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# The persistence of the Turkish nation in the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk

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### Introduction

The Republic of Turkey, founded in 1923 after a war of independence, created a history for its people that completely and consciously bypassed its Ottoman predecessor. An *ethnie* called “the Turks,” existent in the multicultural Ottoman Empire only as a general name used by Europeans, was imagined and given a story linking it with the nomads of Central Asia, the former Hittite and Phrygian civilizations of Anatolia, and even indirectly with the ancient Sumerian and Assyrian civilizations of Mesopotamia. In the early years of the Turkish Republic, linguistic, anthropological, archaeological and historical studies were all conducted in order to formulate and sustain such claims.

Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the revolutionary responsible for the Turkish Republic, was the driving force behind this state-sponsored construction of “the Turks”—even his surname is a fabrication that roughly translates as “Ancestor/Father of the Turks.” It is no surprise then that the structure built to house the body of Atatürk after his death, his mausoleum called Anitkabir, also works to perpetuate such storytelling.

Anitkabir, however, is more than just the final resting place of Atatürk’s body—it is a public monument and stage-set for the nation, and a representation of the hopes and ideals of the Republic of Turkey. Sculptures, reliefs, floor paving and even ceiling patterns are combined in a narrative spatial experience that illustrates, explains and reinforces the imagined history of the Turks, their struggle for independence, and the founding of the Republic of Turkey after the fall of the Ottoman Empire.

In this way, Anitkabir is a collective monument that embodies the whole of the Turkish nation, not just a single man. It is a three-dimensional explanation and reinforcement of the Turkish nation. Additionally, Anitkabir is used to represent both the Turkish nation and the people of Turkey during major national celebrations and on other more personal occasions. While Atatürk’s mausoleum was originally designed and built to elaborate a Turkish identity, it is the monument’s continued maintenance and usage in memorial rituals and commemorative ceremonies that demonstrate the persistence of this identity (or rather, the persistent need for such an elaboration).

### Inventing a history and a language

Gazi Mustafa Kemal Paşa, known as Mustafa Kemal Atatürk after 1934, leader of the 1919–23 Turkish War of Independence and first President of the Republic of Turkey,

clearly indicated his disdain for the former Ottoman Empire when he said in a 1923 speech that: “[The new Turkey has no relationship to the old one. The Ottoman government has disappeared into history. A new Turkey has now been born” (Schick and Tonak 1987:10; Öz 1982:36). Atatürk and the other leaders of early Republican Turkey frequently described their Ottoman predecessor as old, outdated, inefficient, wasteful and disorganized. In contrast, their new democracy was to be modern, up-to-date, efficient, resourceful and well organized. This attitude of contempt for the new state’s immediate predecessor shaped the ideology and hence policies of the young Republic of Turkey, including the construction of its representative architecture.

Ethnicity in the Ottoman Empire was not established exclusively according to territoriality or language, but defined more by religion: Ottoman Muslims, Jews and Christians identified first with those of the same religion before regional or language affiliations, although all were equally the subjects of the Ottoman Sultan. Conversely, the newly created Republic of Turkey sought to establish ethnicity not along religious lines but along the lines of language and history. The new Turkey was to be solely composed of Turks and Turks only—hence the population exchange between the Republic of Turkey and the Hellenic Republic of Greece that occurred in the early 1920s, in which ethnic Turks in Greece and ethnic Greeks in Turkey traded places.<sup>1</sup> Along similar lines, the appellation “Turk” would gradually be appropriated or changed from meaning “Muslim Ottoman” to meaning “a citizen of Turkey.” That is, a new *ethnie*—the Turk—was created at the same time as the new nation of Turkey was also being created.

This new *ethnie*, however, needed a history—it needed a beginning or an origin myth. Given Atatürk’s dislike for his Ottoman predecessors, it is no surprise that such a history was sought and eventually found in the time period before the Ottoman Empire. Eight years after the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey, two Turkish government institutions were founded that substantially contributed to the storytelling about “the Turks:” The Turkish Historical Society (*Türk Tarih Kurumu*) and Turkish Language Society (*Türk Dil Kurumu*). Over the following decade, each institution proposed theories about the Turks that, although eventually partially discredited,<sup>2</sup> shaped the discourse on these subjects well into the twentieth century.

The aim of the Turkish Historical Society, created under the patronage of Atatürk, was (and continues to be) “to study the history of Turkey and the Turks.”<sup>3</sup> It began in 1930 as the “Committee for the Study of Turkish History,” a subgroup of the Turkish Hearth Association, which in turn was an institution founded during the last decade of the Ottoman Empire to promote “Turkishness.”<sup>4</sup> After changing its name and becoming independent of The Turkish Hearth, the Turkish Historical Society proposed the “Turkish History Thesis” at the First [Turkish] History Conference in Ankara in 1932.

This thesis, which attempted to counter the European opinion that the Turks were an inferior race, searched for a pre-Ottoman origin and proposed that current-day Turks descended from a branch of the nomadic **Oğuz Turks** who migrated from Central Asia to India, China, Mesopotamia, Anatolia and even into Europe by crossing the Ural mountains, thereby populating almost the entire known world at that time.<sup>5</sup> This territorial approach to constructing a nation’s origins has been described by Smith (1999:63) as “the myth of location and migration” or “where we came from and how we got there.” In this way, the Republic of Turkey conveniently theorized that contemporary

Turks were the descendants of the ancient Anatolian Hittite civilization (among others), reinforcing Turkish claims to the territory that it prescribed for itself.

The first step toward language reform in the new Republic of Turkey was the ambitious 1928/9 replacement of Arabic script with Latin characters, several of which were specially adapted/adopted for Modern Turkish.<sup>6</sup> This not only allowed for a higher level of literacy in the general population (on the assumption that Latin characters were easier to understand than Arabic ones), but also permitted the vowel harmony of Modern Turkish to be represented more efficiently (since Ottoman Arabic script apparently did not have an agreed-upon system for indicating vowels).

