s were being replaced with the grid plans (Celik, 1986). Not only the urban fabric, the urban life in Istanbul was also transformed through close relations with Europe; new telegraph lines connected the Empire to Europe, new ferry lines were introduced, and a new palace (*Dolmabahçe Palace*) was also constructed to accommodate the sultan and his family. All these investments were realized with European financial aids (Gül, 2009: 40-41).

At the turn of the century, the Ottoman financial system was heavily penetrated by the Western economic interests and suffered from intense crisis. However, it was still a global actor in the world politics (Deringil, 1999: 3). As Shaw (2003: 20) points out, the westernization of the empire was an inquiry for a new identity but it was also a necessity to survive in the nineteenth century; it was an attempt to both take precautions against European imperialism and get aligned with Europe at the same time. It was a transformation project to adopt a European identity. Makdisi (2004: 30) highlights that these

reforms have been realized differently in the center (İstanbul) and the peripheries. Especially in the Arab provinces, *Tanzimat* has been experienced as "physical and symbolic violence in the name of reform, modernization, and imperial stability". This apathy towards the Arab provinces, as will be discussed below, was evident in archaeology as well. Archaeology was one of the most utilized tools to generate a Europe-associated identity. It was the only tool to produce the 'patrimony' that would generate the cultural link with Europe.

## Archaeology during the Westernization

Archaeology has long been conceived as a European practice. It has emerged as a need to satisfy the mankind's curiosity to locate roots of the civilization. During the nineteenth century, this quest triggered a nationalist contest; possessing the archaeological findings would denote possessing the civilization (Bahrani, Çelik, & Eldem, 2011). Ottoman Empire was already familiar with the archaeological campaigns (both in and outside today's Turkey) carried out by the Western excavators. This familiarity was encharged with a frustration related with the removal of the findings to the European or northern American museums. For example, findings of Khorsabad, Nineveh (close to Mosul, northern Iraq) excavations were shipped to the Louvre and to the British Museum; that of Nimrud (which is not the same side as Nemrud in Adıyaman which will also be mentioned below. Nimrud is on the southeast of Mosul in today's Iraq) to the British Museum, Tello/Telloh (Northwest of Lagash, southern Iraq) to the Louvre Museum (Cezar, 1995: 290-293). The most known incidence is the Schliemann's infamous excavations of Troy and his smuggling the treasuries (Bahrani, Çelik, & Eldem, 2011: 24-25). For the Europeans (ambassadors, travelers, archaeologists, etc.) on the other hand, Ottomans seemed indifferent towards the archaeological artifects. These diplomats were concerned for the condition of the artifects and shipping the findings to their countries was a concern of safeguarding them (Anderson, 2015: 450-451). Eldem (2011b: 282-283) states that three cases were particularly triggering for the Ottoman Empire to act against the removals. First one is the removal of the Parthenon friezes by Lord Elgin between 1801 and 1802, the second one is siege of Athens in 1826 by the Ottoman troops during the Greek Independence War (which the Ottomans witnessed the political power of antiquities in a society), and the third one is

removal of the findings of the Ephesus excavation in 1860s by Briton John Turtle Wood. These cases forced the Ottoman Empire to enact regulations to control foreign archaeological activities. However, there were also cases that the sultans gave the archaeological artifacts to the European monarchs as a gesture of gratitude and a symbol of potentiality of the diplomatic relations. For instance, King Louis Philippe received some pieces given by both by Sultan Mahmud II (from Assos on the Aegean Mediterranean coast) and the rebellion Ottoman governor Mehmed (Muhammed) Ali Paşa who established his own dynasty in Egypt rebelling against the Ottoman state (the Luxor Obelisk that is re-mantled at the Place de la Concorde). It is noteworthy that both the sultan and the governor initiated a simultaneous modernization project within their own territories, and they both utilized the same tools to establish the close contact with Europe. Nevertheless, the Ottoman state changed its vision on the uses of this tool (archeology and the archaeological materials) in 1869 with the promulgation of a decree and the establishment of the Imperial Museum (*Müze-i Hümayun*) the very same year. The primary mission of the *Müze-i Hümayun* was not to regulate archaeological activities of foreigners, however it functioned as such to a certain extent.

