Histories of modern Turkish architecture typically start at the moment of stylistic rupture around 1930 when the Ottoman revivalist National Style (Birinci Milli Üslup) of the previous decades was abandoned, and the educational, professional, and cultural framework of Turkish architecture was radically transformed along the precepts of an imported European modernism, the so-called New Architecture (Yeni Mimari). Canonic buildings of the early republic built after 1930 display a deliberate and conspicuous rejection of Ottoman precedents, especially the iconographic and decorative elements of the Ottoman mosque—domes, arches, and tile decoration—which were regarded as aesthetically and ideologically unsuitable to the progressive, revolutionary discourse of the new Kemalist regime.

At the same time, however, in seeming contradiction to this revolutionary impulse to break with the Ottoman/Islamic past, the early republic also displayed a new interest and pride in the country’s Ottoman heritage. Classical Ottoman mosques were now reclaimed as national treasures of modern Turkey, and their picturesque images were widely circulated as official postcards, in government issued photograph albums, and in the pages of the official propaganda publication La Turquie Kemaliste (fig. 1). More significantly, prominent early republican intellectuals, architects, and art historians produced a plethora of books, articles, and commentaries on Ottoman architecture, marking the emergence of native scholars in a field hitherto dominated by Europeans.

The starting point of my essay is this seeming paradox of early republican architectural culture—the conspicuous split between modernist architectural practice, which rejected Ottoman forms, and nationalist historiography, which celebrated them. To make matters even more interesting, the same individuals frequently did both. Sedad Çetintaş, for example, was a prominent architect trained in the Ministry of Endowments (Evkaf Nezareti) under Kemalettin Bey during the heyday of the Ottoman revivalist “National Style.” Çetintaş prepared elaborately rendered survey drawings of Ottoman monuments and wrote nationalist articles in the architectural magazine Yapı. His skilled draftsmanship attracted the personal attention of Atatürk, who appointed him to send his twelve-plate renderings of the Şehzade Mosque to the 1933 Chicago Exhibition. There followed exhibitions of his drawings in Ankara (1935) and Istanbul (1942), culminating in the publication of his two-volume Türk Mimari Anıtları (Turkish Architectural Monuments) in 1946. Yet precisely at the same time his drawings and writings contributed significantly to the nationalist appropriation of Ottoman architectural heritage during the 1930s, Çetintaş also designed new, distinctly modern
buildings totally dissociated from Ottoman precedents, such as his Republican Peoples’ Party Headquarters in Yalova (1954) (fig. 2, a and b).

Behçet Sabri Ünsal, another influential architect and educator, presents a similar duality. As a historian, he wrote extensively on Ottoman and pre-Ottoman Turkish architecture (publishing them in English in 1959 as *Turkish Islamic Architecture*) and at the same time, as an architect, became a prolific advocate for the New Architecture. In addition to producing such unequivocally modernist designs as his 1934 competition entry with Bedrettin Hamdi for the Sümerbank building in Ankara, he contributed pioneering modernist essays about the virtues of rationalism, functionalism, and “cubic architecture” to the professional journal *Arkitekt*.³

The most paradigmatic figure, however, is Celâl Esad Arseven, prominent art historian, critic, and professor of architectural history at the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul, who devoted his entire career to the nationalist historiography of Turkish art and architecture and at the same time promoted European modernism. On the one hand, with his classic *Türk Sanatı* (Turkish Art), first published in 1928, Arseven established the quintessential republican nationalist view...
of Ottoman and pre-Ottoman Turkish art and architecture. On the other, in 1926 he translated Camillo Sitte’s book on principles of modern town planning into Turkish, and in 1931 he published Yeni Mimari (New Architecture), adapted from a 1929 book by the French modernist architect André Lurcat. Yeni Mimari became a required text for architectural students at the Academy of Fine Arts, which had undergone modernist reforms in 1926; in this work Arseven introduced Turkish audiences to the principles of the Modern Movement in architecture as it emerged in Europe after World War I and celebrated its “arrival” in Ankara through the works of the German and Central European architects invited by the new Kemalist regime (fig. 3).

In this essay, I examine the ways in which these and other early republican authors (all of them practicing architects and/or educators) sought to reconcile nationalist historiography with modernist practice. As publications of the time amply document, they did this primarily by reconceptualizing Ottoman architecture as a rational, tectonic, and functional building tradition, distinct from other oriental and Islamic architectures and closer in spirit to the European modernist avant-garde. In the end, theirs was a doubly charged historiography, with both a nationalist program that sought to establish the “Turkishness” and uniqueness of Ottoman architecture against the perceived misrepresentations of Western Orientalist scholarship and a modernist agenda that sought to establish trans-historical affinities between Ottoman building traditions and the New Architecture of the modernist avant-garde in Europe. In what follows, with only brief references to their nationalist program (which is addressed in more detail in Gülru Necipoğlu’s essay in this collection), I focus on their modernist agenda and conclude with the implications of this modernist bias in republican historiography for republican architectural practice in general. Through this discussion, I also suggest that in spite of their now-transparent ideological biases, these modernist texts contain certain complexities, ambiguities, and critical insights that have continuing relevance for current debates on Orientalism, nationalism, modernity, and identity in Turkey and the Middle East.
PREAMBLE: THE “TURKISHNESS” OF OTTOMAN ARCHITECTURE

The first step in the republican reframing of Ottoman architecture was the establishment of a Turkic genealogy for it—a national “essence” distinguishing it from Byzantine as well as other Islamic architectures and linking it to the much longer history of Turkic peoples going back to prehistoric civilizations of Central Asia. That republican texts use the word “Ottoman” only as a period identifier (for example, in Sedad Çetintaş’s 1946 Türk Mimari Anayel: Osmanlı Devri), rather than an identity marker (as in the very specific and historically bounded Ottomanism of the 1873 text Ünlü-i Mihr-i ‘Osmânî) underscores what is, in effect, a “nationalization” of heritage at the point of transition from a multiethnic, multireligious empire to the new ideal of a homogeneous Turkish nation. Thereafter, Ottoman buildings and monuments were perceived and portrayed as part of a vast historical continuum beyond dynastic Ottoman history and were interpreted through the ideological lenses of what many scholars have called “the Sleeping Beauty theory of nationalism”: namely, the theory that nations have existed since time immemorial albeit in a latent state, waiting to be awakened to self-consciousness.6 In other words, no longer viewed as a dynastic category, Ottoman architecture became a “Turkish” architecture whose Turkishness was unrecognized until republican historians recovered it.

