

General Framework of “Culture, Arts, and Art Education” Policies in the Early Republic Period in Turkey

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Abstract

This study is about the general framework of the “culture, arts, art education” policies during the Early Republic Period in Turkey. This vibrant and significantly transformative historical era is characterized by radical socio-political changes initiated by top-down government policies aimed at westernization, capitalist modernization, and national identity formation. This study focuses on the coordinated and intense official efforts to create a capitalist, modern, secular, and nationalist state and culture through radical policies and reforms. Hence, by outlining and surveying major policies, this study explores the general framework of transformative interventions in the education system, language, and the establishment of state-initiated and state-supported arts and cultural institutions. This study also includes discussions on the role of policy objectives aimed at Westernization in shaping the national culture. The sensitive “balance and tension” between “welcoming Western influences” and “trying to preserve traditional cultural elements” framed Early Republic policies related to national literature, music, painting, sculpture, theater, cinema, opera, ballet, and art education. The exploration of “culture, art education, and arts” policies during Turkey’s early Republic period provides also insights into these policies’ ongoing impacts on the nation’s current cultural and educational characteristics.

Keywords: *Turkish republic cultural reforms, modernization in turkish arts, nation-state formation in Turkey, western influence on turkish culture, folklore, and national identity in Turkey.*

Introduction

Today’s nation-states face new conditions under an ever-deepening capitalist globalization, which both fosters “world-citizenship” tendencies and intensifies demands for cultural recognition. A state, as Wilczynski (1981, 566) notes, is an apparatus of governance—courts, police, military—tasked with maintaining order and security. Theories of the state abound, drawn from classical thinkers such as Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, Augustine, Aquinas, and extending through Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, and Mill (Sheldon, 2001, 284). Marxists regard the state as historical, arising once private property emerged (Marx, in *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*; Engels, in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*)—an institution that enforces the rule of a dominant class (Wilczynski, 1981, 566; Çiftyürek, 2005, 135).

Nations, by contrast, are human communities shaped by shared history, culture, economy, rights, and public culture (Smith, 1999, 32). Modern theorists like Gellner (quoted in Hobsbawm, 1995, 24) argue that “nation” is inseparable from the existence of a specific territorial state, while Hobsbawm (1995, 73–100) emphasizes the political and sociological dimensions, including “group belonging” and “proto-nationalism.” In the broader scholarly debate, some regard nations as perennial phenomena, while others see them as modern constructs that crystallized especially with the American and French Revolutions (Hobsbawm, 1995, 29).

Beginning in the 16th century, the consolidation of modern states aligned with mercantilism (Carr, 1999). Subsequently, the French Revolution ushered in a phase of “democratizing the nation,” shaped by enlightenment ideals, universal rights, and public education. By the late 19th to early 20th century—called the imperialist era by Lenin (1992, 96)—rising capitalist and colonial competition fueled new national and anti-colonial movements. The collapse of empires like Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian, alongside the 1917 October Revolution, reshaped nation-state formations.

Turkey’s transition to a nation-state must be understood in this historical context.

Political Situation in the First Years of the Turkish Republic

The nation-states that emerged in the 18th century as a form of political organization to meet the needs of the bourgeoisie, have at their core the need to ensure national market unity for the national bourgeoisie.

The inevitable result of nation-states, which emerged as a form of political organization in the 18th century to meet the needs of the bourgeoisie, is that they aim to achieve a certain degree of homogeneity in cultural areas such as language, religion, and religious sect. “This requirement, in the formation of nations, led to the acceptance of the dominant element within different cultural communities within the drawn borders as the primary element, and the imposition of the culture of the dominant group on others. The approach of homogenization also brought its own law, and a citizenship law based on the abstract individual, independent of cultural identities and community rights, developed” (4. Demokratik Eğitim Kurultayı, 2005, 177).

The founding elites of the Turkish Republic were the product of the power relations conditioned by the Turkish-Greek War. The victory provided prestige and power to the elite. The institutionalization of the nation-state after the war could only be achieved with this prestige and power. Immediately after the announcement of the Republic on October 29, 1923, the first implementations were the abolition of the Caliphate, the Ministry of Shari'a and Waqfs, and the establishment of educational unity. After the abolition of the Caliphate, dervish lodges were closed on November 30, 1925 (Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi, 1988, Cilt 6, 1922).

In early 1926, some basic laws were translated from Switzerland, Italy, and Germany, the legal framework of the nation-state was established and the Constitution was secularized (Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi, 1988, Cilt 6, 1922). In addition to these legal and institutional reforms, transformations towards integration with the capitalist Western world were also initiated. One of the first official westernization practices was the enactment of the Hat Law (Şapka Kanunu), which led to uprisings and the execution of 57 people (Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi, 1988, Cilt 6, 1922).

As stated by Uzunoğlu (2013, 153), throughout Turkish history, cultural transformation within the states established by the Turks gained momentum through the actions of the ruling elite. In most cases, palaces took the lead in instigating alterations in the state's structure and in fostering the development of "High Art" (Uzunoğlu, 2013, 153). Nevertheless, these interactions extended beyond mere diplomacy (Uzunoğlu, 2013, 153). The various populations intermingled became neighbors, and engaged in trade (Uzunoğlu, 2013, 153). This interconnectedness facilitated the adoption of certain customs or preferences already embraced by the ruling class among the general populace

(Uzunoğlu, 2013, 153). Consequently, as Turkish society migrated from the East to the West, it continued to forge new amalgamations with the diverse cultures it encountered along the way (Uzunoğlu, 2013, 153).

Nationalism and liberalism are ideologies that have roots in the West. The active role of the İttihat Terakki (Union and Progress) and the Jön Türkler (Young Turks) in the construction of the nation-state in Turkey is not coincidental (these groups were influenced by the French Revolution and formed accordingly). According to Aktar (2002, 77), one of the most challenging ideas introduced to the Ottoman and Republic elites from Western Europe during the two-century-long process of Westernization is the notion of "nation." This is problematic because nationalism, which played a role in the decline of the cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire, also facilitated the birth and strengthening of the young republic (Aktar, 2002, 77). Nevertheless, both the Ottoman Empire and later the Republic faced the historical dilemma of attempting to modernize by contending with Western military powers for two centuries (Aktar, 2002, 77). The process of Westernization was realized through the establishment of the nation-state with the official aim of "reaching the level of contemporary civilizations" (Aktar, 2002, 77).

According to Kaplan (quoted in Demirel, 2002, 781), for the Turks, the Westernization problem is a "life or death" issue. A nationalist who denies Westernization is truly "backward" if such a person exists. For Deren (2002, 382), westernization is closely related to the key principles of the young Republic, namely, nationalism, secularism, revolutionism, and republicanism. The cultural and art policies during the construction process of the nation-state were also carried out along the axis of nationalism and Westernization.

For Renda (2002, 141), the process of modernization in Turkey, inspired by the science-based Western civilization, distinguishes itself from the earlier Westernization efforts seen in the late Ottoman Empire. During the imperial era, Westernization was mostly confined to the palace and the elite circles (Renda, 2002, 141). In contrast, the cultural policies implemented during the Republican period prioritized the education of the general populace (Renda, 2002, 141). This educational drive was seen as a prerequisite for the widespread adoption of the reforms necessary for modernization (Renda, 2002, 141). Within this cultural transformation led by the state, the fine arts held a significant role (Renda, 2002, 141). There were two key approaches to modernizing culture and art (Renda, 2002, 141): (i) One involved researching and showcasing the country's cultural heritage, deeply rooted in its history, and making it accessible to the public. (ii) The other approach aimed to develop Turkish art that adhered to contemporary Western theories and methods while remaining rooted in tradition. In practice, during the initial decade of the Republic, the state continued to play a central role as a guide, promoter, and protector across all branches of the arts (Renda, 2002, 141).

According to Keskin (2014, 90), in the early Republican period, Turkey was faced with a dilemma in its cultural policy. The country was trying to find a balance between its own traditional values and the modern Western world (Keskin, 2014, 90). This dilemma was reflected in the art world, where there was a struggle between those who wanted to create national art that was based on Turkish culture and those who wanted to create modern art that was influenced by Western trends (Keskin, 2014, 90). The lack of art criticism in the early Republican period contributed to this dilemma. Without art critics to provide guidance and analysis, Turkish artists were left to their own devices to find their way in the world of art (Keskin, 2014, 90). As a result, many artists ended up imitating Western trends, which led to a loss of cultural identity

(Keskin, 2014, 90). The dilemma in Turkish art was not resolved in the early Republican period. It would continue to be a challenge for the country for many years to come (Keskin, 2014, 90).

However, the early official preferences related to culture can not be confined to the fields of art and education. Such preferences have deeper connections to the politics and the interests of the ruling elite. In other words, the “cultural” policy during the process of building the nation-state was based on the “claim” and “official discourse” of creating a so-called “classless, and integrated mass” and brought pressure on those who emphasized class contradictions in society. This approach prepared the ground for the continuation of the pressure on all political formations (e.g. socialist and communist parties representing the working class and worker organizations) outside the official ideological line throughout the whole history of the Republic until the present (4. Demokratik Eğitim Kurultayı, 2005, p.180).