*Müze-i Hümayun* was not the first museum of the Empire. Hagia Irene Church, which had functioned as an army depot since the sixteenth century, was opened in 1846. This church (which is on the first courtyard of the Topkapı Palace) was the only Byzantine church which is not converted to a mosque after the conquest of the city (Ogan, 1946). Displaying this collection of weapons to the public together with some antiquities marked the beginnings of Ottoman museums (Madran, 1996: 61). Hagia Irene Church had been divided into two wings; one wing for these weapons, the Magazine of Antique Weapons (*Mecmua-i Esliha-i Atika*), and the other wing for antiquities, the Magazine of Antiquities (*Mecmua-i Asar-i Atika*). The weapons were already stored in the depot, therefore their rearrangement as a part of the museum collection helped to narrate a calculated Ottoman history to the visitors to praise the achievements of the Ottoman army. The collection at the Magazine of Antiquities, on the other hand, was an assemblage of uncatalogued archaeological artifects from the Hellenistic and Byzantine period, collected from various places of the Empire (Shaw, 2003: 48). In fact, these artifects did not seem very

important to the founders of the museum at the beginning, however, the interest in the weapons had decreased by time and the focus on the antiquities accelerated arguably due to Sultan Abdülaziz's fascination with the antiquities collections in the European museums that he had personally seen during his visit to Europe (Shaw, 2003: 84). The Ottoman bureaucrats were already familiar with the European culture either through completing their education or undertaking various duties in Europe. Witnessing the importance given to the antiquities, they promoted their admiration through printed media to a wider audience once they returned to their homes (Ortaylı, 1985). However, in its early years, the museum did not have a collection catalog; moreover, it was not recorded when and where these artifects were found. The collection was managed (protected) by the official guards (Ogan, 1947).

When the museum at the Hagia Irene Church was renamed and restructured as *Müze-i Hümayun* in 1869, the Minister of Education, Saffet Paşa (1814-1883), who was keenly interested in antiquities, took initiative to enlarge the museum collection. He ordered local governors to pack and ship the antiquities to the capital. A new director was also appointed to the museum meanwhile. Edward Goold, a teacher at the Lycée Impérial de Galatasaray (*Galatasaray Mekteb-i Sultani)* (Cezar, 1995: 231). Even though there is limited information on the collection of the museum, it is known that Goold worked for the preparation of a museum catalog, however this catalog included only some selected pieces (Ogan, 1947). It is noteworthy that the establishment of the Lycée Galatasaray in 1868 was also a *Tanzimat* development. It was a strategic step of the Ottoman Empire to raise the individuals of the intelligentsia that would advocate the co-existence of different communities under the Ottoman rule instead of federal or independent states. Other foreign educational institutions were also established following the Lycée Galatasaray (Feroz, 2003: 35).

As archaeology became an interest for the elite Ottoman class who already had been engaged with the Europe culture, there were no archaeological campaigns yet carried out by Ottomans. There was a lack of qualified professionals who could undertake a campaign. Under the management of the next museum director Dr. Dethier, an archaeology school was already foreseen in 1877 to meet such a need, however this school has never been established (Cezar, 1995: 236). As mentioned above, the removal of

the antiquities was another concern. In the later years, Dr. Dethier, the museum director from 1872 to 1881, had also drawn the government's attention to the antiquities deported by the European diplomats and archaeologists. However, the intentions to pretend such acts became legally and actively possible only when Osman Hamdi Bey became the director of the museum (Cezar, 1995: 313). The collection of the museum kept enlarging also during the management of the later directors; and new artifects necessitated a new space. The museum was carried to its new building in the Tiled Kiosk (*Çinili Köşk)* in 1873 (Madran, 1996).

*Müze-i Hümayun* saw its heyday under the management of Osman Hamdi Bey. When Osman Hamdi Bey became the director of the Imperial Museum in 1881, being the first Ottoman director, archaeological policies of the Empire also faced a new direction (through archaeological campaigns) and the museum gained an ideological vision (Shaw, 2007a: 257).

Osman Hamdi Bey (1842-1910) was born into the highest elites of the Ottoman political class. He was one of the first students sent to Paris to study law by his father, the grand vizier Ibrahim Eldem Paşa who also was sent to Paris for education. Osman Hamdi Bey, instead of studying law, discovered his love for painting in Paris and studied in École des Beaux-Arts. He got trained under the French Orientalist painters Gérôme (1824–1904) and Gustave Boulanger (1824–88) (Cezar, 1995). Osman Hamdi Bey is generally regarded as the master mind of the Ottoman cultural life who challenged the orientalist stereotypes through his paintings.

Completing his education in Paris, Osman Hamdi Bey was reluctant to turn back to the capital, however; what awaited him was worse than what he feared for; his father sent him to Baghdad in 1869 to assist the governor Midhat Paşa. It is arguable that Osman Hamdi developed a nationalist sympathy for the Ottoman Empire during his Baghdad duty, but his time in this Arab province made him face the Ottoman reality and think more elaborately on the reformist discussions to modernize the Empire, however, as a young intellectual in Paris, Osman Hamdi may had learnt such patriotism in France already. After his Baghdad duty, he returned to the capital and carried out several duties most of which were in the department of Foreign Affairs. His duties included even mayoralty. What was common in all these duties

was the interaction with the Empire's European communities, mostly with bureaucrats. Even when he was the mayor, the district of his mayoralty, Pera, was a district populated by the European bureaucrats (Eldem, 2004: 126-127).