As a member of the scientific committee that formulated the nationalist Turkish History Thesis of 1932 under the auspices of the Turkish Historical Foundation (Türk Tarih Kurumu), Celâl Esad Arseven played a leading role in establishing the Turkishness of Ottoman architecture as its originary and defining character. His paradigmatic Türk Sanatı covers some thirteen centuries of trans-historical “Turkish” art that spans many empires, states, and geographical regions but somehow always retains its Turkish essence. Or as Arseven puts it,

Turks are like a large river that, departing from its remote origins, follows the lands and valleys that it encounters on the way, sometimes wandering into faraway lands only to return closer to its source again and sometimes joining, among sandy deserts, with other tributaries once part of itself. It is a river known by a different name each time it crosses a new place.7

In terms of its overall ideological framing, Türk Sanatı reads as the art-historical counterpart to historian Fuad Köprüülü’s foundational thesis, which attributes the birth of the Ottoman state exclusively to Asiatic Turco-Muslim elements with a distinct and continuous historical experience from the early civilizations of Central Asia to the frontiers of Seljuk Anatolia.8 Arseven too locates the origins of Turkish art in such places as Uygur wall paintings, and he finds distant precedents of Ottoman domes in Timurid tombs, which he in turn traces back to the draped tents (yurts) of Turkic tribes in Central Asia (see fig. 14 in Gürür Necipoğlu’s essay in this volume). Seljuk architecture is exalted as the transmitter of this Turkish national essence into Ottoman architecture, but any influences from Byzantium and Anatolian Christendom—Armenian architecture in particular—are mostly unacknowledged or rejected outright.

Collectively, republican art-historical texts by Arseven, Çetintaş, Ünsal, and others testify to the fact that when an ethnically construed genealogy becomes the defining character of architecture, the purity of that genealogy becomes an obsession. At the same time, however, any discussion of the nationalist essentialism of republican art historiography would be seriously incomplete without placing it in the context of the biases of Orientalist European scholarship to which these nationalist authors were responding at the time. Their obsessive preoccupation with an ethnically defined “Turkish” architecture was largely an effort to refute the prevailing Western view that Turks, as a nomadic people, have no distinct and original art, and owe their major artistic and architectural accomplishments to Arab, Persian, and Byzantine precedents.9 In the process of claiming the originality and distinctness of Ottoman (now recast as “Turkish”) architecture among other Islamic architectures, republican authors employed modernist frameworks of interpretation that were increasingly pervasive in the architectural culture of the time. After recovering the “latent Turkishness” of Ottoman architecture, they sought to establish the “latent modernity” of Ottoman forms and building practices, pointing out how these traditions embodied the same aesthetic, constructional, and social principles upon which the Modern Movement was rising in Europe.
RATIONALISM, ANTI-ORIENTALISM, AND TECTONICS

In the first few pages of *Yeni Mimari*, after covering such modernist milestones in Europe as the La Sarraz declaration of the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM) and the canonic 1927 Weissenhof Siedlung Exhibition in Stuttgart, Arseven wrote: “Among the architectures of different nations, the architecture of the Turks is distinguished by its rationality and its conformity to contemporary/modern (asrî) ideas...It is for this reason that the New Architecture will not be foreign to us.” What exactly were these “rational” and “modern” qualities admired by Arseven and other republican authors? How was it possible to look at the six-hundred-year-old architectural heritage of an Islamic empire and find in that heritage the embryonic seeds of twentieth-century modernism?

First and foremost, republican authors exalted the idea of formal purity. For them, what distinguished Ottoman architecture was the primacy of tectonic and volumetric concerns over decorative impulses. In his paradigmatic introduction to *Türk San'atı*, Arseven wrote: “Turkish art is completely different from Indian, Iranian, and Arab examples in the simplicity of its composition, its restraint from exaggeration, and the harmony and logic of its forms...There are such major differences of form and character among the minarets of Turks, Arabs, and Iranians that classifying them together under the general term ‘Islamic’ would be a mistake” (fig. 4). What Arseven inadvertently accomplishes in this introduction is the problematization of the label “Islamic architecture” as a misleadingly broad generalization that obscures the actual complexity, plurality, and diversity of what it represents. He rightly points out that Gothic, Romanesque, and Renaissance works are never lumped under the generic term “Christian art.” More remarkably, anticipating Edward Said’s seminal critique of Orientalism by some five decades, he criticizes the “imaginary Orient” (his words) that exists in the minds of Westerners and in the recent exhibition pavilions of Europe and America, where “it is possible to see an Egyptian mashrabiyya on a Turkish house or an Iranian minaret next to a Moroccan dome, or the geometric ornamental patterns of the Arab next to the tulips and carnations of the Turk.”

