

# Framing the Military-Nation: New War Museums and Changing Representational Practices in Turkey since 2002

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PATRIZIA KERN

Over the last decade, a remarkable number of new war museums<sup>1</sup> have been established in Turkey. All of them are dedicated to important “foundation” battles in Turkish history. In contrast to the traditional display of weapons, belongings of veterans and documents, these museums also include dioramic structures as well as classical 360° panoramas. Most of them are not based on existing collections of arms and armory. Their visual design has become one of the dominant modes for representing war and has influenced representational practices in other museums.

This article aims at examining a few of these museums within their particular cultural and political context.<sup>2</sup> The starting point will be the first museum that used diorama installations, the Ataturk and Independence War Museum in Ankara, which was opened in 2002. In a second part, two projects will be described, which in their content as well as in their design refer to this first museum: the Panoramic Victory Museum and the 1453 Panorama Museum in Istanbul.

In describing the institutionalization processes and spatial arrangements, the article will address questions regarding the objectives and means with which the events in the museums are visualized; the notions of nation and territory that are conveyed in the exhibitions; if the representations are trivializing, and whether they aim at emotional manipulation, historicizing and/or learning. The following will also critically reflect on the “authenticity” of the objects and documents in

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1 | I use the term “war museum” for historical museums dedicated to one particular battle.

2 | “Museumsanalyse”, museum analysis, according to Joachim Baur, treats museums as cultural phenomena. By investigating case studies, it aims at gaining knowledge about their social, political and cultural contexts. From an external perspective, it aims at a critical understanding of these institutions, rather than at their improvement.

Joachim Baur (2011): »Zur Einführung«, in: Joachim Baur (ed.): *Museumsanalyse, Methoden und Konturen eines neuen Forschungsfeldes*, Bielefeld: Transcript, pp. 7–14, p. 8.



*A young visitor at the 1453 Panorama Museum in Istanbul.*

the exhibition in order to understand what they aim to achieve, and how they are perceived by the public.

## THE ATATURK AND INDEPENDENCE WAR MUSEUM IN ANKARA

In October 2001, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Defense and the Turkish Chief of the General Staff<sup>3</sup> took the decision to renovate the Atatürk Museum<sup>4</sup> which was located within the mausoleum complex of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Anıtkabir). Like all “mausoleums built by the state, guarded by honor guards, and visited in silence [...] [Anıtkabir is a] site[] of political legitimization”<sup>5</sup>

**3** | The mausoleum had been administered by the Ministry of Culture until the administration was handed over to the Ministry of the General Staff in 1981. Necdet Evliyağıl (1988): *Atatürk ve Anıtkabir*, Ankara, p. 67. Also involved in the renovation plans were the Prime Minister’s Office, and the Military History Archives (ATASE). Bora Öncü/ Görkem Öztürk (2002): *Atatürk ve Kurtuluş Savaşı Müzesi tanıtımı ve Müze açılış töreni*, in: *Anıtkabir Dergisi*, 11 (3), pp. 12–23, p. 12.

**4** | The Atatürk-Museum was opened in 1960 and exhibited the personal belongings of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk.

**5** | Nazlı Ökten (2007): »An Endless Death and an Eternal Mourning«, in: Esra Özyürek (ed.): *The Politics of Public Memory in Turkey*, New York, pp. 95–113, pp. 99–100.

The context, in which the decision to build the new museums was made, was characterized by the experience of a grave financial and economic crisis, which began in February 2001. Already in the late 1990s, but especially during this crisis “the memory of a strong, independent, self-sufficient state and its secularist modernization project that dominated the public sphere through the past century was challenged by the rise of political Islam and Kurdish separatism, on the one hand, and the increasing demands of the European Union (EU), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank, on the other.”<sup>6</sup> Legal adjustments made in prospect of future EU membership comprised amendments to the constitution. First amendments made in September 2001, at least formally reduced the political influence of the army. But they certainly questioned the idea of a “military nation”, i.e. the indivisibility of the nation from its military, which was promoted by the Turkish government, as well as by the army and other security forces, and which served to mask internal – religious or ethnic – conflicts.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, the role of the army as the guardian of the unity of the Turkish nation, its people and territory as well as the state’s secular order is still largely accepted by the majority of the population.<sup>8</sup>

In contrast, corruption and mismanagement had led to a legitimization crisis of the governing parties, which were threatened with being voted out of parliament in the upcoming elections to the advantage of Islamist and Nationalist parties.<sup>9</sup> In this situation “[...] both the government and business circles evinced a heroic nationalist discourse. National-progressivist slogans such as “the economic War of Independence,” [...] were coined. The rise of the “Islamist” movement also compelled the official nationalism to emphasize the image of Atatürk; the portrait of Atatürk became a kind of logo and was displayed at every opportunity.”<sup>10</sup>

The plans for the design of the exhibition have to be read against this background. The museum was planned to be modernized and expanded by a sector right

**6** | Özyürek, *Nostalgia for the Modern*, 2.

**7** | Ayşe Gül Altınay (2004): »The Myth of the Military-Nation: Militarism, Gender and Education in Turkey«, New York.

