

### 3.

## Bildung und Minderheiten



# The Us-Them Question in Turkish National Education

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Preceding the Republic period, the *millet* system formed the organizational basis of Ottoman Turkey. The *millet* concept differed from the concept of “nation” in that it signified community group affiliation based on religion. According to this system there were two groups within the *millet* system: the “true members” or dominant millet (*millet-i bâkime*) and the non-Muslim subjects of the Ottoman Empire (*zimmi*).<sup>1</sup> The term “true members” included all Muslim populations of the empire such as Turks, Kurds, Circassians and Arabs. The *zimmi* however (later this term would more broadly denote any minority group), denoted any non-Muslim population. According to Kodaman, “Within the millet system were laws that permitted every non-Muslim religious community the right to their own language, religion, the development of cultural and educational institutions, the collection of taxes, and the means for appropriate legal frameworks” (Kodaman 2007: 10). In addition, members of non-Muslim minority communities were required to wear the appropriate attire pertaining to their communities. They were also forbidden from carrying arms and riding on horseback within city limits (Abdurrahman Şeref 1980: 56). They were, however, exempt from obligatory military service.<sup>2</sup> These groups were permitted to freely conduct trade operations and it was in fact already the case that most trade and industry were in the hands of these minority communities. These minority groups could operate their own schools and provide religious education. The 1839 political reforms (*Tanzimat*) and the 1856 royal edict of reforms (*Islahat Fermanı*) recognized minority cultural and, in part, political rights. These reforms signaled the emergence of a national system; at the same time the implication existed that these minority groups would also be subject to greater control. Towards the end of the 1800s, nationalist ideology developed in the West and began to move into Ottoman territory. Minority populations were the first to be influenced by this new ideology followed by the general Turkish population. The instigators of the Armenian re-

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<sup>1</sup> *Zimmi* is a word used in Muslim dominant states to refer to non-Muslims. It is generally used for “people of the book” including Christians and Jews as was the case in the Ottoman Empire. The *cizye* was a tax paid by the *zimmi* in exchange for exemption from certain duties in the Ottoman Empire. This entitled them the right to engage freely in business and afforded them protection of the state (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dhimmi>).

<sup>2</sup> Non-Muslims paid a tax in exchange for exemption from military duty. In 1909 this tax was annulled and non-Muslims were required to serve in the army but were displeased by the new regulation. They attempted to find ways to avoid military service through various means but most were required to serve in the end (Ürer 2003: 182–183).

locations, the Party of Union and Progress (*İttihat ve Terakki Fırkası*), began increasing pressure on minority groups during this period.

The beginning of the 1920s marked the end of the Ottoman Empire and the birth of the Turkish Republic. During this period, political pressure, emigration and population exchanges resulted in the decrease in the non-Muslim population. The Treaty of Lausanne attempted to resolve some of the issues affecting minority communities and recognized the rights of minorities. The treaty recognized the rights of these communities and the Turkish government's responsibility to provide for them. The stipulations in the treaty, however, were limited to the Greek, Armenian and Jewish communities and failed to include minority and ethnic communities beyond these three groups (Oran 2001). As a result, much of the discussion on minority groups in contemporary Turkey is still understood as a reference to these three communities.

In the republic period, the treatment of minorities in truth differed little from the Ottoman period's "dominant nation"-*"dhimmi"* (*millet-i hakime-zimmi*) distinctions. As will be demonstrated below, as Muslims (especially ethnic Turks) became regarded as the dominant group, non-Muslims (despite having equal citizenship status) were regarded as "second class" citizens. With respect to minorities, the stipulations of the Treaty of Lausanne were either sparsely carried out or were eroded with time (Bali 2000: 99, 208, 242). A limit on the number of schools for minority groups was imposed and the content of the curriculum was subject to intense scrutiny. Obstacles to trade were created for minority groups through the stipulations of the Wealth Tax (*Varlık Vergisi Kanunu*). In 1936, the founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, intended "to wring [minority influence] out of Muslim economic resources" but at the time the Islamic Foundations Law lacked the means to enforce such action. It was not until the 1970s when capital seizures of immovable minority capital tied to various Islamic foundations was carried out. This resulted in lawsuits over the restitution of this capital. In a unanimous vote by the second judicial council civil chamber the court declared that the request of minority groups for the restitution of foundation capital seized by the state was denied on the grounds that these groups were not seen as Turks (Oran 2006a: 72, footnote 151; 2006b: 26–27).

After these events, troubled relations developed between various ethnic and religious groups and Turkish state organizations and authorities. Historic, psychological, sociological, and political discourses have served as a background for debates on one of Turkey's most sensitive subjects. Although Turkey's ethnic and religious tensions are most often portrayed as non-existent, through official sources, speeches given by officials, and actual circumstances, this article demonstrates that these problems do indeed exist. Nationalist ideology has on occasion approached what can be considered racist ideology. From this discourse the notion emerged that the Turkification of non-Turks and non-Muslims may be dangerous as it may result in the corruption of the "Turkish race." It is the case that

such sentiments are not often expressed by government officials but are, rather, by those outside state operational structures. However, officials have recognized these tensions and have tried to create a sense that such groups are somehow “Turks” through educational means. This notion has not found broad acceptance. The Turkish Republic has inherited this ethnic and religious tension, as well as the fear and operational approach to dealing with it and has brought it to a more “refined” form from that of its Ottoman predecessors.

