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Picturing National History: Turkey's popular nationalism on the rise through the 1950s new print culture

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Abstract

This article interrogates the role of print culture and visual communication design in the permeation of Turkish national consciousness into everyday practices. It seeks to understand the phenomenon of "banal nationalism" argued by Michael Billig, in a broader context of cultural production advocated by Tim Edensor. It does this by looking into Turkey's first liberalisation period in the 1950s where a boosting print industry, a standard print language and high literacy contributed to the daily reproduction of a collective historical past through representations. This period is analysed through publications like Sunday comic strips, advertorial giveaways, illustrated history journals that emulate popular American formats in the commodification of history. These are treated as material tools to present and disseminate an imaginary reconciliation of secular modernism with imperial history in a new print culture. This analysis reveals how representations in the foreground of everyday cultural artefacts are used to produce and reproduce difference that designates a distinct national consciousness detached from the realm of state. It also sheds light on the prevalence of identity negotiation and the commoditization of culture in the professionalisation of visual communication disciplines in non-Western design paradigms.

Keywords

1950s, popular culture, national identity, graphic design, illustration, Turkey

Walking around a contemporary Turkish city, one gets easily overwhelmed by the paraphernalia of nationalist pomp; new monuments, aggrandising political campaigns boosting with pride of Ottomans.[1] This Neo-Ottomanism stems from the dominant political rhetoric that aims to reconcile Turkey's ties with its imperial past, supposedly severed by the genesis of the modern Republic of Turkey in 1923 and its Westernising, secular reforms led by the single-party regime (1923-1946) of the People's Republican Party (PRP) under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Yet to interpret this obsession with the imperial past as an exuberant manifestation of nationalism ascribed only to Turkey's current political climate would be too simplistic. Surely, before this contemporary Neo-Ottoman political rhetoric hardened, there must have been routine practices in Turkish print culture that as Michael Billig argues, worked to sustain such dormant mechanisms of passionate national insularity as "banal rehearsals for the extraordinary times of crisis."[2] In fact, imperial and national histories have always been intertwined in Turkish political, print and popular culture.

The appropriation of Ottoman legacy in the commemoration of the Turkish nation has always been an intricate political game in Turkish modernity. Even the denigration of the Ottoman dynasty by the modernist republican elite of the 1930s was limited, in so far as imperial legacy retained its currency for the imagination of a glorious national past.[3] Nevertheless, Gavin Brockett argues that the death of Atatürk in 1938 allowed a negotiation of the modernist, secular national narrative (read Kemalist legacy) through a reinterpretation of imperial history.[4] A major instigator for these discourses was the post-war liberalisation of president İsmet İnönü's autarkic regime (1938-1950) in the mid-1940s, flirting with American ideals of democracy and free enterprise, even amending the press law, hindering arbitrary closures of press organs.[5] Measures such as licenses and money deposits for publishing new dailies were also abolished and consequently newspapers doubled and journals saw a thirty percent rise in number.[6]

Nevertheless, the war had already polarized the press and politics; right-wing publications were prosecuted for their pro-fascist tendencies while left-wing ones

were entrapped in a witch-hunt with communism.[7] In May 1950, the opposition held by Democrat Party (DP) won the elections with an economically liberal agenda and tolerance towards public expressions of religion, terminating PRP's single-party era. The corollary political friction between the two parties oscillating between downplaying nationalism and alleged threats of communism greatly shaped the politics and the print culture in the 1950s. Thus, the multi-party electoral system brought in a cultural politics where Ottoman legacy has been increasingly instrumentalised through populist commemorative discourses and practices that dismantled the single-party era secular cult of the nation.[8] A catalyst to such populist historical discourses were the quincentenary celebrations of the conquest of Istanbul in 1953 where public forms of national commemoration found wider ground seeking to reconcile the imperial past with the Kemalist legacy.[9]

This cultural politics deepened an already existing fracture between modern national identity and imperial legacy in the public sphere. Examples of public identity were increasingly interpreted from historical models and disseminated through new print formats to reconcile the political friction, exacerbated by the Cold War, between the Kemalist legacy and traditional models finding expression through liberal politics. These new hybrid identities, held to be both historical and modern, found ground in a new visual culture, a commodified version of history, amalgamating the secular cult of nation and a rising grip to traditional models in postwar liberalisation. This was akin to what Michael Kammen calls the proto-mass culture (PMC) a transitional phase in the 1960s USA with a widening of target audiences in cultural industry and a growing impact of advertisements, leading to the erosion of local identities.[10]

In this article, I propose to locate this shift in the dissemination of national consciousness from top-down nationalistic practices to more popular but less-pronounced ones through the lens of visual communication design and periodical press at the onset of a similar PMC during Turkey's liberalisation in the 1950s. This period offers the traits of an emerging populist print culture with sweeping print formats that permeated a nationalistic appropriation of imperial history into the everyday. To demonstrate this, I will historically contextualise the role attributed to imperial legacies in the everyday representation and commemoration of Turkish

nationalism, the commodification of history in print media. My endeavor here is informed by Billig's invitation to look into the mundane manifestations of nationalism beyond the obvious, official iterations and Tim Edensor's to locate these in popular culture, a prolific field for the production and dissemination of national consciousness explained through actor-network theory.[11]

