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ARTICLE

Islamic art and visualities of war from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish Republic

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Abstract

This article explores how Islamic art was produced and used in Turkey within the context of modern warfare during World War I, the War of Independence, and the nascent Republic – a subject still relatively understudied in Turkish history, as well as in international cultural histories of modern warfare and histories of modern art in the Middle East. Drawing on previously overlooked visual and textual sources such as calligraphic panels, miniature paintings, war posters, and religious timetables produced during the years 1914–1924, we examine the ways in which Islamic arts were articulated with the experience of war through both individual actions and official policies, revealing how Ottoman artists tried to make sense of war and how Islamic genres and motifs were appropriated, and sometimes subverted, in the service of the nationalist cause. We show that far from exhibiting a sharp discontinuity, the transition from Ottoman–Islamic to Republican–nationalist artistic content was gradual, involving the reappropriation and repurposing of Islamic motifs and techniques in a manner that reflected the religious mindset of the elites and masses in the early twentieth century.

Keywords: Islamic art; popular art; World War I; Turkish War of Independence; Late Ottoman and Early Republican culture

Introduction

In April 1923, just six months before the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, an instructor of manuscript illumination (*tezhîb mu'allimi*) at the School for Calligraphers (*Medresetü'l-Hattâtîn*) in İstanbul named Hüseyin Tâhirzâde (Behzâd, 1889–1962) sent a letter to Mustafa Kemâl (Atatürk) along with a unique gift of his own creation (Figure 1). Born in the Azeri city of Tabriz, the second largest city in Qajar Iran, Hüseyin Tâhirzâde had left his homeland around 1909, possibly to flee the Russian occupation in the same year. He became a resident of İstanbul where he studied painting at the Academy of Fine Arts (*Sanâyi-i Nefîse Mektebi*), taught the Islamic art of illumination at various institutions, and served as a conservator at the Imperial

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Figure 1. Hüseyin Tâhirzâde Behzâd, miniature-like portrait of Mustafa Kemâl: "His Excellency, the Holy Warrior Mustafa Kemâl Paşa." Eskişehir Archaeology Museum. Photograph by İdil Tongo Dur.

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Treasury. Less than a decade after his arrival from Tabriz, the artist had found himself yet again in the midst of an occupation, this time of İstanbul – the city he affectionately called his "second homeland" (*ikinci vatanım*) (C.A., 01010042/586139, 9 Nisan 1339 R/9 April 1923).

In his letter, Hüseyin Tâhirzâde complained about regulations that prevented him, a foreign citizen, from being appointed to a tenured position at the School for Calligraphers and sought Mustafa Kemâl's help in the matter. Accompanying the letter was a painting in more or less the style of classical miniatures. Embellished with traditional floral ornaments and four brightly colored angels painted in the Persianate manner, the painting portrays Mustafa Kemâl, leader of the Ankara government, in military uniform complete with his eminently recognizable black calpac. His bust protrudes out of the rest of the composition, perched on a crescent which bears the title "His Excellency the Holy Warrior Mustafa Kemâl Paşa" (*Gāzî Mustafa Kemâl Paşa Hazretleri*). Below the crescent, in two circular medallions, are the inscriptions "to his left, peace" (*yesârında sulh*) and "to his right, victory" (*yemîninde zafer*). Soon thereafter, Tâhirzâde adapted his traditional miniature to modern media by producing a postcard version, no doubt in order to cater to a mass audience (Figure 2). The inscriptions in the crescent and medallions were only slightly altered in the postcard, at the bottom of which was the quite modern inscription "Drawn and printed for Hüseyin Tâhirzâde, instructor of illumination at the School for Calligraphers. All rights reserved." (*Medresetü'l-Hattâtîn tezhîb mu'allimi Hüseyin Tâhirzâde tarafından tersîm ve tab' etdirilmişdir. Her hakkı mahfûzdur.*)

Hüseyin Tâhirzâde's work is one of many in which religious imagery and elements of "traditional Islamic art"[1] were used in the context of modern warfare during the final years of the Ottoman Empire. From miniature paintings like Tâhirzâde's to war posters, from calligraphic panels to religious timetables, traditional artists – some well known and others anonymous – responded in various ways to the ongoing conflict between 1914 and 1923, whether under state patronage or of their own accord.

This paper examines the impact of modern warfare on Islamic artistic production in the late Empire and early Republic, analyzing how producers of the so-called traditional arts gave a political character to their work during World War I and the subsequent War of Independence. Our major premise is that the conflict inflected Islamic art as artists tried to make sense of war, of its horrors and glories, heroes and victims, victories and losses. A second premise is that religion was a significant – yet often overlooked and even suppressed – context for artistic production during this period, including but not limited to the traditional arts where images commonly associated with Islamic themes were assimilated first into nationalist and, after 1923, Republican messages.

The artwork explored here dealt with the war and the occupation across a range of genres – some decisively religious, others apparently secular, still others fascinatingly in-between. They include, on the one hand, "academic" calligraphic panels produced by renowned calligraphers such as İsmâ'îl Hakkı (Altunbezer, 1880–1946), Ahmed Kâmil (Akdik, 1861–1941), and Necmeddîn (Okyay, 1883–1976), and, on the other, products of "popular" arts such as posters, postcards, devotional timetables, and war memorabilia whose artists have often remained anonymous or at least are unfamiliar

[1] We are aware of the problematical nature of this terminological construct, which we only use here as shorthand; interested readers are referred to Schick (2023 [forthcoming]).

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Figure 2. Hüseyin Tâhirzade Behzâd, chromolithographed postcard based on the painting sent by the artist to Mustafa Kemâl on April 9, 1923. Collection of İrvin Cemil Schick.

to us. Our primary sources are predominantly visual. A close reading of this previously overlooked material is combined with other visual and textual sources including photographs, archival documents, contemporary accounts, and ego-documents, in an effort to understand the ways in which Islamic art, as well as its

institutions and actors, were affected and inspired by the wars and the uncertainties they brought.

Recent decades have witnessed a move away from the orientalist quest for "authenticity" in Islamic art and toward an engagement with its multifarious confrontations and imbrications. As has been aptly noted, "Whereas the typical question asked before the 1970s was 'What is Islamic about Islamic art?', inquiries thereafter began to foreground diversity, hybridity and intercultural exchange" (Necipoğlu 2012, 57). A propitious consequence of this new orientation has been a growing interest in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Islamic art (Arık 1976; Ali 1997; Behrens-Abouseif and Vernoit 2006; Rüstem 2019).

Still, while the canon has thus broadened both historically and geographically, the question of how Islamic art has interacted with and been influenced by modern warfare merits more attention than it has yet received. By examining how Islamic imagery was used for political ends by the nationalists during the period 1919–1924, this article draws on recent discussions about the role of religion during the Empire's final conflicts, most especially during the War of Independence (Zürcher 1999; Hanioğlu 2011; Aydın 2017).

Finally, this paper contributes to the cultural history of modern warfare and the concomitant debate as to whether World War I inspired "modernist" or "traditional" modes of representation. While Modris Eksteins (1989) has seen it as a rupture from previous aesthetic modes that gave birth to the "modern age", Jay Winter (1995, 3) has situated the "forms of imagining the war" dialectically between the language of the new, "modern," and iconoclastic, and the language of the old, traditional, and conservative. This paper seeks to participate in these transnational historiographical debates which, significant as they are, have focused mainly on Britain, France, and Germany (Roshwald and Stites 1999; Winter and Robert 2012), rarely analyzing works produced in the Middle East in the context of modern warfare.

Religion, war, and occupation

The founding myth of the Republic draws a solid line between itself and the Ottoman past, teleologically representing the War of Independence as a nationalist, secular, and modernist movement under the single-handed leadership of its visionary commander Mustafa Kemâl. This myth, which has shaped both official histories and popular memory, is a product of hindsight resulting from the self-image of the newly founded Republic as a secularist, Western-oriented nation-state. The characterization of the national movement itself as secular has been problematized by some scholars, notably Gotthard Jäschke who first acknowledged the religious dimensions of the War of Independence (Jäschke 1936); this was confirmed by several studies in the decades that followed (Karpat 1959; Toprak 1981; Ahmad 1991).

