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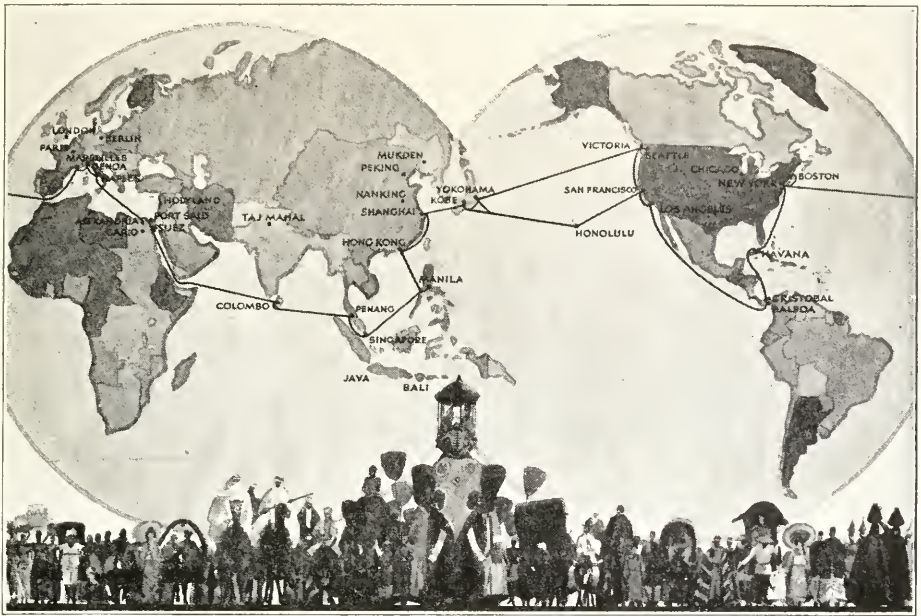
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HIS EXCELLENCY, MUSTAFA KEMAL, THE GHAZI
PRESIDENT OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC
(From Von Mikusch, *Gazi Mustafa Kemal*)

Frontispiece to The Open Court

THE OPEN COURT

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THE NEW ORIENT SOCIETY MONOGRAPH SERIES

NUMBER THREE

MODERN TURKEY

A Scion, not a Stage of Ottoman "Turkey."

BY MARTIN SPREGLING

The University of Chicago

THIS monographic number of the *Open Court* is dedicated by the New Orient Society to the task of setting before the intelligent and interested public of America a fair picture of the rise, growth, and present state of modern Turkey. By way of a brief introduction to the excellent and expert articles through which this task is admirably performed in the body of this monograph, the writer will here limit himself to the attempt to set forth and to emphasize two points, not generally known, but indispensable to a real understanding of the rise of modern Turkey.

The first is that modern Turkey is the first and only real Turkey that ever was. The Ottoman Empire was "Turkey" only in the mind and speech of the West not uninfluenced by subject races within the Empire.

The second is that however sudden and miraculous the birth and early growth of modern Turkey may seem to us, it is actually the product of a long and natural historical process which leads up to it.

I.

Old "Turkey," the Turkey of our childhood days, that Turkey out of whose chrysalis present-day Turkey has largely worked itself, was not properly Turkey at all. Few Americans realize that up to less than fifty years ago it was a deadly insult, worse than the epithet "dog," to call any member of the institution which we called Turkey a "Turk." In the language of Constantinople, Turkish though it was, the name Turk designated dirty and ill-smelling nomads who ranged from the wild wastes of inner Asia Minor to Turkestan, which means "Turkland," eastward of the Caspian Sea. To their own mind and in their own speech the proud effendis, beys, and pashas of Constantinople were not Turks.

What were they? Osmanlis, englished from gallicized Arabic

into "Ottomans." The nature of the group and institution designated by this term is not easy to grasp for minds accustomed to our Western notions of nations, states, and churches. To speak of it even as the Osmanli or Ottoman *Empire* all too easily conjures up before our minds faulty conceptions, which had a way of leading astray even great European statesmen in their dealings with it. We may come nearest to the truth, if we coin a word out of words known to us and designate it as the Osmanli Church-State. Advisedly we do not say state church, but exactly the reverse. A group, an institution embodying features of church and state, inextricably intermingled to an extent that the West has never known, has, indeed, never approached except perhaps in the Europe of the days before the Crusades. The adjective Osmanli designates not a people, but a dynasty, a royal house developed from a family of chiefs of a little, and in its beginnings, not very important tribe which came to settle in the northwestern corner of Asia Minor in the troubled times which mark the end of the Crusading era. What there is of church and state, of government and army, is closely grouped about this royal line—is, indeed, throughout the history of this institution not much more than its court, largely its creation.