The establishment of the Republic of Turkey brought about economic, political, and military developments that led to renewal in various fields, including the arts. During this period, culture and art were brought to the forefront as part of state policy (Özcan, 2019, 30-31). As mentioned above, the fundamental principles underlying these policies aimed to elevate intellectual culture to the same level as folk culture, synthesize national culture with international culture, promote and study the national culture both domestically and internationally, and transmit it systematically and comprehensively to future generations. Additionally, in a country with low literacy rates, it was recognized that art, which appeals to the senses, could more easily influence individuals (Özcan, 2019, 30-31). For Özcan (2019, 30-31), since art indirectly took on an educational role, it became a tool for promoting the adoption of revolutionary ideas. In the implementation of cultural policies, the principles of nationalism

and capitalist modernization were emphasized (Özcan, 2019, 30-31).

Modernization during this period was seen as reaching the level of contemporary civilizations and surpassing them, while nationalism was viewed as addressing the perceived inadequacies compared to the West (Özcan, 2019, 30-31).

For Özcan (2019, 30-31), two significant reasons can be identified for the adoption of cultural policies aligned with modernization and nationalism. Firstly, the global economic crisis of the 1930s, which affected the entire world, strengthened statism in Turkey, particularly in architecture (Özcan, 2019, 30-31). Secondly, and most importantly, were the bold “development decisions” made at the end of the first decade of the Republic (Özcan, 2019, 30-31). In line with this goal, Atatürk's aspiration to reach the level of contemporary civilizations became a guiding principle in various fields, from art to literature and architecture (Özcan, 2019, 30-31).

National History and Language Research Policies

In the West, Turkish studies have flourished since the 18th century and had a great effect on Turkish nationalists and thinkers (Uluskan, 2010, 183). Towards the end of the Ottoman Empire, the growth of nationalist movements gave also rise to Turkish awareness and nationalism, which made Turkish studies more consequential (Uluskan, 2010, 183). Moreover, Turkish intellectuals from Russia also played a role in the elevation of Turkology research (Uluskan, 2010, 183). Misinformation about Turkish history and culture that has been presented in Western research has also played a crucial role in driving the acceleration of Turkology studies (Uluskan, 2010, 183). Thus, it has become essential for Turkish researchers to study Turkish culture with scientific methods to correct Western misperceptions and refute misinformation (Uluskan, 2010, 183).

Consequently, the establishment of the Türkiyat Enstitüsü (Turkic Studies Institute) on 12th November 1924 as the first official institution within Atatürk's cultural policies followed the founding of the Republic (Uluskan, 2010, 183). In the process of building the nation-state, the most important step taken in the cultural sphere toward Westernization and nationalism direction was the creation of policies and institutions that directly intervened in language and historical research. Accordingly, Türk Tarihi Tetkik Cemiyeti (Turkish History Research Society) was established on April 15, 1931, and the Türk Dili Tetkik Cemiyeti (Turkish Language Research Society) was established on July 12 (Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi, 1988, Cilt 6, 1922).

When the establishment years of the Republic are examined, it can be seen that some associations played a prominent role in the formation process of the nation-state. Among these, Türk Ocakları (Turkish Hearths) which existed before the Republic, and Halkevleri (People's Houses) played a very important role in Turkey's efforts to create cultural unity. The importance of these associations stems from the fact that they were directly established by the state with the official aim of creating a mono-centric and nationalistic culture. These associations (as well as the magazines, books, and brochures published by them) essentially continued the mission of organizations established before the Republic such as Türk Yurdu (Turkish Homeland) and Türk Derneği (Turkish Association). It is not a coincidence that many historians and politicians of the period came together in these associations and around the publications of these associations. Especially, Türk Ocakları played an important role in creating Turkish national culture and building Turkish national identity (4. Demokratik Eğitim Kurultayı, 2005, 179).

Halkevleri (People's Houses) was established in 1932 under the leadership of Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP (the Republican People's Party). Halkevleri (People's Houses) as effective institutions left a significant mark on the social and cultural transformation process of Turkey during the early Republican

period. Designed as part of the Kemalist modernization project, Halkevleri (the People's Houses) performed its function by spreading the “then” “contemporary” values determined by the center to every corner of the country (Kayalı 2003, 45–46). People’s Houses operated in various fields such as education, culture and arts, sports, and public health (2003, 45–46). These institutions are also regarded as attempts to extend the “Westernization” efforts that had been ongoing since the Tanzimat era to the masses. Indeed, the People's Houses made significant contributions to the integration of rural and urban societies with the nation-state ideology, particularly in establishing a citizenship understanding shaped around secularism and nationalism (Üstel 2004, 73).

The People's Houses, which have been closely examined in English literature as well, provide exemplary studies on state-society relations in Turkey's modernization journey. Historians such as Erik J. Zürcher (1993, 184–185) emphasize that the People's Houses not only provided mass support for the single-party governance model envisioned by the Republican elite but also served to transform social life ideologically and culturally. Bernard Lewis (1968, 256), on the other hand, notes that these institutions represented a “centralized enlightenment” project aimed at overcoming certain entrenched areas of social resistance during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Republic.

Closed in 1951, the People's Houses continue to be frequently cited in assessments of Turkey's modernization and nation-state-building processes. Halkevleri (the People's Houses) is considered one of the pivotal points in Turkey's social and political history both because of its important role in disseminating the Republican reforms to the masses and for being a source of criticism due to its “top-down” approach.

Uluskan (2010, 20) argued that, given the central role civil society organizations play in democratic thinking, Atatürk decided to go on with Halkevleri (People's Houses) instead of Türk Ocakları (Turkish Hearths)¹. In fact, the Halkevi branches, when opened, gave special attention to each branch of art and worked to educate the people (2010, 20). This was a great chance for the founding party's program to reach the public (2010, 20). 1936 was a time when more effort was put into combining the administration of the party and state (2010, 20), to have all power concentrated in one place and be more effective (2010, 20). Countries like Italy, Germany, and the Soviet Union set examples of such integration that encouraged Ankara to do the same during this period (2010, 20).

The first product prepared by the Türk Tarihi Tetkik Cemiyeti (Turkish History Research Society) in a short period of time was "Outlines of Turkish History: Methal Part" revealing the main content of the Turkish History Thesis. This thesis can be summarized as follows: While the rest of humanity was living in the stone age, the Turks in Central Asia created a developed mining civilization. Due to climate changes, they were forced to migrate to China, India, Mesopotamia, Anatolia, the Aegean coasts, Egypt, and even all over Europe, laying the foundations of all known ancient civilizations (Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi, 1988, Cilt 6, pp.1922-1923). The thesis defended by Türk Tarihi Tetkik Cemiyeti (Turkish History Research Society) is nothing more than the thesis that "all civilizations are our work."

Atatürk's concept of history had a special emphasis on the Hittites and Sumerians, not merely the Seljuks and Ottomans (İnan, 1939, 245-246; quoted in Uluskan, 2010, 252). This theory also claimed there was a family relation between the Etruscans and Turks, that Central Asia was the source of all civilizations, and that the Turks had spread it to different parts of the world (Uluskan, 2010, 252). Criticism was raised both in those days and today about

the fact that the theory gave too much attention to the Hittites and Sumerians while overlooking or ignoring the Seljuk and Ottoman civilizations (Behar, 1992, 195-196, 203-207; quoted in Uluskan, 2010, 252).

Another cultural policy that was produced to break away from the Ottoman Empire and create a new national consciousness was implemented in the fields of language and writing. The visible reason for the alphabet revolution was to quickly increase the literacy rate by using Latin letters. However, 60 years after the official acceptance of Latin letters, the proportion of people who could not read or write was still very high (Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi, 1988, Cilt 6, p.1923).

Scholars of the Turkish language have emphasized age-old roots of the Turkish language that reach beyond Ottoman Turkish (Uluskan, 2010, 207-208). It is regarded as an essential tool for the spread of nationalism (Uluskan, 2010, 207-208). However, the 1928 Language Revolution created a problem by replacing foreign-origin words in Turkish with new Turkish equivalents (Uluskan, 2010, 207-208). This caused difficulty in understanding the language and sparked efforts to simplify it, especially after 1932 (Uluskan, 2010, 207-208). When talking about the new alphabet, people only mentioned the advantages it would offer in daily life, failing to recognize how it could break bonds with the past and be the first step toward cultural integration with the West (Uluskan, 2010, 207). As the language was being purified, the introduction of Western words into the language serves as evidence of this cultural shift.

Another parameter shedding light on the Republic of Turkey's stance on multiculturalism and multilingualism can be found in its engagement with Türk Tarih Tezi (Turkish History Thesis) and Güneş Dil Teorisi (Sun Language Theory) (4. Demokratik Eğitim Kurultayı, 2005, 179). Both Türk Tarih Kurumu (Turkish History Institute) and Türk Dil Kurumu (Turkish Language Institute)

play significant roles in the nation-state building process and have taken it upon themselves to validate these 'theses' (4. Demokratik Eğitim Kurultayı, 2005, 179). These institutions' perspectives on history and culture exhibit a paradoxical 'originality' due to their extremist nature (4. Demokratik Eğitim Kurultayı, 2005, 179). In simpler terms, Güneş Dil Teorisi (Sun Language Theory) posits that Turkish serves as the root of numerous languages and asserts that many great civilizations (including Indian, Sumerian, Hittite, Egyptian, and even Greek civilizations) have Turkish origins (4. Demokratik Eğitim Kurultayı, 2005, 179). According to this thesis, Anatolia has been predominantly Turkish for millennia, and the Turks are considered the indigenous inhabitants of Anatolia (as asserted during the Second Turkish History Congress in 1932) (4. Demokratik Eğitim Kurultayı, 2005, 179).