Methodologically, the study will deal with national consciousness as a cultural construct that is produced and disseminated through a network composed both of human (designers, publishers) and non-human actors (print artefacts, representations) that worked to anchor meanings and actions within particular arrangements. It will do this by analysing both the assigned content (visual/textual rhetoric) and material format of publications, particularly examples of periodical press that pertain to newly adopted popular American formats such as Sunday comic supplements, graphic novels, illustrated popular history journals and advertorial giveaways for which the work of illustrators Ratip Tahir Burak (1904-1977) and Münif Fehim Özerman (1899-1983) was central.

As an inquiry into visual communication design from outside the Western paradigm, this discussion also allows us to understand the heuristic role of identity negotiation in the professionalisation of visual communication disciplines. As Christiane Gruber and Sune Haugbolle argue, the commoditization of culture in the Middle East engendered new creative classes whose position as image-makers granted them greater public visibility.[12] This is also true in Turkey's context, where Eurocentric design narratives generated by industrialisation are less applicable.

The production and circulation of print artefacts as mass-mediated agents of social change in the discursive formation of nationhood in Southeast Europe and the Middle East has long been a central theme. Herkül Millas points to a symmetrical instrumentalisation of history on illustrated mid-century Greek children's literature, a retrofitting of history into stereotypical nationalist constructs.[13] Similarly, Tuğçe Saklıca Rigatos and Marianthi Georgalidou argue for the role of political cartoons on structuring dominant perceptions of Greek-Turkish relations.[14] For the wider Middle East, Gruber and Haugbolle underscore the role of visual culture in understanding the

mass-mediated cultural production in both secular and Islamic contexts.[15] More recently, Zeina Maasri also pointed to the central role of mass-mediated modern formats of visual culture in the discursive formation of national identity in Lebanon.[16] Within the context of Turkey, Yasemin Gençer has observed the negotiation of the values of secular nationalism through satirical press in 1920's Turkey.[17] On the other hand, literature on the mundane reproduction of Turkish national consciousness leans more toward the press rhetoric in the 1990s.[18] These explain the spread of national consciousness with the increased permeation of the printed word through the newspaper and a standardized print language as asserted by Benedict Anderson and later Billig.[19] Overall, there is a greater need to historically situate the mass-mediation of everyday Turkish nationalism in a broader context of cultural production beyond textual press rhetoric.

Historical comic strips, a new national hero cult

The first slippages from the official cult of the nation through high-art monuments to more mundane iterations of national consciousness in print media occurred in the early 1950s, as this section will observe. The historiography of the republican cult for Ottoman subjects during the aforementioned foundational single-party years of the 1930s bears telltale signs of this process. The appropriation of any imperial subject as national heroes depended either on martial or intellectual merit, redefining their roles as teleological actors for the destined birth of the nation. As Edensor explains, this "historical mooring" provides a common-sense framework that includes or excludes individuals as national subjects.[20] This process is exemplified in Ali Riza Seyfi's (1879-1958) work, a retired navy officer and historian. In 1933, Seyfi penned *Gazi ve İnklap* (Gazi and the Revolution), which zealously presented Kemalism as a new model of social cohesion for a modern nation whilst relegating Ottoman history to an oppression of Turkish elements.[21] Yet, Seyfi had also written *Barbaros Hayreddin* (1914), a hagiography to the eponymous Ottoman admiral (1478-1546).[22] Initially pirates from the island of Lesvos, Barbaros and his brothers came to serve Sultan Selim I (r.1512-22) in the conquest of North Africa. That Seyfi's glorification of imperial actors like Barbaros did not contradict his later endorsement of Kemalist

nationalism indicates that the license of martial merit helped to reconcile discrepant perspectives on nationalist historiography.

Such overlaps continued during İsmet İnönü's tenure as president of the republic (1938-1950) with rising populist tones. In 1943, Methi Bayar's *Barbaros Destanı* (Legend of Barbaros, 1943) further blurred the line between an imperial actor and a national hero.[23] A year later, İnönü's Istanbul mayor Lütfi Kırdar officially picked up the momentum to compensate for the growing unpopularity of the autarkic regime, exacerbated by the war economy. Working with Istanbul's urban planner Henry Prost, Kırdar projected a modern square around Barabaros' sixteenth-century mausoleum with a colossal monument dedicated to the Ottoman admiral in an epic narrative with heroic proportions. In his inaugural speech, at the presence of İnönü, Kırdar described the monument as a belated but worthy dedication to a "Turkish general" by the loyal republican generation, "grandsons of Barbaros."[24]

PRP's populist politics invested in the monument also echoed in the press. The pro-PRP daily *Cumhuriyet*, rechristened Barbaros as the "*Great Turkish Admiral*," extensively quoting from the aforementioned works of Seyfi and Bayar.[25] This national appropriation of Ottoman legacy was appealing to populist tendencies and did not transgress republican national identity, since the Turkishness of Ottoman social history was commonly accepted as opposed to the widely purported foreignness of the dynasty.[26] What is more interesting is how Barbaros' monument has become part of a more centrifugal network, relying on popular culture to sustain and mediate this rhetoric.[27] Unlike the centripetal and austere public reception of Atatürk's monuments in the 1930s through a state-sanctioned press, this official interest in imperial legacy seeped into an escalating number of new publication formats; historical graphic novels and illustrated periodicals.