On the one hand, Turkey and specifically Anatolia’s multi-religious and multi-ethnic (cultural) make-up has been a source of pride for the country’s leaders and on the other it has been a source of contention dating from the Ottoman era and, from the year 1920, has been the Turkish Republic’s most poignant issue. There are many reasons why minority groups need not be seen as a problem for Turkey in terms of politics, trade, religion and culture. At the end of the 19th century the emerging nationalist/separatist movements left a lingering bad taste in the mouths of Ottoman intellectuals. The nationalist movements of the time struck the Ottoman Empire and resulted in the loss of its Balkan territories and the orientation of the Arab territories away from the empire (N.N. 1938: 146, 152)<sup>3</sup> (according to national history this was “a stab in the back to the Ottomans/Turks”). Ottoman intellectuals and officials subsequently began to view religious minorities, and then non-Turks and non-Muslims with suspicion. In regards to minorities, this suspicion and tension is strongly reflected in daily life, the economy and education.

These feelings derived as a consequence of the Balkan War and from previous support of nationalist and separatist movements on the part of non-Turkish and non-Muslim minorities. During this period, restructuring of a nationalist-separatist nature was implemented in minority schools and, as a result, the Turkish Republic’s sensitivities towards national education were aroused resulting in a state of perpetual vigilance. For example, at the end of the 19th century with the increasing nationalism of the Ottoman Greeks, and with the conversion of the Ottoman administration in Greece to a Greek one following the revolution there, the aspirations of intellectual Ottoman-Turk-Muslim culture suffered a great blow. Upon their return to Ottoman territory, non-Muslim Ottoman Greeks who were educated in Ottoman Greek schools and who had been accepted to Greek universities, began to spread Greek nationalism and Hellenic cultural ideas (Kazamias 1966: 94–95). Minority schools began to draw suspicion

<sup>3</sup> Since 1931, textbooks History I–V (*Tarih I–IV*) and Middle School History I–III (*Ortaokul Tarih I–III*) were published for highschools and were very important among the Turkish Republic’s textbook publications. These books had a significant function in the formation of the nation-state and are a valuable component to understanding the period’s official history. Of additional importance, these books discuss the Turkish History Thesis and the Sun Language Theory which place Turkish history and language at the center of the world’s major civilizations. These theories claim that the source of all civilizations and languages are of Turkish origin. In this light, these textbooks are important sources for understanding the official point of view (Behar 1996; Copeaux 1998).

and the ground for such suspicion was already fertile. This fear and suspicion became a dominating force in the newly created Turkish Republic.

This article addresses today's more general ethnic and religious groups' national system, in particular the dilemma of the education system's contradictory parallel discourse of "belonging" and at the same time "not belonging." Also to be addressed is the subjection of minority groups to this contradictory discourse and how this contradiction was experienced.<sup>4</sup> during the period between 1920–1950.<sup>5</sup> The reason for concentrating on this period of nation building in Turkey is due to the traceability of the events of the time. Within this time period the nation executed a very intense policy of assimilation, at times disregarded different ethnic and religious groups, and through pressure attempted to drive certain non-Muslim groups out of the country. This pressure was especially applied through the education system as well as schools and minority schools were subject to a very intensive supervision policy. In 1946, after the development of a multi-party system, despite the softening of policy towards non-Muslims and non-Turks, little changed in terms of the nation's general approach towards these groups. In a meeting of minority school administrators held by the Istanbul National Education director on January 27, 1995, the director made the following statement indicative of the current trend in the general attitude towards minority groups:<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For a more detailed account of this debate see Çapar (2006).

<sup>5</sup> After 1950, the politics surrounding non-Turks and non-Muslims changed significantly in the context of the period's tumultuous political conjuncture. Non-Muslims were seen by the state as foreigners and the "other." State officials in referring to minorities used othering language such as "us" and "them." When referring to "them" the connotation of "foreigner" is implied and a deep anxiety seems to be expressed in its use. The message is that they are not truly considered part of society. In 2000, with the restitution of land to minority foundations and the opening of the Ruhban School, it appears that a relaxation in attitude toward minorities is occurring however difficult the process may be. Some ossified state agencies (important political agencies such as the armed forces, the constitutional court, and the state council, some political parties and some civil society organizations that believe state politics should remain as they are) defend the view that it is not justifiable to give minorities rights in light of the treason they will commit towards the Turks and Turkey.

<sup>6</sup> An interesting article appeared in the news as this article was being written. The Çanakkale Province National Education Director Vefa Bardakçı's speech directed towards Armenians on the war in 1915 is still pertinent today in its message of revenge, its threats and for the historical events it reveals. In 2010, it is apparent that there is still hatred towards minorities. He states, "As a citizen I have something to ask the Armenian community, seeing that you were loyal subjects of the Ottoman state. On April 24, 1915 when I was in Çanakkale fighting against seven nations where were you? While we were losing our martyrs in Çanakkale in war why were we struggling against you? Was it for no reason? Now, seeing that you live on this land, that you are citizens of this place, why did you strike at us from behind? We did not come knocking on the doors of the innocent. We did not take bayonets to women and children of the innocent. We did not spill blood of the innocent. We show our pride in the very opposite of these things and we say 'We are a nation of peace, a peaceful state'. We are lovers of peace and we want to live in peace. Our doors and hearts are always open to those who wish to live in peace with us. But those who stab us in the

"You (minority school assistant directors, MÇ) are representatives of the Turkish Republic in your schools. The directors of these schools are chosen by the schools themselves, not by us. They are not our appointed directors. You must be careful. The public sees you as Turkish directors. You are our eyes and ears in these schools and your duty is to watch what goes on and report back to us. Your educational and teaching duties are not of high importance. You must thoroughly supervise the minority teachers in your schools. Because they have been chosen by their religious foundations they cannot back our interests" (Yumul 2005: 94).