Press Freedom

Press freedom in the early Republic period of Turkey was shaped by both constitutional provisions and a rapidly shifting political climate. Following the victory in the War of Independence and the proclamation of the Republic, the new leadership initially advocated broad liberties for the press to highlight the modern and democratic character of the state (Zürcher 1993). However, the practical implementation of these freedoms was frequently overshadowed by the government's overriding emphasis on consolidating power and containing dissent (Lewis 1968).

The 77th article of the "Teşkilat-ı Esasiye Kanunu" (Law on Fundamental Organization, dated April 20, 1924), reiterates the provision of Article 12 of the Kanuni Esasi (Ottoman Constitution) concerning freedom of the press. As the Article states "the press is free within the framework of the press law and is not subject to inspection and examination before publication," for Kurt

(2014), the constitutional guarantees provided by the 1924 Constitution and the Kanuni Esasi (Ottoman Constitution) regarding freedom of the press are similar. However, the fact that “the press is free within the framework of the law and censorship is prohibited” did not constitute sufficient assurance for press freedom (Akkurt 2014). This was because the press could still be restricted by new laws when needed (Akkurt 2014). This insecure constitutional arrangement has led to severe limitations on press freedom through various legal regulations in practice because of international developments and domestic instabilities such as the Great Depression and the failure of the first attempts to implement a multi-party system (Sayılğan 1992).

In the early years of the Republic, although Atatürk asserted that the press should not face any kind of restriction or censorship, due to the appearance of rebellions and increased opposition voices in 1925, there was a demand for a new mindset in the press which is centered on the idea that journalists should unconditionally support the government. This atmosphere led to closer monitoring of journalists who had briefly experienced freedom in the early days of the Republic, after the proclamation of the Republic and the abolition of the caliphate (Uluskan 2010). It is important to note that during this time, the government enacted Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu (the Law of Maintaining Order) and used it as a weapon to curtail press freedom and damage democracy in the country (Uluskan 2010). In other words, the relations between the press and the government were not democratic during the first years of the Republic.

Indeed, the Takrir-i Sükun Kanunu provided the state with sweeping powers to shut down newspapers deemed threatening to national security, a term that was applied broadly to cover any form of political or social criticism (Landau

1974). Additional restrictions came with the Press Law of 1931, which authorized the Ministry of the Interior to close newspapers without judicial review if they were believed to undermine public order. For Karpat (1973), coupled with the one-party regime's determination to suppress dissent, this legislative framework effectively limited the scope of independent reporting. Hence, even periodicals that supported the modernization efforts "but questioned specific policies" risked closure or punitive measures. According to Lewis (1968), despite occasional gestures of openness—such as invitations for journalists to attend official events or personal meetings with the President—the consistent use of legal tools to curb critical voices indicated that *de facto* censorship persisted throughout much of the single-party era.

Education Policies

For Demirtaş (2008, 156), "after the declaration of the Republic, educational problems were not only related to the mistakes of the Ottoman-era system and the inherited model but also to physical and material inadequacies in educational institutions". During the 1923–1924 academic year, Turkey's population stood at around 11–12 million, yet the literacy rate was only 10% overall and a mere 3% among women (Demirtaş, 2008)². At that time, the nation had 5,062 educational institutions in total, comprising 4,894 primary schools, 72 middle schools, 23 high schools, 64 vocational schools, and 9 faculties or higher education establishments (Demirtaş, 2008). These schools employed 11,918 teachers and faculty members, who served 358,548 students across primary, middle, high, vocational, and higher education (Demirtaş, 2008). Public funding for education was also minimal: in 1921, only 390,412 Turkish liras were dedicated to education out of a general budget of 57,128,833 Turkish liras (Demirtaş, 2008). In the Republic's early years, the overall quality of education was low, hindered by inadequate teacher training,

an outdated curriculum, poor school infrastructure, insufficient teaching materials, and organizational issues within both central and local education systems—all of which underscored the prevailing challenges in Turkish education at the time (Demirtaş, 2008).

During the early years of the Republic, the government tried to homogenize the culture within the frameworks of nationalist and Western values. The pressure on the educational activities of different cultures and minorities has already been initiated in the early 1900s (Çapar, 2004, 339, quoted in 4. Demokratik Eğitim Kurultayı, 2005, 180). The official instruction manual (Mekاتب-i Hususiye Talimatnamesi) that stipulated the requirement of "Turkish teachers" to enter “Turkish language, Turkish history, and geography classes in minority schools” was issued in 1915 (Çapar, 2004, 339, quoted in 4. Demokratik Eğitim Kurultayı, 2005, 180).

The transformations in the field of education that began with the Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu (Law of Unification of Education) continued with the establishment of Köy Enstitüleri (Village Institutes), Halk Evleri (People's Houses), and new higher education institutions. In other words, the nation-state attempted to instill its own value system (mostly borrowed from the West) and memory (a memory which on some occasions rejected the legacy of the Ottoman Empire) into society.

One of the most pivotal education reformers in the early Republican period of Turkey was Hasan Âli Yücel (1897–1961). Serving as the Minister of National Education between 1938 and 1946, Yücel was instrumental in expanding state-led initiatives that both advanced the Kemalist capitalist-leaning modernization project and responded, albeit selectively, to the socio-economic challenges facing a predominantly agrarian population (Berkes, 1998). His policies were

aligned with the dominant policies aiming at forging a unified, “modern” citizenry.

One such initiative was the translation of the canonical works of Western philosophy and literature (Mango, 2002, 312). This measure aimed to elevate national intellectual life while fortifying the Republic’s vision of universalist modernity. Such efforts can be read as part of the broader nation-state ideology, where cultural capital was deployed to integrate the public into top-down modernization, thus reinforcing hegemonic narratives around secularism and progress.

Under Yücel’s leadership, the Ministry of National Education undertook significant structural and curricular reforms. Advocates of the “new education” approach, influenced by the pragmatist and progressive theories of John Dewey, sought to produce socially conscious, scientifically literate citizens (Akyüz, 2005). While guided by state-sanctioned nationalism, these reforms also contained egalitarian underpinnings, visible in broader attempts to reach the peasantry. In many respects, the policies sought to quell class contradictions by offering upward mobility through education—an approach not fully radical in Marxist terms but still relatively advanced compared to prior eras (Berkes, 1998).

Yücel is arguably best remembered for his role in bolstering the Village Institutes, pioneering establishments meant to train teachers from rural regions to serve in their own communities. Conceptually, these Institutes fused practical labor (agriculture, crafts) with theoretical instruction (math, literature, civics), aiming to transform the countryside both economically and culturally. These policies attempted to address the urgent need for bridging the gap between agrarian modes of production and the goals of a modern, capitalist-leaning state (Mango, 2002). Although not overtly socialist, the Village

Institutes introduced cooperative elements and hands-on learning that arguably ran counter to the elite-driven modernization tradition, placing a measure of power in the hands of local teacher-cadres.

Despite the genuine attempts at social uplift, critics suggest that Yücel’s reforms never fundamentally challenged the property relations or the class stratifications underpinning Turkey’s late-feudal or semi-capitalist structures. While the village-based teacher model expanded literacy and modern agricultural practices, it remained subject to the overarching ideological frameworks of the one-party regime. From a Marxist standpoint, these reforms were still contained within a top-down approach, intended to fortify the new nation-state and prevent radical peasant mobilization that could threaten the status quo.

The first serious educational conference in Turkey was “Birinci Maarif Şurası” (First Education Council) held at the İsmetpaşa Girls Institute in Ankara from July 17th to 29th, 1939.

During the opening speech of this council, the Minister of Education Hasan Ali Yücel mentioned the topic of primary education in rural areas by quoting a speech by İsmet Paşa (Birinci Maarif Şurası, p.7) :

I do not want to burden the Great Council with the details of the government's implementation program. But I would like to present a couple of points as the main issue to the Great Council. In the coming years, our main goal will be to raise the level of our villagers, who make up the majority of our population, in terms of education and livelihood. We attach great importance and value to the results we will achieve in this regard. We firmly believe that when we raise the education and livelihood of our villagers to a higher level, our nation's power in every field will be as high and majestic as can be imagined today."

He adds: "It is our national duty and national honor to carry out this high directive, which is expressed in the most lucid and clear terms, in the field of education, yours, ours, and everyone's.

Both the above speech and the data contained in several provisions of the Plan Commission's "Report" indicate that the first "Education Council" of the Republic of Turkey aims primarily to educate the peasants to expand the capitalist production relations in the countryside.

The "Şura" (Council) which became the theatre of intense debates on the granting of academic careers in faculties, also emphasized in Article 41 that university professors should be exposed to the market to gain experience which was an early attempt to "commercialize" the education.

One of the most important topics included in this "Council" is the emphasis on the establishment of the National Library in item 35. Another significant proposal is the support of local governments in education, highlighted in item 36, where the support of municipalities in providing accommodation and food for students is emphasized.