This commodification of history was possible thanks to considerable technical advancements in 1950s Turkish print industry. The thriving periodical press of late Ottoman era had weakened abysmally with the 1926 Romanisation of the script, given the already high printing costs and low circulation rates. Literacy was as low as below ten percent until late 1920s with the demographically heterogeneous audience of a

fragmented, declining empire.[28] The WWII further hindered machinery imports with rationed paper supplies that limited page numbers and circulation days.[29] The subventions launched in 1937 to support the press with official adverts (*resmi ilan*) were allocated arbitrarily, favouring the mouthpiece organs.[30] This absence of a strong, independent print industry also contributed to an unequivocally monolithic reception of Turkey's foundational interwar years under PRP's single-party regime.

In the more liberal 1950s, eased import of Western offset printing machines which allowed higher quality and precision in printed graphics, made the press technically more apt, leading to a resurgence of newspapers and illustrated periodicals.[31] Literacy rocketed to around sixty percent in cities and half that amount in rural areas, with a linguistically more homogenous audience.[32] Given the political oscillation aggravated by the Cold War, between communism and a more conservative nationalism, a boosting populist press could not miss the profitability of appropriating history in the public sphere through new print formats. Ever striving for higher circulation rates, the new illustrated publications have been instigators of a slippage between the state's high culture for the secular cult of the nation and a new popular culture. As Edensor argues, once the nation is established as a common-sense entity, modern mass media and popular culture escape the grip of the state to more commercial and informal networks.[33] Thus in Turkey too, emerging from a war-stricken industry, publishers now looked for new ways to widen their target audiences through new print formats and advertorial policies.

Sedat Simavi (1896-1953) was one of the main press actors grasping this opportunity. In 1946, he started publishing *Hürriyet* (Freedom), a new populist daily, asserting his interest in American offset printing machinery since post-war Europe was technically uninspiring.[34] *Hürriyet* clearly emulated American populist journalism with extensive use of images, comic strips, avoidance of dense text walls caused by long, abstruse articles and a new typeface that was easier to follow for readers.[35] This new image/text configuration aspired to make reading a more captivating experience. This was part of a wider American-led liberalisation that included the construction of Marshall Plan-funded roads by DP, which allowed dailies to penetrate further into the rural provinces than with railroads, ever expanding the

audience.[36] Hence, the substructure was laid out for national material culture to shift its centre of production from the political to more commercial rituals, from the state to the market.[37]

In 1950, *Hürriyet* began publishing Turkey's first Sunday comic supplement with the serial graphic novel *Barbaros'un Son Seferi* (Barbaros' Last Excursion) written and illustrated by Ratip Tahir Burak.[38] This was the only colored strip printed on the supplement's cover, in the size of the daily with the classical nine panels of action, peculiar to American comics. The supplement also introduced popular American comics like Chic Young's *Fatoş* (Blondie) or George McManus' *Güngörmüler Ailesi* (Bringing up Father), all delineating class struggles, negotiations of public and personal identities. Comics have since the turn of the twentieth century been a popular mass medium in the USA evolving from the full-colour pages of Sunday supplements to comic books. Jean-Paul Gabilliet argues that the birth of the comic strip had more to do with cultural, technological and economic reasons than aesthetic, perpetuated by mass printing technologies that proposed new ways of storytelling; the sequentiality and predominance of images, the reproducibility of the medium and the moral lesson of the story.[39] Comics have always been receptive to cultural trends too, given their slim profit margins and thus providing a tool for understanding popular culture.[40]

In *Barbaros' Last Excursion,* Burak constructed the main plot in a conventional comic book Manichaeism; an archetypal, vilified non-Muslim enemy, sometimes with anti-Semitic tones, whose treacherous plans against a virtuous Ottoman hero were destined to be doomed (Figure 1). While this narrative flattens the discrepant motivations between modern (national) and historical (imperial) actors, it also generates meaning in a binary structure that reiterates dichotomies like East/West, Muslim/non-Muslim or Turkish/non-Turkish. The whole enterprise of nationalistic reading relies on the construction of the other as the "inversion" of an Ottoman/Turkish "viewer's self-image" through stereotypes.[41] From architecture, costume, hairstyle, tableware, jewelry, martial paraphernalia to conduct and attitude, every detail peculiarly illustrates the boundaries of diverse national worlds. Moreover, as Jacques Derrida has pointed, the proposed binary is not neutral, as the marked