The next and equally ambitious step toward language reform was the creation of the Turkish Language Society, which was founded in 1932 to help “purify” the Turkish language by inventing and suggesting Turkish equivalents for “foreign” words; that is, Ottoman words usually derived from Arabic and Persian.<sup>7</sup> In cases where a suitable Turkish replacement could not be found, the Turkish Language Society, encouraged by Atatürk, resolved the problem by means of the historically inaccurate but politically convenient “Sun Language Theory,” initially made public at the First [Turkish] Language Conference in Istanbul in 1932. Simply put, this theory claimed that Turkish was a primal language from which all other languages emerged. Similarities between Sumerian and the other prehistoric languages of Mesopotamia, as well as contemporary Estonian, Finnish, Hungarian and Japanese, were given as examples to back up such claims.

The result of the “Turkish History Thesis” and the “Sun Language Theory” was the creation of Anatolia as a natural location for the Republic of Turkey and a conception of a Turkish race as its natural population. These theories implicitly upheld Anatolia as a kind of cradle of civilization that existed long before the Ottoman Empire—the place of origin for Turk ancestors who spoke a primal Turk language. The impact of these theories on a cultural level was a huge amount of state-sponsored archaeological, art historical, philological and scientific work that sought to physically exemplify the theories and prove them correct in material form.

The early Republic of Turkey actively supported and funded archaeological excavations, called “National Excavations,” the establishment of “ancient civilization” museums, and the printing of publications in support of this pre-Islamic or pre-Ottoman origin myth. Archaeological finds consisting of sculptures, wall reliefs, architectural ruins and everyday artifacts from the Hittite, Urart, Phrygian and Lydian civilizations were collected, catalogued and exhibited in the new museums and published in the early Republic’s propaganda literature.<sup>8</sup> Many motifs from these investigations such as deer, lions, doubled-headed eagles and Hittite sun emblems found their way onto the Turkish architecture and sculpture of the 1930s.

Such a reliance and dependence on archaeology should not be overlooked. As Smith (1999:174–80) suggests, the nationalist is a sort of archaeologist: rediscovering, reinterpreting and regenerating the historic deposit of an ethnic past to find myths and memories for an *ethnie* on which nationalist identities can be constructed.

Parallel to this literal digging into the past was an increased interest in the nomadic traditions of the pre-Ottoman Turks, which represented a kind of ancestral lifestyle, before the Ottomans settled down. As a result, traditional nomadic crafts, particularly carpet-weaving, with its rich variety of visual motifs, and the design of traditional nomadic tents, were studied, documented and published widely in academic and popular

journals. Such folk traditions were readily accepted and promoted by the Republican elite as symbols of a Turkish (or pre-Ottoman) identity.

With this background information about the Republic of Turkey's construction of a pre-Ottoman history of an *ethnie* called "the Turks," it is now possible to proceed to a discussion about the design and built form of the mausoleum for Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Figure 6.1), which acts to reinforce a national (collective) identity for the citizens of the Republic of Turkey.

### A mausoleum for Atatürk

Although Atatürk died in late 1938, it was not until 1953 that a permanent structure, called Anitkabir (literally, "memorial tomb"), was opened to act as his mausoleum. An international competition for the design of Anitkabir in 1942 received 49 entries from which three Turkish, three Italian, one German and one Swiss entry were shortlisted.<sup>9</sup> From among these, the design of the Turkish team of Emin Onat and Orhan Arda was chosen as the winner.



*Figure 6.1* Anitkabir, the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Ankara, as seen on the back of the new Turkish five lira banknote (source: reproduced with permission of the Republic of Turkey Central Bank, in accordance with law no. 25383, pages 86–9, *Republic of Turkey Official Gazette*, February 24, 2004).

Ironically for a monument that tries to represent the Turkish nation, the winning design for the competition was a monumentalized and abstracted classical (Greek) temple containing small references to Anatolian decorative motifs. The winning architects did not deny this reading. In fact, it was highlighted. In an explanation of their design, Onat

and Arda continued the story (or “history”) of Turkey and the Turkish people that began with the Turkish Historical Society’s “Turkish History Thesis”:

Our past, like that of all Mediterranean civilizations, goes back thousands of years. It starts with Sumerians and Hittites and merges with the life of many civilizations from Central Asia to the depths of Europe, thus forming one of the main roots of the classical heritage. Atatürk, rescuing us from the Middle Ages,<sup>10</sup> widened our horizons and showed us that our real history resides not in the Middle Ages but in the common sources of the classical world. In a monument for the leader of our revolution and our savior from the Middle Ages, we wanted to reflect this new consciousness. Hence, we decided to construct our design philosophy along the rational lines of a seven-thousand-year-old classical civilization rather than associating it with the tomb of a sultan or a saint.

(Bozdoğan 2001:289)<sup>11</sup>

The design took 11 years to build, during which some changes were made, the most significant of which was that the vaulted ceiling of the main building was eliminated. Instead, a flat ceiling and roof were constructed assuring that the mausoleum more closely resembled a classical temple.

Anıtkabir sits at the top of a hill that used to be called Rasattepe.<sup>12</sup> In the 1940s and 1950s, before the rapid expansion of Ankara, this hill could be seen from most places in the city. This acropolis-like siting within Ankara also heightens the classical temple analogy. The location was also chosen for its symbolic value, as argued in Parliament by Minister of Parliament Süreyya Örguevren:

Rasattepe has another characteristic that will deeply impress everyone. The shape of the present and future Ankara ranging from Dikmen to Etlik reminds [tone] of the shape of a crescent while Rasattepe is like a star in the center. Ankara is the body of the crescent. If Atatürk’s Mausoleum [were] placed on this hill, we would embed Atatürk in the center of the crescent of our flag. Thus the capital of Turkey would embrace Atatürk. Atatürk [would] be symbolically unified with our flag.

(Taylak 1998?: 22)<sup>13</sup>

In short, starting from the city-scale, the monument embodies an identity through the presentation of ethnosymbols, be they classical temples or flags.

Coincidentally, Rasattepe was also an ancient Phrygian tumulus and was consequentially excavated before the construction of Atatürk’s mausoleum. The site yielded many archaeological finds, most of which went to the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations in Ankara. In this way, not only did Rasattepe provide the physical material to reinforce a mythical history of the Turks, but it also provided the metaphorical material: Atatürk, father of the Turks, would find his final resting place on top of the Phrygians, metaphorically and literally using this ancient civilization as a foundation.