The biased image constructed in the immediate aftermath of the war, during the monoparty period, was challenged after the consolidation of multiparty democracy by a number of conservative authors who, for their part, argued that the principal driving force behind popular resistance to the Allied occupation was, in fact, Islam. Books like *İstiklâl Harbinde Sarıklı Kahramanlar* (Turbaned Heroes in the War of Independence; Atilhan 1967), *Kurtuluş Savaşında Sarıklı Mücâhitler* (Turbaned Holy Warriors in the War of Independence; Mısıroğlu 1967), and even the Kemalist-leaning Cemal Kutay's *Kurtuluşun ve Cumhuriyetin Manevi Mimarları* (Spiritual Architects of the

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Liberation and the Republic; Kutay 1973) stressed the role played by rural religious notables in mobilizing the people against foreign invaders.

True, those notables' motivations were not always purely religious, and seizing the property of departed or expelled non-Muslim neighbors was often just as important an incentive as protecting the Faith. Nevertheless, the fact remains that Islam was present front and center in the political and cultural discourse of the day. In recent years, a number of revisionist studies have re-evaluated the religious elements in the resistance; in particular, Erik Jan Zürcher (1999, 81) has noted that the language and terminology used by the national liberation movement shows that "it based itself on a corporate identity that was primarily religious: that of the Ottoman Muslims." Other authors have also drawn attention to the Khilafat movement (1919–1924) in India, interpreting the Islamic character of the movement in Anatolia as, in part, linked to the history of Muslim internationalism (Hanioğlu 2011; Aydın 2017). For Aydın (2017, 101), the immediate aftermath of World War I witnessed "the peak of Islamic mobilization in the name of saving and empowering the Muslim world."

In examining how Islamic visualities were articulated within the context of the Allied occupation and the War of Independence, so that miniatures, calligraphy, and other Islamic arts came to express political concerns, the following section builds upon this earlier scholarship but reorients its focus towards visual culture. The manner in which individual artists sought avenues to represent and reflect on the war and the liberation movement reveals both the persistence of Islam as a source of values and meaning during these tumultuous times, and the ways in which Islamic art readily lent itself to being intertwined with thoroughly modern political matters.

The language of Islam and popular culture

Islam was not only the religion of the Ottoman sultans who ruled as caliphs over the (Sunni) Muslim world since the sixteenth century, it was also the basis of many regulations, customs, and laws across the country. In the late nineteenth century, as the once-powerful Empire devolved into the "sick man of Europe" and various nationalisms began to challenge the sultans' leadership over the Muslim world, Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909) embarked upon a program to further religious solidarity among his Muslim subjects (Kara 1986–1994, vol. 1: xxviii–xxix; Deringil 1999, 47).

On November 11, 1914, upon the Empire's entry into World War I, the Ottoman Şeyhülislâm (the supreme religious authority) issued a *fatwa* declaring the struggle against the Allied powers a holy war (*jihad*). In this manner, the Ottoman state sought to convince soldiers that they were promised endless rewards in the afterlife, as well as to drum up support among Muslims, particularly in its non-Turkish-speaking territories and in French and British colonies (Lewis 1975; Aksakal 2011; Zürcher 2016).

Moreover, under the five-year "dictatorial triumvirate" of Enver, Tal'at, and Cemâl Paşa, between the military *coup d'état* of the Unionists in January 1913 and the end of World War I, religion became a criterion for the application of punitive state policies aimed at non-Muslims. The "National Economy" (*iktisâd-i millî*) programme, which aimed to create a national Muslim/Turkish bourgeoisie and targeted non-Muslim businessmen (Toprak 1982), was followed by the forced deportations and violent persecutions of the Armenian genocide (1915–1916) (Akçam 2006, 2012; Kévorkian 2006; Suny 2015).

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(a)

(b)

Figure 3. (a) Ottoman mobilization poster: "Mobilization has been declared. Soldiers to Arms. The first day of mobilization is ..." Collection of Haluk Oral. (b) The mobilization poster on the wall of a building. *Donanma Mecmuası* 25 Ramazan 1332 H/17 August 1914, 125. Public domain.

At the same time, the oppressive regime of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) imposed strict restrictions on the press, controlled the flow of news, and sought to centralize the propaganda apparatus under state control. The aim of the CUP, as Tal'at Paşa would later write in his memoirs, was to create a "national feeling and have this feeling take root in the national soul" (Talat Paşa 2006 [1921], 42). From fabricated news of military victories to jingoistic illustrations and poems produced under state patronage, pro-war nationalist sentiments had to be inculcated in the Ottoman population in a government-led propaganda campaign (Eldem 2004, 416–483; Köroğlu 2007; Beşikçi 2012; Öztuncay 2014; Tongo 2019).

The impact of the war on Islamic art can be analyzed in two approaches: top-down and bottom-up. Regarding the former, the Ottoman state became a significant patron of Islamic art during World War I, offering artists more opportunities to benefit from the commissioning of popular art forms and to bring their productions to the attention of a wider audience beyond conventional cultural institutions. In particular, calligraphers – whose domain was the art of "beautiful writing" (*hüsn-i hatt*, *fann al-khatt*) – played an important role in a "war of words between the belligerents," to borrow a phrase from Alice Goldfarb Marquis (1978, 467).

Recruitment posters, commissioned by the government from anonymous calligraphers as early as the beginning of World War I, are a case in point (Figure 3a). Under the cipher (*tughra*) of Sultan Mehmed V Reşâd (r. 1909–1918), a poster declared: "Mobilization has been declared. Soldiers to Arms" (*Seferberlik var. Asker olanlar silâh altına*). These were soon mass-produced and pasted on the walls of mosques, government buildings, schools, and coffee houses across the empire (Figure 3b).

To be sure, a relationship between war and calligraphy was not a novel idea. Talismanic shirts (*tılsımlı gömlek*, *du'a gömleği*, *şifâlı gömlek*) were often worn by warriors underneath their armor, in the belief that the sacred texts they bear would protect the wearer from the enemy (Tezcan 2006, 2011; Muravchick 2014). Miniature manuscripts of the Qur'an, known in Turkish as "*sancak Kur'anı*," often hung from the

flagposts of advancing Muslim armies, and indeed the flags and flagposts themselves often bore religious symbols and texts (Tezcan and Tezcan 1992; Acar 2005; Kılıçkaya 2007; Majer 2020). More often than not, Islamic weapons and armor were inscribed with prayers, invocations, and hagiographic poetry (Elgood 1979; David 2015; Richardson 2015). What was new in 1914 and thereafter was the vastly increased presence of religious symbols and artifacts in war-related visual material and communications, thanks in large part to technological advances, through which Ottoman calligraphers transformed their traditional modes of expression into new, modern responses to war.

Indeed, due to the advent of lithography, the nineteenth century had already ushered in a visual revolution, ranging from devotional panels and relatively inexpensive Qur'ans to illustrated popular literature and periodicals (Aksel 1960, 1967; Derman 1989; Duman 2018; Erdem 2022). Furthermore, for the Ottomans, the introduction of small box and portable cameras, most especially the mass-produced Kodak Box in 1888, led to a "new age marked by the intense mobility and ubiquity of images" (Ersoy 2016, 356). Visual material, previously the purview of the elite, had thus become a daily sight, whether in coffee houses, *sufi* lodges, or newspapers and illustrated magazines.