This grouping and management worked very well indeed, in the beginning, as long as its affairs were relatively small, late in the thirteenth and in the early fourteenth centuries. Osman, founder of the dynasty, from whom it takes its name, is just a little chief of an apparently still partly nomadic tribe of a type that still exists in Asia Minor. Neither he nor his people feel the need to settle permanently or to expand, until Osman comes—or perhaps it were better to say, until he becomes Osman. Osman is an Arabic-Moslem name. His forebears bore quite other names. Osman, in Arabic pronounced Othman, is the name of the third caliph to succeed Mohammed at Medina; he is the caliph who ordered the redaction of the Koran, which remains officially authoritative to the present day. The adoption of this name by the Turko-Tatar chief probably means conversion to Islam, at any rate to active participation in serious Islamic life, which was then fostered and represented, especially in Asia Minor, by the newly rising Dervish orders. With the adoption of this name there comes immediately a change of policy for himself and his people in close connection with Dervish and lay orders. His people, his little army, do not appear to set any great store on being considered Turks, though they speak a Turk-



OTTOMAN IRON HELMET XVI CENTURY

ish dialect. They are a little Moslem army and court grouped about Osman and call themselves after him Osmanlis. As they expand they absorb without scruple or compunction Greeks, Bulgars, Serbs and others; they maintain no racial purity; they all are, or become, Osmanlis, Osman-people. While they are still small, with leader, court, army, and people all in close touch with each other, it is easy to see that this works beautifully.

As they expand—and their appetite for expansion grows with each conquest—this organization still seems perfectly good as long as the expansion lasts. Up to 1550 in round numbers—(personally expressed, to the reign of Sulaiman the Magnificent)

they are knocking at the gates of Vienna, they are pressing Persia back into its own mountains and deserts, their banners wave over Mecca and Cairo, Tunis and Algiers.

Then comes stoppage and stagnation, and presently the current sets the other way. The thing has become a big, unwieldy affair, whose boundaries cannot with the then known means of travel be reached in a day, nor in a week—nay, not in a month, from the capital. Within its confines are all sorts of racial and religious groups, subject to it, but not truly members of it—foreign, indigestible masses, that cannot be absorbed as were the non-Turks in the early days. The royal house has learned in Byzantine Constantinople that luxurious, capricious, *fainçant* seclusion in the pomp and circumstance of their little city of a palace,* which we are wont to associate with our notions of an Oriental potentate. The dynasty, the heart of the system, becomes a rotten harem-ridden shell and shadow of its former self. The son of Sulaiman the Magnificent is Selim the Sot. Both are typical. For a while—an astonishingly long while—the far-flung, loose-hung creation grouped about them still lasts. The Constantinople of that day was a glorious Oriental capital. The furs of Siberia, the teas and silks of China, the tapestries of Persia, the teak and spices of the Indies, the coffee and perfumes of Araby, all flowed through its gates onto the European market. Only slowly and by imperceptible degrees was all this changing. But the day of awakening was bound to come. And it is to the credit of the ageing dynasty, that there at the very heart of the old Osmanli church-state we see its first stirrings. And this leads us to our second major point.

II.

The Turkey of today is not an ephemeral creation conceived and brought into being yesteryear, but the natural outcome of a process that rises and grows for at least a century, and then produces, in place of the mediaeval structure, in this modern world not a mere further stage, but a true scion of the great Osmanli Empire.

To many, even to Toynbee, it seems odd that the first glimmerings of reform, the first awareness of the need of reforms appear at the top of the old heap. To the writer this seems absolutely natural, so far as the Osmanli body politic, especially the Turki-fied superstructure of it is concerned. What other place was there

*On this great palace or *scraglio*, our readers should consult the excellent story and description, *Beyond the Sublime Porte*, by Barnette Miller, Yale University Press, 1931.

for it to appear in, if one discount the non-Moslem subject races? Constantinople—with officials streaming out and streaming back,—*was* the Osmanli church-state, as, a little later, the keen, shrewd eye of the elder von Moltke saw.

With Russia and Austria encroaching seriously upon the domains of his empire, and France and England lending a hand, as opportunity offered, in the disintegration of the crumbling structure, the enlightened Sultan Selim III (1789-1807) was the first to see and act upon the need of reform. Without entering into details let it suffice to say that serious and much needed alterations were effected both in the central administration at Constantinople and in the government of the provinces. A promising attempt was made to institute a useful and for that time modern system of education. The antiquated army-organization of the Janissaries, dangerous in its weakness against European armies *without*, and in its will and power with closely allied Dervish orders to foment disorders and block the path of progress *within* the confines of the Ottoman commonwealth, was at least supplemented by a corps of new troops drilled and instructed by foreign officers. The thrusts of Europe, among them Napoleon's harebrained attack on Egypt and Syria, impeded this well-meaning sovereign's work, and an internal revolt of reactionary forces brought it to an ill-timed and unfortunate end.