difference works to empower one extremity at the exclusion of the other.[42] Similarly, the binary underlying Burak's work assigns superior moral qualities to a national self against a devious other particularly through gender codes. As in *Barbaros' Last Excursion*, the plot often ties in a love story where the deceitful Western, Christian or Byzantine heroine is tamed, incorporated and converted as the faithful lover of the male Ottoman protagonist, compounded with an appalling absence of female characters on the Ottoman side.[43] This feminisation of the other works as a subliminal analogy for the subjugation of the supposedly inferior attributes of conquered culture by a superior male self, Ottoman/national hero.[44] Yet, as Edensor points, this can be explained as a continuous process of identification rather than a solidification of absolute antipathy, a boundary-making process between self and other.[45]

One peculiar visual element in the construction of difference is through the dress code, a crucial component of national identity.[46] In 1953 Samim Utkun and Fuat Yılmaz took on Burak's comic book Manichaeism with *İstanbul'un Fethi* (The Conquest of Istanbul), through a similar typification; exotically rendered Byzantines in Roman tunics versus heroic Ottomans in trousers or breeches.[47] Such binaries could be historically disruptive for fifteenth-century Asia Minor with their disregard of cultural exchanges. By this time, adherence to Roman style tunics in Byzantine court attire was a lot less sectarian after considerable cultural exchange between Arabs, Persians as of the sixth century and Turkish principalities (*beylik*) since the eleventh.[48] Although representational conventions were slower to pick up this syncretism, the donor portrait of the statesman, Theodore Metochites in Istanbul's Chora monastery (1316-21), depicted with a turban and kaftan, attests to the permeation of this influence into court attire by thirteenth century.[49] Thus, as Timothy Dawson underlines, the late Romans might have looked more Turkish even before the Turks did so.[50] Such cultural parallels could not fit within comic book Manichaeism as they relied on marking differences to suggest a nationalistic reading. This is also evident in their compliance with the nomenclature of Enlightenment style Western historiographies that defined the late Roman Empire as "byzantine," effeminate and subordinate as an inversion of the rational, masculine Western identity, disregarding the actual self-identification of late Romans as Roman (*Romaioi*).[51]

Burak's visual reconstruction of these historical instances must have been so detrimental for the commercial pursuits of *Hürriyet* that in 1953 he was transferred to *Yeni Sabah* where he expanded the genre with *Plevne* on the defense of the city of Plevna against Russia in 1877.[52] This was followed by *Saray Kadınları* (The Dames of the Palace, 1954, *Yeni Sabah*) on Ottoman courtly life, *Kırk Şehitler Kalesi* (City of Forty Martyrs, *Akşam*, 1959) on the defense against Charles V's army, *Barbaroslar* (1963) a series of four extensive graphic monographs on Barbaros and *İstanbul'un Fethi* (The Conquest of İstanbul, Akşam, 1964).[53] Burak's work continued to provide a successful model for visualising more folkloric tales such as *Cengizhan Hazineleri* (Treasures of Genghis Khan, *Akşam*, 1959) and *Karaoğlan* (*Akşam*, 1962) illustrated by Suat Yalaz (1932-2020).

The graphic components of these historical comic strips also contributed to the flagging of national consciousness. Their emotive designs invite viewers to self-identify with the Ottoman/Turkish image by presenting it more favorably, while an extensive use of narrator voice -use of text boxes over the more succinct speech balloons- also suggested by their Turkish name, *resimle roman* (novel with illustrations), has a phatic function in anchoring a particular reading on a new visual medium.[54] The prevalent combination of modern and ornate lettering with flourishes simulating calligraphy brushstrokes, conveys a sense of historicity, contributing to the general aim of projecting the imperial past into the national future as a "Janus-faced" entity looking simultaneously both ways.[55] In the 1950s, two decades after the 1926 Romanisation, communicating cultural attributes through expressive letterform was still under negotiation; yet, the public would have interpreted these cultural references. Overall, these aesthetic elements contribute to project a common-sense historical framework through the lens of national identity, while the material elements, low-cost brittle paper and popular formats convey the ideas of mass production and wide outreach with cost-efficient techniques and materials.

Amalgamating historical imaginations

Such "unwaved flags" were not merely suggested through the iconography of

historical reconstructions on new print formats.[56] It was also in 1950 that Servet İskit began publishing an illustrated popular history journal, the monthly *Resimli Tarih Mecmuası (*Illustrated History Journal) with essays from renowned social historians Ahmet Rasim and Reşat Ekrem Koçu. The content of these were eagerly populist, publicising history with speculative elements, as in the love affair between Sultan Abdülaziz and French Empress Eugénie.[57] More importantly the journal offered some crossbreeding across new and old visual materialities for an amalgamated interpretation of secular Kemalist and imperial legacies that should be observed here.