At the institutional level, the war years saw the establishment of new higher education institutions and the expanded areas of study they represented. The School for Calligraphers, officially inaugurated on May 20, 1915, was such an institution dedicated exclusively to the teaching of calligraphy and other Islamic arts of the book. It was founded as part of a drive to institutionalize and professionalize the production and conservation of Islamic art, just like the Museum of Islamic Foundations (*Evkaf-ı İslâmiyye Müzesi*) established the previous year, with which the School was officially affiliated (*Medresetü'l-Hattâtîn Ta'lîmâtnâmesi* 1334; Ateş 1991; Derman 2015, 23–30). Previously, Islamic calligraphy had been taught exclusively in a one-on-one relationship between master and apprentice that was vital not only for the actual transmission of knowledge but also for the assessment of the student's progress as well as his/her licensing and thus professional legitimation. During the late nineteenth century, attempts were made to develop institutional methods of calligraphic instruction on a broader scale. The significant growth of public education during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamîd II (Ergin 1939–1943, vol. 3; Fortna 2002) brought about a proliferation of lithographed calligraphic workbooks (*meşk defteri*) and other teaching aids that were widely used in elementary and secondary schools. These were, however, only intended to improve the handwriting of the general populace rather than substituting for formal calligraphic training. Between the master–apprentice relationship and mass-produced instructional tools stood a handful of palace schools (e.g. *Enderûn-ı Hümâyûn*, *Galata Sarayı*), religious schools (e.g. the *madrasa* of *Nûr-ı Osmâniyye*), and governmental establishments (e.g. *Dîvân-ı Hümâyun*, *Mızıka-yı Hümâyûn*) where calligraphy was taught in a semi-institutional setting.

With the foundation of the School for Calligraphers, Ottoman education in the Islamic arts was institutionalized in a modern sense. A number of remarkable artists who flourished in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – including Tâhirzâde – taught there. The School also hosted annual exhibitions where students showed their calligraphic panels to the public during the holy month of Ramadan (*Tanîn* 5 Haziran 1332 R/18 June 1916; *Tasvîr-i Efkâr* 29 Haziran 1333 R/29 June 1917). The instructors selected a few works by master artists to set an example for the pupils during these displays (Necmeddîn Okyay's memoirs, quoted in Derman 2015, 127).

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Figure 4. İsmâ'îl Hakkı (Altunbezer), *jalī thulth* panel dated 1336 H/1917–1918. "This too shall pass, O He [God]." Illumination by F. Çiçek Derman. Collection of M. Uğur Derman.

"This too shall pass": sentiments of a war-weary society

Unlike cultural structures engineered top-down by the state (in the form of either patronage or education), the artists' unofficial and independent modes of expression also communicated their personal experience of the war, standing as powerful testimonies of the impact of modern warfare. One such work is a calligraphic panel prepared by the renowned calligrapher İsmâ'îl Hakkı Bey towards the end of World War I (1336/1917–1918) (Figure 4). Written in *jalī thulth* (*celî sülüs*) script, the panel contains one simple line of text which reads: "This too shall pass, O He [God]" ("*Bu da geçer yâ Hû*") – a phrase that conjures the impermanence and ephemerality of any situation, whether wealth and power or poverty and impotence.

The adage was commonly found in *sufi* settings and the panels, often written in *jalī thulth* or *ta'līq* (*ta'lîk*, Ottoman *nasta'līq*) script, invariably hung in dervish lodges (Gölpınarlı 1977, 64). İsmâ'îl Hakkı Bey is not known to have been a member of a *sufi* order, and the fact that this panel remained in private hands suggests that he must have written it for personal reasons, either in response to a commission or because he found it soothing at a deeply troubling time, when the future was anything but certain.

By the time İsmâ'îl Hakkı produced this panel, he was already a renowned artist. When the School for Calligraphers was established in 1915, he was appointed instructor of *jalī thulth* and *tughra*. In 1916, he was among the group who designed and produced the embroidered covering (*kiswah*) of the Ka'ba, for which he was awarded the Silver Medal of Distinction (*gümüş liyâkat madalyası*) by the Ottoman state (BOA, İ. DUİT, 62/41, 19 Eylül 1332 R/2 October 1916).

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İsmâ'îl Hakkı Bey's sentiments concerning the ongoing war are not difficult to guess, even in the absence of archival evidence. Due to press censorship and CUP authoritarianism, it was not possible openly to voice protest against the war between 1914 and 1918. As one Ottoman journalist put it, "all the available organized channels in the country were in the hands of a minority which was composed of pro-war extremists" (Yalman 1970, 219). Towards the end of the war, weariness, exhaustion, and economic hardship had spread to every sector of Ottoman society. As soldiers deserted from the front due to deprivation and concern for their families, civilians on the home front also became "increasingly resistant to official wartime policies and refused to make further sacrifices" (Akın 2018, 11–12). Added to the unprecedented losses of Ottoman territory and personnel were economic woes that hit the home front. By 1917, wartime hyperinflation meant that the overall cost of living had risen almost eight times since the war started; by 1918, eighteen times (Eldem 1994, 50–51; Toprak 2003, 154). In the presence of such despair, visual artists also began to confront the horror and pain brought by the war (Tongo 2019).

Indeed, not all artistic production between 1914 and 1918 was geared towards propaganda and militarism. As painters like Nâmık İsmâ'îl (1890–1935) chose to represent the war with dark ambivalence as to its aims and consequences (Tongo 2020), İsmâ'îl Hakkı produced one of the most thoughtful, if understated, works of art on the ongoing conflict. The "this" in "this too shall pass" must have represented the war's mass casualties and the fading distinction between combatants and civilians; it was about the on-going war that had already become a source of despair and frustration for the population; perhaps, too, it critiqued the illusion of power flowing from the ruling elite, waging and continuing the pursuit of industrialized warfare.

Cultural policy

The Ottomans lost World War I. On October 30, 1918, an Armistice was declared with Allied forces in the port of Mudros, ending the disastrous four-year conflict. The Armistice gave the war-weary population some respite, but it was brief. On November 13, 1918, a combined British–French–Italian–Greek fleet arrived in İstanbul to occupy the imperial capital (Criss 1999). The Armistice of Mudros imposed severe conditions upon the defeated Ottomans. The occupation of İstanbul was soon followed by that of most of Thrace and Anatolia by British, Greek, Italian, and French forces. As the occupation intensified between 1919 and 1921, so did the national struggle movement under the leadership of Mustafa Kemâl. Meanwhile, a new parliament was established in the Anatolian city of Ankara on April 23, 1920, the Grand National Assembly (*Büyük Millet Meclisi*), in clear opposition to the imperial government in İstanbul. Anatolia and neighboring regions were the scene of violence and conflict until the Allies' expulsion in October 1923 and even beyond (Shaw and Kural Shaw 2005 [1977], 340–372; Zürcher 2005 [1993], 133–165; Kayalı 2008, 112–146).

The fall of the CUP government in autumn 1918 and the arrival of the Allies also destabilized the cultural domain, its heritage and industry. The organization and control of the cultural domain was characterized by ambiguities regarding the responsibilities of the agencies in archaeological excavations, entertainment institutions, and imperial palaces, most especially in occupied İstanbul (MacArthur-Seal 2017; Özlü 2018, 552–574; Abi 2022). Under the authoritarian regime that prevailed during World War I, cultural

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policy had been governed through top-down decisions. Administrative bodies such as the Ministry of Education and the Imperial Museum, as well as the cultural elite, managed to turn the situation of the state of war to their own advantage (Tongo 2021). In particular, the director of the Imperial Museum, Halil Edhem (Eldem, 1861–1938) – who had already invested heavily in the protection of Islamic antiquities (Shaw 2000, 2003; Çelik 2016, 119–128) – found the opportunity to implement laws and regulations for the enhancement and conservation of Islamic art. The foundation of the Museum of Islamic Pious Foundations in 1914, only a few months before the outbreak of the war, was followed by the establishment of a scientific committee (*heyet-i ilmiyye*) in 1915 to "investigate and publish the product of research on Islamic and national knowledge" (*âsâr-ı ilmiyye-i İslâmiyye ve milliyye*; BOA, TSMA.e., 1425/79, 5 Mart 1331 R/18 March 1915). Within two years, the CUP congress had approved the foundation of the General Directorate for National Art (*Âsâr-ı Milliyye Müdüriyyet-i Umûmiyyesi*; BOA, MF. MKT, 1230/46, 1333 R/1917) to administer various national institutions, including the national library (*Millî Kütübhâne*), the national archive (*Millî Hazîne-i Evrâk*), and works of Islamic art (*âsâr-ı İslâmiyye*) more generally. Meanwhile, various precious Islamic art objects were brought to the Museum of Islamic Pious Foundations, notably early Qur'an manuscripts and other valuable Islamic artefacts from the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus (BOA, DH. ŞRF, 73/73, Şubat 1332 R/February 1917; *Türk ve İslam Eserleri Müzesi: 100 Yıl Önce 100 Yıl Sonra* 2014, 227–236).