Yet, after insightfully criticizing Orientalist conceptions of Islamic architecture as a monolithic, supranational, and ahistorical category, Arseven, like many other republican authors, reverts to the same Orientalist categories in his treatment of other Islamic architectures and employs the same binary oppositions, such as rational vs. sensual, tectonic vs. decorative, and, ultimately, Western vs. Oriental. Turkish architecture, Arseven and others claim, is not only different from Arab, Iranian, and Indian examples but also superior to them, because it represents the rational,
tectonic, and thereby more “Western” side of these binaries. Difference is not simply neutral: it is hierarchical. This Turkish exceptionalism, defined in terms of conformity to Western artistic/architectural conceptions of rationality, permeates Arseven’s entire analysis of Turkish art and architecture. For example, in a later edition of Türk Sanatı, he juxtaposes what he calls the “simplicity and purity” (saçyet ve sadelik) of classical Ottoman tile patterns with the “overcrowded and exaggerated complexity” (takz ve mübalağalı gırgıft) of Arab decoration in the Alhambra (fig. 5). Similarly, in his Turkish Islamic Architecture, Behçet Ünsal compares the Şehzade Mosque with the mosque of Qaytbay in Cairo and the Masjid-i Shah in Isfahan, highlighting the formal purity, simplicity, and rationality of the Turkish/Ottoman mosque, which he sees as unmatched by its Arab and Iranian counterparts. In an even more overtly nationalist article titled “Architecture and Turkishness” (Mimarlık ve Türkçülük), co-authored with Bedrettin Hamdi and published in 1934 in Mimar, the newly inaugurated professional journal of republican architects, Ünsal pairs two images with the following captions: “Perfection in architectural taste: a Turkish mosque in Istanbul” and “Primitiveness in architectural taste: an Arab mosque in Baghdad” (fig. 6).

Leaving aside their obvious nationalist biases, what is particularly significant in such claims to formal purity and tectonic character is the accompanying idea of progressive evolution towards purer forms—an idea
that mirrors the way the official history of modern architecture has been written in the West as a teleological unfolding of an inner rationality culminating in the Modern Movement. Arseven, Ünsal, and Çetintaş all praise Seljuk architecture as the transmitter into Ottoman architecture of an Asiatic Turkish national essence but argue that the Ottomans transcended the Seljuks in achieving a purer, more tectonic architecture, shedding excessive decoration.

Sedad Çetintaş writes about the difference between the "squat and massive" buildings of the Seljuks, "a medieval architecture," as he calls it, and the Ottoman success in "modernizing" these inherited building traditions with "higher walls, larger arches, larger domes, plastic effects of the building mass, and a logical simplicity and dignity in decoration." Along similar lines, Arseven asserts,

![Diagram of Turkish architecture](image)

Fig. 7. "Plastic effects" (mücessemiyet tesirleri) in Turkish architecture. (After Arseven, Türk Sanati, pl. 29)
Whereas Seljuk art is one of detail and decoration, Ottoman art is one of form and harmony. From the earliest mosques in Bursa and Iznik onwards, we see Ottoman art leaving behind exaggerated decoration [seen for example, in the Divriği Ulu Cami, which he characterizes as “strange, primitive, wild, and ultimately unsuccessful”] and becoming a more modest art that seeks beauty in composition and evolves toward rationalism.17

Unlike a Seljuk building, he argues, no part of an Ottoman monument can be removed without ruining the whole.

Appreciation of Ottoman architecture as a tectonic composition of masses and volumes is the single most recurrent theme in early republican architectural historiography. For example, contrasting the “plastic effects” (mücessemiyet tesirleri) of classical Ottoman architecture with the decorative character of other Islamic architectures, Arseven presents these effects—especially the balanced pyramidal silhouette of domes and half domes inscribed within an imaginary equilateral triangle—as its essential, defining attribute. Thus viewing Ottoman architecture through the optics of modernist lenses, he privileges geometry, proportion, and volumetric composition, relegating decoration to secondary status at best (fig. 7). A similarly tectonic reading of Ottoman architecture can be found in the writings of İsmail Hakkı Baltacıoğlu, a prominent intellectual, art critic, and admirer of Le Corbusier. As early as 1929, Baltacıoğlu, echoing Le Corbusier’s words, argues: “The so-called decorative arts do not need decoration in order to be beautiful. Beauty in art lies in composition and volume.”18 In many subsequent writings in the magazine Yeni Adam (The New Man), he elaborates on this idea, blending a modernist appreciation of form with his Turkish nationalism:

We Turks, together with ancient Greeks, are the inventors of cubism in architecture…In fact, we contributed something new that the Greeks did not have: we combined straight line with curves; we married cubes with domes.19

Fig. 8. Le Corbusier’s sketch of the mosque of Sultan Selim, made during his visit to Istanbul in 1911 and published in his Le voyage d’Orient (Paris: Forces Vives, 1966). (Image ©2007, Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York/ADAGP, Paris/FLC)
Once again, these words bear a conspicuous resemblance to the appreciative description by Le Corbusier of the mosque of Sultan Selim (fig. 8), which he saw and sketched during his visit to Istanbul in 1911: “simple, pure geometric forms: a square plan, a cube with a semi-circle on top.”

As a prolific educator and art critic, Baltacioglu is an interesting persona and a rather understudied figure in the historiography of modern Turkish architecture. While sharing the nationalist/modernist biases of Arseven, Unsal, Cetintaç, and many others, he nonetheless represents a somewhat different position, less insistent on the larger historical continuum of Central Asian Turkish art, but rather eager to situate the Ottoman heritage within the intellectual tradition of classical Greek thought, Western humanism, and, ultimately, the modernist avant-garde. In 1927 he writes:

Especially in the period from the conquest of Istanbul to the completion of Yeni Cami, whenever our ancestors built their mosques, fountains, hans, and hammams, they derived their inspiration not from religious sentiments but from the humanistic forces of reason and logic.

Borrowing the concepts of humanism (beşertilik) and precision or clarity (vuzüd) from the philosopher Henri Bergson’s writings on ancient Greek art and thought, Baltacioglu extends these to observable qualities of simplicity (sâdelik), geometry (hendesëlik), rationality (mantîkilik), and above all aversion to decoration (tezînât korkusu). He locates all of these qualities in Turkish art and architecture—for example, in the architecture of the mosque of Beyazid II, another perfect “marriage of cubes with domes,” which, he argues, “is evocative of the ancient Greek genius rather than its contemporaries in the Islamic world.” Most interestingly he calls this “a new Hellenism,” again with explicit reference to Le Corbusier’s influential writings in the 1920s characterizing the new twentieth-century modernist spirit as a contemporary version of the same quest for pure proportions and geometries that distinguished ancient Greek architecture.