Anıtkabir consists not only of the temple-like main building, but also a huge public plaza in front of the mausoleum, pavilions that surround the plaza, and a ceremonial

approach. Visitors are first confronted by an imposing staircase with 26 risers which are intended to evoke the memory of August 26, 1922, the date on which Atatürk's forces could legitimately say that they had won control over the country during the Turkish War of Independence.

On either side at the top of the staircase are groups of sculptures: to the left, "Turkish Men" and to the right, "Turkish Women" (shown in Figure 6.2). The men include a soldier, a villager and a student—symbolizing defense, productivity and education. The two women in front are holding a wreath of wheat, a symbol of fertility, while the woman at the back is silently crying—symbolizing the nation's grief over the death of Atatürk. It is no exaggeration to say that these highly stylized sculptures physically represent the actual *ethnie* of "the Turk," the population of the Republic of Turkey, with the men strangely resembling Atatürk.<sup>14</sup>

Also on either side of this staircase are two stone pavilions, or "towers," that introduce the exterior architectural decoration scheme for the rest of the monument, which consists of Seljuk details like *mukarnas* ("saw-tooth" cornices), relief arches, water spouts, rosettes and bird houses. These preOttoman architectural details, as already explained by the architects, were chosen to represent the "roots" of Turkish architecture. Additionally, the roof and the bronze arrowhead at the top of each "tower" (ten in total) represent a traditional Turkic nomadic tent (*yurt*),<sup>15</sup> still found today in parts of rural Turkey and Central Asia, the first of many examples of the appropriation of folk traditions found at Anitkabir.



Figure 6.2 "Turkish Men" (left) and "Turkish Women" (right) at the entrance to the Street of Lions (source: sculptor: Hüseyin Özkan; photograph: Christopher S. Wilson).

Furthermore, each tower at Anitkabir represents a theme related to the Turkish War of Independence.<sup>16</sup> Inscribed on the inside walls of each tower are quotes by Atatürk corresponding to the particular theme of each tower, such as “This nation has not, cannot and will not live without independence. Independence or death” (1919) in the Independence Tower or “Nations who cannot find their national identity are prey to other nations” (1923) in the National Pact Tower.

After the male and female sculptures, a ceremonial approach follows, known as the Street of Lions because it is lined on both sides by 24 stone lions (six pairs on either side). These lions are blatantly reminiscent of the Hittite lions found in archaeological digs sponsored by the early Republic of Turkey (Figure 6.3), a reference explicitly working to remind visitors of the pre-Ottoman origins of the Turks. This ceremonial approach ends physically at a huge public plaza, but visually beyond at the Turkish Grand National Assembly, or Parliament Building, and behind that, (Çankaya Hill, the residence of the President of Turkey. In this way, the narrative of the ceremonial approach starts in the past (Hittite lions) but concludes in the present or even future (the Parliament and Presidential Palace).



*Figure 6.3* Left, lion sculptures from the neo-Hittite settlement of Carchemish/ Jerablos (source: Leonard wooley (1921) Plate B26a “Carchemish: Report on the Excavations at Jerablus on Behalf of the British Museum—Part II: The Town Defences,” courtesy of the British Library). Right, a lion from the ceremonial approach to Anitkabir (source: sculptor: Hüseyin Özkan; photograph: Christopher S.Wilson).

Once into the huge public plaza, the main temple-like building of the complex is on the left and more small pavilions frame the plaza on the right. The axis of this public plaza and the main building, known as the Hall of Honor, connects to the Old Citadel or Ankara Castle, which represents preRepublican (read: Ottoman) Ankara, before it was declared the capital city of Turkey. Here again, the visitor is reminded of the past. However, this time, it is a past that is behind Atatürk—we cannot see it. Atatürk (or rather, the building housing his body) is literally blocking our view of this past because the Ankara Citadel is associated with the Ottoman Empire and is therefore not worthy of our attention, unlike the Hittite and Seljuk past that is.

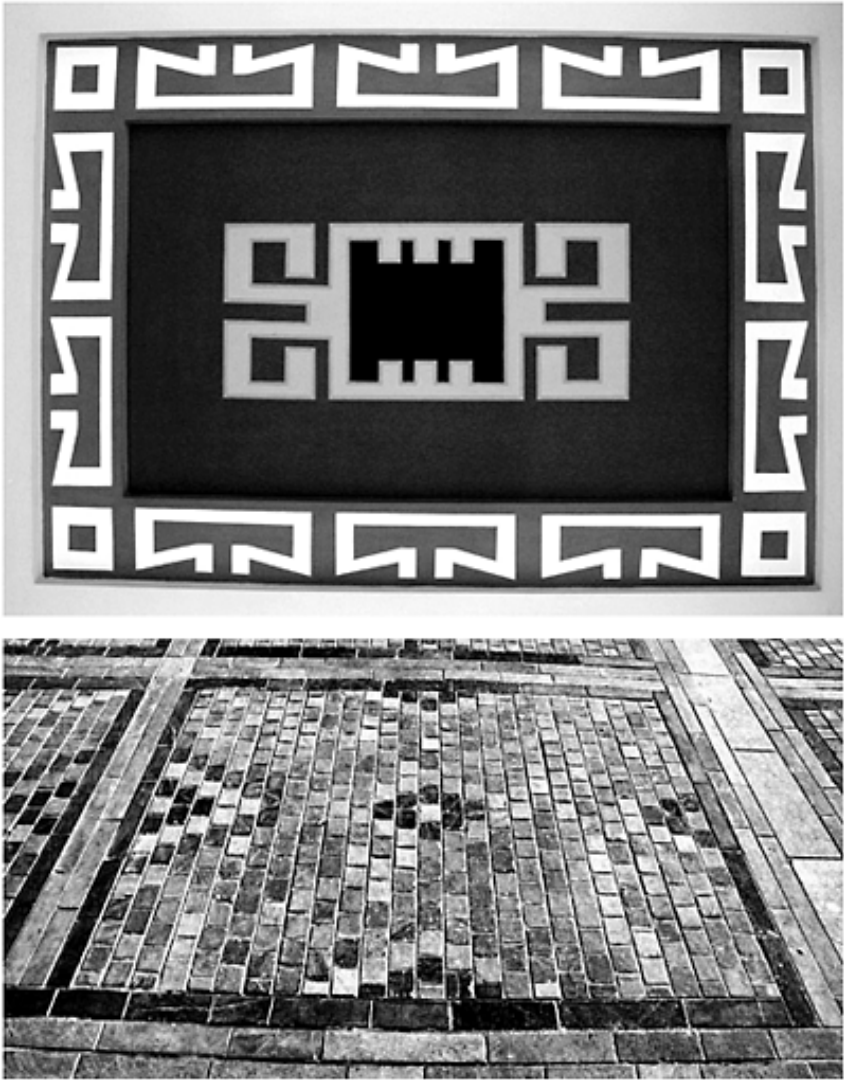
The pavilions surrounding the public plaza contain a museum, opened in 1960, displaying Atatürk's personal artifacts like his identity card, clothing, medals, weapons and other memorabilia (including a wax model of Atatürk sitting at his desk with his stuffed dog at his feet). This museum leads to a new (Turkish) War of Independence Museum under the Hall of Honor. In the 18 vaults surrounding this museum are a series of "panoramic" exhibits, also themed according to the War of Independence and the revolutions that followed.<sup>17</sup> This experience ends in the Library of Atatürk, containing the 3,123 books in Modern and Ottoman Turkish, French, English, Greek and Latin owned by Atatürk, some of which are open to pages containing his notes in the margins.