That said, the Allied powers, successive Ottoman cabinets, and the Ankara Government (from 1920 on) occasionally clashed over the fate of Islamic cultural heritage between 1918 and 1923. The issues at stake were sometimes economic, but more often ideological and political. In 1921, the School for Calligraphers was in danger of closure due to budget shortfalls, though it did manage to survive (Derman 2015, 35) and continued to display calligraphy panels in public exhibitions (*Akşam* 26 Mayıs 1337 R/26 May 1921, 1). Previously undertaken Islamic arts projects were also suspended during the Armistice period, including the reproduction of the paintings in the sixteenth century *Book of Skills* (*Hünernâme*) – a project in which Tâhirzâde was directly involved (C.A., 01010042/586139).

In August 1922, the issue of the protection of the sacred relics (*emânât-ı mukaddes*) and other valuable antiquities and objects (*zî-kıymet bi'l-umûm âsâr ve eşyâ*) in the Topkapı Palace and the Museum of Islamic Pious Foundations was addressed by Mustafa Kemâl. He demanded their transportation to Anatolia, having considered the possibility of the occupation of İstanbul by the Greek army (Karaduman 2016, 219; Özlü 2018, 569). The demand of the Ankara government was not immediately granted, but following the abolition of the sultanate on November 1, 1922, Mustafa Kemâl raised the issue once again and ordered Re'fet Paşa (governor of İstanbul as of November 4, 1922) to take security measures for the protection of the sacred relics against the possibility that they might be smuggled abroad by the dethroned Sultan Mehmed VI Vahdeddîn or by departing British forces (Karaduman 2016, 62). Two telegraphs sent by Re'fet Paşa and Mustafa Kemâl, regarding the security measures for the protection of the relics, were read at the Grand National Assembly at the meeting where Prince Abdülmecîd Efendi was elected caliph (November 18, 1922). The message was straightforward: "It is important to protect the relics. The British must only [be allowed to] take the relics through the use of weapons and bloodshed" (*emânâtı muhâfaza etmek mühümdir. İngilizler emânâtı ancak silâh isti'mâl ederek ve kan*

dökerek almalıdırlar) (*TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları*, 18 Kasım 1338 R/18 November 1922, 1042–1043).

By the time these security measures could be taken, İstanbul had been under the control of the Ankara government for two weeks, having endured twelve government changes between October 11, 1918 and November 4, 1922 (Tunaya 1986; Criss 1999). Eventually, a large number of valuable objects from the Topkapı Palace and the Museum of Islamic Foundations, including the sacred relics, arrived in Ankara where they were kept in 372 chests; meanwhile the Prophet's "Holy Mantle" (*Hırka-i Sa'âdet*) and "Noble Standard" (*Sancak-ı Şerîf*) remained in Abdülmecîd Efendi's possession, as requested by him and agreed upon by the Grand National Assembly (Karaduman 2016, 70, 225).

Deploying Islamic signifiers

The Greek invasion in 1919 reinforced the role of Islam in Turkish national identity. Mustafa Kemâl and Ra'uf Orbay, who had moved to Anatolia in May 1919, submitted a joint declaration to the Interior Ministry in which they stated that "there was something holy about the national struggle (*mücâhede-i milliyye/cihâd-ı milliyye*)" (Gingeras 2009, 74–75). Indeed, taken in 1920, the well-known photograph of Mustafa Kemâl and İsmet Paşa (İnönü) sitting before numerous maps and a banner inscribed with three Qur'anic verses (as-Saff 61:13, at-Tawbah 9:33, Al Imrān 3:64) – a talisman that reportedly accompanied them from one battlefield to another – is quite telling (Figure 5).[2] The Grand National Assembly, as Hanioğlu has emphasized, "adopted a strong Islamic tone from the outset:"

> The opening was deliberately scheduled for a Friday, following prayers at the central mosque [. . .] Before the [deputies] entered the building, which contained a replica of the Prophet's banner and a piece of hair from his beard, clerics completed a recitation of the full text of the Qur'ān [. . .] The assembly proceedings – with an imām leading prayers, deputies summoned to pray five times a day, constant reference to religious sources, and placards displaying Qur'ānic quotations (such as *wa-amruhum shūrā baynahum* [Qur'ān, 42:38] commending those "whose affairs are decided by mutual consultation.") – resembled old *meşveret* (consultation) meetings at the house of the Şeyhülislam (the chief mufti) (Hanioğlu 2011, 102–103).

The following year, after the victory at the Battle of Sakarya (waged against the Greek army between August and September 1921), the Grand National Assembly gave Mustafa Kemâl the title of *Gāzî* (holy warrior, fighter for the faith against the infidel) along with the rank of *Müşir* (Field Marshal) (Shaw and Kural Shaw 2005 [1977], 361).

On the ground, religious language was frequently used by nationalist journalists and writers to justify wars and the unprecedented number of casualties. *Şehîd*, *şühedâ* (pl.) (martyr) was one of the most persistent words to appear in the intellectual and political discourse of the day. In a way it offered a lexical framework to help

[2] This photograph was taken in Ankara in April 1920. Within a few months, a similar photograph with the same banner also appeared in the daily *Vakit* under the heading "The situation at the İzmir front" (*Vakit* 4 Temmuz 1336b R/4 July 1920; Çetin 2017, 25, 193).

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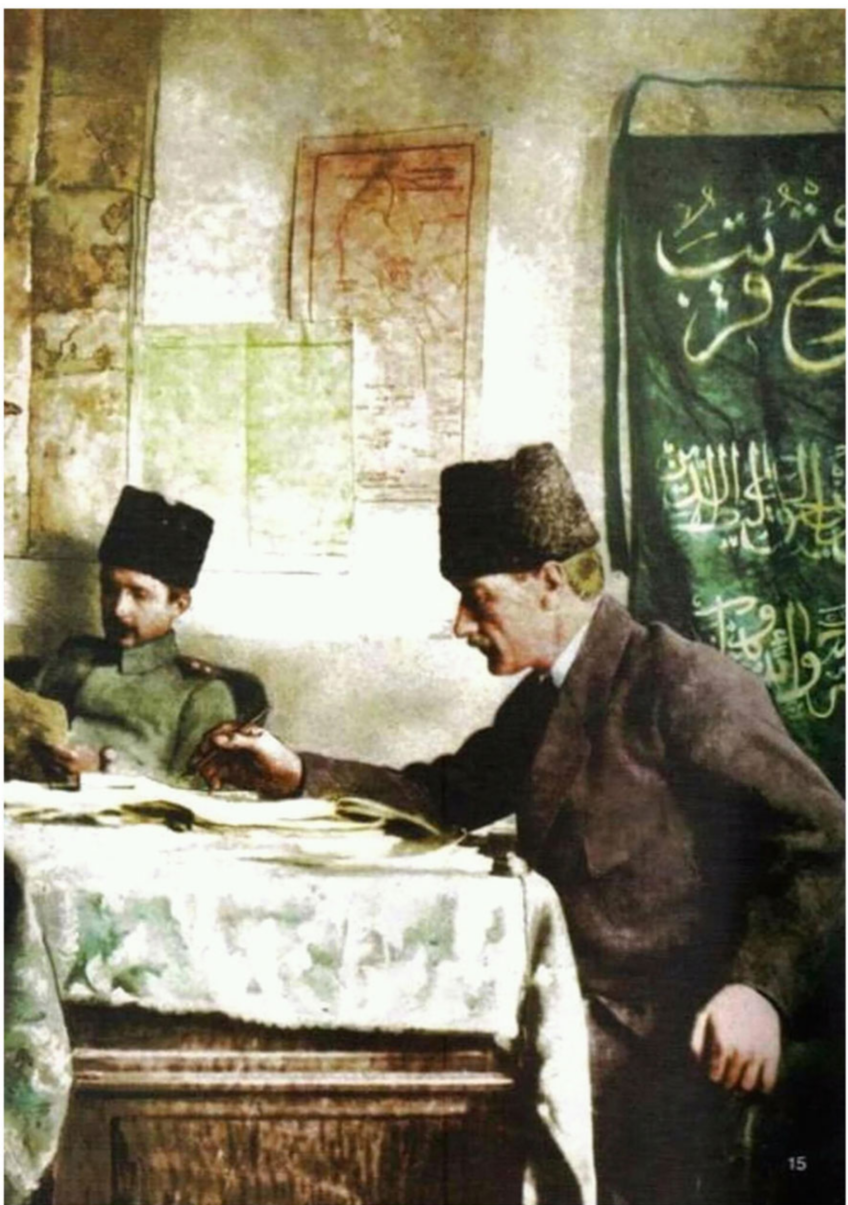