In many of his writings Baltacioglu makes similar connections between Ottoman cultural production in general and the modernist ideas emerging in Europe during the interwar years. For example, he observes similarities between Ottoman popular entertainments (such as orta oyunu, a form of traditional vaudeville, and Karagöz, the traditional shadow-puppet theater) and avant-garde theater (e.g., the Meyerhold Theater in Soviet Russia). Most insistently, he draws parallels between Ottoman calligraphy and surrealist painting. He writes that calligraphers like Seyh Hamdullah, Hafiz Osman and Mustafa Rakim, whom he calls “the predecessors of Cezanne and Picasso,” transcended the visible, calculable, measurable reality of naturalistic representation (zâhirî hakîkat) to reach a spiritual reality (bûnî Hakîkat) that is the very essence of art as Henri Bergson has defined it. He explains that this Bergsonian idea of a secular quest for a new spirituality should not be confused with mysticism, obscurantism, and rejection of science, in the same way that his own traditionalism (’ân aneçilik) should not be confused with nostalgia (mûzîperestlik), reaction (înîsçä), or conservativism (muhafazakârlık). Rather, it should be seen as a celebration of creativity, spontaneity, and individuality in the true spirit of the modernist avant-garde. According to Baltacioglu,

It is one thing to derive a creative force from the past, it is another thing to be reactionary…I am not saying that modern Turkish theater will be something like Karagöz or orta oyunu; I am saying that the reworking of these traditions with new techniques will give us a theater that is modern like European theater and Turkish at the same time.

Baltacioglu’s views are echoed in the writings of Hilmi Ziya Ulken, another important intellectual of the early republic, the founder in 1931 of the Turkish Philosophy Association, and the editor between 1938 and 1942 of the journal İnsan (Man). Ulken too writes about the increasing tendency towards abstraction in Western avant-garde art, arguing that a new expressionism to be derived from Turkish-Islamic art has the potential to reconcile tradition with modernity in Turkey—something that cannot be achieved by the clumsy and belated attempts since the Tanzimat to imitate the naturalist and figurative art that the West has since abandoned. Among many philosophical and cultural essays in İnsan, Ulken also published Le Corbusier’s writings on modern architecture, urbanism, and machine civilization, reminding readers of how much Le Corbusier appreciated the architecture and urbanism of Istanbul. He points out that

while striving to plan the beautiful, hygienic, orderly, and functional new cities of the world, the author [Le Corbusier] does not forget to derive models from the world’s old cities and finds, for example, the roots of Cubism in the geometrical order underlying the plans of Babylonia or Beijing.
These remarks are very similar to those of Baltaciğlu, illustrating their authors’ mutual conviction that the spirit of the modern can be located in national traditions. Or, as the prominent literary figure Sabahattin Eyüboğlu puts it in another issue of İnsan,

“The meaning of a Turkish national renaissance is a rebirth through a European consciousness that is the consciousness of the new world... The new Turkish artist should go to and return from Europe in order to fold Europe into our own culture.”

Yet this quest for a modern and national art/architecture is a vague formula that no early republican author manages to define with adequate specificity. Baltaciğlu’s writings are full of contradictions revealing the profound and agonizing cultural questions of the time. “Civilization is not a cup and a nation is not a material thing like, say, milk,” he writes in 1941. “Can we really drink Turkish milk out of a European cup? This is a formidable question!”

FUNCTIONALISM, SECULAR INTERPRETATION, AND TYPOLOGY

In the architectural writings of early republican authors, functionalist and secular readings of Ottoman architecture are carried to such positivist extremes that they often resemble the radical New Objectivity (Neuesachlichkeit) arguments put forward by the modernist avant-garde in Europe. For example, with obvious allusions to Le Corbusier’s characterization of the house as “a machine for living,” Baltaciğlu describes Ottoman minarets as follows:

Minarets are containers—tools for calling the faithful to prayer—before they are works of art... Their bases are the load-bearing foundations of these tall towers. The şerefe is a balcony for the muezzin to go around. The cap is a roof to protect the minaret from rain—the most appropriate roof form for a tall structure. The arabesk motifs of the şerefe balustrade are not the work of a mind exploring the mystical secrets of geometric shapes; [they are] the idea of the craftsmen who were trying to reduce the load of the masonry balustrade. The stalactites under the şerefe are not symbols of stalactite caves, nor the creations of a romantic mind. They are devised by the mason as the structural brackets connecting the şerefe to the body of the minaret.
Such secular explanations of architectural form as a thoroughly rational consequence of function and technique, rather than of any religious, symbolic, or decorative impulse, can be found in Arseven’s writings as well. In a later edition of Türk Sanatları, Arseven even writes that tile decoration in Ottoman mosques should be explained less as a decorative idea than as a technical necessity that protects the wall surface from weathering and allows easy maintenance. The overall consensus in republican architectural culture is that even when Turks have used decoration they have done so with restraint and in conformity with the structural system of their buildings, which stand in contrast to the decorative excess and exuberance of other Islamic architectures, not to mention Baroque churches in the West. In his Turkish Islamic Architecture, Behçet Ünsal illustrates this with an interior photograph of the Selimiye Mosque in Edirne showing the use of tile decoration within clearly delineated areas corresponding to the structural and spatial logic of the building, rather than as a continuous decorative layer hiding this logic (fig. 9). According to Baltacioglu, this rational and restrained attitude absolves the Turks of the “crime” of ornamentation, which he maintains has no place in contemporary civilization—an assertion echoing the famous “Ornament and Crime” essay of Adolf Loos, the early modernist architect and theoretician in Vienna, whom Baltacioglu cites in his important 1929 article “Cubism in Architecture and the Turkish Tradition.”