**8** | See Heinz Kramer (2004): »Die Türkei im Prozess der „Europäisierung“«, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B33-34, pp. 9–17, pp. 11–12. See also S. Irzik and Güven Güzeldere (2003): »Introduction«, in: *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102 (2/3), pp. 283–292, p. 284.

**9** | In June 2001 the Islamist Virtue Party was prohibited by law. In August 2001, one of its wings re-united as AKP, the Justice and Development Party, which then under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan clearly won the early parliamentary elections on 3 November 2002 with 34.3 % of the votes.

**10** | Tanıl Bora (2011): »Nationalist Discourses in Turkey«, in: Ayşe Kadioğlu/E. Fuat Keyman (eds.): *Symbiotic Antagonisms. Competing Nationalisms in Turkey*, Salt Lake City, pp. 57–81, pp. 64–65.

beneath the hall of honor and around the crypt. Plans foresaw an exhibition of paintings of decisive battles in Turkish history related to Atatürk.<sup>11</sup>

According to the exhibition catalogue, the museum was supposed to show the “difficulties on the way towards the Republic”, and to give orientation for the future.<sup>12</sup> The past, in which the makers searched for orientation for the future, was the Independence War, which, in the official national narrative, symbolizes the end of an empire, and the “re-birth of the Turkish nation”. Visualized in countless memorials throughout the country, but especially in the capital Ankara, and celebrated in numerous national holidays, it is the central historical period publicly remembered.<sup>13</sup> Perceived as a part of the Great War, it represents one of the foundation myths of the Turkish Republic and a main reference for national identity constructions in contemporary Turkey.<sup>14</sup>

In the Ottoman-Turkish experience, this Great War that began in 1914 did not end in 1918. At the end of World War I, the Ottoman Empire, an Ally of the Central Powers, was partitioned among the victorious powers and their clients according to the agreements of the Treaty of Sèvres.<sup>15</sup> When Greece, one of the occupying powers, started to expand its territories in 1919, Mustafa Kemal led a successful counter-offensive of the so-called National Forces revolting against the Ottoman leaders,

**11** | The idea for painted battles came from the Chief of the General Staff Hüseyin Kıvrıkoğlu. Yury Baranov (2004): »The Secret Mission of Merchant Mikhailov«, in: Russian Military Review 1, pp. 66–69, p. 66.

**12** | T.C. Generalkurmay Başkanlığı/Turkish General Staff (ed.): Atatürk ve Kurtuluş Savaşı Müzesi/Atatürk and the Independence War Museum, museum catalogue, Ankara n. d., p. 43.

**13** | See Eviatar Zerubavel (2003): »Calendars and History: A Comparative Study of the Social Organization of National Memory«, in: Jeffrey K. Olick (ed.): States of Memory: Continuities, Conflicts, and Transformations in National Retrospection, Durham, pp. 315–337, p. 326.

**14** | Foundational myths are “myths [...], in which the national society or national state locates either its historic origin or its new foundation [...] (translation by the author). D. Langewiesche (2003): »Krieg im Mythenarsenal europäischer Nationen und der USA. Überlegungen zur Wirkungsmacht politischer Mythen«, in: Dieter Langewiesche/Nikolaus Buschmann (eds.): Der Krieg in den Gründungsmythen europäischer Nationen und der USA, Frankfurt/Main - New York, pp. 13–22, pp. 14–15.

**15** | In the Ottoman-Turkish perception, Sèvres was “not only a disastrous conclusion to a war, but the final act in a tragic sequence of events. In ten years the Ottomans had lost three wars in quick succession. [...] The Balkan War had been over for slightly over a year when World War I broke out.” Erik-Jan Zürcher (2008): »The Turkish Perception of Europe. Example and Enemy«, in: Michael J. Wintle (ed.): Imagining Europe: Europe and European Civilization as Seen from its Margins and by the Rest of the World, in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, Brussels (et al.) [Multiple Europes; 42], pp. 93–103, p. 101.

and, finally, the Greek army had to retreat. As a consequence of the victory in this so-called Turkish Independence War, a new peace treaty was signed in Lausanne and the Turkish Republic was established in 1923. The subsequent years until the death of Atatürk in 1938 were then characterized by numerous social reforms that aimed at modernization and Westernization.