Before 1946, the education of peasants through the "Village Institutes" as foreseen in the reports of the "Şura" was also an important policy topic.

The Village Institutes (Köy Enstitüleri), established in 1940 under the auspices of the Ministry of National Education, represented one of the most distinctive education projects of the single-party era in Turkey. These institutes can be understood as an attempt by the emerging national bourgeoisie to integrate the rural populace into the modernizing project of the early Republic—primarily through controlled, state-led strategies. While not openly socialist in their framework, the Village Institutes introduced elements of collectivism, practical

learning, and critical thinking that challenged traditional hierarchies and existing class relations in the countryside (Akyüz, 2005).

Under the international influence of the first socialist experiments in the USSR, “Village Institutes” was conceptualized largely by İsmail Hakkı Tonguç and supported by leading reformers such as Hasan Âli Yücel. The Village Institutes aimed to cultivate “enlightened” teacher-cadres who would return to their home villages as agents of cultural, technical, and economic transformation. For this purpose, teaching curricula combined academic and theoretical subjects (such as Turkish language, mathematics, etc.) with vocational training in agriculture, carpentry, and crafts, thereby encouraging students to gain not just theoretical knowledge, but also practical skills relevant to village life.

Although Village Institutes “(i) raised literacy rates, (ii) fostered a critical perspective..., and (iii) refrained from fundamentally challenging property relations, thereby demonstrating the limits of bourgeois modernization (Akyüz, 2005), nevertheless, they underscored tensions between state-led reformism and the private interests of landowners, many of whom feared the empowerment of educated rural youth. In other words, although the Village Institutes were under the complete control of the state and operated within the limits of dominant production relations and policies, political pressures mounted, conservative factions grew wary of perceived “leftist” inclinations, the progressive intellectuals and educators produced by the Village Institutes discomforted the ruling class and the gradual elimination of these schools began by the 1946 reactionary intervention. Although they were active for only a short period, these institutions left a lasting imprint in terms of grassroots educational participation and remain central to debates on whether Turkey’s modernization drive could have followed a more egalitarian trajectory (Tonguç 1947).

Formation of the Art History Discipline and Art Education

The development of art history as a scientific discipline in Turkey occurred during the Republican era (Altuner, 2007, 80). The government's focus on cultural heritage and ever-increasing awareness of it caused an increased emphasis to be placed on art history. For Altuner (2007, 80), establishing a national identity required an appreciation for the nation's artistic works, so art history and architectural history became instrumental in efforts to establish a nation. To modernize, it was essential to document artistic expressions, which then served to support nationalist mentalities (Batur, 2002, 70; quoted in Altuner, 2007, 80). Ottoman records of specific events naturally gave rise to an understanding of art history (Altuner, 2007, 80). The practice of documenting details of structures and artworks also contributed to art history and served as a source for the discipline (Altuner, 2007, 80). The material constituting the subject matter of art history had been stored in palaces and carefully preserved in tekkes and dargahs (Altuner, 2007, 80).

Following the establishment of the Republic, a Western-inspired approach was evident in the reforms undertaken in various fields (Altinkurt, 2005, 2-3). In the realm of art education during the Republican era, the institution previously known as the School of Fine Arts transformed and became the "State Academy of Fine Arts" (Altinkurt, 2005, 2-3). For Altinkurt (2005, 2-3), the overarching societal aim of the Republic was to nurture a generation characterized by rationality, creativity, and constructive contributions. To realize this objective, educators in the early years of the Republic emphasized the inclusion of polyphonic music, painting, and Western literature in school curricula (Altinkurt, 2005, 2-3).

As per Yaman's analysis (1994, 156; quoted in Altinkurt, 2005, 3), the period spanning from 1923 to 1950 witnessed the interaction between culture and art in Turkey, leading to the emergence of three fundamental principles in the state's cultural and artistic policies:

- Creating a national art.
- Ensuring that national art is new, modern, and contemporary.
- Shaping fine arts education in the formation of national contemporary art.

Below is a timeline for an overview of the development of art education and art history in Turkey from the early 20th century to the 1980s:

Year	Key Developments in Turkish Art Education and Art History [Prepared by use of the Information provided by Altuner (2008)]
1909	Celal Esat Arseven publishes 'Constantinople de Byzance a Stanboul,' introducing Turkish art as a separate section in his book.
1913-14	Minister of Foundations Hayri Efendi opens the 'Evkaf-ı İslamiye Müzesi,' which later becomes the 'Türk İslam Eserleri Müzesi.'
1930s	Prof. A. Gabriel starts teaching Turkish Architectural History at Darü'l-fünun (Istanbul University). Fehmi Karatay later translates these lectures into Turkish.
1930s	Foreign educators and researchers are brought to Turkey due to the shortage of trained personnel in the fields of art and education. Turkish art history education is influenced by France, England, and Germany.
1933-34	Various foreign professors, especially in Istanbul and Ankara Universities, contribute to art history education.
1933	University in İstanbul underwent a major reform and was renamed Istanbul University which started to offer archaeology and art history courses.
1943	Prof. Dr. Ernst Diez and Oktay Aslanapa established the first Art History Department at Istanbul University, introducing art history as a separate course.
1950s	Istanbul University's Art History Department expands its programs, offering certificates in Turkish and Islamic Art, Byzantine Art, European Art, and Aesthetics.
1951	The Academy of Fine Arts (Sanayi-i Nefise) leads to the creation of the "Türk Sanatı Enstitüsü" (Turkish Art Institute), offering scientific research opportunities.
1951-1952	Turkish Art History courses are introduced in all departments at the Academy of Fine Arts.

- 1954** The Sanat Tarihi Kürsüsü (Art History Department) is established at Ankara University with the leadership of Prof. Dr. Katherina Otto-Dorn.
- 1954** In the Faculty of Theology at Ankara University, courses on Turkish and Islamic Art are introduced, and the "Türk İslam Sanatları Tarihi Enstitüsü" (Turkish Islamic Art History Institute) is established.
- 1959** The First International Turkish Art Congress is organized by Suut Kemal Yetkin, marking the introduction of Turkish art history studies to the international academic community.
- 1965** Hacettepe University establishes its Art History Department under the leadership of Suut Kemal Yetkin.
- 1980s** The expansion of art history education to various universities across Turkey, with many universities establishing art history departments.
- 1982** Restructuring by the Higher Education Council combines Archaeology and Art History disciplines into single departments in all universities.

National Literature

According to Türkeş, the writing of novels in the Ottoman Empire began during a period when the Ottoman intellectuals, searching for a solution to save the dispersed empire, thought and acted with defensive reflexes. This reflex was not a reflex of Turkishness in today's sense. At that time, the word "Turk" was used to indicate cultural differences in everyday life, rather than its ethnic meaning, and sometimes just meant "ignorant peasant" (Türkeş, 2002, 811).

The nationalist movements that started with the influence of the French Revolution had a disintegrating effect when they reached the nations within the Ottoman Empire and its reflection in the form of Turkism was first demonstrated in literature.

"The National Literature movement, initiated by Ömer Seyfettin, Ziya Gökalp, and Ali Canip Yöntem in the journal "Genç Kalemler (Young Writers)" in 1911, is also referred to as the "National Language Movement" due to its goal of simplifying the language. Distinctive motifs of this literature include populism, simplicity in language, utilization of folk

literature and syllabic meter, return to national identity, awareness of Turkishness, Turkish traditions, homeland, selflessness, generosity, marriage, wars, and sincere romantic feelings" (Türkeş, 2002, 811-812).

After the War of Independence, the Republic government, which attracted Turkish nationalists to its own ranks, did not have difficulty in extending Turkish history to Central Asia. Many of the first-era writers such as Abdullah Ziya Kozanoğlu, Nizamettin Tepe Delenlioğlu, Turhan Tan, Feridun Fazıl Tülbentçi, Reşat Ekrem Koçu, Fazlı Necip, İskender Fahrettin Sertelli, Refi Cevad Ulunay, Kadircan Kaflı, Enver Behnan Şapolyo, also wrote history textbooks and thus aligned the history written in history books with that in novels (Türkeş, 2002, 814).

National Literature has played a role in the creation of both external and internal enemies. With the Turkish nationalism movement, communities such as Greeks, Armenians, Jews, and Kurds were transformed into “idealized others” due to their non-Muslim status or ethnic identity (Türkeş, 2002, 819). For Türkeş (2002, 819), "*Ömer Seyfettin was one of the most important representatives of racism and ethnic hostility in his novel. He often emphasized the treachery, cruelty, and dangers of Balkan peoples while also criticizing Armenians in his novel ‘Bir Ermeni Gencinin Hatıraları’ (Memories of an Armenian Youth)*".

For Türkeş (2002, 819), there is no extreme hostility towards the Armenian community in Bekir Fahri's novel “Jönler” (1910), but the Kurds continue to maintain the characteristic of being bloodstained rebels against both the Armenians and the Turks (Türkeş, 2002, 819).