This article references the constitution's well-known stipulation on Turkish citizenship as well as the numerous statements of state officials. An attempt to demonstrate the contradictions in these discourses will be made. In relation to these issues, as non-Muslim and non-Turkish groups are set along the path of Turkification<sup>7</sup> in the education system the fact that they really are not and cannot be Turks means that they are not given the same rights as Turks (and Muslims). Thus these policies are applied to this end. Using the official documents cited below concerning non-Muslim and/or non-Turk minorities, this article will address the ways in which policy, attitude, and educational approaches were applied to minority groups, the forms of discourse around the issue of Turkish citizenship and the consequent denial of it for these groups, the justifications used by the state and its officials for the "othering" of minorities, and finally, the ways in which ethnic and religious groups were discriminated against and portrayed as traitors in lesson books and education research.

### *Minorities: Neither Turks, Nor non-Turks*

According to the official letter of the Treaty of Lausanne, Greeks, Armenians and Jews were identified as non-Muslims. These minority groups, recognized by the state, were residing in Istanbul and already possessed certain cultural rights since Ottoman times. During the Conference of Lausanne, minority groups from the Republic's other cities were not acknowledged and as a consequence they did not receive international support. Separately, the nation-state accepted the notion of the "single-nation" (*tek millet*) as a natural condition and did not accept the exis-

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back must be put in their place. That is also the kind of nation we are. We have lived through these events and it is over now. I want to have your attention in order for us to meet at the same point in history. Let no one rest on innocent feet. While I was in Çanakkale in 1915, barricaded behind my breast from iron-clad ships, cannon balls and bullets you were closing on Anatolian villages bayonneting women and children. You stabbed us in the back. You betrayed us. And we responded in kind." (<http://www.radikal.com.tr/Radikal.aspx?aType=RadikalDetay&Date=26.4.2010&ArticleID=993652&CategoryID=77>).

<sup>7</sup> In official discourses in Turkey "Turk" (especially in reference to non-Muslims) is generally used in place of "Muslim" and is still used in this context. In this understanding, it is postulated that all Muslims in Turkey are Turks. However, when it comes to the Kurds and the question of rights, the concept of Turkishness is used to describe the Kurds as a Turkish ethnic group.

tence of different ethnic and religious groups. Another reason for this was since these other minority groups created problems for the dominant ethnic group, they were excluded from recognition under the “official minority group” category. Non-Turk Muslim groups such as Laz, Kurds, and Circassians, were not perceived as minorities because of their Muslim status.<sup>8</sup> In the case of the Kurds, this group in particular demanded their cultural rights and came into conflict with the state. They were investigated by official foundations and although the discourse states otherwise, a multitude of official documents concurs that the Kurds are indeed not Turks (Bulut 1991; Öztürk 2007; Koçak 2003).<sup>9</sup>

The Treaty of Lausanne is a primary source on the topic of non-Muslim and non-Turk minorities (*ekalliyet*). Articles 38–44 of the treaty address the rights of Turkey’s minority groups with article 44 being specific to educational rights. According to this article, the state is required to facilitate the provision of education for minorities by matching funds from the municipal, state or other budgets (Meray 1969). Non-Muslim minorities were also required to be provided with Turkish language courses according to the treaty, however this practice was already being carried out during the *Tanzimat* era. Beginning with the Public Education Law (*Maarif-i Umumiye Nizamnamesi*) followed by the Regulations for Special Schools (*Mekâtib-i Husûsiye Tâlimatnâmesi*), a structure for how foreign and minority school education should operate was outlined in detail. In a sense, the Treaty of Lausanne confirmed these directives and guaranteed their successful application. With the exception of Turkish language, Turkish history and geography classes, non-Muslims in the Turkish Republic had the right as citizens to education in their own language, religion and culture.

<sup>8</sup> According to Baskın Oran, the Treaty of Lausanne refuted such notions. The treaty fails to clearly indicate specific minority groups and due to this Turkey was at its leisure to distinguish only Armenian, Jewish and Greek non-Muslim minorities. Separately, according to the 39th Article the rights of Muslim ethnic groups are protected in addition to non-Muslim groups (Oran 2001; 2002).

<sup>9</sup> The best examples of records that state that the Kurds are not in fact Turks are official documents provided to state affiliated agencies and reports provided at various times to appropriate foundations dealing with such issues. Documents obtained by the general staff with statements such as “Kurdish rebels” clearly identify the Kurds as their own distinct group. The Pülümür Operation (*Pülümür Harekâtı*) report states that 10,000 Kurds live in the Erzincan provincial center. It reports that these Kurds “in making use of the Alevi faith are Kurdifying local Turkish villages and are actively spreading the Kurdish language” and that “the Erzincan area will be overrun by Kurds in a few years” (Bulut 1991: 203–204). In various documents discussed in this article such as The Settlement Law of 1934, İsmet Paşa’s “Report on the Kurds” (Öztürk 2007), the prime minister at the time, Şükrü Saraçoğlu’s “Report” (1944), and the Public Inspectors’ various reports, either addressing the public or Kurds directly, admit the existence of the Kurds in stating that they “should be given Turkish names and surnames, and they should be inoculated with Turkish culture (Koçak 2003).