Nevertheless a strong man was found to continue on the road to progress now definitely entered, when Mahmud II, sometimes called, not without reason, the Reformer, became Sultan in 1808. His reign, too, was a troubled one and presents to us, looking back, clear evidence of the fact that the structure he tried to repair was crumbling away beyond help. Russia maintained the pressure from outside by another war disastrous to Turkish arms. England and France destroyed the Turkish navy at Navarino as Greece was winning her freedom. Serbia was in revolt. Presently Moslem Egypt under Mehemet Ali rose against her caliphal overlord. Despite all this the modernization begun under Selim did not come to a full stop. It was in this reign that the Janissaries were finally disbanded and largely wiped out, though their Dervish aids and agitators had to be allowed to continue for another full century. In connection with this modernization of the Ottoman army came the first adoption of European dress, for the army at least, in the ill-fitting and not very picturesque uniform which the elder



Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

TURKISH TILE PANEL XVII CENTURY

Moltke describes in his letters. It is very interesting to note that in this connection the introduction of the so-called Turkish fez was a Europeanizing improvement over the old Janissary turban, and that its introduction falls almost exactly 100 years before the introduction of the thoroughly European hat and cap.

In the very year of Mahmud's death (1839) the Ottoman com-

monwealth received its first constitution of Western type issued by imperial ukase. The Arabs call it the Tanzimat, the putting in order, the reform. Its official name is the Hatt i Shereef of Gylhane, which means simply "the imperial rescript promulgated at Gylhane." It declared all races and religions equal before the Sultan and in other ways had an enlightened Western ring. But it left the antiquated church part of the Ottoman commonwealth pretty well unchanged, and so side by side with this modernistic rescript there continued the mediaeval canon law of Islam pervading every nook and cranny of human life throughout Ottoman territory.

In the same reign which saw the birth of this attempt at legal reform, that of Abd ul-Medjid (1839-1861) a literary revival begins to take shape. Its creators are young men of army and court circles who have been sent to Europe (in those days chiefly Paris) to learn Western lore, or who, at any rate, have access to European instructors (chiefly French) at home. This is the origin of the "Young Turks" and their movement. There is much that is Western in it. French and English plays, novels, philosophizing essays are translated outright. Presently Turkish plays, novels, and essays are written. Ideas and words quite new to the Ottoman world are embodied in its pages: fatherland, nation, freedom, constitution. Presently, however, genuine Turkish folk-life and folk-thought are brought to the fore. And if, as yet, there is no new, popular alphabet, there does now appear a new language, true Turkish, the Turkish of the people, to replace the old Arabo-Persian-Turkish and the stilted phrases of the previous leisure-class literature. All this is started rolling about 1850 and continues lavine-like with increasing speed, volume, and independence right down to our own day.

The next reign initiates at Constantinople and at Khedivial Cairo the perilous modern art of borrowing money against the security of governmental resources. This introduces the tentacles of modern business and banking into the vitals of the weakening Ottoman body politic and leads to foreign monopolies in addition to the old capitulations. At the same time the aspirations of subject races to independence such as Greece had attained, stir ever more strongly, especially in the Balkans.

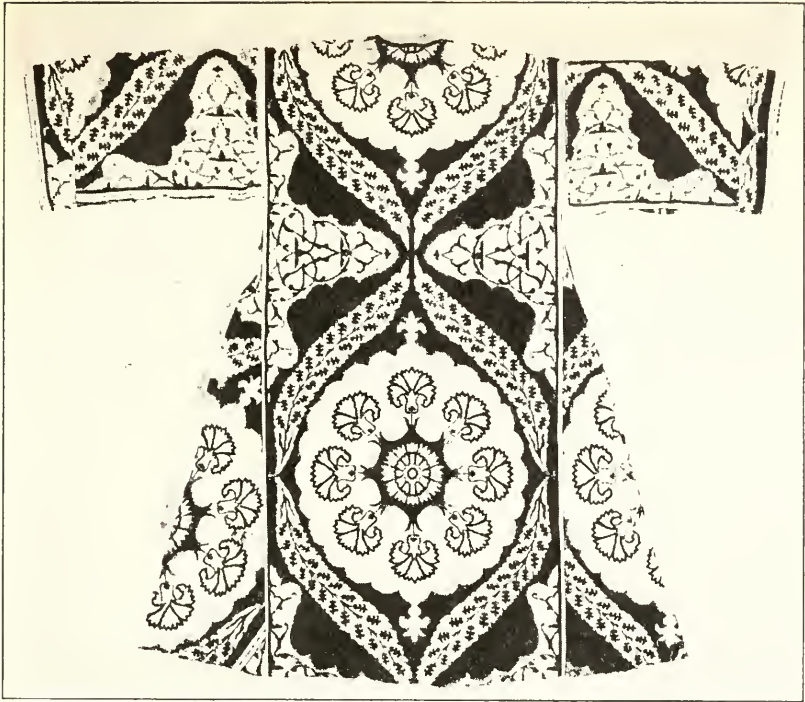
It is, perhaps, but natural that all this leads to a final, futile, but flaming reaction in the thirty odd years of Abd ul-Hamid (1876-