According to Türkeş (2002, 820), in the early period of the Republic, compared to attacks on other minorities, the attacks on Greeks were more widespread and

violent in novels written by the Republican young generation who have adopted the historical thesis through the national education curriculum:

"Perhaps the saddest and most embarrassing aspect of such vulgar nationalist rhetoric is that racial superiority is established in the sexual sphere and concretized on women: Greek women cannot withstand the physical, mental, and moral superiority of Turkish men, they hope to marry and become Muslim and be saved. They applaud the victorious Turkish soldiers the most. Those who protect their Greek identity are either "sluts" or "madame" who run a brothel. The main reason for the admiration of Greek women towards Turkish men is the sexual inadequacy of Greek men."

In the field of literature, a movement that was favorable to westernization, represented by figures like Yahya Kemal, was also observed alongside nationalist movements.

Music

For Uluskan (2010, 306-307), nationalism is an ideology that has had a profound impact on the modern world and will continue to do so. It has persisted throughout history and in Turkey especially during the 1930s when there was a push for a Music Revolution (Uluskan, 2010, 306-307). In other words, during this time, nationalism was a rising value in both the world and in Turkey, and efforts were made to incorporate it into art, especially music, resulting in the creation of national music (Uluskan, 2010, 306-307). However, it's important to consider the appropriate dosage of nationalism (Uluskan, 2010, 306-307). Yahya Kemal, a significant figure in Turkish Literature, espoused a nationalism based on culture rather than racism, and this same cultural nationalism was evident in the actions and works of Kemal Atatürk, the state leader (Uluskan, 2010, 306-307). For Uluskan (2010, 306-307), Atatürk did not

have a chauvinistic nationalism and acted with a nationalism based on culture throughout his life, as did Yahya Kemal.

The cultural policies during the process of building a nation-state can clearly be observed in the music field. For Deren (2002, 396-397), the dominant view behind the music policy was based on Ziya Gökalp's book "Türkçülüğün Esasları (The Principles of Turkism)". In this official view, the music genre referred to as "alaturka" (Classical Turkish Art Music - Klasik Türk Sanat Müziği) is not actually Turkish, but a mixture of the music of Byzantines, Iranians, and Arabs, and therefore does not have a national quality. In addition to its Byzantine music origin, the claim that “Classical Turkish Art Music” has monophonic, melancholic, soul-abandoning, and discouraging features has led to the elevation of Western music against alaturka music. For example, Falih Rıfkı Atay states that there is no room for "Ottoman's twin civilizationism" and that fasıl and opera cannot coexist (Deren, 2002, 396-397).

On one hand, the search for national music, and on the other hand, the historical preference for westernization, resulted in the fragmentation of the institutional structures created in the field of music. Nevertheless, the music policies of the young Republic leaned towards westernization. The inadequacy of musicians who were familiar with the western form and orientation led to the policies of calling foreign experts to Turkey and sending students to the West to study western music. One of the experts from the West was Hindemith. Hindemith examined the existing music institutions in the major cities of the young Republic and prepared a report (Kaygısız, 2000, 284). Based on the findings and recommendations of this report, music policies and institutions were established (Kaygısız, 2000, 284). Ahmet Adnan Saygun, Ulvi Cemal Erkin, Halil Bedii Yönetken, Cevat Memduh Altar, Necil Kazım Akses, Hasan Ferit Anlar, Cezmi Erinc, who were sent abroad in 1934, returned to their country.

Before these names were sent, Cemal Reşit Rey had already been abroad and returned (Kaygısız, 2000, 284). These names created the polyphonic national musical genre called “contemporary Turkish music”. They, in line with Hindemith's views, processed folk and classical art music through the use of Western polyphony and harmony.

Activities of artists such as Lico Amar (1891-1951) and Eduard Zuckmayer (1890-1972) who came from Germany to Turkey during the early years of the Republic had also an impact on the artistic atmosphere (Müzik Ansiklopedisi, 1992, Cilt 1, 310).

The era of the Republic of Turkey cannot be solely examined as entirely separate from the Ottoman culture and mindset, nor can it be entirely divorced from the ideals of the Republic. While there were significant differences between the two periods, the societal and cultural developments during the Republic incorporated and built upon previous experiences and knowledge.

For Şahin & Duman (2009, 269-270), when looking at the developments before and immediately after the Republic's establishment, it's evident that progress in music education occurred rapidly and effectively. This rapid transformation can be attributed to the specific characteristics of the era, which were marked by significant social, cultural, and political changes initiated systematically under Atatürk's leadership (Şahin & Duman, 2009, 269-270). Each step taken during this period deeply influenced and reshaped the state, society, and culture (Şahin & Duman, 2009, 269-270). Such rapid social and cultural changes in Turkey directly impacted the country's artistic sensibilities, including also music and music education (Şahin & Duman, 2009, 269-270). Significant strides in music education, in particular, took place in the years following the Republic's proclamation (Şahin & Duman, 2009, 269-270). The foundations of

contemporary music education in Turkey were laid during the Republic period and continued to evolve in the subsequent years (Şahin & Duman, 2009, 269-270). Initiatives in music education were implemented after addressing scientific shortcomings in the field (Şahin & Duman, 2009, 269-270). As a result, significant emphasis was placed on the education of individuals who would provide music education, with many students sent abroad to receive training (Şahin & Duman, 2009, 269-270). The aim was to ensure that the upcoming generations received purposeful music education (Şahin & Duman, 2009, 269-270). Music education was primarily based on Western music but occasionally shifted between Western polyphonic music and traditional Turkish music (Şahin & Duman, 2009, 269-270).

For Şahin & Duman (2009, 270), during the Republic period, the intense focus on certain qualities by the state, particularly in the context of music education, stemmed from the belief that music could serve as a suitable tool for advancing the goals of the reforms and for establishing a foundation for the country's transition to a Western society (Şahin & Duman, 2009, 270). Considering the low literacy rates and educational levels during that time, music became one of the most effective means to reach the population in the process of building a new society (Şahin & Duman, 2009, 270). Therefore, it can be said that the initiatives undertaken during this period served not only cultural goals but also significant political objectives (Şahin & Duman, 2009, 270). The modernization sought in music education during this period was primarily driven by a focus on "nationalism" (Şahin & Duman, 2009, 270). The advancements and efforts in music education during the Republic period were crucial to the nation-building project (Şahin & Duman, 2009, 270).

Policies aiming at the creation of a “national” music, the simultaneous effects of eastern and western cultures, and the deliberate attempts to modernize music

culture were the dominant factors of the early years of the Republic. These factors sometimes created tensions between the state's cultural policies and the people's traditional culture (e.g. implicit resistance among the people against western polyphonic music), hot debates among the intellectuals (e.g. debates on the balance between modernization/westernization and tradition), and rivalries between cultural institutions.

During the Early Republican Era, People's Houses (Halkevleri) made the most significant contribution to the public's music education, following schools (Yücel, 2022, 16). People's Houses collected and published folk songs and especially folk verses (Yücel, 2022, 16). The activities carried out in People's Houses can be considered reform-oriented within the republic's music policies (Yücel, 2022, 16). In order to introduce Western music and increase its popularity, polyphonic Turkish folk music concerts were organized in People's Houses (Yücel, 2022, 16). Choral activities were also conducted, and choirs were formed in many cities across Anatolia where People's Houses were present (Yücel, 2022, 16). These activities, aimed at familiarizing the community with polyphonic music and collective singing, often featured songs written for two voices (Yücel, 2022, 16). Through the courses offered in People's Houses, service was provided to the entire nation, including women, men, young, and old alike (Aktaş, 2015, 110-116; quoted in Yücel, 2022, 16). People's Houses also made significant contributions to collecting folk music (Aktaş, 2015, 110-116; quoted in Yücel, 2022, 16).

For Yücel (2022, 17), in line with the founding purpose of People's Houses, the education provided is not limited solely to music. There is a wide range of education available in the field of culture and arts. However, music activities, choirs, and an interest in musical plays have been more prominent (see the following table):

Growth of Numbers, Members & Activities of People's Houses (Halkevleri) in Turkey (1935-1941)

[Prepared by the use of information provided by Yücel (2022, 17)]

Number of								
	People's	Number of	Theater		Cinema		Number	
<u>Years</u>	<u>Houses</u>	<u>Members</u>	<u>Events</u>	<u>Concerts</u>	<u>Screenings</u>	<u>Conferences</u>	<u>of Books</u>	<u>Readers</u>
1935	103	54.595	732	776	636	1.503	39.386	160.573
1938	209	105.000	1.703	1.420	1.760	2.727	106.000	1.095.910
1941	383	144.500	3.250	1.750	1.550	5.100	419.250	2.461.813

Opera and Ballet

One of the Westernization efforts in the Ottoman Empire was the promotion of opera, especially in the palace and major cities (Yücel, 2022, 15). Before the establishment of the Republic, opera was first introduced to the Ottoman Empire through European troupes visiting Istanbul and Izmir. The Ottoman Empire was introduced to this musical genre through operas performed at Western embassies in Istanbul and Izmir, and even in 1797, Sultan Selim III watched an opera performance at the palace (Altar, 1989, 257; quoted in Yücel, 202, 15). Besides Sultan Selim III, art-loving Ottoman sultans such as Abdülmecit, Abdülhamit II, and Mahmud II showed interest in opera. Sultan Abdülmecit appointed Giuseppe Donizetti to provide opera education in the Ottoman Empire, while Abdülhamit II built the Yıldız Palace and attended opera performances (Balkılıç, 2009, 7; quoted in Yücel, 2022, 15).