In the mid-1990s, Turkey's secular republican state elites, who were losing influence to a new conservative urban middle class, had begun to remember this period as a "Golden Age." Anthropologist Esra Özyürek has called the memory practices of these groups "nostalgia for the modern."<sup>16</sup> A second part of the new museum was dedicated to this early Republican Era of the 1920s and 1930s.

Although not completely finished, the new museum was (re-)opened after nine months of work as the 'Atatürk and Independence War Museum' (Atatürk ve Kurtuluş Savaşı Müzesi) on the occasion of the (80th) anniversary celebrations of the "Great Offensive" (Büyük Taarruz), a decisive battle of the Independence War, on 26 August 2002. The opening ceremony was attended by politicians and military officers as well as by ambassadors from several foreign countries.<sup>17</sup>

## THE BATTLE DIORAMAS

In the first new sections, dedicated to the Gallipoli battle and the Independence War, three battle dioramas are on display. Loudspeakers fill the rooms with the sound of battle and solemn music. Visitors, who stand in front of a faux terrain of trenches with life-sized mannequin soldiers, rocks and weaponry, share the troops' view of the enemy strike force. The installation between the wall panorama and the visitors, the special sound effects and three-dimensional displays aim at making the past present.

The "script" for the exhibition was written by Turgut Özakman, a famous script writer and novelist, who is known for his – anti-Western and anti-Imperialist – accounts of the Gallipoli battles and the Independence War.<sup>18</sup> The realization of the dioramas though, was handed over to the Moscow Grekov-Studio of military painting for obvious technical, but also political reasons.<sup>19</sup> The Russian painters had to obey particular "Turkish rules" when working on the wall panoramas:

**16** | Esra Özyürek (2006): »Nostalgia for the Modern. State Secularism and Everyday Politics in Turkey«, Durham-London, pp. 62–63.

**17** | »Memories of Atatürk and Independence War immortalized«, in: Turkish Daily News, 28 August 2002.

**18** | Lerna K. Yanık: 'Those Crazy Turks' that Got Caught in the 'Metal Storm': Nationalism in Turkey's Best Seller Lists, EUI Working Papers RSCAS 2008/04. Accessible via <http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/8002>. (Last access: 6 March 2012).

**19** | After 9/11, the military's overall pro-EU stance had taken a more conservative-

“Apart from the rules of battle painting, it was necessary to take into account Turkish national features. For example, Kemal Atatürk could be depicted only in poses seen on surviving photographs. No free interpretation was allowed. The commissioners, the Turkish Joint Staff and the Culture Ministry, even insisted that the Turkish President should be 160 cm tall, as he was in reality. In compliance with Turkish rules, works about Atatürk must be confirmed by authentic photos of him. His photos from the memorial museum in Ankara served as the accepted models.”<sup>20</sup>

Also, the motives for the panoramas were chosen from a well-established repertoire of real events and myths: The “Battle of Çanakkale” diorama<sup>21</sup> presents asynchronous events like the landing of the Anzac troops at Arıburnu as well as the legendary Turkish soldier who carried a wounded enemy soldier next to each other. It depicts the commanders of the Turkish troops, and shows everyday life in the trenches, the wounded, and the common prayer of the soldiers.

Vis-à-vis the panorama a map illustrates the planned dismemberment of the Anatolian peninsula by the Allied forces by the Treaty of Sèvres. The memory of the imperialist powers dividing the country is one that is repeatedly used in Turkish political discourse. Politicians and nationalist groups have repeatedly used the term “New Sèvres” (*yeni Sevr*) to condemn EU pressure regarding minority rights. Fittingly, the term “national unity” (*Milli birlik ve beraberlik*) is increasingly found in discourse as well.<sup>22</sup>

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nationalist tone. The overall perception was that the EU displayed “a negative bias toward Turkey” and that therefore, the attempt to become an EU member would be in vain, that, “Turkey need[s] new allies, and it would be useful if Turkey engages in a search that would include Russia and Iran.” Tüncer Kiliç, Secretary of the National Security Council, in March 2002. Cited in Ümit Cizre/ Menderes Çınar (2003): »Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism, and Politics in the Light of the February 28 Process«, in: *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 102 (2/3), pp. 309–332, p. 315. For an account of the “Eurasian Partnership” regarding military cooperation and tourism between Russia and Turkey, see Tunç Aybak (2006): »From ‘Turkic Century’ to the Rise of Eurasianism«, in: Gerald McLean (ed.): *Writing Turkey: Explorations in Turkish History, Politics and Cultural Identity*, London, pp. 69–84.

For the technical reasons, see Baranov: *The Secret Mission*, 66. The other option would have been Dutch studios or Korean artists, but the General Staff apparently preferred the Russian realistic style.