The parameters and degree to which non-Muslims and non-Turks are to be defined as Turks have never truly been explicitly outlined.<sup>10</sup> The 1924 Constitution's 88th article qualifies citizenship status regardless of religious and racial differences. In a similar vein, in defining all citizens as Turks (Kili/Gözübüyük 2000), the 1982 Constitution has complicated matters further in some cases. State officials and some judiciary members who concurred with this article did so making the claim that the term Turk was not used in the sense of an ethnic group. Meanwhile, some judiciary members and educated non-Turkish ethnic groups defended the position that the emphasis on Turkish ethnicity was akin to discrimination. According to Ergun Özbudun (1998: 154), the 1924 Constitution described minorities as equal citizens, however, the same article did not view non-Muslim minorities as citizens from a sociological standpoint. In addition, there was a problem perceived with the naming of all citizens as "Turks." The term "Turk" was sometimes perceived by both lawmakers as well as laypersons to mean "citizen." In most cases, however, the term was taken to refer to ethnicity. Counter to the claim that the term "Turk" in the constitution did not refer to ethnicity, many official foundations and in particular the army and high level administrators were hired on the condition that they were of the "Turkish race" or of "Turkish decent." More "civil" institutions also sought "racially Turkish" applicants and those "of Turkish decent" in notifications of employment and these terms were also used in their official documents (Bali 2000: 197–240; Aktar 2000: 118–129). While in the 1930s and 1940s the identifiers "Turkish race" and "to be of Turkish decent" were commonly seen in notices, it was less case in the 1950s. The upper tiers of the state and other institutions, however, remained inaccessible to non-Muslims and non-Turks. These examples raise doubts on two issues; that the state's use of the term "Turk" in the constitution was indeed neutral and that the state's intention was to embrace all citizens.

Despite indications in the constitution and related documents in addition to other official documents that all citizens of the Turkish Republic are considered equal, proof that non-Turks and non-Muslims were indeed not seen as equal citizens is found in the Wealth Tax (*Varlık Vergisi*). The implementation of the Wealth Tax was essentially a move to Turkify the economy and trade in Turkey (particularly in Istanbul) as documented in *The Wealth Tax Calamity (Varlık Vergisi Faciası)*, a critical source on this topic authored by Faik Ökte. According to Ökte, the tax was planned by Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu and was discretely ordered to apply only to non-Muslims (Ökte 1951). In actuality, the tax was applied to some Muslims, however, this was apparently done to minimize non-Muslim reactions and to disguise the real purpose of the tax. The acting prime minister, Ferit Melen, indicated that, through this tax, trade that was once in the

<sup>10</sup> The rulings on minorities in the Treaty of Lausanne span from Article 37 to Article 45 (III. Section). Article 37 is the introduction to this topic. Article 45 decrees that Muslim minorities in Greece must be given the same rights (reciprocity) as those in Turkey.

hands of minorities had passed into the hands of Turks and thus generated positive opportunities for Turks. This state/government activity was supported by many intellectuals of the time. In one case, upon hearing the grievances of Jewish community members, Avram Galanti and Baba Gomel, intellectual statesman and writer Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, himself a “liberal, socialist, republican, democrat,” concocted a string of arguments against non-Muslim minorities. According to him, minorities lived lives of comfort built from tax-free trade while Turks died fighting in wars and had no time for amassing wealth. The capital seized in the name of the Wealth Tax can be interpreted as a kind of “blood tax” and consequently the application of this tax has been viewed as justified (Aydemir 1968: 231–232). This view was just as much shared by the era’s “socialist” intellectuals as it was by many of its statesmen and nationalists (Bali 2000; Okutan 2004: 270–293). In his book *Missionary Schools from the Ottoman Era to Today (Osmanlıdan Günümüze Misyoner Okulları)*, Necdet Sevinç, a writer who focused on claims of missionary activity in minority schools, similarly wrote

“The state was created by the children of the Turkish race and by them was exalted. In endless wars from the equator to the North Pole, the blood of the children of the Turks was spilled. *The burdens were born on the shoulders of the Turks but the benefits were shared by minorities.* This is why Turks are poor and minorities are rich. And the rich are insolent and they are traitorous” (Sevinç 2002: 218; Sonyel 1993).

The Wealth Tax was not only intended to apply to religious minority trade organizations but was also intended for education foundations. Heavy taxes were applied to private foreign schools along with non-Muslim minority schools (Ökte 1951: 245–47). The reasoning for this was that these schools were founded as profit generating businesses. In effect, these taxes were not collected from these schools (Ökte 1951: 127). Under the Treaty of Lausanne the state was required to support and protect minority schools but instead of supporting these schools their intention was to tax them, an indication that minority schools were seen as harmful places and that they needed to be eradicated.