The overarching editorial theme in *Resimli Tarih* echoed the three-layered modern national schema of official republican historiography; the ethnic Central Asian origins, the Islamic Ottoman Empire and finally the modern Republic. While this approach allowed national continuity through ages, it gave the nation a central role in the dissemination and enrichment of Islam and relegated religion as secondary to the nation.[58] This was skillfully visualized by Özerman's illustrations of sixth-century Central-Asian Turkish tribes, sixteenth-century Ottoman armada and national soldiers in the battle of Gallipoli (1915) that coherently reconfigured these distinct historical layers in an epic, Caravaggesque and Delacroix-like painterly zeal (Figure 2). On January 1951, about forty of these paintings were featured in an advertorial campaign, promoted as "vast in size" and an "ideal source of pride and ornamentation for each living room." Breaking free from the mass-mediated journal page, they were then displayed in Istanbul's major shop windows, and gifted to subscribers with a drawn prize as unique artworks.[59]

Another manifestation of these hybrid visual materialities was the journal's reproduction of the *Young Album* (1815), depicting the dynastic lineage of Ottoman sultans from its founder Osman (r.1281-1326) to Sultan Selim III who in 1806 commissioned the album to British printmaker John Young as mezzotint prints based on gouache portraits by Ottoman-Greek artist Konstantin Kapıdağlı.[60] Although Selim III's intention was purely diplomatic, in 1862, the album penetrated into national circulation in the form of *cartes de visite* by Istanbul's Abdullah Frères photography studio with the inclusion of the photographic portrait of incumbent Sultan Abdülaziz (r.1861-76), going as far as the Ottoman pavilion in the 1867 Paris exposition.[61] As

Mary Roberts argues, the *Young Album* is a collectively created artefact that projects history into the future, transgressing many object categories, from diplomatic gift embodying imperial power to affordable photographic images in consumer culture.[62] *Resimli Tarih* introduces yet another layer to this material construct by adapting the album to a national economy of images, disregarding its socially heterogeneous authorship. The journal extends the sequence of portraits with a full-page photograph of Atatürk, following the last sultan, Mehmet VI, and terminating the lineage with the latest presidents of republic İnönü and Celal Bayar (1950-1960) (Figure 3).[63] By repurposing the original function of the album from the commemoration of the dynasty to that of the nation, this hybrid reproduction of the *Young Album* foregrounds an imaginary patrilineal continuity between the dynasty and the nation's founding fathers.

Such "invented traditions" of the late Ottoman period nevertheless presented a repertoire of historical imagery for the 1950s populist print culture.[64] Among these were also the works of the last court painter, Fausto Zonaro (1854-1929). While working for the court (1869-1910), Zonaro executed four historical reconstructions of Istanbul's conquest, commissioned by Sultan Abdülhamid II.[65] In the early 1950s, with the backdrop of the quincentenary celebrations, these have become "exactly repeatable pictorial statements" visualising the anniversaries of the conquest on newspapers and the historical imaginations of popular press.[66] For instance, although ten years apart, both Burak and Utkun-Yılmaz in the cover art (by Firuz Aşkın) of their homonymous *The Conquest of Istanbul*, emulated Zonaro's depiction of Sultan Mehmet II entering the city through the gate of St. Romanus in a comic book vigour (Figure 4).[67] In 1953, the *Album for the Celebrations of the Quincentenary Anniversary of the Conquest* featured a cover illustration by Özerman, which aspired to the same sequence (Figure 4).[68] These late Ottoman historical reconstructions were publicly accessible in Istanbul's new Museum of Painting and Sculpture since 1937.[69] President Celal Bayar recalled in his memoir that even Atatürk was very fond of a painting of Mehmet II on horseback here, likely pointing to Zonaro's work.[70] Arguably, the everyday imagination of the nation's past equally depended on the dynasty's own appropriation of Western conventions of imperial visibility. Edensor explains that such canonical icons of national high art are held up as exemplars of

national genius, often retrieved and used as resources providing new images for national attributes in mass media. This amalgamation of "low" and "high art" in new cultural formats continually redistributes the meaning of nationalism in subtle ways.[71]

These appropriations of an imperial historical visual repertoire to the commodification of history in a modern nation entailed some exclusions, silences in the visual rhetoric in a Foucauldian sense.[72] These often concerned the socially heterogeneous background of original makers or religious references, especially, the continuous omission of the figure of Sheikh Ak Şemseddin (1389-1459), the leading dervish preacher in the Ottoman camp who appears to guide Mehmet II into fallen Constantinople in Zonaro's painting. The comic books concomitantly omitted such Islamic references, as these would transgress secular Kemalist nationalism.[73] Indeed, even Zonaro's inclusion of the dervish is motivated as chroniclers state that he never set foot in the fallen city, fearing its blasphemous foreignness.[74] Thus as Howard Becker argues the value of representations do not lie in their accuracy but in their use.[75] In so far as hybrid formats were compatible with secular Kemalist legacy, whilst allowing continuity with the imperial, and by then, canonical imaginations of the past they offered a malleable visual currency for the nation's mundane iterations.