**20** | Yury Baranov: *The Secret Mission*, p. 69.

**21** | For a list of painters, see: [www.panoramapainting.com](http://www.panoramapainting.com).

**22** | Zürcher, *Turkish Perception of Europe*, p. 101. It is “a term often used in Kemalist discourse, in particular by the army. Politics on the basis of ethnicity, religion or class are seen as contrary to this principle of national unity and therefore unlawful.” Zürcher, *Turkish Perception of Europe*, p. 98, Fn. 8.

The two panoramas depicting the battles of the Independence War<sup>23</sup> are placed en face in a separate room. The room between the panoramas exhibits oil paintings depicting scenes from the defence of Gallipoli and the Independence War as well as portraits of Atatürk's companions and military commanders. The paintings aim at illustrating the closeness of the military leadership represented by Mustafa Kemal and his deputy Ismet (Inönü), the unity of the people, and their support of the soldiers and the National Movement; they give impressions from soldier's everyday lives, the cruelty of war, as well as the victories.

In this new section "the brave Turkish army stop[s] the strong European navies and armies with its national faith alone. The German military aid and the existence of German commanders such as Liman von Sanders are not mentioned at all. The true national essence, with Mustafa Kemal as its future leader, is identified as the real agent of this [...] Great War."<sup>24</sup> This "national essence" is "limited to specific groups: Anatolian peasants, young nationalist intellectuals from Istanbul – who served as reserve officers in the war – and low-ranking army officers."<sup>25</sup> The nation as represented in the portrait galleries is a "military-nation". The top-down view that has also dominated official remembrance remains very noticeable in the exhibition.<sup>26</sup>

## MODERNIZATION AS A LINEAR SUCCESS STORY

The second of the museum's new sections is dedicated to the period from the Treaty of Sèvres to the social reforms of the 1920s and 1930s. It occupies a hall with eighteen vault galleries, in which around 3,000 photographs and objects accompanied by Atatürk quotes are on display.

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**23** | Sakarya Pitch Battle (Sakarya Meydan Muharebesi), 23 August - 13 September, 1921, 35 x 6 m and the Battle of Dumlupınar or Commander-in-Chief (Başkomutanlık Meydan Muharebesi or Büyük Taarruz), 26 August 1922, 35 x 6m.

**24** | Erol Köroğlu (2006): »Taming the Past, Shaping the Future: The Appropriation of the Great War Experience in the Popular Fiction of the Early Turkish Republic«, in: O. Farschid/ M. Kropp/ and S. Dähne (eds.): *The First World War as remembered in the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean*, Beirut, pp. 223–230, p. 230.

**25** | E. Köroğlu: *Taming the Past*, p. 227.

**26** | The memory of the war was greatly influenced by the sources available: "Historiographical works on military, diplomatic and economic aspects of the war and memoirs of high-ranking soldiers and politicians, many of them reflecting the official perspective (often quoting from orders) and the top-down view". See M. Strohmeier: »Monumentalism versus Realism: Aspects of the First World War in Turkish Literature«, in: O. Farschid (et al.): *The First World War as Remembered in the Countries of the Eastern Mediterranean*, pp. 297–319, here p. 306.

Among the reforms presented are the adoption of the Western clock and the Gregorian calendar in 1926, the script reform in 1928 and the language reform in 1932 – measures that not only served to westernize and secularize society, but also to break with the Ottoman past and legitimize the party in power “as the founder of a new era”.<sup>27</sup> In the context of the exhibition, the reforms are presented as unanimously welcomed by the people. The rigorous measures taken by the one party regime to enforce the new laws – such as death penalties for wearing a Fez, the Ottoman hat – are not mentioned.

The image of the nation remembered here is very much in line with the “nostalgia” mentioned above: “The early Republican days are depicted as a joyous time in which individual citizens were ideologically and emotionally united with their state”.<sup>28</sup> This depiction can be interpreted “as a critique of contemporary Turkey”,<sup>29</sup> which does not live up to the high values of this golden past. At the same time, “such nostalgic narratives stood against contemporary historiographic criticism of the 1930s as oppressive.”<sup>30</sup> The narrative presented in this section is one of unity and progress towards modernity, but, in the context of the early 2000s, a modernity that is located “in the non-present.”<sup>31</sup>

The origin of most of the objects remains unclear to visitors. They are presented without contextualization. Together with the Atatürk quotes the objects inserted in this arrangement play a crucial role as “authentic objects”, as they confirm and testify the claimed facts and serve to support and legitimate the content presented.<sup>32</sup>

The busts and brief CVs of twenty so-called “civilian-soldier heroes and heroines” are on display alongside the corridor and are picturing the power-relations of the present under the rubric of ‘the history of the nation.’<sup>33</sup> At first glance, the selection of heroes of the nation seems to illustrate the ideal of the “military-nation”, the civilian-soldier. However, at closer range, the ideal turns out to be restricted to a quite small and elitist group: Among the “heroes”, there are only two “heroines”, of whom one, Halide Edip Adivar, impersonates the ideal of the westernized, educated woman. Despite the emphasis on the efforts of the little soldier, the so-called “Mehmetçik” and the contributions of civilians, most of the “heroes” portrayed in