Figure 5. Photograph of Mustafa Kemâl and İsmet İnönü sitting before numerous maps and a banner inscribed with three Qur'anic verses: as-Saff 61:13, at-Tawbah 9:33, and Al Imrān 3:64. Public domain.

compensate for and heal the staggering casualties suffered by the soldiery exposed for the first time to the technologies of modern warfare – large-scale artillery, machine guns, submarines, airplanes, Zeppelins, and chemical weapons – that dwarfed earlier losses of life. It was not for nothing that Mehmed Âkif (Ersoy) included, in his poem

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Figure 6. Postcard no. 12 of the series "Mehmed's story," depicting Sultan Mehmed II, conqueror of Constantinople, sitting before his own tomb, watching the signatories of the Treaty of Sèvres (the Allied commanders and their collaborators in the İstanbul government) shaking hands. Undated, c. 1921–1922 CE. Collection of İrvin Cemil Schick.

adopted by the Grand National Assembly in 1921 as Turkey's National Anthem, the verse "Martyrs would gush out, were you only to squeeze the soil!" (*Şühedâ fışkıracak toprağı sıksan, şühedâ!*) His use of the word "martyrs" was as much personal as it was a nod to the dominant discourse. He had left İstanbul in 1920 to join the national movement in Ankara (Şeyhun 2015, 20); his patriotism, as Gingeras has emphasized, was imbricated with his Islamic faith, and his support for Mustafa Kemâl "initially came with his understanding that Atatürk too was a defender of faith and the Ottoman sultan/caliph" (Gingeras 2019, vii–viii).

Mehmed Akif's anthem was soon integrated into popular culture, with the added twist of clear references to Ottoman forebears. One such work is a postcard that marked the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres (*Sevr mu'âhedesi*, August 10, 1920), in which the artist depicted Sultan Mehmed II, known as "The Conqueror" (r. 1444–1446, 1451–1481), sitting by his own tomb and looking wistfully at the signatories shaking hands (Figure 6). On the wall are the dates of the conquest and occupation of İstanbul, as well as a quatrain from Mehmed Âkif's poem. The turban and the inscription "He is the Eternal One" ("*huwa al-Bāqī*") on the cenotaph, as well as the Qur'an on the lectern in front of it, make explicit the scene's Islamic context.[3]

[3] Some of the postcards about the occupation and the War of Independence are signed, but many are undated. Those that depict datable events provide clues as to when they were produced; most were first published between 1920 and 1922, and some were subsequently reproduced (Uğurluer 2019, 13–14; *Türk Ocağı Koleksiyonu ve Selahattin Ömer Resim Sergisi* 2014).

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Figure 7. Postcard no. 32/45 of the series "Mehmed's story," depicting Sultan Mehmed II "the Conqueror" bursting into a room where a recoiling Sultan Mehmed VI (or possibly Grand Vezir Damad Ferid Paşa) stands behind a table covered by the torn Treaty of Sèvres. Undated, 1922 or later. Collection of İrvin Cemil Schick.

Another postcard makes reference to the occupation of İstanbul and depicts Sultan Mehmed II bursting into a room where a recoiling Sultan Mehmed VI (or possibly Grand Vezir Damad Ferid Paşa) stands behind a table covered by a torn document that reads "Treaty of Sèvres" (Figure 7). The painting on the wall – of uncertain authorship, by Hasan Rıza (1858–1913) or Fausto Zonaro (1854–1929) – reinforces the motif of the sultan's entry into Constantinople through the city's breached fortifications.

These two postcards are part of a long series entitled "Mehmed's story" (*Mehmed'in hikâyesi*), named after the eponymous Turkish soldier. Several other series were also printed to mourn defeats, commemorate victories, and mark special events. Here and elsewhere, the foreign occupation and the War of Independence were depicted with direct reference to the Ottoman past. Nostalgia for a lost golden age, the heyday of the empire, and most especially for Sultan Mehmed II, the conqueror of Constantinople, gave the national movement the means to revile the occupation and declare that "İstanbul belongs to the Turk, and the Turk to İstanbul" (*İstanbul Türk'ün, Türk İstanbul'undur*) (*Vakit* 14 Kānûn-ı sânî 1336a R/14 January 1920, 1). The romanticization of historical roots and imperial glory was everywhere, voiced in İstanbul demonstrations against the occupation, illustrated in journals (e.g. *Büyük Mecmua*, no. 10, 19 Haziran 1335 R/19 June 1919), and displayed in works of art – including Tâhirzâde's miniatures showing Sultans Osman I (Osman Gāzî, r. 1299–1324) and Mehmed II displayed at the Turkish Industry Exhibition (*1335 Senesi Türk Sanayi Sergisi Kataloğu* 1335 [1919], unpaginated).

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Figure 8. Ahmed Kâmil (Akdik), *tokça* (midsize) *thulth* panel dated 1339 H/1920–1921. “And surely We shall test you with something of fear and hunger and loss of wealth and lives and the fruits [of your labor]; but give good tidings to those who endure.” (Qur’an, al-Baqara 2:155) Collection of İrvin Cemil Schick.

Calligraphy

The occupation and War of Independence provided inspiration for a number of calligraphic works, some produced by renowned calligraphers of the time. For example, a panel in *tokça* (midsize) *thulth* script by Kâmil Efendi dated 1339 H/1920–1921 features the Qur’anic verse “And surely We shall test you with something of fear and hunger and loss of wealth and lives and the fruits [of your labor]; but give good tidings to those who endure” (al-Baqara 2:155) (Figure 8). Kâmil Efendi taught the *thulth* and *naskh* scripts at the School for Calligraphers, and was bestowed the official title Head of the Calligraphers (*re’îsü’l-hattâtîn*) in 1915 “due to his expertise and authority in his craft” (*mesleğindeki kemal ve iktidarına*, BOA, İ. TAL, 499/29, 28 Kânûn-ı Sânî 1330 R/10 February 1915) – the last calligrapher officially to hold that title. Along with İsmâ‘îl Hakkı, he took part in the preparation of the *kiswa* in 1916 and was awarded a Gold Medal of Distinction (BOA, İ. DUİT, 62/41, 19 Eylül 1332 R/2 October 1916; BOA, MV, 245/48). Written a short time after the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres and possibly as battles raged against the invading Greek armies, it is rather difficult to imagine that the country’s travails were not foremost on Kâmil Efendi’s mind as he wrote this verse.[4]

[4] See Maşalı (2020), where this very panel was used to illustrate the Qur’anic message of trials and endurance.

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Figure 9. İsmâʿîl Hakkı (Altunbezer), *thulth* panel dated 1340 H/1921–1922. *Basmala*. Collection of İrvin Cemil Schick.

Figure 10. İsmâʿîl Hakkı (Altunbezer), *jalī thulth* panel dated 1341 H/1922–1923. "Help from God and a present victory." (Qur'an, as-Saff 61:13.) Collection of İrvin Cemil Schick.