### *Education: They will Turkify – They won’t Turkify*

The politics and ideology surrounding the state’s national education structure is directed towards all citizens. As discussed by Louis Althusser (1989: 20, 28), schools and education (churches [religion], the justice system, and politics being the state’s ideological tools) play important roles in capitalist modes of operation for the reproduction and transference of the elite’s ideology and for activation of this ideology. The state’s education policy especially took on a nationalist ideological bent and, in developing an official ideology, its aim became to assimilate more marginal ethnic and religious groups (Okutan 2004: 155). In this context, the state’s leading education foundations hold an important position in creating an official ideology on the one hand and implementing an intensive assimilation

policy on the other as the nation-state became fully established. In minority schools, history, geography, civics, and sociology as well as Turkish language courses were required to be taught in Turkish (Okutan 2004: 169). The appointing of “teachers of Turkish ethnicity” and ethnic “Turks” as assistant directors in schools can be interpreted as part of the effort to Turkify minority groups and resulted in feelings of insecurity on the part of minorities.

In order to increase the long-lasting effectiveness of the national ideology imposed in schools, extrascholastic activities were organized. To this effect, the appointing of persons whose political orientation was in line with official/national ideology and members of minority groups was seen as highly advantageous. The experiment in Turkey was a significant one. In this case, with the purpose of influencing their own ethnic groups, influential persons among Turkey’s non-Muslim and non-Turk groups set out disseminating publications with national ideological content. It was believed that national schooling with an agenda of indoctrination of minority groups was of necessary importance and thus encouraged. Ayaz İshakî, a writer associated with minority groups, claimed that the Turkification of minorities will become easier with time and more widespread. İshakî wrote an article on April 28, 1928 in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper entitled “How can non-Turks be Turkified?” (*Gayr-ı Türkler Nasıl Türkleştirilebilir?*). He states that he did not find the Turkish Hearth’s “Citizens, Speak Turkish!” (*Vatandaş, Türkçe Konuş!*) movement a very meaningful one in the context of the day. İshakî, being of the opinion that assimilation was necessary and natural, supported the state’s assimilation policy believing that there was a need for a scientific method as such used by France, Germany and Russia. According to İshakî, the easiest and best known way to Turkify non-Turk populations was to teach their children Turkish. Through this process, they grow up indoctrinated into the culture and the civilization. This is a case of education and culture and not one of some simple ability of the youth to yawp about and the occasional reading of a newspaper on a ferry boat. According to İshakî “the incorporation and implementation of the best methods will provide minorities with a sufficient knowledge base. Turkish schools will provide them with something unique. We should convey the greatness of Turkish culture and its heights to all youth” (Sadoğlu 2003: 325, appendix 7).

Tekinalp and Avram Galanti assert that non-Muslims involved in education played an important role in the Turkification process. Galanti lists the duties that fall to the state and minorities in the process of Turkification through non-Muslim minority schools and suggests that Turkification brings a greater degree of social ease to minority groups (Galanti 2000: 46). According to Galanti, if minority groups in Turkey consider what is to their own benefit they should sincerely take the steps to becoming Turks. He says, “There is only one road to Turkification: Turkish schools or complete schooling in schools that teach Turkish” (Galanti 2004: 177) because “Turkification happens chiefly through language. Language is the root to this end and establishes itself in the home. But for

it to enter the home, it must come from the schools” (Galanti 2004: 195). Tekinalp, however, as previously stated, suggests that Turkey’s Jews and other non-Turks will be better assimilated through the national education system (Tekinalp 1928). These writers have expressed the idea that in order for non-Turks and non-Muslims to embrace Turkishness the state and (Muslim-Turkish) citizens must accept them as Turks.

Schools are the primary foundations for the Turkification of non-Muslims and non-Turks. Schools and Turkish language instruction, however, did not prove to be successful for making these groups feel Turkish. As discussed by Rıfat N. Bali (2000: 525), Jews who passed through the national education system, with its glorification of “original Turks” and the Turkish race, rather embraced their own group. However, in order to accept the identity of Turk, Jews who requested their constitutional rights were met with denial and scorn. As a consequence, their developing a self-perception as Turks was not enough because of the fact that they were Jewish and/or Christian. This posed obstacles in the acceptance of self-identities as Muslim-Turk among these groups.

Non-Muslim and non-Turk groups demands for rights were viewed with suspicion and subsequently denied out of fear that the granting of rights would lead to more demands and would eventually lead to Turkey’s destruction. As will be shown below, this fear of a minority “conspiracy” was either conveyed openly or was implicit in the materials presented in lesson books as well as the activities carried out through the national education system.

The speeches of officials are important as the basis for support for regulations and laws. As will be seen below, there is a great deal of contradiction in the laws themselves, regulations and speeches of the state. On the one hand, it was believed that non-Muslims and non-Turks could become Turkified and their recognition as Turks was written in the letter of the law. However, minority associations with Turkishness were also in doubt and the use of language such as “them” and “us” had a distinctly exclusionary purpose. Reflecting this trend, Mahmut Esat Bozkurt, parliament member in the republic’s first years, constitution committee member, former justice minister and law professor said,

“Turk insurrection does not rest with original Turks anymore. It is complacent and unconditional. Those who revolt with the help of foreigners will be indebted to foreigners. The debt can not be paid off. The worst Turk is better than the best non-Turk. (...) The work of the Turkish state should not be given to any other than a pure Turk” (Bozkurt/Peker/Tengirşek 1997: 113, 187).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> The much discussed declaration of Mahmut Esat Bozkurt appearing in the September 19, 1930 issue of *Milliyet* newspaper parallels this idea (N.N. 1930). He declares “My idea, my opinion is that friend, foe and even mountain alike should know that the overlord of this country is the Turk. Non-pure Turk citizens have one right. And that is to be a servant, to be a slave.” At the time Bozkurt made this comment he held a post in the Justice Department.