-1908), the last great Osmanli sultan-caliph. Great is not quite correct, unless we add the adverb grotesquely great. Even in the sunset glow of imperial pomp and circumstance that surrounded him in the Europe of his day this little, apelike, Armenoid mannikin, determined in diabolical desperation to hold back the hands of his world's clock, stands out as a grotesque purple patch. Some of us still remember the sly, bitter cunning, the insidiously energetic pertinacity with which he held off the great European powers converging upon his boundaries, playing them off against each other or against their favorite fears. Many of us recall him as the instigator, perhaps the originator, of the first vile Armenian massacres for reasons of state. Few of us know that his mysterious court in the fastness of Yildiz Kiosk with its spies and taxeaters lay quite as heavily upon and was as heartily hated by his Moslem and even his Turkish subjects.

How the repression was finally broken by the Young Turk revolutions of 1908-09, how it issued in the curious triumvirate of Talaat, Enver, and Jemal, the difficulties which their not always consistent policies and their halfway measures encountered—these things are recent history and may best be seen and felt in the first volume of Halidé Edib's *Memoirs*, in which this great Turkish writer reached the high point of her literary activity up to the present.

What has been said will suffice to show the American reader that the gigantic figure of the Ghazi, Mustapha Kemal Pasha, which rises with the New Turkey out of the storm and murk of the World War and its aftermath, is not so grotesque and impossible an innovator and revolutionary as without this background he must appear. Against the background we have sketched he appears, in contrast to most, if not all, of his reforming predecessors or contemporary opponents, as a man who sees with a clear eye and cool head, what the steps are which his country and people must take if they would secure for themselves a proper place in this modern world. And having seen what is necessary his indomitable energy and unshaken courage lead him to seek for his country and people as straight a road as possible toward the desired goal.

Viewed in this light it is easy to see that there is nothing revolutionary or wild-eyed about the innovations introduced by the Ghazi's régime. The reduction of the Ottoman royal house first to an ecclesiastical rank and then to innocuousness: the complete excision



VELVET, RED ON GOLD GROUND, XVI-XVII CENTURY

of canon law from affairs of state and its replacement by tried and tested civil codes; the shift from fez to hat; a new alphabet for a new language already in process of formation; the abolition of the Dervish orders,—all these are clearly perfectly natural and correct steps in real progress. The clean dropping of inherited and inflamed hostilities against Greece, the Balkans in general, Russia, England, and France, and the amicable and intelligent regulation of Turkey's international situation is another case in point. The complaint of foreign business and capital against the new régime are intelligible, when one remembers the wholly impossible privileges these factors used to enjoy in the rotting Ottoman commonwealth. The caution of the Ghazi and his government against falling into anything resembling these entanglements is likewise intelligible. The fact that foreigners can do business there, if they behave themselves at least as well as at home, is attested by the continued activity of American tobacco buyers on the one hand,

and by the new venture of the Ford automobile interests in establishing a great assembly plant for the entire Eastern Mediterranean territory on the northern, Tophane shore of the outer harbor of Constantinople.

The job undertaken by the Ghazi of leading no longer merely a royal house and its court and its army, but an entire, extremely poor and backward people out of the mediaeval shadows into the sunlight of modernity is a terrific undertaking for any man in any life span. This fact stands out clearly from what has been said and is doubly clear to anyone who has seen not merely the cities of Constantinople and Angora (Ankara), but even in small measure any part of the Asiatic hinterland. No one, doubtless, knows this better than the Ghazi himself.

If to us in America the glamor of the ancient riches of Stamboul is vanishing, we have yet an appreciable stake in the new venture. However much or little this may have been its intention, American education, selflessly given, has its share in the rebuilding of the Turkish mind already accomplished, as it has its share in the same accomplishment all over the Near East. Our business ventures and the stake to be gained are no longer as large and fantastically gainful as they might have been in Ottoman days; but such as are there make up in solidity and decency what they lack in glamor and adventure. But though we had no stake at all, scientific, educational, or commercial, the valiant attempt of a poor and downtrodden people under extraordinarily capable leadership to find its way by its own efforts out of a slough of despond onto solid ground and a passable road to an enduring future, commands the respect and sympathy of every American worthy of the name.