The pavilions surrounding the public plaza are connected to each other with arcaded walkways that make extensive usage of Turkish carpet (*kilim*) decorative motifs on their ceilings (Figure 6.4). The public plaza in front of the Hall of Honor also has 373 abstracted carpet motifs on its floor, done with cobblestone paving (Figure 6.4). Just like the nomadic tent folk traditions that were appropriated for the towers of Anitkabir, the Turkish carpet has also been seized upon to provide a visual identity for the Turks.

Approaching the Hall of Honor from the public plaza, there are two low-relief sculptures flanking either side. On the left is "The Battle of the Commander-in-Chief" (Figure 6.5); on the right, "The Battle of Sakarya." Both reliefs refer to the events of July–September 1921, during the Turkish War of Independence, when Atatürk was officially named Commander-in-Chief of the Turkish forces and a decisive battle occurred at the Sakarya River that brought both military and political victory for the young Republic.<sup>18</sup> Similar to the Street of Lions, these reliefs resemble archaeological Hittite finds in their composition and stylization. However, the subject matter of these reliefs is more recent than the lions and they function to fuse the recent past (War of Independence) with the present (public square), just before ascending the stairs to pay one's respects to Atatürk.

Before actually proceeding into the Hall of Honor itself, one is confronted in several instances with the words of Atatürk. First, in the middle of the stairs is a low wall with "Sovereignty Unconditionally Belongs to the Nation" inscribed onto it.<sup>19</sup> On the outside wall of the main building (the Hall of Honor), two of Atatürk's most famous speeches are emblazoned: on the left, Atatürk's 1927 "Address to the Youth," his call for vigilance against traitors to the Republic; and on the right, Atatürk's grand congratulatory 1933 "Speech on the Occasion of the 10th Anniversary" (Figure 6.6). Although visitors are just about to enter the personal burial place of Atatürk, they are still being reminded of the nation of Turkey (and not the Ottoman Empire) by means of these inscriptions.





*Figure 6.4* Turkish carpet ceiling decoration (top) and floor paving (bottom) at Anitkabir (source: photograph by Christopher S.Wilson).



*Figure 6.5* Detail of “The Battle of the Commander in Chief by sculptor Zühtü Müritöğlo. Atatürk stretches one arm and says, “Armies, your first target is the Mediterranean, march!” (source: photograph by Christopher S.Wilson).



*Figure 6.6* The Hellenic temple-like Hall of Honor, with two of Atatürk's famous speeches shining in gold behind the columns (source: photograph by Christopher S. Wilson).

Inside the Hall of Honor, the Turkish carpet motifs multiply in number and complexity. The roof beams of the ceiling are not even exempt from such treatment, with intricate patterns composed of gold mosaic tiles. At the far end of the Hall, framed by a single oversized window, is Atatürk's huge marble sarcophagus, a single block of red marble from Osmaniye (near Adana) weighing 40 tons, a symbol of the grave and body of Atatürk. The revolutionary's corpse is actually interred in a Seljuk-decorated, octagonshaped chamber below the sarcophagus. This tomb is generally not open to the public, but has recently been made accessible via closed circuit television.

Although this point of the site is the most personal part of the experience, the sarcophagus, the end goal of a visit to Anıtkabir, completes the national narration: from the male and female sculptures to the pavilions/towers to the Street of Lions to the battle reliefs to the inscriptions of famous Atatürk sayings, the entire experience is meant to remind the visitor of the history (and future?) of the Turkish nation. Additionally, with the use of the pre-Ottoman architectural details, modern copies of archaeological finds and abstracted tent and carpet motifs, the monument presents a history of the Turks that existed long before the Ottoman Empire, thereby lessening the Ottomans' importance. In this way, Anıtkabir is a symbol of a constructed *ethnie* and history whose function is not simply commemoration but also education.

### Persistence through maintenance

Architectural theorist Adrian Forty (2001:4–8) has questioned the assumption that material objects can take the place of those memories formed in the mind, citing three phenomena to support his argument: the ephemeral monuments of some non-Western societies that function to “get rid of what they no longer need or wish to remember;” Sigmund Freud’s theory of mental processes, which sees forgetting as repression (willful, but unconscious, forgetting) that decays differently than physical objects; and the difficulty of representing the Holocaust in physical form without diminishing its horror.<sup>20</sup>

Forty may be correct—material objects cannot simply replace mental memories—but what he does not recognize is the maintenance required to keep physical artifacts from decaying. It is this very maintenance that is significant in the construction of collective identity, memory and nationalism. The fact that physical objects, like architecture, need to be constantly maintained (or, literally, propped up) to achieve their purpose, means that there is always something or somebody behind that maintenance with a reason for doing it. This type of maintenance is more ideological than physical, although it sometimes manifests itself as physical changes, and can be categorized into two types: commemoration/ritualization and addition/subtraction.

Once Anitkabir was constructed and opened in 1953, it immediately became the location of ritual commemorations and/or remembrance ceremonies associated not only with Atatürk, but also with the Turkish nation. Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973:448) has called rituals the “stories people tell themselves about themselves.” Similarly, John Skorupski (1976:84) has commented: “ceremony says look, this is how things should be, this is the proper, ideal pattern of social life.” At Anitkabir, the stories told by the acting out of commemorations and ceremonies seem to reinforce the ideology of “how things should be” already advocated by the architecture, which then, in a circular fashion, leads to more commemorations and ceremonies.