İsmâʿîl Hakkı Bey, for his part, tried to provide direct spiritual support for the War of Independence through his art, vowing to write the *Basmala* (the Qur'anic formula "in the name of God, most gracious, most merciful") once every night for 1001 nights or until the end of the war, whichever came first (Figure 9).[5]

Like martyr, the word victory too was brandished about frequently during the twilight of the Empire. In particular, the Qur'anic verses "indeed We have laid open for you a manifest victory" (al-Fath 48:1) and "help from God and a present victory" (as-Saff 61:13) were written countless times in a variety of media in direct proportion, it seems, to the number of defeats suffered by the Empire. İsmâʿîl Hakkı Bey wrote the latter verse in *jalī thulth* script in 1341 H/1922–1923 (Figure 10). Here, the date of the inscription correlates well with a military victory, namely the decisive Battle of Dumlupınar which was won on Muharram 7, 1341 H/August 30, 1922.

[5] Uğur Derman reported that he once saw such an item dated "Wednesday Dhu'l-qaʿdah 1337" and numbered 33. During that month, Wednesdays corresponded to the 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd, and 30th days. Assuming that İsmâʿîl Hakkı Bey did write the *Basmala* once per night, the earliest he would have started could have therefore been Ramadan 29, 1337/June 28, 1919, and the latest, Shawwal 27, 1337/July 26, 1919. Although Derman's teacher Necmeddîn Efendi told him that victory was achieved before the 1001st *Basmala* had been written, that sounds unlikely since a reasonable date for victory, August 30, 1922, would have come more than 1001 days after Hakkı Bey had probably taken his vow (*Cumhuriyet'in 97. Yılında Milli Mücadele Sergisi* 2020, 98–99).

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Figure 11. Mustafa İhsan Bey, *jalī thulth* panel dated 1338 H/1919–1920. "May the eyes of the enemy close as soon as they open / By the power of the *surah* 'indeed We have laid open . . .'" (Qur'an, al-Fath 48:1). Private collection.

The verse "indeed We have laid open for you a manifest victory" was written numerous times not only by trained calligraphers but also by popular artists in a variety of media, notably *sous-verre* painting, during the last decades of the empire. A panel by Mustafa İhsan Bey (1871–1937), a calligrapher and inspector at the Military Printing House (*Matbaa-i Askeriyye*), is dated 1338 H/1919–1920 and has part of the verse embedded in a Turkish phrase: "May the eyes of the enemy close as soon as they open/By the power of the *surah* 'indeed We have laid open . . .'" ("*Açıldıkça kapansun ayn-ı a'dâ/Bi-hakk-ı sûre-i 'innā fataḥnā*'" (Figure 11). Not only does this panel express the nation's fond hopes at the dawn of the War of Liberation, it also beautifully encapsulates the Islamic belief in the power of the word, particularly the Divine Writ.

Of course, not every work of art produced during this period was of a specifically religious nature. A striking example is a two-tone marbled (*akkâseli ebru*) inscription in *jalī ta'līq* script by Necmeddîn Efendi, which reads "*gel keyfim gel*" – a somewhat untranslatable Turkish expression that invokes contentment and well-being (Figure 12). Necmeddin Efendi is best known for *jalī ta'līq* inscriptions as well as for floral and calligraphic marbled compositions. Upon joining the faculty of the School for Calligraphers in 1915, he began to teach marbling and paper polishing (Berk 2011; Derman 2015). Like İsmâ'îl Hakkı's panel described above, this work too is

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Figure 12. Necmeddîn (Okyay), two-tone marbled inscription in *jalī taʿlīq* script dated 1341 H/1922–1923. "*Gel keyfim gel*," a Turkish expression that invokes contentment and well-being. Collection of M. Uğur Derman.

dated 1341 H/1922–1923 and may have been written to celebrate the end of the war.[6] İsmâʿîl Hakkı also produced a panel with the same celebratory line in the same year (Mert 2020, 193).

Mustafa Kemâl in name and image

The occupation and the War of Independence were formative experiences for post-war visual culture. Patriotic representations of military leaders, particularly Mustafa Kemâl, were the new face of the war, leaving a legacy for subsequent generations of artists well beyond 1923.

An interesting set of works in which Islamic and Turkish–nationalist motives freely intermingle are (at least) three panels printed lithographically in İzmir. These were designed by a certain Hasan Fehmî Bey of Mora Yenişehri (i.e. Nauplio, in the Peloponnesus) about whom we know nothing else.

The first is an *imsākiyyah*[7] published for Ramadan 1341 H/April 17–May 16, 1923 (Figure 13), some six months before the proclamation of the Republic. It features a

[6] Necmeddîn Efendi's student Uğur Derman, who now owns the piece, reports that it was written upon the end of the occupation of İstanbul, as the Allied navy was pulling out on October 2, 1923. That would correspond to the Hijri date of 20 Safar 1342; yet, the piece is dated 1341. Derman has argued that, the year 1342 having just begun, Necmeddîn Efendi must have mistakenly written the date of the previous year (*Cumhuriyet'in 97. Yılında Milli Mücadele Sergisi* 2020, 92–93). That seems quite unlikely, however, since it would have been seven weeks since the first of the year and surely a man who worked as a prayer leader (*imam*) at a mosque would have been aware of the passage of the sacred month of Muharram. It seems more probable that the piece was written at the end of the War of Independence, which would be August 30, 1922/Muharram 7, 1341 H, the date on the panel thus being correct.

[7] The *imsākiyyah* is a timetable describing the hours at which fasting must begin and end, as well as the hours of the five daily prayers, at a particular location, during the month of Ramadan.

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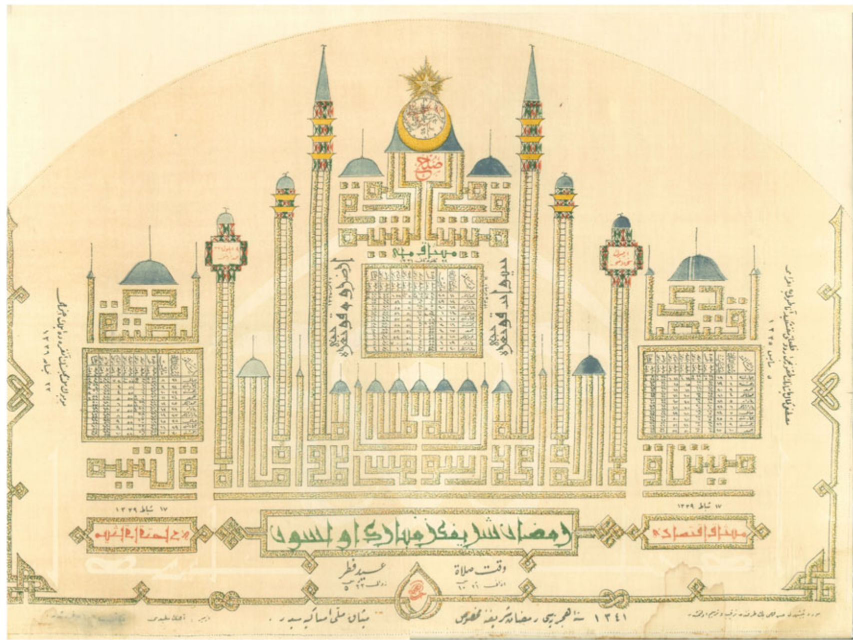

Figure 13. Hasan Fehmî Bey of Mora Yenişehri, *imsākiyyah* (timetable of fasting and prayer) for the month of Ramadan 1341 H/April 17–May 16, 1923. Words like "National Pact" and "Economic Pact" have been added to Islamic elements such as the Profession of Unity in the form of a mosque at the center. Collection of İrvin Cemil Schick.

well-known motif, a mosque in *maʿqilī* (checkerboard) script constituted by a symmetrical arrangement of the Profession of Unity ("There is no deity but Allah, Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah"). What is especially interesting is that the domed edifice at the top of the structure spells the words "National Pact" (*Mîsâk-ı Millî*) and those at the far ends of the structure the words "Economic Pact" (*Mîsâk-ı İktisâdî*), both in symmetrical arrangements. The former is the name by which the Declaration of National Accord (*Ahd-i Millî Beyânnâmesi*), adopted by the Ottoman parliament on January 28, 1920 and outlining the minimal conditions for peace acceptable to the Turkish side, came to be known. The latter refers to the principles adopted at the Economic Congress of İzmir (February 17–March 4, 1923), concluded a few weeks before the *imsākiyyah* was printed.