### *The State Approach: "The Other"*

Non-Turk and non-Muslim minorities were recognized as Turks and received the same rights as Turk-Muslim citizens. This was fundamental law according to officials. The actual situation, however, was very different. Constitutional articles did not possess clear stipulations and in the implementation process a discriminatory policy contradictory to the constitution was applied as discussed above.

Official documents have proven important for demonstrating the perception of non-Muslim groups as "other" in the scope of education regulations. For regulatory purposes minority schools were considered separate from "Turk schools" but included with minority schools. The 1915 Private School Regulations (*Mekâtib-i Hususiye Nizamnamesi*) is one of these pieces of regulatory legislation. In this document "ethnic Turk teachers" appears as an important stipulation. Teachers identified as ethnic Turks (=Muslims) were to teach classes such as Turkish language, Turkish history and geography. This regulation was to apply to both minority and foreign schools. In the year 1341/1925 a program entitled the Curriculum Program of Mandatory Turkish Language, Turkish History and Geography Classes in Non-Muslim Minority and Foreign Schools (*Gayrimüslim Ekalliyet ve Ecnebi Mekteplerinde Tedrisi Meşrut Olan Türkçe ve Türk Tarih ve Coğrafyası Derslerine Aid Müfredat Programı*) published in the 1938 document Management in Minority and Foreign Schools Pertaining to Turk Ethnicity (*Türk Hususi Azınlık ve Yabancı Okullarda İdare İşleri*) stated policy for managing minority and foreign schools. The approach prescribed by this document can be interpreted as encouraging policy implementors to view minorities as foreigners. It may be considered usual and routine to manage minority and foreign schools under the same set of regulations and under the same program as lessons and their contents are created in partnership. It can not be considered coincidence, however, if evidence of tension towards minority and foreign schools is found in the same text. When addressing the issue of foreign schools, it is understood that state officials often include minority schools within their definition and thus the conclusion drawn from official documents is that there is no distinction between minority and foreign schools.

Hence, non-Muslim minorities, while regarded as "our (the Turkish Republic government's) citizens" as it concerns policy, are at the same time othered at every opportunity. More importantly, strict regulatory control was imposed on minority schools due to authority distrust of minorities. In 1938, the implementation of the *Management in Minority and Foreign Schools Pertaining to Turk Ethnicity* guidelines demonstrates the scope of this distrust and thus the subsequent regulations imposed on minority groups. The attempt to control minority schools was implemented through the posting of "ethnic Turk teachers." According to the regulations, if an appointed teacher had not attended Turkish language or culture courses, a commission appointed by the cultural director would administer an exam in language, history, spelling, reading and in the candidate's

academic specialization in which the candidate was required to score well. The school director was to provide courses for the appointed “ethnic Turk teachers” on behalf of the Ministry of Culture. In addition, assistant directors appointed to minority schools were required to be ethnic Turks (and therefore Muslim) and their duties included informing the proper parties and carrying out the proper procedures in the event of a “misstep” on the part of the school (*Türk Hususi Azınlık ve Yabancı Okullarda İdare İşleri* 1938).

Greek, Jewish and Armenian Turkish Republic citizens, as expressed in the regulations, were generally implied to be foreigners. Kurds were also considered foreigners but being Muslim were also accepted as Turks. According to official and classified reports as well as state addresses and statements, Kurds were not viewed to be Turks and were seen as a dangerous, untrustworthy and traitorous “race.” This attitude toward the Kurds is openly expressed in reports prepared for the upper structures of the state and is concerned with habitation, deportation and penal matters.<sup>12</sup> After Turkey’s first prime minister, second president and “First Man-Eternal Leader/Chef” (*Birinci Adam-Ebedi Şef*), Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the Second Man-National Leader/Chef (*İkinci Adam-Milli Şef*), İsmet Pasha’s *Report on the Kurds* and the First Public Inspector (*Birinci Umum Müfettişi*) Abidin Özmen’s report were prepared in the same year. In 1944, Internal Affairs Representative Hilmi Uran presented a report to Prime Minister Şükrü Saraçoğlu stating similarly to the above reports and other official documents that Kurds were not Turks. Şükrü Saraçoğlu’s education minister at the time stated the following in a report: “We cannot entrust this community with state and institutional services. They do not feel as we do, their thoughts are different from ours as are their ideals and we cannot be at ease with the inclusion of such an element [Kurds] in external and internal politics” (*Rapor* 1944: 37). Separately, similar documents attempt to clarify how Kurds can be assimilated and made into Turks (Öztürk 2007; *Rapor* 1944).

In these reports, schools and education are perceived to be an important means of the assimilation of Kurds. The reports take special note of the Turkification of girls (women). The state also supported the Kurdish Turk (“mountain Turks, Kurdish Turks”) theory and the notion that Kurdish is not its own language but rather a dialect of Turkish. At the same time schools in areas with heavy populations of Kurds were to give great importance to the Turkish language. Speaking Turkish in school was required and male and female teachers

<sup>12</sup> For example the June 14, 1934 Settlement Law (*İskan Kanunu*) places a certain emphasis on “the Turkish race” and “Turkish culture” (Okutan 2004: 316–330; attachment 6). As in many other writings, here the meanings of race and culture are not clear. Groups and individuals that have entered Turkey for settlement such as “non-native Turkish speakers,” “tribes that have no relation to Turkish culture” and Roma are classified as foreigners. It is understood that those who are not considered members of the “Turkish race” according to racial characteristics but who require Turkification are considered untrustworthy “foreigners.”



appointed to these schools were required to be of Turkish ethnicity and from Turkey's western provinces (*Rapor* 1944; Öztürk 2007: 120). Such official documents are proof that Kurds were not seen as Turks although they are classified as Turks.