Ultimately, operating with such rationalist/functionalist biases against decoration, republican authors largely overlook the sophisticated symbolism of Ottoman decorative programs—how, for example, particular patterns and inscriptions were selected for particular components of the building to convey specific messages about program, patronage, memory, and decorum. An overview of representative republican architectural texts clearly reveals that their authors are more interested in the formal and structural rationality attributed to classical Ottoman monuments than in the history and society that produced these buildings. These texts also offer ample evidence that modern analytical tools such as axonometric sections and typological classifications (with their methodological ancestry going back to Choisy, Le Roy, and Durand in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century French architectural theory) lend themselves particularly well to such ahistorical, rationalist, and formalist readings of Ottoman architecture. For example, cutout axonometric sections in the manner of Choisy, a preferred representational technique for architects, are still used frequently in republican texts to explain the structural logic behind the baldachin system in classical Ottoman mosques.

The most pervasive representational device, however, is typological analysis, which allows formal comparisons of a range of monuments from different periods and places. For example, evocative of Le Roy’s eighteenth-century drawings comparing the plan types of different churches and monuments, Behçet Ünsal’s Turkish Islamic Architecture classifies different Ottoman and pre-Ottoman building types (not just mosques but also medreses, hammams, and tombs) according to their floor plans, all drawn to the same scale (fig. 10). This attributes a clearly legible inner rationality to the evolution of Turkish architecture, one that
can be readily grasped by functional considerations of building type and formal analysis alone, independent of the specifics of history, context, and patronage. Subsequent republican scholarship on Ottoman architecture has relied heavily upon these conceptual, analytical, and methodological premises established in the 1930s, especially typology. It should be noted, however, that unlike Durand’s instrumental use of typology as a design tool for architects in the École Polytechnique in Paris in the nineteenth century, republican typological studies of Ottoman monuments were historiographic and analytical devices not intended for the design studio. Only in the case of Ottoman residential architecture would typology become a possible and legitimate design tool for modern Turkish architects.

Complementing their rationalist/functionalist perspectives, early republican authors introduced new and often insightful secular readings of Ottoman architecture, largely as a result of their anti-Orientalist and nationalist sentiments. One now-familiar bias of Western Orientalist scholarship on Islamic architecture is its “universalism”: its tendency to treat the Islamic faith as the exclusive source of all architecture across Muslim geographies. Taking issue with this bias long before its exposition by post-Saidian cultural criticism, Arseven, Ünsal, Baltacıoğlu, and others drew attention to the importance of extra-religious factors (climate, terrain, and local materials) informing the designs of Ottoman and pre-Ottoman Turkish buildings, thus attributing a geographical and cultural specificity to Ottoman architecture in the Lands of Rum. Such contextualism, while seemingly contradicting the ahistorical, formalist, and typological readings discussed above, allows republican authors to situate Ottoman forms within a national discourse. Having ignored the historical and social context of Ottoman buildings in favor of a more object-oriented, rationalist method best illustrated by the typological diagrams, they simultaneously reintroduce “context” into the discussion in the form of an extensive attention to the physical context of Ottoman monuments, ultimately equating culture with nature. For example, Ünsal distinguishes “Turkish” Islamic architecture from other Islamic architectures primarily by the physical, climatic, and geological conditions of Anatolia, explaining regional variations in form and construction by such factors as concentrations of limestone in the central plain, marble on the Aegean coast, wood construction in the north, and so on.

The photographs in his *Turkish Islamic Architecture* testify to this desire to situate Ottoman monuments within their particular sites, climates, landscapes, and vernacular contexts (fig. 11). Similarly Baltacıoğlu writes,

> Every nation’s fine arts, traditions, and moral constitution are determined by its geographical context (*mutâhi-i coğrafiya*). Unlike the arid desert civilization of the Arabs, Turks have established their civilizations in the fertile and green lands of Anatolia and Rumelia, which...
Such views on the effect of geography and natural context (mahüt-i tabiat) on the distinct national character of Turkish art and architecture were largely derived from influential European writings on human geography and racial theory. Throughout the early republican period, theories linking climate and terrain with the national character of different peoples (as in the writings of Gustav Le Bon), or with the particular forms of government suitable for them (as in the writings of Jean-Jacques Rousseau) inspired Turkish intellectuals in their nationalist search for distinctness and originality. Not surprisingly, some of the works of Le Bon, whose Orientalist dismissal of Turkish art was otherwise criticized by Arseven, were translated into Turkish by none other than Baltacıoğlu, in collaboration with the nationalist historian Fuad Köprülü. While the significance of landscape in the construction of modern nationalist narratives is a vast topic beyond the confines of this essay, there is nevertheless enough evidence in republican culture to establish its centrality for the Turkish nation-building project. Images of nature and Anatolian landscapes abound in early republican visual sources, as for example in the pages of La Turquie Kemaliste as well as in an official photograph album, Fotoğrafılarla Türkiye (Turkey in Photographs) issued by the Ministry of Interior in 1938. The pervasiveness of contextualist readings of Ottoman and pre-Ottoman Turkish architecture has a lot to do with this desire to invest the landscape with national meanings. Just as Behçet Ünsal’s photographs show Seljuk and Ottoman monuments situated “in harmony with the landscape” (fig. 12), official early republican photography depicts the new architecture of factories, bridges, and modern buildings in Anatolia as intimately situated within the landscape, thus suggesting a continuity of attitudes from an Ottoman sensitivity to natural context to a modernist one (fig. 13).

Such conflation of nation with nature was precisely how modern forms of the New Architecture were also “nationalized” in republican discourse around the same time. For example, the leading architect of republican Ankara, Austrian-Swiss designer Ernst Egli, published articles in Turkish presenting the so-called “Ankara cubic” (flat roofs, courtyards, small openings) as a thoroughly rational response to the arid, hot climate...
of the central Anatolian plain. His theories about the relationship between climate and architectural/urban form were later published in his *Die neue Stadt in Landschaft und Klima*. Bruno Taut, a prominent modern architect of Weimar Germany, an architect/educator in Turkey in 1936–38, and a vocal admirer of Ottoman architecture, also remarked on the double meaning of the term “nature” (tabiat) in referring to both physical nature and the national character of particular peoples. The writings of Egli and Taut and their work in Turkey offered strong theoretical grounds upon which their Turkish colleagues and students could claim the compatibility of Ottoman building practices with the principles of modern design, particularly the idea that design should emerge out of a rational response to site conditions. Hence, Arseven, Ünsal, Baltacğolu, and others, regarding Ottoman monuments (and the residential architecture of Anatolia and the Balkans during the Ottoman period) in the same terms of conformity to climate, terrain, and local materials emphasized by modernist architects, could thereby claim the “inherent modernity” of the Turkish national heritage.