The most significant ceremony conducted at Anitkabir occurs on the anniversary date of Atatürk’s death, 10 November. On this day at 9.05 am, a one-minute silence, a familiar device of remembrance ceremonies, takes place throughout Turkey. This commemoration is something that anyone in Turkey (national or not) is obliged to live through, even during heavy morning rush-hour traffic when all vehicles stop in their place; it is a major element in the collective memory of the Republic of Turkey. Although this minute of silence is simultaneously celebrated everywhere in the land, it is officially commemorated at Anitkabir, despite the fact that the actual location of Atatürk’s death was a bedroom in Dolmabahçe Palace in Istanbul.

After this one minute of silence, a wreath of flowers is typically laid in front of Atatürk’s sarcophagus (the one accessible to the public) and the current Prime Minister and President write official statements in the Anitkabir visitors’ book. This laying of a wreath and writing in the book not only occurs on the anniversary of Atatürk’s death, but also at the opening of the Turkish Parliament every year and at any other time when it is deemed appropriate. When domestic associations and foreign dignitaries pay visits to Atatürk’s mausoleum, they also act out this ritual, drawing both the national and international community into the collective memory and identity construction of Turkey.<sup>21</sup>

Wreath-laying and statement-writing also take place during periods of national crisis, especially national identity crisis. The most famous example of this occurred after the 1980 military coup when the Turkish armed forces took control of the country because a civil war had almost broken out between the political left and right in Turkey. General Kenan Evren, one of the outspoken leaders of the coup, immediately paid a visit to Anitkabir, laid a wreath and explained the coup leaders' intentions in the visitors' book, addressing the text to Atatürk as if he were still alive:

Our Great Leader: the Turkish Military Forces, as guardians of the republic that you founded, always faithful to your principles, had to halt those who were pushing the Turkish State a little closer toward darkness and helplessness, and were forced to take over the administration of the nation in order to renew democracy and your principles. We remember you once again with gratitude and a sense of obligation, and bow before you in respect.

(Anitkabir Association 2001:439)<sup>22</sup>

Since Atatürk and the Republic of Turkey are frequently combined in the collective conscience of Turkish nationals, especially at Anitkabir, the idea of Atatürk's immortality is equivalent to the continued survival (or persistence) of the Turkish nation.

Anitkabir plays an equally important role in the rituals and commemorations surrounding the Turkish national day, October 29: the date of the declaration of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. Annually on this day, Anitkabir's wide ceremonial approach (the Street of Lions), the large public plaza and the Hall of Honor are thronged with visitors, all paying their respects to both Atatürk and the nation of Turkey by visiting the monument. The significance of Anitkabir and this date was not lost on those terrorists associated with the Islamicist Metin Kaplan, who have been accused of plotting to bomb the monument during the 75th anniversary of the Republic in 1998.<sup>23</sup> By attacking and possibly destroying the monument, the terrorists were attempting to eradicate (or at least nullify) the symbol of what they opposed. By attacking it on October 29 the symbolic nature of their act was greatly magnified.

Commemorative activity also takes place in a less formal manner that is not sponsored by the state itself. For example, political protestors often seek permission to end their rallies at the monument, both so that they can take their grievances directly to Atatürk himself and so that they can raise their concerns to national prominence. Grievances can be as petty as the proposal of insufficient pay increases for civil servants or as significant as recent opposition to military intervention in Iraq. In this way, Atatürk's mausoleum, more so than the Turkish Parliament itself, acts as a symbol of the nation. Likewise, schoolchildren, both in Ankara and from around the country, frequently make pilgrimage-like trips to Anitkabir to pay their respects both to Atatürk and the nation, especially on April 23, the children's holiday in Turkey.<sup>24</sup> All of these ritual forms assure that Anitkabir remains a place that simultaneously represents the past (a dead leader and an official history), the present (current crises and grievances) and the future (children).

Anthropologist Michael E. Meeker (1997:163) has compared the wreath-laying assemblies in the public plaza at Anitkabir to the so-called "Council of Victory" assemblies at the Topkapı Palace during the Ottoman Empire, where "thousands of the

highest military and administrative officials assembled in [Topkapi's] middle court to manifest their personhood before the eyes and ears of the sultan...for hours at a time." Meeker claims that the ranked formation at these Anitkabir assemblies (from President to Prime Minister to military elite to Members of Parliament to provincial governors to the civil elite, as well as members of societies, political parties and associations) parallels that of the Ottoman Council of Victory and that in these ranked formations "[c]itizen and founder interact within a framework of constraints imposed by nationhood" (1997:172). This is one of many parallels between the management of the Republic of Turkey and the Ottoman Empire, where the persistence or continuance of the Republic can actually be read as a persistence or continuance of practices started earlier and merely altered for new conditions.<sup>25</sup>

While Meeker's comparison is enlightening, more helpful still for understanding all of these commemorations and rituals is the argument developed by sociologist Paul Connerton who suggests that commemorations and rituals shape a collective or social memory not only by their persistent occurrence, but also by the performative bodily movements involved in carrying them out. He maintains that such bodily movements "act out" (in the psychoanalytic sense) a society's memory—its knowledge and images of its past. He refers to this specialized form of collective social memory as "habit-memory" and suggests that it includes those collective actions that are ruled by conventions and traditions. Connerton concludes:

The habit-memory—more precisely, the social habit-memory—of the subject is not identical with that subject's cognitive memory or rules and codes; nor is it simply an additional or supplementary aspect; it is an essential ingredient in the successful and convincing performance of codes and rules.