At the apex is the word "peace" and on either side of the central table, in a decorative pseudo-*Kūfī* script, are the inscriptions "Congress of Erzurum" (held on July 23–August 7, 1919) and "Congress of Sivas" (held on September 4–11, 1919) – two milestone events where resolutions were taken against the occupation and in favor of national self-determination and the protection of territorial integrity, thus paving the way for the War of Independence.

Another *imsākiyyah* by Hasan Fehmî, this one prepared for Ramadan 1342 H/April 6–May 5, 1924 (Figure 14), is titled "*imsākiyyah* for the first mercy-spreading Ramadan of our Republic" (*Cumhûriyetimizin ilk Ramazân-ı mağfiret-feşânına mahsûs imsâkiyyedir*) and features another common motif, a calligraphic composition in *maʿqilī* script in the

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Figure 14. Hasan Fehmî Bey of Yenişehir (Mora Yenişehri), *imsākiyyah* for the month of Ramadan 1342 H/ April 6–May 5, 1924. Nationalist slogans such as "The Turk is undaunted," the names of war heroes like Mustafa Kemâl, and the names of various battles have been added to Islamic elements such as the Profession of Faith attributed to Abū Hanīfah. Collection of İrvin Cemil Schick.

form of a sailing ship. The upper deck of the ship and its oars contain an inscription that is often written in this form, the Profession of Faith attributed to Abū Hanīfah that begins with "I believe" (*āmantu*) and lists the main articles of the Islamic faith: belief in God, His angels, His scriptures, His prophets, the Day of Judgement, that all that is good and bad comes from Him, and resurrection after death. Below these words, between the oars, is an incongruous alliterative inscription that says "Little Mehmed [is] strong, earnest, loyal, patient, able-bodied" (*Mehmedcik salâbetli samîmî sâdık sabırlı sağlam*), followed by "the Turk is undaunted" (*Türk yılmaz*).[8] "Little Mehmed," symbolic of the quintessential Turkish soldier, was already a significant presence in official propaganda during World War I when he was assigned a "momentous role," as Yiğit Akın (2018, 93) has emphasized, to fight "for the very existence of the empire" and defend "the entire Islamic world."

These inscriptions set the tone for the rest of the artwork, which uses eminently recognizable religious iconography to celebrate the victorious conclusion of the War of Independence. Prominently displayed at the apex is the name "Mustafa Kemâl" and on either side are the names of the commanders "Fevzî" (Çakmak) and "İsmet" (İnönü). The quarter-deck spells the name of another commander, "Kâzım Karabekir,"

[8] This last statement is likely a reference to a patriotic anthem written and composed by Kâzım Karabekir and entitled *Türk Yılmaz Marşı*; see Akkuzu (2022, 14–15).

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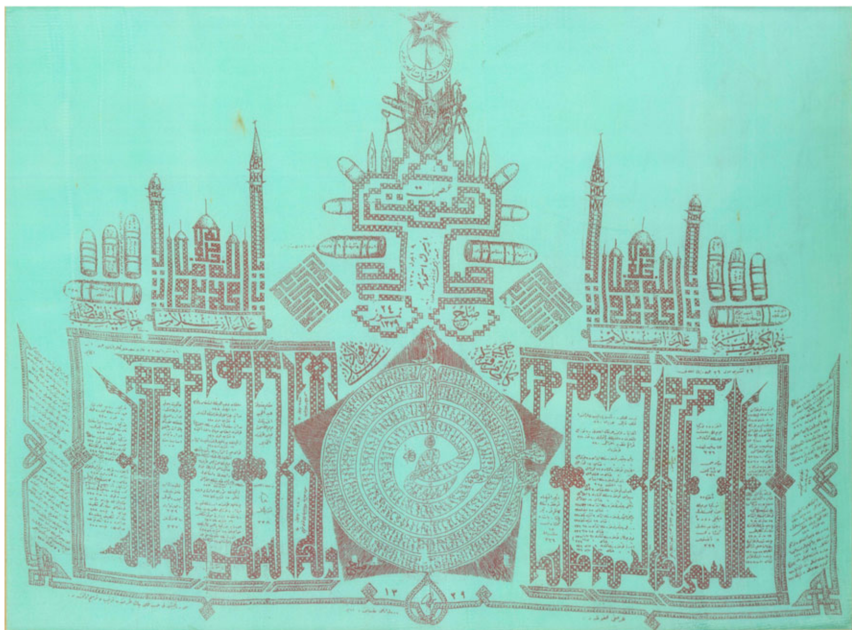

Figure 15. Hasan Fehmî Bey of Mora Yenişehri, commemorative panel dated 1339 R/1923–1924. Military symbols such as bullets and/or cannon shells and the names of war heroes like Mustafa Kemâl are mixed in with Islamic elements such as "O Muhammad, O God may His glory be glorified." Collection of İrvin Cemil Schick.

while the ship's hull is composed of the inscription "Republic of Turkey" (*Türkiyâ Cumhûriyyeti*). The flagpole to the right of the ship's bow lists the names of various cities and the dates of their liberation: İstanbul, İzmir, Çanakkale (the Dardanelles), Mudanya, and Edirne. Similarly, the flagpole to the left of the stern lists the names of various victorious battles: Sakarya, İnönü, Dumlupınar, Afyon, Tınaztepe, and Kars.

A third work by Hasan Fehmî is a commemorative image, apparently printed on both paper and fabric, dated 1339 R/1923–1924 (Figure 15). It depicts a crescent and star at the top, the former inscribed "independence and liberty are among divine signs" (*istiklâl ve hürriyet âyât-ı ilâhiyyedendir*) and the latter "Ankara." Below the crescent and the star, in both *ta'līq* script and a strange, winding, pseudo-*ma'qilī* script, is the name "İsmet" bordered on either side by a symmetric inscription of the word "peace" (*sulh*). It is worth remembering that İsmet Paşa was Turkey's chief negotiator at the peace conference in Lausanne. The arcs of the letter "*h*" in "*sulh*" contain the inscription "peace Lausanne July 24, 1339 R/1923."

The triangles immediately below these arcs contain the names of the commanders "Kâzım Karabekir" and "Ali Fu'âd [Cebesoy]." On either side of this central composition are squares inscribed with the Profession of Unity in *ma'qilī* script. Mosque-like compositions to the right and left contain the inscriptions "O Muhammad, O God may His glory be glorified" (*yā Muhammad yā Allāh jalla jalālahu*) rising from rectangular bases inscribed "World of Islam" (*âlem-i İslâm*). Next to these bases are the inscriptions "National Sovereignty" and "Economic Sovereignty" (*hâkimiyyet-i milliyye* and *hâkimiyyet-i*

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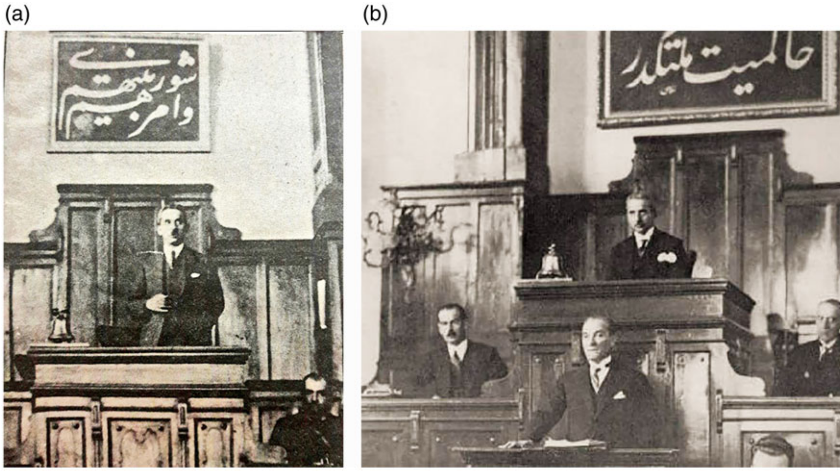

Figure 16. Two calligraphic panels adorning the wall behind the lectern in the meeting hall of the Turkish National Assembly. (a) Earlier panel, calligrapher unknown, *jalī taʿlīq* script. "And their affairs [are conducted by] consultation among them." (Qur'an, ash-Shūrā 42:38). (b) Later panel, Hulûsî (Yazgan), *jalī taʿlīq* script. "Sovereignty belongs to the nation." Public domain.

iktisâdiyye). The large pseudo-*Kūfī* inscription in the lower half of the panel is in Arabic and reads "O God, praise to you always and thanks to you continuously. God" (*Allāhumma laka al-hamdu dā'iman wa laka al-shukru qā'iman. Allāh*). The spiral composition at the center is a highly fanciful representation of the name "Mustafa Kemâl," supplemented in the middle by the word "holy warrior" (*gāzî*). A variety of religious texts are written in *ghubārī* script between the large letters and within the central spiral. And above it all is a whole series of what appear to be bullets or cannon shells, also inscribed in *ghubārī* script.