Finally, as most architectural historians would agree today, the most important and original contribution of early republican scholarship to the “secularization” of Ottoman architecture was the focus on houses and other non-religious/utilitarian programs. By drawing attention to this hitherto neglected dimension of Ottoman architecture, nationalist authors of the 1930s challenged the prevailing religion-based Orientalist categories of European scholarship, the biases of which were evident not only in the exclusive focus on mosques but also in the extensive use for architecture of such terms as “Mohammedan” or “Saracen.” “So many people wrongly assume that Turkish art is only about the architecture of the mosques,” complained Baltacğolu in 1926, “whereas Turkish art manifests itself in all the material forms of a civilization: in houses, castles, fountains, aqueducts, bridges, hammams, weapons, manuscripts, calligraphy, decoration, pottery, woodwork, textiles, oil lamps, clothing, and gardens.” Arising largely out of republican authors’ anti-Orientalist and nationalist sentiments, this redirection of scholarship on the material and residential culture of the Ottoman Turks proved to be a most productive path in republican architectural historiography.

The early republican preoccupation with the traditional “Turkish house” was primarily focused on a very specific vernacular type spread across a vast geography of fertile lands from the Balkans to western and northern Anatolia, with the earliest surviving examples dating from the seventeenth century. The Amcazade Hüseyin Paşa Yalısı in Istanbul (dating from 1699 and still standing, albeit in a precarious state) enjoys a particularly inspirational, canonic status for modern Turkish architects, especially for Sedad Hakkı Eldem, a prominent designer, educator, and public figure who is arguably the most important name in modern Turkish architecture (fig. 14). Eldem argued that with the structural logic of its timber frame and modular windows, as well as the functional arrangement of its rooms around a central hall (sofa), the traditional “Turkish house” was already “modern” in its conception—an idea that inspired a full-fledged...
Nationalist Historiography and the "New Architecture" in the Early Republic

While the major credit for modern scholarship on the Ottoman/Turkish house rightly goes to Eldem, it is important to note that, long before Eldem’s studies in the 1930s, Arseven had devoted considerable attention to these houses, elevating them to a status equal to that of Ottoman monumental buildings. As early as 1903, as part of the Ottoman participation in the World’s Fair in St. Louis, Arseven made a drawing of a street of Turkish houses (fig. 16). A substantial section of his Türk Sanati is devoted to plans, drawings, and photographs of these wood-frame houses from Gebze, Bursa, and other Anatolian cities (fig. 17). What distinguishes Sedad Hakki Eldem is his success in turning this interest in the “Turkish house” into a systematic program of study, documentation, and codification, primarily through his National Architecture Seminar at the Academy of Fine Arts in Istanbul in the 1930s and 1940s. Eldem’s most lasting contribution to modern Turkish architecture is the classification of these house plans into an elaborate typological matrix based on the location and configuration of the hall (sofa) (fig. 18, a and b). Furthermore, unlike the typological classification of mosques and other monumental buildings by Arseven, Ünsal, and others, Eldem’s typological approach was an operative design tool in creating a modern residential architecture for republican Turkey, as demonstrated in his own work and that of his students and disciples. Devoid of the religious and dynastic connotations of monumental Ottoman architecture, the “Turkish house” would become an acceptable model for a nationalized modernism in the early republican period—and, from the 1980s onward, a marketable style for luxury villas (figs. 19 and 20).

POSTSCRIPT: TURKISH MODERNISM AND THE BURDEN OF OTTOMAN LEGACY

The perception of Ottoman house forms as viable models for modern Turkish architecture is the one exception to what was otherwise the architectural profession’s radical break with the Ottoman past. To this day, the consensus in republican histories of Ottoman architecture is that its progressively evolving rationality reached its perfection in the classical era and entered into a century-long phase of “alienation and degeneration” after the Tanzimat, to be finally superseded by the New Architecture of the Republic. For Arseven, Ünsal, Baltacoğlu, and others, the
Tanzimat period marked the decisive turning point for the worse, marking the infiltration of European styles and tastes, especially Baroque, Gothic, Neoclassical, and French Empire, into Ottoman architecture. Reflecting their nationalist, anticosmopolitan biases, these authors also associated the “decline and contamination” with the work of foreign and non-Muslim Ottoman architects—European, Levantine, Armenian, and Greek—who dominated the building scene in the postclassical Ottoman Empire.  For example, one of the key monuments of the Azizian period, the 1871 Pertevniyal Valide Mosque in Aksaray, designed by the Italian-Levantine Pietro Montani and the Armenian Sarkis Balyan, is dismissed by Baltacıoğlu as “a Gothic cathedral disguised as a mosque.”

More surprisingly, however, the nationalist attempt on the eve of World War I to resurrect the classical glory of Ottoman architecture in the form of an Ottoman revivalist “National Style” does not fare much better in republican scholarship. This pervasive style of the Empire’s final decade receives at best an ambiguous assessment from republican authors, since it flatters their national pride but at the same time goes against their modernist, antiacademic, and antirevivalist convictions. Many of them admire the exquisite craftsmanship of National Style buildings and the loyalty to classical Ottoman proportions displayed in...
small neighborhood mosques designed by Kemalettin Bey, such as the 1913 Bebek and Bostancı mosques in Istanbul (fig. 21). Ultimately, however, looking at the Ottoman period through the optics of their ideological commitment to the Kemalist “revolution,” they see this style as a romantic and futile idea belonging to a bygone era. “Each epoch produces its own art,” Baltacoğlu writes in 1929. “Today, when it is possible to build flat roofs, it makes no sense to modernize the dome. The dome is not a national motif: it was merely a constructional necessity of the past.”