(Connerton 1989:36)

To successfully participate in the rituals and commemorations at Anitkabir is to perform from one's habit-memory. A visit to Anitkabir is not an easy physical task. It means walking up a moderate incline for 600 meters through the Peace Park that surrounds it, ascending the 26 entrance stairs to the Street of Lions, walking on this "street" for 260 meters at a slow pace (due to the five-centimeter grass space between the paving slabs), ascending six more steps to the public plaza, crossing this expansive space (130 × 85 meters), ascending 42 more steps to the Hall of Honor and walking approximately another 35 meters to Atatürk's sarcophagus. All in all, from entry gate to sarcophagus, this journey takes at least 45 minutes on foot.<sup>26</sup>

According to archeologist Bruce Trigger, the monumentality of such long walks symbolizes the grandeur of the state and is designed to "impress people with the power of a ruler and the resources that he has at his disposal" (1990:127). To lay a wreath at Atatürk's sarcophagus not only includes this extended journey, but also the bending down to place the wreath, always uncomfortably keeping one's back away from the sarcophagus as a sign of respect. To write in the memorial book may not be strenuous, but still involves perfunctory bodily movements by proceeding to the official writing spot at the official lectern and using the official pen.<sup>27</sup>

The second method of maintaining Anitkabir concerns additions and subtractions to the monument since it was first designed and built. These additions and subtractions are significant because they are a direct reflection of the changing of circumstances over time, for which the process of maintenance constantly strives to compensate.

Beginning with the subtractions to Anitkabir, the most radical change between the architects' competition-winning design and the actual built product was the elimination of the upper "attic" story over the Hall of Honor, which was a large mass covered in reliefs and projecting up from the columned base below that made it very similar to the first mausoleum in history, the tomb of Mausolus in Halicarnassus (located in present-day Bodrum, Turkey) built around 353 BCE. This attic story was not built, under consultation and with the approval of the architects, during the final phases of construction in 1950, in order to save both time and money. However, the removal of this attic story results in a plain and abstract columned main building that is even more like a Hellenic temple atop an acropolis, probably why the architects agreed to such a change (see note 11).

Also changed from the architects' original design was the number of torches flanking both sides of the Hall of Honor. Throughout Atatürk's laying-in-state, funeral and interment in a temporary tomb at the Ethnographic Museum, there were always six symbolic torches, three each side, representing the "six pillars of Kemalism": republicanism, secularism, nationalism, populism, statism and revolutionism. These "pillars" were the ideological manifesto of Atatürk's "People's Republican Party" and, since the early Republic of Turkey was a one-party state, these six concepts were also the ideological basis of the republic. Anitkabir, as built, contains ten torches; five either side of the Hall of Honor. While it is difficult to pinpoint exactly how and why the number changed from six to ten, this change in number can be counted as a subtraction and not an addition because the equating of Atatürk with his ideals, the six pillars of Kemalism, was lost (subtracted).

The next subtraction from Anitkabir involves the public "Peace Park" around Atatürk's mausoleum, which is praised in the monument's promotional literature for its dedication to Atatürk's famous saying "Peace at home, peace in the world" and also for its wide variety of trees, flowers and vegetation from around Turkey and 24 other countries.<sup>28</sup> However, this park ceased to be public sometime in the 1960s or 1970s. No picnicking or barbecuing is allowed in the park, both of which are favorite weekend pastimes of most Turks. Visitors are not allowed to even walk through it—they must stay on the prescribed paths when moving from the entrance gate to the monument proper. The change was made principally as a way to enhance security, but the end result is that the monument is maintained in a "timeless bubble" away from the hustle and bustle of the capital city that has grown up around it.

The last subtraction from Anitkabir involves Cemal Gürsel, a former President of Turkey from 1960–6, and some martyrs of the 1960 military coup, all of whom were buried at the monument in the 1960s. These graves were all removed after 1985 when a "State Cemetery" in an Islamic-inspired style, openly acknowledged by the cemetery's architect (Anitkabir is sometimes criticized for its non-Islamic look and feel), was constructed elsewhere in Ankara. Along with the 1981 law announcing that the State Cemetery will henceforth take all dead Turkish persons of national importance, it was

also declared that Anitkabir was not a graveyard but a national monument and gathering place:

Only Atatürk's grave, and also his closest friend-in-arms and efforts İsmet İnönü's grave may be kept at Anitkabir, which has been established as a gift to the Turkish people for the Great Savior. No one else may be buried on the property of Anitkabir.

*(Republic of Turkey Official Gazette, November 10, 1981:1)*<sup>29</sup>

The declaration that Anitkabir should not serve as a graveyard was made despite the fact that the mortal remains of Atatürk and Turkey's first Prime Minister (and Atatürk's best friend), İsmet İnönü, are buried there. İnönü died on December 25, 1973 and was quickly interred in a special tomb on the edge of the ceremonial plaza, directly opposite and on axis with the Hall of Honor. The interment of İnönü (and his non-removal to the State Cemetery after 1985) maintains the presentation of Anitkabir as primarily a national monument, of importance to the whole nation and not to specific family members; and only secondarily as the location of the remains of Atatürk and İnönü.

The next additions to Anitkabir were done in 1981, a celebration-packed year due to the 100th anniversary of Atatürk's birth. It was during these centennial celebrations that 68 small bronze pots of "Turkish" soil were placed around the subterranean grave of Atatürk, the one closed to the public that is directly below the sarcophagus in the Hall of Honor. The pots contained "Turkish" soil (in quotation marks) because at the time there were 67 provinces in Turkey—one pot came from each province. The 68th pot contained soil from the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, the disputed territory occupied by the Turkish military and to this day not recognized by the majority of the world's nations as a legitimate state.

Since 1981, due to rapid development in Turkey, provinces have sometimes split as former small towns became larger cities and regional centers. As a result, there are currently 81 provinces in Turkey, and a brass pot for these new provinces seems to have been added each time. Lastly, like the "Turkish" soil from Northern Cyprus, three other "Turkish" soils have been added: from the garden of Atatürk's supposed birth-house in Thessaloniki, present-day Greece; from the area surrounding the Turkish monument in the UN Memorial Cemetery, Korea; and from the grave of the Selçuk commander Süleyman Shah (d. 1227), which is located in present-day Syria.<sup>30</sup>

All of these places are connected in some way with Atatürk and/or the Republic of Turkey: Atatürk's birthplace, a monument to fallen Turkish soldiers in the Korean conflict (1950–3), and the grave of the grandfather of the founder of the Ottoman Empire. Significantly, however, similar to the soil from Northern Cyprus, all of these supplementary pots contain soil from outside the current borders of Turkey—a very literal claiming of territory.