Following his promotion as the head of the Imperial Museum, Osman Hamdi Bey started archaeological campaigns that would fulfil his vision: redefining the museum as a reputable institution of the Western archaeology world (Eldem, 2004). If archaeology in Turkey has started as a cultural activity imported from the West to "integrate within the European cultural system" (Özdoğan, 1998: 112), then Osman Hamdi Bey is one of the key figures of this import. He was not only effective to envisage a new direction for the museum, but also enforced the legislation changes to prohibit the export of archaeological findings (Eldem, 2004).

With Osman Hamdi Bey, the Ottoman Empire took steps to become an internationally-acknowledged actor of archaeology (Bahrani, Çelik, & Eldem, 2011: 13), as a result, the institutionalization of the Imperial Museum and its ambitious expansion had raised questions and doubts among the European community (Celik, 2011: 446). For example, when Osman Hamdi Bey started his Mount Nemrud campaign (in Adıyaman) in 1883 to excavate the tumulus of Antiochus I of Commagene, the site had already been discovered by a German team two years earlier and even the results were published by the Berlin Museum in 1882. As the Carl Humann was in the process of being commissioned by the Berlin Museum to investigate the site further, Osman Hamdi Bey went to the Mount Nemrud to claim the site before Germans (Cezar, 1995: 313-314; Eldem, 2004). Mount Nemrud campaign was the first campaign managed by an Ottoman in 1883. It was the first step of the successive archaeologic expeditions started by Osman Hamdi Bey all over the Empire.

The Nemrud excavation was already an unexpected step for the European community. The 1884 Decree, then, came as a shock for the same community. There was already an existing legislation to regulate the issues related with archaeological campaigns, obtaining the permits, and transferring the findings. The 1869 Decree, Old Monuments Law (*Asar-ı Atika Nizamnameleri*) had seven articles all of which were related with the archaeological findings. This decree was needed to regulate the permission

process for the foreign archaeological excavations and to stipulate the conditions for the export of the findings (Madran, 1996: 61). This decree, which was drafted and proposed by another museum director, Dr. Dethier (Cezar, 1995: 236), allowed the private ownership of the findings but prohibited their export to other countries. This decree was not sufficient to ensure absolute state control over the findings. The new 1874 Decree prohibited excavations without permissions and regulated the ownership arrangements. By this law, the finder and the landowner would hold a share of the findings and the finder would be allowed to export his share. These two decrees were already active when Osman Hamdi Bey was promoted as the head of the Imperial Museum. After being promoted, Osman Hamdi Bey enforced a new law; with the 1884 Decree, all findings would belong to Imperial Museum, however if the findings were accidentally found on a private land, then the landowner would be granted half ownership of the artifects. The last decree came in 1906 and declared that all antiquities that were found in or on private or public lands would belong to the state (Cuno, 2008: 81-82). With this last decree, the Imperial Museum also became an institution under the Ministry of Education (Madran, 1996: 62). Such a restructuring implies that the Ottoman state was aware of the educational values of the museums. These set of decrees of the late-nineteenth century remained active for the half century following the foundation of the Turkish Republic. Even the Old Monuments Law which was promulgated in 1973 as the first law on historic preservation, made minor changes in terms of archaeology. These late-Ottoman regulations formed the foundations of the current legislation and they are still in effect to regulate the archaeological activities in Turkey.

The authority that the Ottoman state claimed over the antiquities of the territory was a serious cut of resource for the European museums. However, these foreign museums either by-passed Osman Hamdi Bey through directly reaching the sultan (as did Louvre for the antiquities of the Tillo excavations in Iraq) or they developed more intimate relations with Osman Hamdi through purchasing his paintings or honoring him with the memberships (Eldem, 2004).

Osman Hamdi Bey's most significant archaeological accomplishment can be considered as the Sidon excavations. Following the accidental discovery of the site by a villager, O. Hamdi Bey

immediately started the campaign in 1887 (Cezar, 1995: 311-318). He unearthed twenty sarcophagi to be sent to the capital; and ordered the construction of a new museum building across the Tiled Kiosk. The new museum building, the Sarcophagus Museum (Lahitler Müzesi) which was designed by Levantine architects Alexandre Vallaury, opened in 1891 (Even today, these sarcophagi contribute to the highlights of the İstanbul Archaeology Museum). During these years, the museum collection did not include any Islamic works (Shaw, 2003: 157). With the success of Sidon excavations, Osman Hamdi Bey gained his fame and his place among the global archaeology world; he informed European archaeologists as well as Paris-based *Academié des Inscriptions et Belles Lettre* and he co-authored *Nécrople Royale de Sidon* with Theodor Reinach in 1892 (this was the first of a series of publications on the Sidon campaign). Following the fame of the Sidon excavations, the number of the American and European visitors of the museum also increased (Cezar, 1995: 317).