To explain and legitimize the New Architecture’s radical aesthetic break with Ottoman formal precedents, similar arguments emphasizing the need to capture the zeitgeist of the modern epoch abound in other early republican writings. In his Türk Sanatı, Arseven writes, along similar lines:

![Fig. 18, a and b. Eldem’s typological studies of “inner hall” (iç soфа) house plans with an oval sofa. (Courtesy of Sedad Hakkı Eldem archives)](image1)

![Fig. 19. Komili Villa, Kanlıca, Istanbul, 1978–80, by Eldem. (Author’s photo)](image2)
The Ottomans had no choice but to make domes to span their roofs; after the advent of reinforced concrete, this method was rendered obsolete. Fortunately it did not take long to realize that it is a malaise to continue with the same method. We are hoping that the classical Ottoman style, which has great affinities with European modernism, will return with a new and more rational face than with domes and arches.51

There was, however, no consensus in republican texts about how the essence of classical Ottoman architecture could be captured in modern buildings without reproducing Ottoman forms and iconography. For example, Bruno Taut’s Faculty of Humanities Building in Ankara (1937), which makes subtle references to Ottoman spatial and constructional sensibilities, such as alternating courses of stone and brick in its walling technique (fig. 22), was praised by Baltaciğlu as a successful experiment “evoking the soul of the old in a new body”52 but criticized harshly by Ünsal as “a historicist style” (tarihçi stil) that “[imitates the old mosque and medrese construction for a modern university building].”53 This inability to imagine or agree upon what might constitute a good reincarnation of the old in the new inadvertently exposes what Gülsüm Baydar has called “the historical burden of
nationalist historiography and the “new architecture” in the early republic

While no one had a clear answer to what a modern and national Turkish architecture would look like, everyone agreed on what it should not look like: an Ottoman mosque. In 1937, the year that the Faculty of Humanities building was completed, the only competition entry for the new Grand National Assembly with formal references to the Ottoman mosque was promptly eliminated (fig. 23). In spite of the insistence of Arseven, Baltacioglu, and other authors that the dome was “a technical necessity, not a national, religious, or symbolic motif,” it was precisely this religious/dynastic symbolism that rendered it politically and ideologically impermissible in a modern, secular republic. At the very same time that republican authors exalted the tectonic purity and structural rationality of classical Ottoman forms in modern Turkey, domes, arches, and tile decoration were banished from republican practice as reactionary nostalgia.

This early republican modernist consensus favoring a definitive formal/stylistic break with the Otto-

non-Western architectures”; the impossibility of an “authentic national modernity” when the very definition of modern architecture is constituted outside national history.54

Fig. 22. Facade detail of the Faculty of Humanities Building, Ankara, 1937, by Bruno Taut. (Author’s photo)

Fig. 23. Project by József Vágó for the Turkish Grand National Assembly competition, 1937. (After Arkitekt 8, 4, [1938]: 127)

Fig. 24. Şişli Mosque, Istanbul, 1945–49, by Vasfi Egeli. (After Arkitekt 23, 9 [1953]: 169)
man past would last until the end of the single-party period in Turkey. Once the radical secularism of the early republic was somewhat relaxed, a few new mosques—such as the 1945–49 Şişli Mosque by Vasfi Egeli (fig. 24)—would reestablish some continuity with the Vakıflar (Ministry of Endowments) tradition loyal to classical Ottoman models. If it were not for the ideologically charged radical break with classical Ottoman forms in the early republican period, a gradual and evolutionary reconfiguration of Ottoman spatial, structural, and aesthetic sensibilities into a more innovative Turkish modernism might well have been a real historical option, far more consistent with the spirit of the republican writings I have summarized in this paper. We get a glimpse of precisely such an experiment in Vedat Dalokay’s unbuilt project for the Kocatepe Mosque in Ankara, the result of a competition in 1957 (fig. 25). Dalokay’s project reinterpreted the centralized domed system of the classical Ottoman mosque using an innovative thin-shell concrete structure. While celebrating lightness, transpar-

Fig. 25. Unbuilt competition project for the Kocatepe Mosque in Ankara, 1957, by Vedat Dalokay. ( Courtesy of İmdat As)

Fig. 26. Kocatepe Mosque, Ankara (1981–87) by Hüsrev Tayla and Fatin Uluengin. (Photo by Önol Soner)
ency, and modern conceptions of space, the design was still capable of evoking the classical Ottoman tradition. That the project was abandoned for both technical and ideological reasons is a major loss for modern Turkish architecture. Instead, the site of Dalokay’s project is now occupied by the current Kocatepe Mosque (1981–87) designed by Hüsrev Tayla and Fatin Uluengin as a monumental neo-Ottoman replica of the Şehzade Mosque in Istanbul (fig. 26).

Since the 1980s, with the dramatic changes in the Turkish political scene and the rise of political Islam as a major force, the iconography of the Ottoman mosque has returned with a vengeance to the Turkish urbanscape. Contemporary replicas of classical Ottoman mosques now fill the skylines of major Turkish cities: examples include the monumental Sabancı Central Mosque in Adana (1988–98) (fig. 27) as well as countless inferior versions mushrooming in the poorer urban fringes and smaller towns across the country. Classical tile decoration has also returned to popularity as an interior design feature of numerous new projects, from municipal offices to luxury hotels. The classical Ottoman mosque has even “gone global” today, informing mosque designs in Beirut, Riyadh, and Tokyo (fig. 28, a and b), among other places.