Another centennial addition to Anitkabir was the inscription of more quotations onto the monument. Atatürk's final Republican Day address to the Turkish military on October 29, 1938 (in effect his last public speech since he died 12 days later) was inscribed at the lefthand entrance of the Hall of Honor; and İnönü's eulogy given at Atatürk's funeral on November 21, 1938 was inscribed at the righthand exit from the Hall of Honor. In between these two readings the visitor experiences Atatürk's sarcophagus



inside the Hall of Honor. In this way, the placing of the inscriptions makes sense: 1) final words, 2) dead body, 3) funeral eulogy. What is significant, however, is that these inscriptions were not part of the original 1942 competition-winning entry, they were added almost 40 years later in 1981. In 1942 (and in 1953 when the monument opened), many people still had personal memories of the death of Atatürk. However, by 1981, several newer generations did not have such firsthand memories. It can be theorized that these new inscriptions were added to remind younger visitors that, although Anitkabir is a national monument dedicated to the Republic of Turkey, its foundation stems from the death of Atatürk.

The most recent addition to Anitkabir was made during the 2002 renovation of the original 1960 Atatürk museum. At this time, the museum was greatly expanded to become a “War of [Turkish] Independence Museum,” which documents and explains post-World War I events, the creation of the Republic of Turkey and the political, economic and social revolutions that followed. Interestingly, the museum does not start with the beginning of the Turkish War of Independence, traditionally dated to Atatürk’s landing at Sansun on May 19, 1919, but with the World War I battle of Gallipoli in 1915, when Atatürk first proved his military prowess to the outside world fighting in the service of the Ottoman Empire. In this way, the museum exhibits more blatantly equate the two concepts of “Atatürk” and “Turkish nation” than the architecture that surrounds the museum does.

The final significant transformation of Anitkabir can be seen in the changing administration of the monument over the years. The 1941–2 architectural competition and the construction of the monument (minus the Hall of Honor’s attic storey) from October 9, 1944 to its opening on November 10, 1953 were overseen by the Ministry of Public Works. The ministry continued to administer the monument until February 28, 1957, after which time it passed to the Ministry of National Education. The Ministry of National Education administer Anitkabir until the 1974 establishment of the Turkish Ministry of Culture, which then took responsibility for the monument. The Ministry of Culture then managed the monument until the military coup of 1980, when the Ministry of the General Staff of Turkish Military Forces assumed control. This ministry still runs the monument, which means effectively that Anitkabir is a military installation, albeit freely open to the public and to foreigners, which begins to explain much of the previous discussion about the changes to Anitkabir: it is a national monument, but not one where citizens have the freedom to do as they please—they must act within the rules set out by the military administration, which ensure that all visits to Anitkabir are only for the purpose of honoring Atatürk and the Republic of Turkey, and for no other reason.<sup>31</sup>

## **Conclusion**

At the mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, officially called Anitkabir, an authorized version of Turkish history is manifest in physical form. That is, official public (state) culture uses the architectural construction of Anitkabir to set rules that govern both the nation-state and society. These rules are subsequently extended and maintained by means of the many and various visits to and commemorations at the monument that take place on both special and normal days and which are carried out by elites and the general

public. Additions and subtractions to the construction also provide maintenance of sorts, as the symbolism of the monument is fine-tuned and its purpose(s) (re-)defined in concrete terms as circumstances change over time.

Can it be concluded that the Turkish nation persists because of the habit-memory that plays itself out at Anıtkabir—because of the bodily memory of “nation-ness” that is brought about by the commemorations and rituals that take place there? Or, is the persistence of the Turkish nation at Anıtkabir merely a reflection of the loyal military institution that runs the monument? Regardless of the answer to these questions, one thing is certain: Atatürk’s mausoleum is the location of not only his physical remains but also his intellectual remains—it is an ever-changing (yet paradoxically ever-maintained) architectural representation of both Atatürk and the Turkish nation.

### Notes

- 1 The exceptions to this population exchange were those ethnic Greeks who could establish their residency in Constantinople (Istanbul) prior to October 30, 1918 and those ethnic Turks who could establish their residency in Western Thrace prior to October 18, 1912, as agreed upon at Lausanne on January 30, 1923.
- 2 Most notably by Beşikçi (1977).
- 3 According to an informational brochure in English by the Turkish Historical Society, dated 2002. See also [www.ttk.gov.tr/ingilizce/data/tarihce.html](http://www.ttk.gov.tr/ingilizce/data/tarihce.html) (last accessed June 21, 2006).
- 4 Turkish Hearth Association branches throughout Turkey later became known as “People’s Houses” (*Halk Evleri*).
- 5 Although the Turkish History Thesis searched for a pre-Ottoman origin, it was in fact partly based on the Ottoman myth of beginnings as descendants of the **Oğuz Turks**, although not mentioning “a tribe of 400 tents.” See Wittek (1958:7–15) for more information about the Ottomans’ own myths of origin. The Turkish History Thesis seems to have adapted the Ottoman myths by broadening the extent to which the **Oğuz Turks** migrated.
- 6 These specially adapted/adopted characters were:
  - Ç/ç (written as a “c” with a circumflex and pronounced like the English “ch”);
  - Ğ/ğ (known in Turkish as a “soft g,” this is a silent letter that prolongs the vowels that follow it);
  - İ/i (both a capital and lower-case letter “i” pronounced like the English “ee”);
  - I/ö (both a capital and lower-case “i,” but having no dot, pronounced like the English “uh”);
  - Ö/ö (pronounced the same as the German);
  - Ş/ş (written as an “s” with a circumflex and pronounced like the English “sh”); and
  - Ü/ü (pronounced the same as the German).
- 7 For example, the Ottoman “*mektep*” (school) was replaced with “*okul*,” derived from the Turkish verb “*okumak*” (to read). In English, the equivalent would be banning the French word “*chauffeur*” and replacing it with “*driver*.”
- 8 Particularly as postcards or in *La Turquie Kemaliste*, a bimonthly magazine in French, English and German published by the Turkish General Directorate of Publications [*Basın Yayın Müdürlüğü*].
- 9 Turkish short-listed entries: #24 Hamit K.Söylemezoğlu—Kemal A.Aru—Recai Akçay, #25 Emin Onat—Orhan Arda, and #29 Feridun Akozan—M.Ali Handan; Italian short-listed