Popularising a Turkish Istanbul

The popularisation of history by the print industry reached a climax with the May 1953 quincentenary anniversary of Istanbul's conquest. The DP government refrained from endorsing the celebrations, as it feared jeopardising the political balance with the West, thus failing to echo the emerging public interest in the conquest's national significance. With the dearth of governmental finances, the celebrations were criticized as managed poorly and downplayed in the opponent press.[76] The daily *Cumhuriyet* even rebuked the government for not floodlighting Hagia Sophia to avoid intimidating the West.[77] As modern Turkey's first government elected by popular vote, DP's reluctance in espousing the conquest's national significance ushered an unprecedented public reaction, paving the way for its more public and commercial adoptions.[78] The official neglect was exploited by the print industry in special

illustrated editorials, albums and graphic novels, as per above, that addressed diverse target audiences through a variety of print formats. This section will examine one of these print artefacts that came out of this balancing act when the market rather than the state stepped in to provide popular national interpretations of a historic event.

Some of the newspapers taking advantage of this public demand through special commemorative issues were *Cumhuriyet*, *Yeni Sabah* and journals *Yeni İnci* and *Resimli Tarih*.[79] Of these, *Cumhuriyet*'s *Türk İstanbul* (Turkish Istanbul, *TI*, May 1953) edited by popular historian Reşad Ekrem Koçu, was remarkable in its adaptation of a nostalgic Ottoman past to Kemalist legacy by offering a popular nationalistic reading of Istanbul's cultural landscape through a meticulous visual and textual rhetoric. This was a prevalent concern of the contemporary intelligentsia. Throughout the 1940s, Istanbul's cosmopolitan heritage stood in contrast with the newly built national capital Ankara.[80] As novelist Orhan Pamuk points, since the 1920s the national intellects were enthralled by the recognition of Istanbul's significance in national historiography, condoning its cosmopolitan legacy.[81] This underlines how the spatial organization of the nation is maintained through constant acts of domestication, reproduction through local contexts and integration to everyday life to retain its symbolic functions.[82] *TI* offers an invaluable perspective into how popular print formats disseminated this negotiation of spatial significance.

As a promotion campaign aiming to increase the newspaper's circulation rates, *TI* was monochrome-printed on tabloid-sized spreads, distributed twice weekly as advertising giveaways over thirteen days, at the end of which, the reader could get a five-colour printed hard cover with a modest fee (Figure 5).[83] This was another adopted American format widely used in the emergence of comic strips in the 1930s USA.[84] In the early 1950s Turkish press still suffered from limited advertorial revenues, making it dependent on official adverts, the disproportionate allocation of which had become a means to orchestrate press control.[85] Therefore promotional supplements were crucial for the survival of the newspapers and in fact two more similar historical giveaways succeeded *TI* in 1954.[86]

TI zealously begins by declaring that the Ottoman monuments "marked the

city, as it is known today, much more than its Byzantine landmarks had contributed to this reputation."[87] The first pages introduce a map of Istanbul, spotting its 450 mosques, which along other Ottoman public works "bestowed harmony with the city's natural beauty."[88] This is followed by an excerpt from architecture historian Ekrem Hakkı Ayverdi (1899-1984) whom had penned a monograph on Istanbul's architecture in Mehmet II's era (*Fatih Devri Mimarisi*, 1953). Ayverdi asserts that it was Turks who had made Istanbul what it was, given that even Hagia Sophia looked rigid and weighty without its Ottoman minarets and buttresses.[89]

These exclusive readings of Istanbul's cultural landscape accompanied the supplement's visual rhetoric. An editorial, on the following pages on Mehmet II's *Rumelihisarı* (Roumelian Fortress, 1452, constructed to hinder logistics to Constantinople) was illustrated by Albert-Louis Gabriel's (1883-1972) cross-section and illustrative renderings of the fortress (Figure 6).[90] As an architect and archaeologist, Gabriel is a prominent figure in early national art historiographies. Invited to Istanbul's *Darülfünun* (House of Sciences, later Istanbul University) by the Ministry of Education (1925-1929), his research consisted of demarcating an exclusive canon of Turkish art and architecture against the circumscribed Western generic denomination of Islamic arts.[91] According to Edensor, such selective and ideological interpretations of iconic sites aim to connote cultural continuity and coherence within the national borders.[92] Similarly, the reproduction of Gabriel's drawings on an advertorial supplement two decades later for a wider audience is a reminder of how these earlier state-sanctioned national art historiographies were now seeping into the market with more commonplace and populist interpretations, integrating the nation's spatial organization to everyday life.