**27** | Esra Özyürek: »Introduction«, in: Özyürek: *The Politics of Public Memory*, pp. 1–15, p. 4.

**28** | E. Özyürek: *Nostalgia for the Modern*, pp. 62–63.

**29** | *Ibid.*

**30** | E. Özyürek: *Nostalgia for the Modern*, p. 26.

**31** | E. Özyürek: *Nostalgia for the Modern*, p. 11.

**32** | Jana Scholze (2004): *Medium Ausstellung: Lektüren musealer Gestaltung in Oxford, Leipzig, Amsterdam und Berlin, Bielefeld*, pp. 122–123.

**33** | Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2000): *Museums and the Interpretation of Visual Culture*, London-New York, [Museum meanings; 4], p. 43.

the gallery do at least have the rank of general. Many later became members of the new Grand National Assembly.

Minorities are included in the exhibition only with the objective of presenting them as “others” or (internal or external) “enemies”, against which the ideals of the “Turkish nation” can be shaped. Photos of “innocent Turks”,<sup>34</sup> peasants, old women and children, presumably mutilated by Greeks, are on display. Besides the Anatolian Greeks, Armenians are presented as the second group of inner enemies,<sup>35</sup> who by deserting the army and through their guerilla activities, revealed themselves to be traitors.<sup>36</sup>

Visitors are guided linearly along the arch vaults, in correspondence with the linear narrative of a nation’s struggle for independence and its successful modernization, which is uncritically presented as a pure success story.<sup>37</sup> This section, in sum, links the Independence War to the one-party regime of the Early Republic, its leader Atatürk and his reforms. It visualizes a narrative of progress whose narrative structure is reflected in the spatial arrangements of this section.

In comparison with earlier museum representations, the topic is now dealt with in a much more sensual and three-dimensional way. In its visual design the museum presents a caesura: Over the last decade, a remarkable number of museums have adopted the panorama form to present the battles.

Two of these projects were initiated by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, which, as a consequence of liberalization policies in the 1980s, has vast resources at its command and is thus one of the “new players” in the museum sector on a national scale.<sup>38</sup> Since the mid-1990s, the Municipality has been dominated by conservative

**34** | Cited from a text accompanying the exhibited photographs.

**35** | Within the biographies, reference to the Anatolian Armenians is made twice: women joined the war to free their husbands that are said to have been tortured to death by Armenians (Kara Fatma); and Armenians “started harassing Muslim women” (Sütçü İmam). Turkish General Staff (ed.): Atatürk and the Independence War Museum, p. 141.

**36** | See Hamit Bozarslan (2009): »Der Genozid an den Armeniern als Herausforderung: Erinnerung, nationale Identität und Geschichtsschreibung in der Türkei«, in: Kirstin Buchinger/ Claire Gantet/ Jakob Vogel (eds.): Europäische Erinnerungsräume, Frankfurt-New York, pp. 267–280, pp. 274–275.

**37** | The exhibition thus does not reflect recent research and historiography which particularly highlight the character of this “modernization” of the state and the society as a time of mostly top-down revolution of a small elite and a cultural identity break. See, for instance, E. Özyürek: »Introduction«. Researchers also claim that those reforms only affected an urban minority, but did not improve life for the rural majority. See Erik-Jan Zürcher (2004): Turkey: A Modern History, London-New York, p. 206.

**38** | Wendy M. K. Shaw: »National Museums in the Republic of Turkey: Palimpsests within a Centralized State«, in: Building National Museums in Europe 1750–2010. Conference proceedings from EuNaMus, European National Museums: Identity Politics, the Uses of

elites and, since 2004, by the AKP. Their cultural policies have focused “largely on strengthening exhibitions that emphasize Islamic heritage.”<sup>39</sup> This article shall argue that the two projects present “adaptations”, or counter-narratives, to what is presented at the museum at Anıtkabir.