- entries: #41 Giovanni Muzio, #44 Arnaldo Foschini, and #45 Guiseppe Vaccaro—Gino Franzi; German: #9 Prof. Johannes Kruger; Swiss: #42 Architect Ronald Rohn.
- 10 Implying the Ottoman era.
  - 11 The original Turkish can be found in Onat and Arda (1955:55–9).
  - 12 Rasattepe literally means “Observation Hill,” because of a meteorological station that existed on the site prior to building Anitkabir. The name of the hill has been creatively changed to Anittepe, or “Memorial Hill.”
  - 13 Translation by author. The original Turkish of this speech was also published in the Turkish newspaper *ULUS* on January 18, 1939.
  - 14 Before Atatürk’s body was moved to Anitkabir on November 10, 1953, his temporary tomb was located in the Ethnographic Museum, Ankara—as if he was an exhibit himself.
  - 15 According to the Turkish Ministry of Culture; see <http://www.kultur.gov.tr/EN/BelgeGoster.aspx?17A16AE30572D313AC8287D72AD903BE B361049FDD41AE45> (last accessed June 21, 2006).
  - 16 The “Independence” (*İstiklâl*) and “Freedom” (*Hürriyet*) Towers are at the beginning of the Street of Lions; “GI Joe” (*Mehmetçik*), “Victory” (*Zafer*), “Peace” (*Bariş*), “23rd April” (*23 Nisan*), “National Pact” (*Misak-i Milli*), which established the borders of Turkey, “Revolution” (*İnkilâp*), “Republic” (*Cumhuriyet*) and “Defense of Rights” (*Müdafa-i Hukuk*) Towers are around the public plaza.
  - 17 The themes of these 18 vaults are as follows: Turkish Commanders in the War of Independence; Occupation of the Country; National Forces; The Congresses; Inauguration of the Turkish Grand National Assembly; National Struggles in Çukurova, Antep, Maraş Urfa and Trakia; First Victories at the Eastern and Western Fronts; Grand Victory—Mudanya Armistice—Lausanne Treaty; Political Revolutions; Reforms in Education, Language and History; Reforms in Law, Women’s Rights and Family Names; Rearrangement of Social Life; Fine Arts, Press and Community Centers; National Security; Agriculture, Forestry, Industry and Commerce; Finance, Health, Sports and Tourism; Public Works and Transportation; Domestic and Foreign Political Events 1923–38.
  - 18 It was after this victory that the French started to take Atatürk and his forces more seriously. The English would not do so until after the August 26, 1922 victory.
  - 19 The Turkish is “*Hakimiyet Kayıtsız Şartsız Milletindir*” There are many more sayings by Atatürk inscribed at Anitkabir than the three discussed here. Most are on the inside walls of the towers, corresponding to the theme of each tower. For example, in the Tower of Independence: “We are a nation that wants life and independence, and we will pay with our life” (1921). Interestingly, the following quote can be found in the Tower of the National Pact: “Nations who cannot find their national identity are prey to other nations” (1923).
  - 20 See also Young (1993) for a further explanation of the contradiction of Holocaust memorials.
  - 21 By domestic associations I mean, for example, the Zonguldak Miners’ Labor Union, which at one time also left a plaque that is located outside Atatürk’s (real) subterranean tomb, or the Ankara Society of Women, who annually visit the mausoleum on its own commemorative date, World Women’s Day (March 8). The ritual of laying wreaths and writing in the visitor book actually started at the Ethnographic Museum temporary tomb, but was institutionalized at Anitkabir. The visitor books containing all entries are routinely compiled and publicly published. There currently exist 20 published volumes; see Anitkabir Association (2001).
  - 22 Translation by author. For more on the immortality of Atatürk, see Volkan and Itzkowitz (1984).
  - 23 Metin Kaplan and his “Anatolian Federated Islamic State” planned to smash a small plane full of explosives into Anitkabir during the October 29, 1998 ceremonies (strangely foreshadowing September 11, 2001), but were apprehended by Turkish police beforehand. As would be expected, the alternative date chosen in case of bad weather was November 10.

- 24 Delaney (1990:517) likewise describes Anıtkabir as a place of pilgrimage, similar to the Ka'ba in Mecca, only secular.
- 25 Many authors have pointed out how the Republic of Turkey did not magically spring from the ashes of the Ottoman Empire as perhaps Atatürk (in his famous "Nutuk" speech from October 15–20, 1927) and Kemalist historians present it. Instead, the "Tanzimat" reforms of the late nineteenth century and the early attempts at a constitutional monarchy of the twentieth century laid the groundwork for a nationalist view. See particularly Ahmad (1993), Berkes (1964), Heper *et al.* (1993), Kushner (1977), Poulton (1997) and Zürcher (1998).
- 26 Private vehicles are allowed to enter the grounds of Anıtkabir, which eliminates the first 600 meters uphill through the Peace Park, but the experience of the architectural promenade still begins at the 26 steps before the Street of Lions.
- 27 US President George W. Bush controversially used his own pen, rather than the official pen, during his visit in June 2004, setting off a string of commentary in Turkish newspapers.
- 28 The Turkish of Atatürk's famous saying is: "Yurtta Sulh, Cihanda Sulh." The promotional literature of Anıtkabir states that the park contains around 50,000 decorative trees, flowers and shrubs in 104 varieties.
- 29 "Türk milletinin, bir armağan olarak yalnız Buyuk Kurtarıcı için tesis ettiği Anıtkabirde Atatürk'ün ve ayrıca en yakın silah ve mesai arkadaşları İsmet İnönü'nün kabirleri muhafaza edilir. Anıtkabir alanı içine başkaca hiçbir kimse defnedilemez." See also the Turkish Ministry of Justice webpage <http://www.mevzuat.adalet.gov.tr/html/568.html> (last accessed June 21, 2006).
- 30 The grave of Süleyman Shah on the banks of the Euphrates in Syria is guarded by Turkish soldiers who also have the right to fly the Turkish flag there, as agreed in the July 24, 1923 Lausanne Treaty.
- 31 Of the 19 official rules for visiting Anıtkabir posted at the entrance in Turkish and English, rule number 16 reads:

While visiting the mausoleum, proper behavior must be adapted. Making a statement about political and social issues to the press, addressing to the crowd (sic) and handing out leaflets is prohibited. Shouting and screaming is forbidden. Respect must be shown within Atatürk's eternal rest grounds.

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