These three extraordinary documents beautifully illustrate the pentimento-like presence of Islamic art during the Armistice period and the early Republic. Although religious institutions such as the caliphate faced revolutionary changes in the immediate aftermath of the foundation of the Republic, the visible role of Islam in politics persisted for some time. Thus, when the second parliament building was officially opened on October 18, 1924, the wall behind the lectern in the meeting hall bore a panel in *jalī taʿlīq* script inscribed with part of a Qur'anic verse, "and their affairs [are conducted by] consultation among them" (ash-Shūrā 42:38) – certainly a very fitting text for a parliament building even if the calligraphy was mediocre at best (Figure 16a). By November 30, 1925, however, almost a year after the inauguration of the second parliament building, this panel was replaced by a beautiful inscription by the well-known calligrapher Hulûsi (Yazgan, 1869–1940),[9] the text of which was in Turkish and declared "Sovereignty belongs to the nation" (*hâkimiyyet milletindir*)

[9] Mehmed Hulûsi Efendi is especially known for his works in *jalī taʿlīq* script, which he studied with Sâmi Efendi. He was appointed instructor at the School for Calligraphers in 1915 (Derman 2015, 90–97).

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(Figure 16b). It is more than likely that this change was not motivated by aesthetic considerations; the replacement of a Qur'anic verse by a Rousseauean maxim in the legitimation of universal suffrage and parliamentary representation must be seen as a visible manifestation of a sea change in Turkish politics, away from Nâmık Kemâl and towards Mustafa Kemâl, away from Islam and towards eventual secularism.

In closing, let us return to the striking painting with which we began: the miniature-like portrait created by Hüseyin Tâhirzâde (Behzâd) and gifted to Mustafa Kemâl in April 1923 (Figure 1). At the center of the miniature is Mustafa Kemâl in military uniform, wearing the *İmtiyaz* medal, awarded in 1915 by Sultan Mehmed V in recognition of his service at Gallipoli. Above him are four angels – probably the archangels Jabra'il, Israfil, Mika'il, and 'Azra'il – and outlines of several more angels in the background; green and red flags adorned with crescents and stars, symbolizing "religion and state, kingdom and nation" (*din ü devlet*, *mülk ü millet*), a vestige of Ottoman political culture; and a crescent and star at the apex. The entire composition is framed by a very Persianate border which gives the entire work a vaguely carpet-like appearance – not surprising since Tâhirzâde also taught and authored a book on carpet design (Behzād n.d.). The frame is hand-decorated with eight rectangular compartments and four circular medallions. The latter contain the words "peace" (on the right) and "victory 1338" (on the left), presumably a Rûmî date corresponding to the year 1922 and thus referring to the Battle at Dumlupınar that concluded the War of Independence. The medallion at the bottom contains the artist's name: "Hüseyin Tâhirzâde, instructor of illumination at the School for Calligraphers" ("*Medresetü'l-Hattâtîn tezhîb mu'allimi Hüseyin Tâhirzâde*").

The rectangular compartments at the top and bottom of the frame contain a *ruba'i* by the Persian poet Husayn Sahi Qomi, written in honour of the Caliph 'Ali:

> In the wilds of creation of the Lord of the Worlds was a lone lion.
>
> For Mustafa's [i.e. the Prophet's] enemies, he had a sword.
>
> Mother Earth cannot bring one like 'Ali into this world!
>
> It seems the heavens had only this single arrow in their quiver.[10]

Strikingly, Tâhirzâde altered the third line of the poem, replacing "'Ali" with "Kemâl." Thus, the names "Mustafa" and "Kemâl" are both present in this brief ode, which deftly dethrones both the Prophet Muhammad and the Caliph 'Ali in favor of the leader of the Turkish national movement.[11]

The rectangular compartments on the left and right of the frame also contain a short poem, this time in Turkish. Unfortunately, some of the paint has flaked away, making it partly illegible, but what we have been able to decipher reads as follows:

[10] "*Bīsha-i ījād-i Rabbu'l-'ālamīn yak shīr dāsht/Az barā-yi doshmanān-i Muṣṭafā shamshīr dāsht/Mādar-i gītī nazāyad dar jahān mis̱l-i 'Alī/Āsmān gūyā ki dar tarkash hamīn yak tīr dāsht.*" See, e.g., Insāfpūr 1353, 126.

[11] An alternative interpretation, suggested by our first referee, is that "Mustafa" in the second line does indeed refer to the Prophet and thus bolsters Mustafa Kemâl's status as defender of Islam, as also emphasized by the Turkish poem discussed below.

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The pride of the entire Muslim World,

The savior of the State of Turkey

Renowned hero of the battlefield of Holy War

Gāzî Mustafa Kemâl Paşa.[12]

The seamless amalgamation of Islamic motifs and political signifiers in this painting, coupled with Mustafa Kemâl's flattering acknowledgement of receipt, give a good indication as to the thinking prevailing at the time and of the value accorded to Islamic art forms when in the service of state goals (C.A., 01010042/591052, 26 Mayıs 1339 R/26 May 1923; C.A., 01016717/700674, 10 Haziran 1339 R/10 June 1923).[13]

Conclusion

World War I and the Armistice period are significant not only as a narrow political interlude that witnessed total war, occupation, and resistance, but also as a time of cultural transition from the multi-ethnic, multi-confessional Empire to the Republic, conceived as a unitary nation-state. As we have tried to show in this article by exploring the use and appropriation of Islamic motifs, often taken out of context, during World War I, the War of Independence, and the nascent Republic, this difficult period was anything but artistically barren. Such motifs resonated with the public and were thus an effective medium for political discourse. On the one hand, Islamic calligraphy was used to articulate responses to war, invasion, occupation, and the struggle for liberation; on the other, images commonly associated with Islamic themes were transformed into nationalist–Republican messages. These artworks were created and disseminated within the context and conditions of modern warfare, and endorsed a mode of expression which obfuscated the distinction between the modern and traditionalist artistic interpretations of war. Oscillating between convention and experimentation, the works of art often retained an Islamic form, while adopting nationalist substance.

Of course, any study dealing with visual culture must take account of the complex interrelationships among artist, production, and reception, as well as the work's overall impact. Despite their perhaps somewhat marginal nature, the works discussed here are worthy of consideration on several levels. They represent a curious case study within the field of research on modern Islamic art, as well as on the cultural history of modern warfare and the role of religious rites of passage in shaping and reshaping national identity. Some of the works mentioned here, such as the calligraphic panels at the Grand National Assembly or the mass-produced posters, postcards, and Ramadan timetables, must have reached a wider audience than those intended for private consumption. Collectively, however, they complicate the image of a sudden and clear-cut transition from Islam to secular nationalism: the continuities and changes in Islamic art during this period show the process to have been more intricate, more gradual, and less homogeneous than it is often thought to have been.

[12] Subject to eventual correction, we have read: "*Bütün âlem-i İslâm'ın iftihârı/Devlet-i Türkiyâ'nın halâskarı/Meydân-ı mücâhedenin kahramân-ı nâmdârı/Gāzî Mustafâ Kemâl Paşa*."

[13] For Mustafa Kemâl's letter, subsequently decorated by Tâhirzâde, see Gündüz 2000.

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Dedication. We fondly dedicate this article to Zafer Toprak (1946–2023), our *hoca* and colleague; we so wish he had lived to see it in print.

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