Fig. 27. Sabancı Central Mosque, Adana (1988–98) by Necip Dinç. (Photo by Ahmet Tozar)

Fig. 28, a and b. Plan and interior dome of a mosque in Tokyo, Japan. (Courtesy of Kimiyo Yamashita)
These examples provide particularly compelling illustration of how an acontextual, transnational pastiche removes the architectural object completely from its historical, geographical, and cultural specificity, turning it into a universal identity statement for a Muslim society. “Appreciating tradition means studying and documenting the Ottoman heritage with a theoretical and methodological rigor unmatched in later pioneering studies,” wrote Behçet Ünsal in the 1930s.55 In the end, today’s “neo-Ottoman” mosques give one a renewed appreciation of early republican texts on Ottoman architecture, even when they are fraught with the nationalist biases addressed in this essay and others in this volume. These texts deserve credit for studying and documenting the Ottoman heritage with a theoretical and methodological rigor unmatched in subsequent periods; in addition, as a historiographic project, their early, critical engagement with Orientalist views of Islamic art/architecture addresses issues that are still relevant and provocative. By seeking to locate the “modern” in the country’s own heritage, they challenge the assumption that modernity is an alien, imported discourse that Muslim societies cannot produce from within. Although their desire to see the rational evolution of Ottoman/Turkish architecture translated into an authentic modernism has remained unfulfilled, and although modern Turkish architecture has, by and large, failed in establishing meaningful continuities with the Ottoman architectural heritage, their insightful rejection of pastiche is even more poignant today. “Appreciating tradition means studying its essence and understanding its spirit, not imitating its forms,” wrote Behçet Ünsal in the 1930s.55 The pervasiveness of postmodern “neo-Ottomania” in contemporary Turkish architecture and culture is a timely reminder of the wisdom in these words.

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NOTES
4. C. E. Arseven, Türk Sanı’atı (Istanbul: Aşkım Matbaası, 1928), in old Ottoman script. In this essay references are made to this 1928 edition, as well as to later editions published in 1970 and 1984.
8. F. Köprüli, Türk Sanı̇ı̇ (History of Turkey) (Istanbul: Kanaat Matbaası, 1923).
9. See, for example, Gustav Le Bon, La civlization des Arabes (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1884), a text that Arseven mentions and critically engages with in his writings.
12. Ibid., 5.
17. Arseven, Türk Sanatsı Tarhı, 143.
22. On the major significance of Bergsonianism in Turkish intellectual history and art historiography, see N. İrem, "Turkish Conservative Modernism: Birth of a Nationalist Quest for Cultural Renewal," International Journal of Middle East Studies (henceforth IJMES) 34, 1 (Feb. 2002): 87–112; see also
H. Z. Ulken, Türkiye’de Çağdaş Dinî Yazısı (History of Contemporary Thought in Turkey) (İstanbul: Ulken Yayınlari, 1992), 375–81.


26. Ibid., 28–31; for a more extended discussion of Ottoman calligraphy see I. H. Baltacıoğlu, “Türk Sanatının Tedkikine Medhâl” (Introduction to the Study of Turkish Art), Davul- fûranı Bahşıyat Fâkültesi Memûüssâ (Mar. 1926).


29. H. Z. Ulken, “Le Corbusier’ye görür İstanbul” (Istanbul according to Le Corbusier), İn san 1, 10 (1 March 1939): 845.


31. I. H. Baltacıoğlu, “Türk Nereyi?” (What is a Turk?), Yeni Adam 18 (Dec. 1941); reprinted in idem, Türk Doğru, 9–12.


33. C. E. Arseven, Türk Sanatı (İstanbul: Cem Yayınları, 1970), 196.


35. For a comprehensive discussion of this topic in classical Ottoman architecture see G. Necipo lu, The Age of Sinan: Architectural Culture in the Ottoman Empire (London: Reaktion Books, 2005).

36. Ünsal, Turkish Islamic Architecture in Seljuk and Ottoman Times, 8–9.

37. I. H. Baltacıoğlu, “Türk Mimarisinin Felsefe ve Ruhüyâti” (The Philosophy and Soul of Turkish Architecture), in idem, İsmail Halâk Bey’in İzmir Konferansları (İzmir: İzmir Mili Kültüphânesi, 1915), 127.

38. See, for example, E. Eğli, “Mimari Muhi” (Architectural Context), Türk Yurdu 30, 224 (June 1950): 32–36.


41. As, for example, in Sir B. Fletcher’s classic History of Architecture on the Comparative Method (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1958, orig. publ. 1896), 80; Baltacıoğlu, “Bir Türk Sanatçı Nicin Vardı?”, 52. For his more extensive and illustrated discussion of Ottoman/Turkish houses see idem, “Türk Sanatının Tedkikine Medhâl.”

42. Baltacıoğlu, “Bir Türk Sanatçı Nicin Vardı?”, 62. For his more extensive and illustrated discussion of Ottoman/Turkish houses see idem, “Türk Sanatının Tedkikine Medhâl.”


46. I thank Yavuz Sezer for drawing my attention to Celâl Eza Arseven’s involvement in the St. Louis World Fair of 1903. A brief mention of this episode can be found in World’s Fair Bulletin (July 1903): 35–36. Sezer has also pointed out to me the fact that another important early republican figure, Süheyl Ünver, wrote extensively on the architectural merits of Turkish houses in Millî Mecmuası and other publications of the 1920s, before Eldem published on the subject.

47. As collected in Eldem’s two-volume İstanbul Avniyaları (Reminiscences of Istanbul) and Boğaziçi Avniyaları (Reminiscences of the Bosporus) (İstanbul: Alar kö Kültür Yayınları, 1979), and his monumental three-volume Türk Evi (Turkish House) (İstanbul: Taç Vakfı, 1984).

48. See especially Arseven, Türk Sanatı (1970), 80; Baltacıoğlu, Sanat ve Türk Doğru; and Apûtallah Ziya (Kozanoğlu), “Sa- natta Nasıonalizm” (Nationalism in Art), Mimar 2, 2 (1934): 51–54. For a more detailed discussion of the “decline the- sis” in Turkish scholarship see the essays in this volume by Shirine Hamadeh and Ahmet Ersoy.

49. I. H. Baltacıoğlu, “Mimaride Türkilik” (Turkishness in Architecture), Yeni Adam 15 (Aug. 1942); reprinted in idem, Türk Doğru, 92.


52. Baltacıoğlu, “Mimaride Türk Doğru” (Towards the Turk in Architecture), Yeni Adam 9 (July 1941); reprinted in idem, Türk Doğru, 89.