## RE-INTERPRETING THE FOUNDING MOMENT: THE MINIATÜRK PANORAMIC VICTORY MUSEUM

The Miniatürk Panorama Victory Museum (Panorama Zafer Müzesi) presents the same events as the Anıtkabir museum, but with a shift in its meaning that corresponds to the interests of a new neo-conservative elite. The “museum” is comprised of one room located within Miniatürk Park in Istanbul and was opened on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Republic.<sup>40</sup>

Miniatürk, which had opened its doors to the public only about half a year earlier, is a nation-themed miniature park situated on the northern shore of the Golden Horn. As a cooperation between the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and the Kültür A.Ş., a joint-stock company, Miniatürk presents miniature models of cultural and natural heritage.<sup>41</sup> With its choice to also present models from Ottoman territories and its emphasis on the Turkic-Islamic heritage, Miniatürk is said to be an example of “neo-conservative memory” that illustrates how alternative memory practices have moved from their “marginal position toward the center.”<sup>42</sup>

The Victory Museum is placed in a small building at the rear of the park, beyond the open-air exhibition. Divided into two parts, the left-hand and rear side of the exhibition space present a miniature diorama of battlefields, easily identifiable as Gallipoli, and a miniaturized Anatolian village scene. The right-hand wall of the museum exhibits a photo gallery with Atatürk quotes.

The first section, the miniature diorama with mannequins was not designed by a professional, but by a retired teacher. According to Christine Beil, miniaturized presentation forms of war served to “convey[] the impression that it [the war] was controllable, because visitors saw an infantilized, harmless and straightforward

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the Past and the European Citizen, Bologna 28–30 April 2011. Peter Aronsson & Gabriella Elgenius (eds.): *EuNaMus Report No. 1*, Linköping University Electronic Press: [www.ep.liu.se/ecp/064/038/ecp64038.pdf](http://www.ep.liu.se/ecp/064/038/ecp64038.pdf), 1093–1123, 1106. (last access: 6 March 2012)

**39** | W. Shaw: *Palimpsests*, p. 1108.

**40** | The Gallipoli part was only added in 2005, on the anniversary of the battle. W. Shaw: *Palimpsests*, p. 1109.

**41** | The models are displayed in an open area and arranged in sections entitled “Istanbul”, “Anatolia” and “Abroad” (meaning former Ottoman territories beyond the current state territory).

**42** | E. Özyürek: *Nostalgia for the Modern*, p. 176.

picture of the war-related events. The war's atrocities were neutralized by shrinking it down to a few centimeters. [This] trivialization [...] freed the war experience from its unpleasant aspects, so that this experience could enter cultural memory [...] in the form of myths of battle and the heroization of the soldiers to war heroes."<sup>43</sup>

The aim is not to illustrate historical events or the cruelties of war, but to stage "the founding moment". The installation concentrates on the Anatolian peasants, while no historic person is recognizable among the soldiers. It is dominated by village scenes including the mosque at the centre of everyday life, and the famous ox carts with which civilians transported armory and food supplies to the front. The miniature diorama thus "appeals to a populist nationalism without emphasizing the person of Atatürk, and thus suggests a democratic means of commemorating national history."<sup>44</sup>

A closer look at the second part of the exhibition reinforces the impression of a shift in the interpretation of the founding moment. 18 photographs of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, both in private and in official situations, accompanied by – mostly well-known – Atatürk quotes in Turkish and English, are put on display.<sup>45</sup>

The exhibition provides a complex and interesting interplay of images and quotes. The idea that all soldiers equally contributed to the making of the nation is, for instance, expressed in the following quote, which is accompanied by a portrait of Atatürk: "It is not me who won this victory. We owe this victory to our valiant soldiers [...]"<sup>46</sup>

Another image/quote pairing hints at the religious character of the nation and its founding moment: "Our religion is the most reasonable and natural religion. This is why it has become the last religion."<sup>47</sup> The quote dates from the same year as the

**43** | „[...] vermittelte die miniaturisierte Präsentationsform [...] den Eindruck, dieser sei beherrschbar, denn der Betrachter sah ein infantilisiertes, harmloses und überschaubares Bild vom Kriegsgeschehen. Das Kriegsgrauen wurde neutralisiert, indem man es auf Zentimetergröße schrumpfen ließ. [...] Die Trivialisierung [...] reinigte das Kriegserlebnis von unangenehmen Seiten, so dass dieses in Form von Schlachtenmythen und der Heroisierung der Soldaten zu Kriegshelden Eingang in das kulturelle Gedächtnis [...] finden konnte.“ C. Beil: *Der ausgestellte Krieg*, p. 282. (Translation by the author.)

**44** | W. Shaw: *Palimpsests*, p. 1109.

**45** | Atatürk images and quotes have always been used for legitimation by different groups, see, for instance, Özyürek: *Public Memory as Political Battleground*, in: *Özyürek: Politics of Public Memory*, pp. 14–137, and Walter B. Denny (1982): »Atatürk and Political Art in Turkey«, in: *The Turkish Studies Association Journal* 6 (2), pp. 17–23. As historical sources the quotes are quite problematic since their tradition is very often unclear and they are usually used outside their original context.