For Uluskan (2010), the Ottoman elite's interest in opera increased with reports from Ottoman ambassadors in Europe, fostering the art's development in Turkey. Notable sultans like Selim III and Mahmud II showed great

interest in opera and stage arts (Uluskan, 2010). In the Early Republic Period, modernizing and institutionalizing opera and ballet were one of the main objectives of art and education policies. Efforts were made to establish a national opera and ballet by promoting modern western music and performing arts, (e.g. founding of the Ankara Conservatory). Atatürk's cultural policies included the enhancement of music education, with the establishment of conservatories and the introduction of Western music into the curriculum (Uluskan, 2010). This approach aimed at creating a well-rounded educational system that included the arts as a fundamental component (Uluskan, 2010).

The inadequate performance of the Dar-ul Elhan (1912) established before the war led to the establishment of the İstanbul Belediye Orkestrası (Istanbul Municipal Orchestra) and the İstanbul Şehir Operası (Istanbul City Opera) as a result of the collaboration of young Turkish musicians who returned to the country after 1926, and foreign instructors (Müzik Ansiklopedisi, 1992, Cilt 1, 311).

An opera house was put into service in 1948 in Ankara (Müzik Ansiklopedisi, 1992, Cilt 1, 311). Opera Cemiyeti (Opera Society), established at Alay Köşkü (Alay Mansion) within Istanbul's Gülhane Park in 1930, staged parts of operas using Turkish lyrics accompanied by piano (Müzik Ansiklopedisi, 1992, Cilt 1, 311). Such performances were influenced by the domestic and foreign policies of the time. For example, while the State Conservatory was being established in Ankara, an opera performance was arranged for the visiting Shah of Iran and was staged at Türkocağı in 1934 in the presence of Atatürk and the Shah of Iran (Müzik Ansiklopedisi, 1992, Cilt 1, 311). Following the success of the opera, Atatürk asked for three themes of his choice to be composed. Saygun composed "Taşbebek," Akses composed

"Bayönder," and Erkin composed "Ülkü Yolu" (Müzik Ansiklopedisi, 1992, Cilt 1, 311).

For a broader historical perspective see the following tables prepared by the use of information provided by Uluskan (2010, 389-417).

Historical Developments in Opera	
19th Century	Introduction of opera to the Ottoman Empire. European troupes visited Istanbul and Izmir.
Late 19th Century	Interest in opera increased among the Ottoman elite.
Early Republican Era	Focus on Western music and opera. Establishment of conservatories; training of Turkish artists.

Historical Developments in Ballet	
Early 20th Century	Introduction of ballet to Turkey. Gradual introduction alongside opera.
Early Republican Era	Institutional support for ballet. Support from the state for the development of ballet.
1936	Establishment of conservatories. Formal ballet education begins.
1940s	Expansion of ballet education. Increased focus on ballet in arts education.

Theatre

For Buttanrı et al. (2013), the Early Republic Period (1923-1946) was characterized by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's leadership and the formation of a new national consciousness where theater played a crucial role in producing modern Turkish national identity. In Atatürk's view theater was not just an art form but an effective tool for education, social transformation, and the dissemination of Republican ideals (Buttanrı et al., 2013). In this period state-supported institutions were established, modern and national themes were introduced into the theatrical repertoire, and significant efforts were made to

make theater accessible to a broader segment of the population (Buttanrı et al., 2013). As discussed before, the top-down capitalist modernization and westernization policies required a set of radical reforms in every sector, including also the arts, one of whose function was to align the nation with Western values while preserving its cultural heritage. Thus, theaters became arenas where western values, nationalism, and secularism were communicated to the public (Buttanrı et al., 2013). This era also witnessed the political and artistic efforts to include women both on stage and in the audience, to break previous social barriers and promote gender equality (Buttanrı et al., 2013). Finally, the period was also marked by efforts to decentralize theater by spreading it beyond Istanbul and into Anatolia, in order to enable widespread popular access to cultural production (Buttanrı et al., 2013). For various aspects of theatre during the Early Republic Period (1923-1946) see the following table:

Theatre During 1923 - 1946 Period

[Prepared by the use of information provided by Buttanrı et al (2013)]

Institutionalization	Establishment of State Theaters and Conservatories. Introduction of professional training programs for actors and directors. Governmental support and funding for theater productions.
Themes and Content	Emphasis on plays that reflected the ideals of the Republic, including nationalism, reform, and modernization. Incorporation of traditional Turkish elements with Western theatrical forms. Production of plays that addressed social issues, and historical events, and celebrated Turkish heroes.
Access and Inclusion	Expansion of theater to Anatolia, making it accessible to a wider audience. Inclusion of women as performers and audience members, breaking traditional gender barriers. Efforts to educate the public through theater, using it as a medium for social and political commentary.
Key Figures	Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's direct influence and support for theater. Prominent playwrights and directors like Muhsin Ertuğrul played a significant role in modernizing Turkish theater. Introduction of female actors to the stage, such as Afife Jale and Bedia Muvahhit.

Cultural Impact	Theater as a vehicle for promoting the Turkish language and identity. Reflection of social reforms, such as the Hat Law and the adoption of the Latin alphabet, in theatrical productions. Use of theater to solidify the ideological foundations of the new Republic among its citizens.
International Influence	Influence of European theatrical traditions on Turkish plays and production styles. Participation in international theater festivals and collaborations with foreign artists and directors. Adaptations of Western classics to the Turkish stage, alongside original works by Turkish playwrights.

Cinema

For Karaca (2019), policies during the early Republican period had significant impacts on the development of Turkish cinema, ranging from technological advancements to the thematic scope of films. Factors such as the government's involvement, national and global historical and political conditions, societal changes, and the evolving market dynamics all contributed to the foundation and development of the Turkish film industry.

The first films arrived in Turkey from France, Germany, and Italy (Karaca, 2019). After WWI, although American films entered the Turkish market, European films continued to dominate the market until the 1930s (Karaca, 2019). American films' domination began in 1935 (Karaca, 2019)

As early Turkish films were silent and lacked subtitles, access to films by large audiences was difficult (Karaca, 2019). The advent of sound films and the use of subtitles made films accessible to a wider audience (Karaca, 2019).

Policies before and during the period had a significant impact on the evolution of cinema in Turkey. For instance, Sedat Simavi's proposal to the Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti (National Defense Society) was the main driver of the production of Turkey's first themed films (Karaca, 2019). The first

themed Turkish film was "Himmet Ağa'nın İzdivacı (Marriage of Himmet Ağa)" which was an early example of narrative cinema in Turkey (Karaca, 2019). WWI conditions highlighted the need for domestic film production (Karaca, 2019). During the early Republic period, Malul Gaziler Cemiyeti (Disabled Veterans Society) which took over cinema equipment from the disbanded Müdafaa-i Milliye Cemiyeti, continued film production but also faced challenges such as censorship (Karaca, 2019). The first cases of film censorship (e.g. the censorship on "Mürebbiye") were examples of attempts at political control and direction of the cinema industry (Karaca, 2019). For a broader perspective see the following table:

Key Developments in Cinema during the Early Republic Period in Turkey

[Prepared by the use of information provided by Sim (2010)]

Early Films and Cinematic Beginnings in Turkey

	Event	Significance
1896	Eugene Promio's Filming in Istanbul	Introduction of cinema to Turkey
1914	Demolition of the Russian Monument	Considered the start of Turkish cinema
1917-1918	Films by Sedat Simavi and Fuat Uzkınay	Early narrative filmmaking
Various	Establishment of First Cinema Theaters	Growth of cinema culture

The Theatrical Period (1922-1939)

	Film	Contribution
1922	İstanbul'da Bir Facia-i Aşk	Initiation of the theatrical film era
1923	Ateşten Gömlek	The first film to address the Independence War
Various	Muhsin Ertuğrul's Works	Theatrical adaptations and narrative experimentation

Transition Period (1939-1950)		
	Development	Impact
1939-1950	Emergence of New Directors	Shift toward cinematic storytelling
1940s	Influence of Foreign Films	Diversification of film content and style
Various	State and Industry Changes	Adaptation to societal and technological shifts

Painting

According to Yurttadur (2012, 363), the establishment of Western-style painting and the adoption of oil painting techniques in Turkey do not have a precise starting date. However, the adoption of such techniques closely aligns with periods marked by intense Westernization efforts (Yurttadur, 2012, 363). Yurttadur (2012, 363) also mentions the introduction of art lessons in military schools which marked a significant step towards their formalization. For Yurttadur (2012, 363), a closer examination of historical events and developments reveals that these artistic endeavors were part of broader initiatives aimed at rescuing the Ottoman Empire from decline. These efforts sought to establish a new state order aligned with Western models, encompassing various major institutions, including art (Yurttadur, 2012, 363). The earliest attempts at creating paintings following Western examples took place in the vicinity of the palace, driven by the encouragement of palace officials (Yurttadur, 2012, 363).