The reproduction of nineteenth-century engravings by European travelers was another prominent visual rhetoric the supplement deployed to anchor an exclusive reinterpretation of Istanbul's landmarks.[93] Mostly works of English and French engravers like Thomas Allom (1804-1872), William Henry Bartlett (1809-1854) and Émile Rouargue (1795-1865), these were part of a greater nostalgia against new urban planning schemes and raising concrete apartment blocks in the 1950s. On a special section dedicated to Allom whom had published *Constantinople and the Scenery of*

the Seven Churches of Asia Minor in 1838, Koçu noted that his book maintained a remarkable market value in Istanbul's old bookshops for which dealers rather sold the illustrated pages singularly to maximise profit.[94] This concurrent demand for engravings and their reproductions on mass media attests to a vibrant visual culture where the social significance of historical print artefacts was being reassessed as visual manifestations of an idealized but fleeting past.

This reconfigured value of Istanbul's historical images concerns the abovementioned reconciliation of the city's cultural landscape with the nation's new spatial organisation. Where earlier national art historiographies allegedly defined post eighteenth-century imperial history as inflicted by "foreign elements" and lacking a Turkish essence, pre-photographic visual materialities must have presented a more authentic and therefore Turkish imperial capital.[95] The new popularity of European engravings therefore translated into an aesthetic ideal for a nationalist remodelling of Istanbul's imperial landscape. Writing on *TI*, even Koçu lamented on the earlier destruction of the nineteenth-century *Kuleli Military School*'s twin turrets, which Allom had depicted intact, asserting that it was "a great loss of charm for the building."[96] Ironically, recalling Koçu's lament, when the building was restored in 1968, its turrets were replaced after almost hundred years.[97] Subsequent restorations of other landmarks, the Tophane Fountain (1732) in 1958 and the Galata Tower in 1964 were similarly based on romanticised European engravings.[98]

These restorations sought to locate an idealised Turkish essence in Istanbul's cultural landscape in a nostalgic longing, which was modelled on equally idealised renderings by European travelers. What was not questioned was the likelihood of printmakers having other interests than a realistic representation of monuments.[99] Nur Altınyıldız argues that the first republican restorations of Istanbul's landmarks were similarly based on the projection of an idealised image quality rather than structural integrity.[100] A similar approach is also evident in the reconstruction of Athens as the national capital in the early eighteenth century.[101] Edensor explains that such ideological interpretations of iconic sites entails the creation of a "purified space" where architectural signs of otherness could be subversive to the assertion of a competitive identity claim.[102] Koçu's eloquent visual and textual rhetoric on *TI*

demonstrates a segment of this process where the interpretation singles out the site's nationally symbolic values to explain their specific relation to the nation. *TI* also highlights the mundane nature of this act as historical images of Istanbul found wider circulation for such national interpretations of Istanbul's cultural landscape in the 1950s.

The makers, the readers…

Beyond the visual, textual and material rhetoric these print formats mediated, their production and consumption cycles are also revelatory. In the 1950s, the figure of visual communication designer, often called as *gazete ressamı* (newspaper painter) operated on a wide practice area, on the threshold between crafts and design given the absence of a strong advertising industry.[103] Actors like Özerman, once trained in classical fine arts in Istanbul's *Sanayi-i Nefise Mektebi* (Academy of Fine Arts) had to demonstrate a flexibility of skills from stage design, satire, calligraphy, illustration, and photography to editorial design.[104] Burak had a similar background and practice area with the surplus of a state-funded painting training in Paris.[105] These figures were denigrated by art critiques for being overtly commercial "cover" artists and not recognized as visual communication practitioners until the late 1970s.[106]

In the 1950s this scenery was undergoing a transformation. The sheer surge in the circulation of newspapers explains better the adoption of popular American print formats by publishers, and their increasing need for visual communication practitioners. In 1952 the daily circulation rate of all national newspapers rocketed to 500 thousand from mere 100 thousand in 1946.[107] *Hürriyet*'s populist tone is likely to have led this as in 1952 it alone circulated at 100 thousand copies, which almost tripled in 1962 as opposed to *Cumhuriyet* stagnating at 90 thousand.[108] This implies that *Hürriye*t's popular print formats had been exemplary for *Cumhuriyet* and others to follow. It also sheds light on the popularisation and transfer of illustrators as in Burak's abovementioned transfer from *Hürriyet* to *Yeni Sabah* in 1953. This increasing competition between publications must have helped cement the figure of professional graphic designer and illustrator as key figures in sustaining the popularity

of the publications.

Within their new accentuated status, designers were likely conscious of their role in the dissemination of political ideologies. When offered a new post at the right-wing newspaper *Millet*, Yalaz remained at centre-left *Akşam* as he dreaded advocating a harmful ideology through his comic strips.[109] While Burak was an adamant supporter of PRP, with a dissent towards the Orthodox Patriarchate, which exacerbated the party's unpopularity amongst Istanbul's religious minorities in the 1954 elections.[110] He was nonetheless a fervent advocate of press freedom; sentenced to sixteen months' imprisonment in 1956 for a satirical cartoon criticizing Prime Minister Adnan Menderes.[111]

It is harder to discern the motivations of the makers and publishers. As Edensor argues, the making and marketing of culture is an "inexact science" beyond mere commercial greed or collective ideological mission.[112] That design actors like Yalaz were wary of disseminating harmful ideologies through their practice also points to their awareness of the double-edged sword of nationalist narratives, as both banal manifestations of national consciousness and nationalistic propaganda. Yet, despite the librealisation of the autarkic policies, in the 1950s, the Turkish government still orchestrated considerable control over press freedom. Aside from the aforementioned official adverts, there were also state-sanctions on paper and printing supplies and censorship, which controlled adopted Western formats.[113] It is interesting how this commodification of history thrived under these circumstances, raising the question of whether authorities and publishers had a consensus over their seemingly harmless educative role for the masses in raising national consciousness.