**46** | „Bu zaferi kazanan ben değilim. Bunu [...] kahraman askerler kazanmıştır.“ (Translation as in the exhibition.)

**47** | “Bizim dinimiz en makul ve en tabii bir dindi. Ve ancak bundan dolayıdır ki son din

proclamation of the Republic. The related photograph was taken on the very same day as the founding of the Republic, on 23 October 1923. The image shows Atatürk amongst a group of men on the balcony of the building of the National Assembly. Next to Mustafa Kemal is a religious leader with a white turban, and all the men, including Atatürk, are holding their hands up and pray.<sup>48</sup> Thus, the religious aspect of the foundation moment is highlighted.

The nation as presented in the gallery is no longer only defined by the “myth of the military-nation”, but also by the values of the new conservative, as well as economically potent middle class: “The new Turkish society won’t be a nation of warriors. The new Turkish society will be a nation of economic activities”.<sup>49</sup> And: “Economy is everything. Economy means all one needs to live, to be happy, to be civilized”.<sup>50</sup>

The question of friend and foe is not addressed in the arrangement. The territory inhabited by the nation is not clearly defined, but the characteristics of the nation are. The presentation in the Victory museum reflects the neo-conservative memory that also dominates Miniaturk Park and reveals a subtle shift in the narrative of the founding of the republic via highlighting a different group of actors, while silencing another.

## STAGING AN ALTERNATIVE FOUNDING MOMENT: THE 1453 PANORAMA MUSEUM

Only two years later, in 2005, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and Kültür A.Ş. initiated a new museum. It was the first actually built in a “panoramic” form: The 1453 Panorama Museum. It was opened in 2009 as the first museum dedicated exclusively to the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453. The museum

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olmuştur.” (Translation as in the exhibition.) The quote is one of the best-known Atatürk quotes regarding religion. It dates to the period of the Liberation War period of 1919–1923 and to a context, in which the fight against occupation was rhetorically functionalized as a fight against the infidel occupiers. See Zürcher, *Turkish Perception of Europe*.

**48** | Until the 1990s this image had not been in the canon of official Atatürk portraits, i.e. it did not appear in text books, documentaries on Atatürk on television or in mainstream print media. Since the 1990s, it has been used in Islamist publications on Republic’s Day to highlight religious aspects of the founding of the Republic. Özyürek: *Public Memory as Political Battleground*, p. 115.

**49** | The English translation here reads “nation”, although the Turkish original uses “devlet”, meaning “state” or “land”: “Yeni Türk Devleti savaştı bir devlet olmayacaktır. Fakat yeni Türk Devleti, ekonomi devleti olacaktır.”

**50** | “Arkadaşlar ekonomi demek her şey demektir. Yaşamak için, medeni insan olmak için ne lazımsa onların hepsi demektir. (Translation as in the exhibition.)

is located in a rotunda at the historic site where the Ottoman troops stormed the city walls and is thus close to Istanbul's historic old town and the conservative Fatih neighborhood.

It consists of two sections: First, a hallway exhibiting boards that recount the story of Istanbul and the conquest. The second part is made up of a hemisphere panorama of the conquest of Byzantine Constantinople by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmed II. in 1453. The panorama depicts the morning of the conquest. Visitors are positioned between the attacking army and the city walls, thus sharing in the glorious moment of conquest.

Originally scheduled for 2008, the 555th anniversary of the conquest, the museum obviously claimed national significance. According to President Abdullah Gül, the museum should serve “as a remembrance by all individuals of our great nation of the glorious days of our honorable history and the development of a historical consciousness [...]”<sup>51</sup> Nevzat Bayhan, the Director of Kültür A.Ş. and the museum, declared in an interview: “People had been waiting a long time for the panorama museum. Until today there was no museum dedicated to the conquest of Istanbul, which meant a big void for the city [...] For years the conquest of Istanbul has been celebrated with ship models that parade through the metropolis. One should definitely have the opportunity to feel the spirit of the conquest.”<sup>52</sup>

Bayhan is referring to the annual celebrations including re-enactments, which have been taking place since the mid-1990s, when Islamist political organization appropriated the event. This appropriation has been interpreted as a shift of the national founding moment to the Ottoman period.<sup>53</sup> As in the other museums, no historian was involved in the planning of the museum.<sup>54</sup>

Before entering the panorama, visitors are led through a hallway that extends over two floors. It exhibits boards that offer a roughly linear narrative of the conquest, but highlight thematic aspects. Istanbul is framed as a historical capital of several empires. Its conquest was foretold by the prophet Mohammed and the quote is highlighted on one of the boards.

**51** | President Abdullah Gül's entry in the museum's visitor book on 15 March 2009. Accessible via <http://www.panoramikmuze.com/visitors.php> (last access 6 March 2012). (Translation by the author).

**52** | Interview with Nevzat Bayhan in: <http://www.zamanavusturya.at/details.php?haberid=1633> (last access 6 March 2012) (Translation by the author).