Osman Hamdi Bey took initiative also for the establishment of the Academy of Fine Arts (*Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi*) in 1883. He retained his position both as the director of the Museum and the administrator of the Academy until his death in 1910 (Shaw, 2003: 105). As mentioned above, a school of archaeology was proposed by Edward Goold, however this dream was not achieved in the Ottoman times. The Academy of Fine Arts, in a way, was a more improved version of this school.

At this point, it is needed to remember the irony that is highlighted by Makdisi (2002: 784) that the Ottoman state had developed a strong policy in the nineteenth century to prohibit the export of antiquities, but simultaneously it was removing them from Arab provinces. This attitude shows how modernization/westernization of the Ottoman state was Istanbul-centered and the Arab provinces were considered as "ignorant provincial premodern periphery" (Makdisi, 2002: 784). Cuno (2008) also underlines the complexities related with Ottoman Empire's, hence Osman Hamdi Bey's efforts to claim ownership over antiquities. He draws a contemporary critic of the Turkish Republic's recent attempts to request objects from the foreign museums and raises questions on the antiquities found in the sites that were once Ottoman lands but are independent states today.

I would like to reiterate that the main goal of this paper is to understand how and for what purposes the power structures exploited archaeology. However, the relationship between the society and the archeological artefacts was not always managed by these powerful authorities. Anderson (2015)'s research, for instance, reveals that there were cases that the local population reacted to the removal of the antiquities. He suggests that this reaction was not triggered by a Europe-minded appreciation of archaeology. On the contrary, these objects did not belong to the 'past', but they were a part of their daily-life practices. Similarly, it was again the local population who reacted when Lord Elgin and his team set up the scaffoldings in Parthenon; in fact, Elgin and his team, despite the sultan's written permission, had to made the transportation at nights so the locals inhabitants could not intervene.

In this respect, their reaction challenged the 'authorized heritage discourse' (generated by the Ottoman state) and created an alternative one.

The 'authorized heritage discourse' defines and shapes our relationship with the 'cultural heritage' and is generated by the predominant power holders in a society (Smith, 2006). Without a question, Osman Hamdi Bey was the most powerful figure in the cultural life of the Empire from the start of his duty as the museum director in 1881 to his death in 1910 (Eldem, 2011: 186). Even his father İbrahim Edhem Pasha, the Minister of Trade and Public Works, had been influential in the cultural life of the late Ottoman era; he had taken initiative for the Ottoman participation at the 1873 World Exposition in Vienna. He had prepared an exhibition and two publications; the Fundamentals of the Ottoman Architectural (*Usül-ü Mimari Osmani*) and the Ottoman Clothes (*Elbise-i Osmaniye*) (Cezar, 1995: 203). There are countless number of academic studies on Osman Hamdi Bey and not all of them praises Osman Hamdi Bey as a bohemian intelectual. Eldem (2004), for instance, challenges the idea that Osman Hamdi Bey was a national hero who deliberately enacted patriotic efforts to westernize the empire. He highlights that his motivation for his achievements were much more complex and his world view may had been shaped by the Western cultural system (and a desire to get accepted by that system) rather than the Ottoman system. Similarly, Makdisi (2002) suggests that he was an *Ottoman orientalist* whose attitude towards the Ottoman east both resembled and differed from the Western orientalism. However, even

though it is not the aim of this paper to draw a critic of history-writing, it is needed to highlight that these Osman Hamdi Bey-dominated historic narrations also exposes a problem. As narrated by Çelik and Eldem (2012) the lack of the archival material and the poor maintenance of the existing ones, makes it almost impossible to talk about Ottoman the cultural life of the late nineteenth century without referring to Osman Hamdi Bey (Celik & Eldem, 2012). However, there exists the material to narrate a comprehensive history of archaeology that is not dominated by Osman Hamdi Bey. For instance, the Armenian sculptor Osgan/Oskan Efendi (1855-1814) was the travel companion to Osman Hamdi Bey on his Nemrud archaeologic mission and he was also the co-author of the excavation report *Le Voyage a Nemrud Dağı d'Osman Hamdi Bey et Osgan Efendi (1883);* this report was rapidly published to claim the site before the Germans (Eldem, 2010a). Osgan Efendi had repaired and restored the sculptures and reliefs found in the excavations, and contributed to the establishment of the Academy of Fine Arts as well (Eldem, 2010b). However, his place in Turkish archaeology or his role in the Nemrud excavations is rather left unknown. Not only the actors of the archaeology, but also the existence of alternative archaeological practices are also overlooked in the current scholar literature.

Even though questioning a less-Osman Hamdi Bey-dominated history is an important task, his legacy constituted the basis of archaeology in Turkey. The legislative structure and *Müze-i Hümayun* were the basic elements of this legacy that continued also during the Republican period.