According to Yurttadur (2012, 363), it's important to note that the Westernization movement in the Ottoman state originated from the upper class, primarily due to support from the state's administrative elites, rather than spontaneously emerging from society. As it is known, towards the late 18th century, Turkey began implementing Western institutions and organizations in various domains, including education and the military (Yurttadur, 2012, 363). In

the realm of art, foreign experts played a crucial role, and the movement's sustainability was ensured by local talents who graduated from these newly established educational institutions (Yurttadur, 2012, 363).

In the field of painting, there was a similar situation to that in education and other art fields. In the Ottoman Empire, drawing art, which had been stunted by the influence of Islam and had been confined to miniature, ebru, and calligraphy arts, gained its Western forms with the establishment of the Republic. The painters sent to the West brought Western Impressionism and Romanticism, which has a historical connection with nationalism, to the country.

The start of the Republican period painting art can be traced back to the Osmanlı Ressamlar Cemiyeti (Ottoman Painters Association), which was formed in 1908 during Sultan Abdul Hamid II's reign (Ünal, 2010, 21). It had its first exhibition at Üsküdar İskele Gazinosu (Ünal, 2010, 21). The association went through a few iterations and was renamed as Türk Ressamlar Cemiyeti (Turkish Painters Association, 1921), Türk Sanayi-i Nefise Birliği (Turkish Fine Arts Association, 1926), and Güzel Sanatlar Birliği (Fine Arts Union, 1929) (Ünal, 2010, 21). This group is referred to as the "1914 Generation" (Ünal, 2010, 21). Some of the artists belonging to this group include Avni Lifij, Nazmi Ziya Güran, İbrahim Çallı, Namık İsmail, Feyhaman Duran, Hikmet Onat, Mehmet Ruhi (Arel) (Ünal, 2010, 21). After receiving their artistic education from European countries, they made a major contribution to Republican period painting art (Ünal, 2010, 21). These artists both crafted artworks and wrote articles for magazines (Ünal, 2010, 21). Their training in Europe helped them become proficient in figure drawing and revolutionized the art of that era (Ünal, 2010, 21). They revolutionized the art of that era by introducing new subjects and using light effectively (Ünal, 2010, 21).

When the newly formed Republic was established, the government expected that art and artists would reflect its values and celebrate the recent War of Independence³. At the opening of the 7th Galatasaray Exhibition in 1923, Hamdullah Suphi Bey, representing Atatürk, gave voice to these expectations when he asked for works that presented national issues. This call was heeded at the next exhibition in 1924, which saw an abundance of related theme-based paintings. The state also took action to foster a more conducive environment for artistic growth.

The Fine Arts Academy was revitalized, and from 1924 onward, scholarships were made available to allow artists to pursue study abroad⁴. In 1926, officials decided to accept exhibitions held in Ankara as official exhibitions; some purchased works were used to form the basis of a museum collection. This led to Ankara becoming a hub for art events and demonstrated the state's desire to link support for art with certain criteria.

In 1928, the artists studying abroad were recalled to Turkey by a commission from the Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi (Fine Arts Academy) before they had finished their training (Ünal, 2010, 23). Upon their arrival back in Turkey, these artists arranged for a grand show at the Ankara Ethnography Museum on April 15th, 1929 (Ünal, 2010, 23). This showcase of different works generated a great deal of interest and reactions because it was unlike anything ever presented before (Ünal, 2010, 23). After organizing this first "Young Artists Exhibition" on that April day, the artists then officially created the “Müstakil Ressamlar ve Heykeltıraşlar Birliği” (Independent Painters and Sculptors Union) later on July 15th of 1929 (Ünal, 2010, 23). The first members of the union were: Refik Fazıl (Epikman), Cevat Hamit (Dereli), Şeref Kamil (Akdik), Mahmut Fehmi (Cuda), Nurullah Cemal (Berk), Hale Asaf, Ali Avni (Çelebi), Ahmet Zeki (Kocamemi), Muhittin Sebati, Ratip Aşir (Acudoğu), Fahrettin (Arkunlar) (Ünal, 2010, 23).

For Ünal (2010, 25), the artists of the Independent Painters and Sculptors Union shaped their art around Western influences. In other words, they borrowed from and imitated Western styles (Ünal, 2010, 25). Yet, these adaptations were not original and came about as a result of the state's cultural policies, which viewed Westernization as the ideal level of modernity (Ünal, 2010, 25). For Ünal (2010, 25), this imitative attitude and Westernization formed the foundations of republican ideology.

Halkevleri (People's Houses) and Resim ve Heykel Müzesi (Painting and Sculpture Museum) were also vital for not only publicizing culture and art to the people but also providing artists, especially painters places to showcase their work⁵. In August 1938, the Republican People's Party (CHP) General Executive Board, led by Interior Minister and CHP General Secretary Şükrü Kaya, made several decisions to support the development of Turkish culture and its ties to Halkevleri (People's Houses) (Uz, 2012, 16). One of these decisions was to organize an annual "Homeland Tour" for ten artists (Uz, 2012, 16). Below is a table including information about periods, artists involved, and cities visited during Homeland Tours.

Homeland Tours

[Prepared by the use of information provided by Uz (2012, 17-18)]

<u>Year</u>	<u>Artists</u>	<u>Cities</u>
1938	Ali Avni Çelebi, Bedri Rahmi Eyüboğlu, Cemal Tollu, Feyhaman Duran, Hamit Görel, Hikmet Onat, Mahmut Cuda, Sami Yetik, Saim Zeki Kocamemiş	Malatya, Edirne, Antalya, Gaziantep, Erzurum, Bursa, Giresun, İzmir, Konya, Trabzon
1939	Cevat Dereli, Abidin Dino, Seyfi Toray, Ali Karsan, Sabiha Bozcalı, Zeki Faik İzer, Turgut Zaim, Refik Epikman, Malik Aksel, Ayetullah Sumer	Sinop, Balıkesir, Diyarbakır, Bolu, Zonguldak, Eskişehir, Kayseri, Hatay, Sivas, Afyon

- 1940 Arif Kaptan, Elif Naci, Edip Hakkı Köseoğlu, Eşref Kastamonu, Samsun, Seyhan, Yozgat, Üren, Halil Dikmen, Melahat Ekinçi, Nurettin Giresun, Aydın, Isparta, Amasya, Ergüven, Nurullah Berk, Saip Tuna, Şeref Akdik Maraş, İçel
- 1941 Nusret Karaca, Sadık Göktuna, Sami Lim, Ali Rıza Urfa, Tokat, Kars, Elazığ, Manisa, Beyazıt, Salih Urallı, Ahmet Hakkı Anlı, Refia Kütahya, Ordu, Artvin, Muğla, Van Erden, Fahri Arkunlar, M. Salim Turan, Kemal Zeren

According to Uz (2012), homeland tours have made an important contribution to the development of modern art in Turkey. A large majority of the paintings made on homeland tours are landscape paintings reflecting the natural beauties and historical sites of Turkey (Uz, 2012). The human figure also occupies an important place in the paintings made on homeland tours reflecting the lives and cultures of people from different regions of Turkey (Uz, 2012).

Sculpture

For Korur (2008, 120), in Turkey, the recognition and adoption of sculpture has not been an easy process because of many cultural and historical reasons.

"When asked why the delay has been so long, the answer to this will be that there is no subject as foreign to Turkish society in its historical development as sculpture. When the development line of sculpture art is generally followed, it will be seen that for the existence and development of this art, first and foremost, societies need to live in a settled order, and right after that, there is a need for religious beliefs to have a warm, even more than warmth, a serious affinity with sculpture... Sculpture was the last art form to enter Turkey during the period of opening to the West. The adoption of this art form coming from the West by society was quite late and slow" (Cezar, 1986, 83; quoted in Korur, 2008, 120).

Turkish sculptors did not receive formal education in this art until 1882 when the Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi (School of Fine Arts) was established (Korur,

2008, 131). For Korur, before that, there were no Turkish sculptors except for Yervant Osgan in Turkey. In 1882, the first Turkish sculptor, İhsan Özsoy, entered the Sanayi-i Nefise (Uz, 2012). Until the establishment of the Republic, there were only four sculptors who were İhsan Özsoy, Behzat, Mahir Tomruk, and Nijad Sirel (Uz, 2012).

The early years of the Turkish Republic witnessed an influx of foreign sculptors. Many of these artists came from Europe, particularly countries with strong traditions in sculpture such as Austria and Italy. They brought with them their expertise and experience in sculpting (see the table below):

Foreign Sculptors in Turkey in the early years of the Republic
[Prepared by the use of information provided by Korur (2008, 122-124)]

<u>Artist</u>	<u>Date of birth</u>	<u>Date of death</u>	<u>Country</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Works in Turkey</u>
Pietro Canonica	1869	1959	Italy	Torino-Academia Albertina	Republic Monument in Taksim, Atatürk Bust
Anton Hanak	1875	1934	Austria	Vienna Academy of Fine Arts	Güven Monument
Heinrich Krippel	1883	1945	Austria	Vienna Academy of Fine Arts	Victory Monument, Atatürk Statues in Anatolia
Josef Thorak	1889	1952	Austria	Berlin Academy	Güven Monument

For Korur (2008, 122-124), during the early years of the Republic of Turkey, foreign sculptors played a significant role in the development of sculpture in the country. These foreign sculptors were instrumental in introducing and

promoting the art of sculpture in Turkey (Korur, 2008, 122-124). Foreign sculptors were often involved in creating monumental sculptures and public monuments which often had “national” and “patriotic” themes, and they aimed to reflect the ideals of the newly established republic (Korur, 2008, 122-124). Notable examples include the statues and monuments of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Foreign sculptors also played important roles in promoting sculpture as a legitimate art form in Turkey (Korur, 2008, 122-124). They organized exhibitions, workshops, and art events to introduce Turkish audiences to the world of sculpture (Korur, 2008, 122-124).