**53** | Alev Çınar (2001): »National History as a Contested Site. The Conquest of Istanbul and Islamist Negotiations of the Nation«, in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 43 (2), pp. 364–391.

**54** | The team consisted of computer specialists under the direction of renowned animation director Haşim Vatandaş, İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi/ İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Panorama 1453 Tarih Müzesi/ Panorama 1453 Historical Museum, İstanbul 2009, 137.

The narrative as presented in the exhibition reiterates national ideology. Like the “Great War”, the conquest signifies the end of one empire and the birth of another. But the conquest as it is presented in the museum is also a surprisingly peaceful one. The museum provides a new, alternative hero. It is not difficult to recognize the parallels to the Kemalist narrative. Like Mustafa Kemal, the historical figure of Mehmed is heroized and stylized. He combines “national grandeur” and “revolutionary fervour”.<sup>55</sup> He dares the seemingly impossible. At the same time, and in contrast to Kemal, he shows respect towards the elders and the religious dignitaries at court. Mehmed II. is not only presented as a successful leader, but also as a foundation hero of a new civilization: Instead of destroying the city, Mehmed finances reconstruction works.

Hamit Bozarslan has called attention to the generosity of the Ottomans towards conquered peoples and Christian minorities as a part of the national narrative.<sup>56</sup> In the exhibition, not only does the young sultan spare the city’s inhabitants, but he also appears as the bringer of liberty for suppressed minorities<sup>57</sup> by founding a new civilization in which, under the umbrella of Islam, all minorities can live together peacefully.

Regarding the relations to the West the Ottoman victory is presented as a result of the technological advance of the Ottomans that served as a role model for Europe. The presentation of Turkish tolerance and the support of art and culture by the Sultan as decisive factors and the origins of European Renaissance are also in line with the traditional nationalist narrative.

## CONCLUSION

The Turkish military and government were leading agents in the institutionalization of the Atatürk and Independence War Museum. Against the backdrop of the perceived threat of political Islam, the adjustments in view of a possible EU full membership and the challenge of new parties and interest groups, the foundational myth of the Republic was invoked in order to stabilize national identity, give reassurance and to emphasize these groups’ political legitimization.

In its narrative mode, the museum reflects representational practices that are inextricably interwoven with public imaginaries of nation, modernity and development, but also how those representational practices respond to contemporary challenges of globalization, European integration, and new media.

**55** | „nationale Größe“ und „revolutionären Eifer“, see Rudolf Speth (2000): *Nation und Revolution. Politische Mythen im 19. Jahrhundert*, Opladen, p. 122.

**56** | H. Bozarslan: »Der Genozid an den Armeniern als Herausforderung«, p. 271.

**57** | One board highlights Mehmed as the “Hope of Christians and Jews”, who were encouraged by the free lives of their fellow-believers to move to the Ottoman Empire.

The projects of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality further develop the form of dioramic/panoramic presentation, probably due to the importance and the symbolic value of Anıtkabir. Both the Panorama Victory Museum and the 1453 Panorama can be framed as sites of contestation<sup>58</sup> between secular elites and local authorities that explain existing conditions in society and legitimize political positions and decisions. They exemplify how strategies of re-interpretation and adaptations of the nationalist founding myth and of the time and identity of the nation are inserted and negotiated in museum space. While the museum in Ankara visualizes the political myth of the “military-nation”, the other two represent a conservative interpretation. Still, they reiterate national ideologies.

While they react to political and historiographical discourse, such as a new interest in the Ottoman past and criticism of the early Republican nationalist period, they do not include current debates in the exhibition. The war experience itself is trivialized by forms of miniaturization. The main aim of the museums and presentations is to activate and stage political myths which serve as a source of legitimation.<sup>59</sup>

This boom in panoramic museums, however, is still going on: The installation and design of these new museums has had an impact on existing “traditional” museums and exhibitions. In 2007, the Harbiye Askeri Müzesi installed a new “Hall of the Conquest” (Fatih Salonu) including a diorama in cooperation with a team of artists, who were already involved in the work at Anıtkabir. The Naval Museum (Deniz Müzesi) added a panorama of Istanbul painted by Henry Aston Barker in 1801 to its existing “Fatih Salonu”. All this confirms that the panorama now acts as a “code” for the museum representation of the conquest.

New projects like the Gallipoli Panoramic Museum or the Victory Museum at Polatlı near Ankara, where battles of the Independence War took place, are also under construction. The opening of a panorama museum at Gallipoli is scheduled for 2015.

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**58** | Ivan Karp (1992) (ed.): *Museums and Communities: The Politics of Public Culture*, Washington (et al.).

**59** | R. Speth: *Nation und Revolution*, p. 142.