The beginning of the new century had been politically and socially unstable for the Empire which was to be replaced with a Republic in two decades. The passage from the absolute monarchy to the constitutional monarchy in 1908, and the formation of the new parliament was conceived by many as a magic tool that would finally stop the Empire's decline. However, the parliament was attacked by a coup d'état managed by the supporters of Sultan Abdülhamid II. When the sultan was dethroned in 1909, the lack of central power created a liberated milieu for the spread of nationalist thoughts that promoted a Turkish identity. This was followed by more troubled years; the Balkan Wars (1912-1913), the First World War (1914-1918), and finally the Turkish Independence War (1919-1923) paved the way for the emergence of a new state.

Halil Eldem was the successor of his brother Osman Hamdi Bey. He took over the directorship of the *Müze-i Hümayun* during these troubled years after Osman Hamdi Bey's death in 1910. Halil Eldem's productive life shows the rising interest in Islamic heritage in the first decades of the twentieth century; he wrote many publications most of which were about the Seljukid and Ottoman works of art and architecture. His works included the publications on old coins, the articles on the inscription panels on the Islamic monuments, the inventories of the museum collection, the translations from German to Ottoman, and the popular books to promote the Ottoman art to the public. Following the foundation of the Turkish Republic, his studies and publications have included the researches on prehistoric ages as well (Eyice, 1995).

Eldem had to direct the museum during the First World War. This was an overwhelming task that Eldem overcame successfully. Sardis excavations is a fine example to demonstrate not only the intricacy of managing the cultural heritage in the times of armed conflict but also the diplomatic skills of Eldem in directing the museum.

The Sardis excavation had started in 1909 and managed by the Princeton professor Corosby Butler for 'the American Society for the Excavations of Sardis'. The findings of the excavation had been sent to İstanbul until the First World War. During the war, the artifacts in the depots were sent to İzmir (the closest city) to avoid a possible damage. During the Greek occupation of İzmir, this time the artifacts were sent to New York, and this way they were rescued once more. Out of 56 crates that were kept in the Metropolitan Museum, 53 crates were sent back to İstanbul. After classification, twelve crates were again sent to the Metropolitan Museum as a gift in return for their help. Eldem managed the negotiations between the Turkish parliament (convincing them to send back the crates as a measure of gratitude and to cover the costs of the shipment) and the Metropolitan Museum (threatening them to prohibit any future American excavations in Turkey) (Mansel, 1948). The Sardis case may immediately remind the *partage* system (sharing the archaeological findings between the excavating institution and the host country) (Cuno, 2008, p. 14). However, this was not a mutually agreed sharing system, on the contrary, neither

MET nor the Turkish government compromised their positions to own the antiquities. This was a unique win-win instance that was accomplished with Eldem's taking initiative.

Eldem continued his position as the museum director until his death in 1938. He was a prominent figure for the archaeology during the first decades of the Republican era.

## Archaeology during the Republican Times

During the Turkish Independence War (1919-1923), the Grand National Assembly had already been established in 1920 in Ankara. The parliament selected Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), the founder of the Turkish Republic as the first president. The assembly passed intense reforms rapidly under the presidency of Atatürk. Sultanate was already abolished in 1922; and in 1924 caliphate was also abolished and the educational system was renewed to abolish Islamic education. In 1925 religious lodges (*tekke*), shrines (*türbe*), and spaces of fraternities (*zaviye)* were abolished; the alphabet was changed from Arabic to Latin in 1928. In addition, women rights were improved and in 1934 Turkey became one of the earliest countries in Europe that granted women the right to vote and to get elected. All these reforms were a part of a modernist project to create a secular modern nation-state out of centuries-old Islamic dynasty (As noted by Bozdoğan & Kasaba (1997, p.6), Bernard Lewis's work *The Emergence of Modern Turkey* (1961) is one of the best introductory texts for the passage from Ottoman Empire to Turkish Republic). This modernist project primarily got focused on the construction of modern cities through state-funded projects (Bozdogan & Akcan, 2012; Bozdoğan, 2001; Kezer Z. , 2015). Changing the capital from İstanbul to Ankara in 1923 also helped gaining a distance from the Ottoman memories. It also became possible to eliminate the old Ottoman intellectual community from the decision-making process to a certain extent and to form a central community in Ankara. This was a deliberate plan as much as it was a natural outcome of changing the capital. This elimination helped embracing a world-view based on 'positive sciences' ceding the Islamic faith-oriented way of thinking of the Ottoman period (Mardin, 1990).

The conversion of the Topkapı Palace into a museum just after the foundation of the Republic can be considered as the most symbolic act of the Republic's efforts to tear down the Ottoman identity. The

Topkapı Palace Museum was opened to the public with the museum director Tahsin Öz's narrative arrangement of the objects of the imperial life in accordance with their aesthetic and historic value. A more controversial conversion project came in 1934 when the most important ceremonial mosque was decided to be converted into a museum; conversion of the Hagia Sophia Mosque into a museum was an indicator of the secularization of the Republic (Shaw, 2007a: 269-270).