Over time, as the field of sculpture gained recognition and popularity in Turkey, Turkish sculptors began to emerge and take on a more significant role. A summary of information about prominent local artists in the field of sculpture during the early years of the Republic is presented in the table below.

Local Sculptors in Turkey in the early years of the Republic
[Prepared by the use of information provided by Korur (2008, 124-128)]

<u>Artist</u>	<u>Date of birth</u>	<u>Date of death</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>Works in Turkey</u>
Ratip Aşir Acudoğu	1898	1957	Münih Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi, Paris Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi	Kubilay Monument
Ahmet Kenan Yontuç	1904	1995	Almanya	Atatürk Monuments
Mustafa Nusret Suman	1905	1978	Almanya, Fransa	Atatürk Monuments, Busts
Ali Hadi Bara	1906	1971	Fransa	Atatürk Monuments, Busts
Zühtü Mürtoğlu	1906	1992	Fransa	Barbaros Monument

Sabiha Bengütaş	1910	1992	İtalya	Busts
Nermin Faruki	1914	2001	Almanya	Busts

Conclusion

The “General Framework of Culture, Arts, and Art Education Policies during the Early Republic Period in Turkey” has a set of central characteristics that stand out. These characteristics give insight into the general layout of these policies during the Turkish nation-state's establishment period. They especially spotlight how nationalism, capitalist modernization and development, and state control interact to shape cultural and educational environments.

The objectives behind these policies were based on nationalism and modernization through capitalism. They intended to not only safeguard but also advance Turkish identity while incorporating modern practices from industrialized Western countries.

The early elites of the Republic of Turkey were devoted to developing a new Turkish nation, and their societal guidelines were crafted to augment Turkish **nationalism**. To this end, they set up various organizations to research and celebrate Turkish culture and heritage, such as the Turkish Historical Society and the Turkish Language Institute.

The early political leaders of the Turkish Republic sought to create a **unified culture** by encouraging the Turkish language, traditions, and history. To do this, they looked toward the West for guidance on how to shape their own cultural policies. This included incorporating Western practices such as operas and symphony orchestras.

Another characteristic of young Turkish state policies was the strong emphasis on **secularism**. This was shown in how they tried to separate religious institutions from educational and cultural spheres. The state was declared as secular, and that was echoed through its cultural policies. One example of this is that the Latin lettering system replaced Arabic characters, and religious education was taken out of public school classes.

The state was a central force in establishing and executing these policies, indicating a powerful dedication to an authoritative system of government. During the formative years, the Turkish administration had a huge influence on the country's cultural environment. It founded and subsidized many cultural entities, and it controlled media and the arts. Governmental culture policies were frequently enacted from the top down. This meant that there was little room for involvement from the ordinary citizens.

Culture, education, and the arts were believed to be necessary tools for nation-building and economic advancement. They were thought to help construct a strong, unified, and modern national identity.

Alongside capitalist modernization, there was also a tendency to preserve and document Turkey's long cultural history. For this purpose, a set of archaeological research and preservation projects were launched. The government sought to encourage modernization in a capitalist fashion, while also attempting to incorporate aspects of traditional culture into the national identity, creating a fusion of antique and modern values. To that end, a methodical approach was taken to record, examine, and distribute culture and arts through education and cultural organizations for the benefit of future generations. Various initiatives were put in place to extend access to culture and the arts to the wider public. For example, state-funded theaters and museums

were established so that people of all social classes could enjoy cultural activities.

During the early years of the Turkish Republic, much focus was placed on education. The government established a large network of public schools across the country and made it mandatory for all citizens to attend elementary school. Furthermore, they opened many universities and other institutions of higher learning. Education policies emphasized the need for a literate and educated citizenry. This meant that strategies had to be devised to raise literacy rates and provide better access to education, particularly in terms of the Western style of schooling.

While fostering a strong sense of national identity, these policies also encouraged international engagement. Cultural and art programs were seen as opportunities for diplomatic advancement, helping Turkey gain recognition among civilized nations. The country sought to present itself positively on the world stage through various cultural events.

In the founding process of the nation-state in Turkey, the implementation of culture, education, and arts policies had also significant **social costs**. While these endeavors were designed to create a unified and modern nation, they also had implications that had negative impacts on various segments of society.

The ruling elite's preference for capitalist development resulted in class inequalities and oppression of socialist organizations, actors, and intellectuals.

The emphasis on creating a unified national identity led to the marginalization and suppression of indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions, particularly among minority groups such as Kurds and Alevis. Strong efforts to homogenize

culture and promote a singular national identity harmed the cultural diversity of Anatolia. In other words, many traditional practices, languages, and customs faced the risk of extinction. The assimilation policies pursued by the state alienated minority communities, contributing to social tensions and conflicts some of which are still defining the political landscape of Turkey today. This was especially noticeable concerning Kurdish grievances and the fight for recognition by Alevis.

In many historical cases, the government's attempts to regulate and dictate cultural and artistic expression led to the restriction of freedom of speech and creativity. Scholars and creative individuals were censored or punished for expressing different opinions. People who disagreed with state policies risked punishment, such as imprisonment or exile. This prevented a diversity of ideas and stifled constructive criticism.

The state's control over educational institutions restricted local autonomy and variety in education. This frequently resulted in a “one-size-fits-all” approach that neglected the diverse needs and identities of different regions.

Finally, contrary to popular belief, the founding of the Republic of Turkey as a capitalist modernization project was **not** unique. Similar instances were observed within 20th-century modernism in Asia, Latin America, and Africa. The distinctive characteristic of 20th-century modernism was that its roots were in the West. In the process of constructing the nation-state, it can also be argued that Turkish nationalism and the historical Western orientation of the founding elites of the Republic of Turkey were not contradictory phenomena but, on the contrary, they were the two aspects of the same objective: capitalist modernization which was also embodied in culture and art policies of the period.

Notes

¹ In the beginning of 1931, a proposal was brought to the parliament for the complete closure of the Türk Ocakları (Turkish Hearths) organization, and after discussions, the organization was closed in April 1931. Following the closure, Halkevleri (People's Houses) were opened on February 19, 1932 (Uluskan, 2010, 34).

² For this information Demirtaş (2008) quoted:

- Galip Karagözoğlu, “Atatürk’ün Eğitim Savaşı”, I. Uluslararası Atatürk Sempozyumu Bildirileri, 21-23 Eylül 1987, Ankara 1994;
- Rauf İnan, “1920’lerde Türk Millî Eğitimi”, Cumhuriyet Döneminde Eğitim, Millî Eğitim Basımevi, İstanbul 1983;
- Yahya Akyüz, Türk Eğitim Tarihi, Ankara 2006.

³ Türk Resim Sanatı Tarihi,

http://www.lebriz.com/v3_misc/docView.aspx?doc=143&pageID=21&lang=TR

⁴ “On the first anniversary of the Republic, in October 1924, the Ministry of Education organized a competition for students wishing to study painting in France. Five students who were successful in the competition were sent to Paris to continue their studies at the expense of the state. Refik Fazıl (Epikman), Cevat Hamit (Dereli), Mahmut Fehmi (Cuda), Muhittin Sebati, and Şeref Kamil (Akdik) left Istanbul in January 1925 and arrived in Paris after a twelve-day journey by sea and train. In 1922, Ali Avni (Çelebi), Ratip Aşir (Acudoğu), and Ahmet Zeki (Kocamemi), who had received a scholarship from the Turkish Hearth at the request of Hamdullah Suphi Tanrıöver, were studying in Munich. In 1923, Ali Çelebi was awarded a state scholarship with the help of Abdülhalik Renda. Ratip Aşir Acudoğu returned to Turkey in 1925. In October 1925, he was sent to Paris as the winner of a competition for sculptors organized by the Ministry of Education as part of the programs to celebrate the second anniversary of the Republic. He became the first sculptor to be sent to Europe for study in the Republican period. Hale Asaf and Fahri Arkunlar, who also won the competition in the painting category, also went to Paris at the expense of the state. Nurullah Cemal (Berk) also went to Paris on his own initiative in 1924” (Giray, 1997, 268; quoted in Ünal, 2010, 23).

⁵ “The innovations in the field of art continued with the Inkılap Exhibitions (1933-1936) and Yurt Gezileri (1938-1943), as well as the Painting-Sculpture Exhibitions (1936-1938) and the Ankara Halkevleri United Painting-Sculpture Exhibitions (1937-1938) held at the Halkevleri. The opening of the Painting and Sculpture Museum by Atatürk on September 20, 1937, and the important work done in the field of fine arts, constituted the last link of this period. This period has entered an important development process in terms of the art movements that were made, and it has laid the solid foundations of the Republic of Turkey in the field of plastic arts” (Buçukoğlu, 2020, 226).

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