The readers remain more opaque apart from the aforementioned homogenization of the audience and rise of literacy. Generally, the rhetoric of these publications addressed a homogenous community of Muslim Turks as their "implicit reader," defined as the sole inheritors of a selective Ottoman legacy.[114] Sunday newspaper supplements most likely targeted this homogenous adult market, as they could not be purchased individually and included advertisements for household items. However, an increasing number of comic journals first in the Turkish version of

Mondadori's *Pekos Bill* (1951), and later in local productions like *Köroğlu* (1953) or *Ceylan* (1955) as well as comic books like Utkun-Yılmaz's *İstanbul'un Fethi* point to a widening of younger target audiences. These could be published regardless of the newspaper's political orientation and bought without parental control. Pamuk remembers that in his childhood, roughly a decade after their publication, Koçu's historical giveaways were still kept in his grandmother's bookcase, where he would frequently visit them for an immersive experience, which attests to overlaps with age groups in these more informative formats.[115] These captivating illustrations that escaped textbook orthodoxy for Pamuk were possibly by Sabiha Rüştü Bozcalı (1904-1998), a pioneering professional woman in the field. That an ephemeral newspaper supplement was conserved and can still be found in second-hand bookstores in Turkey also reminds us of the social conventions on keeping, restoring and displaying objects that Edensor argues as inseparable from the construction and sustenance of collective histories.[116]

Conclusion

The print artefacts analysed above demonstrate how print culture and visual communication practice have become material apparatuses for the daily reproduction of national consciousness, beliefs and representations through an unprecedented commodification of history in the prolific setting of 1950s Turkey. As mass-mediated cultural artefacts they were instruments for projecting contemporary understandings of nationalistic difference into the past and vesting them in historical attire through popular representational conventions and print formats to offer more familiar readings to the public. As "historical agents" shaping the spectator's view into historical events on everyday print artefacts, they made history relatable and communicable to a contemporary Turkish audience that was dealing with the negotiation of secular modernism with the imperial past.[117] They revalorised a repertoire of images and forms for the commemoration of the nation's past. These routinely constructed and reproduced differences between the undesired elements of a heterogeneous imperial past and those of a more assertive homogeneous modern Turkish national identity. Moreover, from the standpoint of a non-Western design paradigm, this discussion also

highlights how the commoditization of culture helps in the self-assertion of visual communication practitioners as crucial figures for the survival of the publications.

As is argued by Billig, such everyday reiterations of national consciousness work repetitively to construct and present the nation as the natural norm and order, and as Edensor adds, these operate on a wider network of both human and material actors that permeate collective imaginations into mundane popular culture. Yet, banal though they may be, they are not benign, they provide the ideological basis for more fanatical nationalisms that when triggered, result in aggressive behaviour.[118] This was nowhere more apparent than in the 1955 pogrom, instigated by the very DP government, where any non-Muslim element from shops to shrines was ferociously attacked for posing a threat to a homogenously defined collective national consciousness.[119]

List of figures

Figure 1: Ratip Tahir Burak (1950). *Barbaros'un Son Seferi*. Typification of non-Muslim characters versus the Ottoman hero. This image also perpetuates the anti-Semitic stereotype of a greedy Jewish merchant. © Author's collection.

Figure 2: Münif Fehim Özerman (1950). *Resimli Tarih Mecmuası*. Illustrations delineating three-layered national historiography, left to right, Central Asian Turks, Ottomans and the modern War of Liberation. Photo © Author's collection.

Figure 3: The reproduced *Young Album* on *Resimli Tarih Mecmuası*, 1950, with the portraits of the presidents of republic. Photo © Author's collection.

Figure 4: Emulating Zonaro's painting, left to right, Samim Utkun-Fuat Yılmaz, (cover by Firuz Aşkın, 1953). *The Conquest of Istanbul*; Ratip Tahir Burak (1964). *The Conquest of Istanbul*; Münif Fehim Özerman (1950). *Album for the Celebrations of the Quincentenary Anniversary of the Conquest* © Author's collection.

Figure 5: *Cumhuriyet* (1953). Türk İstanbul. © Author's collection.

Figure 6: *Cumhuriyet* (1953). Türk İstanbul. Albert Gabriel's cross-section and illustrative renderings of of the Roumelian Castle. © Author's collection.

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