As the converted museums of Istanbul helped the Republic gain a distance from the Ottoman identity without completely rejecting it, the new museums were established in the new capital Ankara to reinforce the new national Turkish identity with the secularization goal on the agenda. The Ethnography Museum was opened to the public in Ankara in 1930. The collection was an assemblage of objects collected from the abolished spaces of religious activities. The presentation of these objects was supposed to alienate the visitors from the religious activities (Kezer, 2000).

About a decade later, another museum, the Ankara Hittite Museum was also going to be established following the initial suggestion of Atatürk. The interest on the prehistoric civilizations was embodied also with names of two state banks that were called SumerBank and HittiteBank (*Etibank*) (Seton-Watson, 1977, p. 259). This interest on the late-Neolithic Age/early-Bronze Age civilizations was not a random choice; on the contrary it was the was a delicately organized project designed for defining the national identity – 'the race'- of the Turkish nation.

The Republic embraced *Türk*-ness as the identity of its nation. Conversely, for the Ottomans, the word *Türk* had pejorative connotations and during the times of war, only a small community called themselves so (Özdoğan, 2001: 33). For the Republic; the '*Türk'* race was an assemblage of nomadic communities covering the lands from Eastern Europe to Central Asia. Some public institutions were formed and commissioned to scientifically investigate the roots of *Türk*s.

The Turkish Hearths' Committee for the Study of Turkish History (*Türk Ocakları Türk Tarihi Tetkik Heyeti*) was founded in 1930 and following the instructions of Atatürk, produced its major work *General Themes of Turkish History (Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları)* in the very same year (Cagaptay, 2004: 87-89). However, this 600-page single volume publication was prepared very fast and carelessly. In some

chapters, the author was not the expert of his field and even the major reference sources were not checked. Atatürk himself had also read and disliked the book; it became obvious that the work of writing the Turkish History would take much longer efforts (Uzunçarşılı, 1937). However, the thesis was formulated and it had to be made public as soon as possible. This failed publication was simplified to outline the major arguments of the Turkish History Thesis and published as *Introduction to the General Themes of Turkish History (Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları-Methal Kısmı),* which advocated that the 'motherland' of *Türks* is the Central Asia; and suggested that *Türks* were diffused to China, India, Middle-East, Egypt, north Africa, Eagean coasts, and Europe from this motherland searching for a better climate after a devastating draught. Moreover; the history of *Türks* in Anatolia was dated back to Sumerians and Hittites ([İnan] et al., 1931). It became clear that a specialized committee would be needed to scientifically proof the thesis. This sub-committee was established in 1930. A few months later, the Turkish Hearths became inactive (after its seventh convention) whereas the sub-committee continued its mission being reorganized as the Society for the Study of Turkish History -SSTH (*Türk Tarihini Tetkik Cemiyeti*) in 1931, which would eventually become the Turkish History Association in 1935 (İnan, 1953). The Association's primary focus was the promotion of the History Thesis. The first years passed by writing the General themes of the Turkish History. Accordingly, the first publications included primary and secondary education history course books, journals, translations of old publications on Turkish history. Moreover, the members of THA participated in international congresses to promote the thesis (Göker, 1937). The History Thesis was backed up also with a language theory, which suggested that Turkish language was the root of contemporary Indo-European languages. SSTH formed another committee for this mission; the Society for the Study of the Turkish Language (*Türk Dili Tetkik Cemiyeti*) was formulated to frame the theoretical background of this suggestion (Cagaptay, 2004: 88). The Language Theory had been harshly criticized and proved incorrect by international scholars, so it faded and got totally forgotten in mid-1930s (Tanyeri-Erdemir, 2006: 390).

The History Thesis was laboriously formulated to claim an internationally acknowledged place within the changing power relations of the early twentieth century. Through the Thesis; firstly, it was

possible to claim links with the Anatolian heritage covering all layers of the territory (including the prehistoric ages), secondly it helped including the Islamic heritage without compromising the secularization goal, and thirdly, it has established connections with the Central Asia through the Turkic precursors (Carter Vaugn, 2005: 5). Yet, it also was beneficial to balance the internal dynamics. The late nineteenth century Westernization project had been an epic failure for the Ottoman Empire and the intellectuals had become even more critical against the Western culture. Therefore, a new historic reference was needed to unite the devastated population of this new state (Özdoğan, 2001). History, anthropology, linguistics, folklore and archaeology were the instruments that the Republic operated with to define the Turkish identity (Tanyeri-Erdemir, 2006: 381).

SSTH has organized two conferences in 1932 and 1937. The main aim of the first congress was to promote the Turkish History Thesis; the second congress, on the other hand, was planned to scientifically back up the History Thesis through archaeological research campaigns (Atakuman, 2008; Tanyeri-Erdemir, 2006).

In the first congress of 1932, the members of SSTH presented their papers all of which elaborated the history thesis. The president of SSTH was Ms. Afet (Afet İnan, after the Surname Law of 1934). She was adopted by Atatürk, and encouraged by him to study and research the history of Turkish nation. She obtained her PhD degree at the Geneva University in 1939, under the supervision of Eugene Pittard.