*Statesmen: You are either one of us or...*

Contradictory attitudes on non-Turks and non-Muslims are not only found in curriculum related documents and the discourses of state officials but also in the speeches of upper level government officials and policy implementing bodies. Although all citizens are given equal rights according to law and international treaties, speeches in parliament and public meetings demonstrate the real attitude towards minorities wherein non-Turks and non-Muslims were often referred to as "other" (onlar = them). Many such examples exist, however, only a few examples are needed to demonstrate the contradictions.

The founder of the Turkish Republic, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's, view on minorities is an important one for this discussion and will be presented here. Mustafa Kemal's speeches on education as well as those on other topics convey contradictory attitudes towards minorities.

In a speech on December 28, 1919, Mustafa Kemal made the statement that, "We are all of the same kind, this nation's Muslims and non-Muslims alike. And in this respect we are all under the same law. We cannot give certain privilege to *non-Muslim citizens living amongst us* to the detriment of stability and convention" (Atatürk 1987 C II: 12, emphasised by MÇ). With these words Mustafa Kemal was stating that non-Muslim minorities are equal to Muslims and ethnic Turks before the law. However, in an address to parliament on May 1, 1920 on the issue of whether or not non-Muslims were included as a part of the "Turkish nation," Mustafa Kemal made remarks in contradiction to his previous statement. According to Mustafa Kemal, the groups that constitute the nation are Turks, Kurds, Laz, Circassians and others and are "components of Islam" (*anasır-ı islamiye*) (Atatürk 1987: 74–75, C I). The absence of non-Muslim minorities as legally recognized citizens among these groups is notable. Accordingly, the address asserted the notion that non-Muslim minorities are not considered elements of the Turkish nation. This notion is later encountered now and again. For example, Mustafa Kemal, accepted as the nation's leader, in a speech on February 17, 1931, emphasized the difference in non-Muslims and non-Turks on the subject of language in a general warning: "One of the nation's more pronounced aspects and invaluable fundamentals is language. Those who claim to be of the Turkish nation should first and foremost speak Turkish. It cannot be that a person who cannot speak Turkish can claim to be connected to Turkish culture and community" (Bali 2000: 157–58).

In Adana on March 16, 1923, Mustafa Kemal spoke about a speech given by Administration Committee Chairman Ahmet Remzi Yüreğir and offered a similar warning. In a speech addressed to Turkey's non-Muslim and non-Turk minority citizens, Mustafa Kemal gave some idea as to his policy pertaining to education in addition to policy in other areas. In this speech he stated that Armenians acted as if they owned the country but that those in Adana (and all of Turkey) were, as in the past, regarded as Turks and will be until the end of time. He emphasized that there were no "rights for this bountiful country's" minority peoples including Armenians and that the country was strictly the land of pure Turks (*öztürkler*) (Atatürk 1987: 130, C II). The significance here is that the highest authority is avowing that the Armenians (and non-Muslims and non-Turk ethnic groups) that "remained" in Turkey are not and will never be Turks.

Other statesmen active in education, who possessed a more benign stance towards minorities from that of Mustafa Kemal, have a noteworthy approach and discourse worth presenting here (Bali 2000: 322–23). İsmet Pasha, the "Second Man" (*İkinci Adam*), in his May 5, 1925 address to the Educators' Union Congress (*Muallimler Birliği Kongresi*), emphasized that non-Muslims and non-Turks have not become Turkified to the desired extent and suggested a threat related to this in the context of national education and its importance.

"We want national discipline. What does this mean? We can understand this more clearly in its opposite manifestation. We can say that the opposite of national discipline is this: perhaps it is religious discipline, or international discipline. The discipline you will administer is not religious discipline, but national discipline; not international, but national discipline. (...)

Today the politics in this land are overwhelming those of the Turkish nation. It is a Turk who is giving this whole land a Turkish essence. However, this state is not yet the homogenized place we want it to be. (...) From this single nationhood, foreign cultures should melt away. (...) We direct this to those who are oriented to a culture other than the Turkish national one: Let them be unified with the Turkish nation. However, not as an amalgam, not as part of a confederacy, but as one unified civilization. This nation is a single nation made up of one nationality. And we do not regard this as just words. We are not of the mind that this is simply decorative language. This policy is the life of the nation. If we are to live we are to do so as one nation. The national discipline of which we speak is a communal goal" (N.N. 1946: 92–93).

According to İsmet Pasha, the aim of national education is to Turkify non-Turks and non-Muslims. He indicated that these groups would not have a life of comfort if they remained in a non-Turkified condition. In a previous speech given April 27, 1925, much stronger language was used to express similar notions. The statement reads, "We will crush those who lack respect for Turks and Turkishness. (...) We will demand from those who serve the country that what comes first are Turks and the proponents of Turkishness" (Nişanyan 1995: 134). This type of declaration was not only brought about by İsmet Pasha; Statesmen from the Prime Ministry, the National Education Ministry and other high order offices have frequently iterated similar notions in the functions of their duties. For example, dur-



ing the founding of the Turkish Republic, Kazım Karabekir, an important military and political figure, commented on the perceived untrustworthiness of minorities in times of war and their capacity to spread through Anatolia to take up residence in the place of previous inhabitants. He suggested that Beyoğlu's brick houses be taken over by Turks and stated that, "Friends, wherever non-Turks reside, you can be sure that that place is a nest of spies... These blood sucking minorities are dangerous and found at the army's rear flank. They should be thrown into Anatolia's fitting places for such kind" (Okutan 2004: 107–108; Akar 2001: 20). In so saying Karabekir is emphasizing the notions that non-Turks are untrustworthy and at the same time he is implying that they are not and will never be Turks.