In her presentation during the first congress, Ms. Afet referred to various European experts who previously mentioned or highlighted that the first civilizations in Europe were formed through the migration wave from Central Asia to the both east and west. She highlighted several times during her presentation that the Turkish race was not a *dolichocephalic* but *brachycephalic* race (these two types of cephalic index groups are anthropologically generated by skull measurements techniques. There is also the third *mesaticephalic* group). This suggestion would mean that the Turkish nation is related with the Europeans (and *Türks* are their ancestors), not with the Mongoloid or Near Eastern societies. Her paper questioned the autochthone community of Central Asia and concluded that *Türk*s were the natives of this land. “Today’s children” she said, “they already know and will acknowledge that they [*Türks*] are not a

tribe of some 400 tents; but they are a ten thousand years-old race that is Arian, contemporary, and high-skilled nation evolved from a high race" ([İnan], 1932). The general secretary of SSTH, Dr. Reşit Galip, on the other hand was reiterating that the predominant elements of the *brachycephalic* Europeans were *Türk*s. He was also addressing Mesopotamia as the land that will provide the clearest information on the racial roots of the Turkish nation. He was suggesting that the "scientific researches reveal that Hittites have common anthropologic features with Turkish race" and he was arguing that Sumerians were the first settlers in Anatolia (Reşet Galip, 1932). Similarly, the other presentations of the SSTH members investigated the relationship of the Turkish race with other civilizations all over the world. Atakuman (2008) suggests that this race-based philosophy is different than the other racial political systems of the given period (the 1930s), because it was born as a reaction to the suggestion that *Türk*s are a secondary Mongoloid race.

Following the First History Congress, SSTH was renamed as the Turkish History Association (THA) in 1935 and was restructured as an institution that is responsible for commissioning archaeological missions in various parts of Turkey. THA mapped the archaeological sites and attained experts to these sites for archaeological excavations. In 1933, Ahlatlıbel and Karalar, in 1934 Göllüdağ, in 1937 Ankara Castle, Çankırıkapı, Etiyokuşu, Pazarlı sites were excavated. In addition, 500 sites (potential  were designated for future excavations and four of them were started to be excavated. Alacahöyük excavation between 1935-1937 was the most significant accomplishment among the THA-commissioned excavations. This site was a tumulus around Hattusas, the capital of Hittite civilization (İnan, 1938). The report of this excavation was one of the first publications of THA (Göker, 1937). Moreover, Alacahöyük was one of the most important religious centers of the Hittites (Koşay, 1943: 30). These extensive archaeological researches did not only represented Turkey as a powerful country that contributes to the global production of archaeological knowledge, but also reinforced the claim that *Türks* owned Anatolia. For the international recognition, the members of THA were participating in international conferences. They both presented the archaeological researches commissioned by THA and promoted the History Thesis and the Language Theory.

When Prof. Afet (İnan) delivered her presentation at the '*XVII Congrès international d'anthropologie & d'archéologie préhistorique*' (September 1-8, 1937) in Brussels; she impressed the

committee with the extensive research THA undertook. She brought publications and journals of THA to promote the science-oriented developments of Turkey in the archaeological field. In addition, she also brought a selection from the findings of the above-mentioned excavations, and she presented these findings to the international scientific community to strengthen her arguments. (Anonymous, 1938). As THA-commissioned excavations numerically increased, foreign teams also continued their excavations (which they had started during the Ottoman period) or started new ones. Atatürk's encouragement for foreign teams to carry research in Turkey was well-received by the European and American community. Many universities and institutes such as the French Archaeological Institute in Turkey, the Oriental Institute of Chicago University, the German Archeological Institute, the Institute of Advanced Studies at Princeton undertook archaeological research projects and subsequently the museum collections expanded in many cities of Turkey (Whittemore, 1943).

THA decided to organize the Second History Congress in İstanbul between September 20-25, 1937. An exhibition on Turkish History was planned, so THA formed a committee for this exhibition. Dolmabahçe Palace was provided by the Republican government for the congress and the exhibition. THA also organized two trips to Alacahöyük and Troy (Göker, 1938). The exhibition acknowledged the *Türk*-ness of Anatolia; it was curated with the archaeological findings displayed in a chronological order to represent all the civilizations that had settled and disappeared in Anatolia (Whittemore, 1943: 164).

Among the participants of the second congress, unlike the first one, there was no concrete consensus. The main argument of the Turkish History Thesis was examined during the five-years span with the archaeologic researchers and at the end, not everyone had agreed on it completely. For the most part, there were disagreements for the suggestion that Aegean culture was formed through its interaction with the migrating Turkish community from the Central Asia to the West during the third millennium BC. Even though some scientists affirmed the suggestion; they suggested the formation of the Greek culture should focus on the second millennium BC when the Aegean culture took precedence through colonialization (Atakuman, 2008: 227)

Tanyemir-Erdemir (2006) and Atakuman (2008) argues that it was this period of intense archaeological research campaigns (between the first and the second History Congresses) that raised the questions about the validity of the Turkish History Theory. The archaeological data was supposed to affirm the theory, however, contrary to the expectations, the data challenged the theory. It is noteworthy that Atatürk attended both congresses, promoted the exhibition to the international audiences, and listened to the outcomes of the researches. In fact, it was Atatürk himself who commissioned some of these researchers to produce the archaeological data to prove that the Turkish History Thesis is the real history (Cagaptay, 2004). When Atatürk died the next year in 1938; the thesis lost the state support granted by the most powerful figure of the Republic. However, it is possible to suggest that the remnants of this thesis are still visible in the contemporary life of Turkey; In the course books, or on the official website of Ministry of Culture and Tourism and its publications, Anatolia is still referred as 'cradle of civilizations'.

## Conclusion

If we try to imagine the daily life of any individual of the first generations of the Turkish Republic, we must consider that for this person the memories of the terror would be still very vivid. This lucid empathy may help us evaluate that designing the past to create the Turkish nation was an urgent need for the Turkish Republic. Creating and sustaining this nation would give the Republic the safe zone that is free from both the dangers of European imperialism/colonialism (as experienced during the late nineteenth century Ottoman era) and the terrors of wars of the early twentieth century (the Turkish Independence War to fight against the European forces that occupied the Ottoman Empire after the loss of the First World War) (Shaw, 2007b). In addition to these legitimizing conditions, it should be also noted that the project of nation-making was race-based so that today's Turkish political problems (especially those related with the minorities) are still discussed as the 1920s-born issues (Cagaptay, 2004).

In Turkey context, cultural heritage has always addressed different pasts; this condition has continued also after the 1940s (after that the parliament had two parties). In 1950s, once ambitiously-alienated Ottoman past was recalled together with its Islamic practices. This process, the never-ending reconstruction of the past through cultural heritage may help us gaining an insight into the contemporary

Turkish politics as well. When one reads on the newspapers that there took a Ramadan ceremony on April 11, 2015 at the Hagia Sophia where the Quran was re-heard for the first time in 85 years, he/she can easily develop an idea about the conflict between today's conservative Turkey and its own republican roots. All these discussions may seem not to be directly related to the main curiosity of this paper, however these are important discussions to understand that cultural heritage may become outstandingly important in the times of political and social changes. This article covers a period from the nineteenth century to the 1940s that these kinds of changes were sudden and intense.

When the ruling class of the Ottoman Empire decided to Westernize the empire, it was not a very radical decision since Europe was the main global powerholder of the nineteenth century. Accordingly, the European interest on antiquities penetrated the Ottoman culture. For the Turkish Republic, on the contrary, the question of who hold the power had a more complicated answer. Sustaining a well-balanced relationship between the US, the USSR, and Europe; Turkish Republic formulated a new identity based on a racial unity. It is noteworthy that one of the earliest (and most important) visuals of Ankara during Republican era is a video-documentary prepared by a Soviet team. This documentary, *Ankara: The Heart of Turkey (Ankara:Türkiye'nin Kalbi),* was prepared for the tenth year anniversary of Republic in 1933 and it was a propaganda movie that praised the Republic's achievements focusing on the new capital. Moreover, also during the first History Congress several telegrams were received by the USSR Academy of Science and Ministry of Culture which congratulated the Republic for the Congress (Anonymous, 1932: 166-167).

It should be also remembered that the formula that the Republic exploited to create the modern nation was the formula that most of the twentieth-century born nation-states utilized. Scott (1998) suggests that this formula is generated by manipulating three basic elements. This suggestion may help us understand the development of modern Turkey as well: First one of these elements is the 'high modernism's ideal motivation to administratively control both the nature and the society (which is evinced in Ankara, the new capital of the Republic); second one is the unrestrained use of the power for this ideal; and the third element is a civil society lacking the capacity to resist this power (we may once

more recall the protagonist Mümtaz, who is mentioned in the introduction of the article; or the first generation of the Republic who witnessed a decade of wars).

The focus of this paper, as mentioned in the introduction, is to understand how 'cultural heritage' was defined and managed amidst strong alterations in the state structure during both the Ottoman Empire's last decades and the Turkish Republic's early decades. After the discussions presented in this paper, it is evident that cultural heritage was not a by-product of these changes but it was an integral element for enacting the change. Therefore, defining the cultural heritage was a process of deconstructing and then reconstructing the parts of the history. This process depended on who had enough power to define the heritage and for whom it was defined. "The knife's edge of present carried the weight of history while also transforming it word by word" says Tanpınar (1949), highlighting that the present is not only evolves from the past, but it also re-generates the past, forms it in a way that the current-past is different from what it was some time ago.

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