The controversial topic of the "Student Oath" (Our Oath), mandatorily read aloud collectively every morning in primary schools, is an important topic and is a tradition still practiced today. It is another key example of "othering" in the Turkish education system. The reading of the "Student's Oath" was put into practice by Reşit Galip on May 18, 1933 and 1749/42 (in the Muslim calendar) through a National Education Ministry memorandum. In 1972 and 1997 some additions and changes were made to sections of the "Student Oath" (<http://istiklalmarsi.gen.tr/andimizin-anlami-nedir.html>).<sup>13</sup>

The "Student Oath" was implemented over a long period by the National Education Ministry and its importance was highly valued by Hasan-Ali Yücel, an important national education figure. According to Yücel, "Those in the Turkish Republic who do not declare "I am a Turk", who do not feel that they are Turks neither at heart nor in language, and who do not stand by the phrase "all that I am is the Turkish Republic" are, of course, not Turks" (1993: 127). National Education Minister H. A. Yücel and the period's statesmen defended the "Student Oath" through written content that explicitly pronounced the intrinsicness of national education ideology and politics. Through the emphasis of this content a controversy was born which has drawn increasing participation to today. The essence of this debate draws from the "Student Oath"'s failure to recognize non-Muslim and non-Turk minorities, those who do not self-identify as Turks and members of

<sup>13</sup> <http://istiklalmarsi.gen.tr/andimizin-anlami-nedir.html>.

The final version of the "Student Oath" known as "Our Oath":

I am Turkish, I am righteous, I am hard working,

My principles: To protect my young ones, to respect my elders, to love my country and my people.

To advance and raise up my country.

Atatürk is the greatest!

I take an oath to continue without end on the road you paved to the goal you showed us.

Let my existence be a gift to Turkishness.

How happy is he who says "I am a Turk."

(<http://okulweb.meb.gov.tr/60/08/622036/and%C4%B1m%C4%B1z.htm>)

other ethnic groups as well as from the exclusion and psychological pressure the oath places on these groups.<sup>14</sup>

The fact that non-Muslim minorities were not and would not be Turks was at times addressed in the Grand National Assembly (*Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi*, TBMM). Non-Muslims were sometimes heavily denounced in sessions of the assembly and mere words at times even crossed over into real action as was the case in the 1921 “secret” parliamentary session. During this session, Representative Fevzi Efendi spoke harshly of Armenians declaring that they needed to be crushed and destroyed while another representative, speaking about Armenians who had been exiled to Erzurum, declared that this “heap of shit” will not be accepted (*TBMM Gizli Celse Zabıtları I* 1985: 322). These and similar statements were openly made by education foundations and their attitude towards minorities has been a demeaning one. The disregarding of minorities in lesson books is an ongoing issue that continues still.

### *Textbooks: “Our Foreigners”*

As to the question of whether Turkey’s non-Muslims and non-Turks do in fact comprise legitimate elements of the national make-up, school textbooks add to the controversy in their approach to minorities. Textbooks tend to provide a description of the “nation of Turks” at the same time that they provide a description of the constitution’s stipulations; this is to mean that the non-Turks and non-Muslims living within Turkey’s borders are described in these texts as Turks. However, the subject matter of these books as it pertains to minorities is loaded with content emphasizing their untrustworthy nature. The most frequently appearing themes pertain to Ottoman era “fifth column” activities of minorities in conjunction with foreigners and the accusation that minority (and foreign)

<sup>14</sup> National Education Director Nimet Çubukçu proposed to lift the “Student Oath” requirement in May 2009 (<http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/24968646/>). This was met with pressure from various foundations and the issue was not raised again. The Diyarbakır branch of Mazlum-Der began an active poster campaign against the oath called “Lift the Student Oath.” State foundations and nationalists reacted by removing the posters (*Radikal* 2009) and filing a legal case against the branch director (<http://www.gundem-online.net/haber.asp?haberid=80133>). The state has remained sensitive on this issue as can be seen from its reaction (it is significant to note that a more heated reaction was seen from educators to this request). On the other hand the state rejected the views of official bodies that saw the oath as discriminatory, exclusionary and essentialist. According to the state, the oath is not discriminatory or disdainful of differences but rather the opposite. It is a force of unification and inclusion for the entire nation. According to this concept, the fact that “Our Oath” ignores difference is not negative. It can be seen as a positive declaration because it does not promote one ethnic group over another in its concept of Turkishness. As to the emphasis on Turkishness, the constitution does not define the nation as one particular ethnic group but rather encompasses all citizens. In practice, however, state agencies and officials have invalidated such claims through the very real discrimination experienced by their citizens.

schools are nests of treachery. The following passage from the Ottoman period publication *The History of Middle Schools III* (N.N. 1938: 278) contains a typical example of this sentiment:

“Under the Ottoman government there were Christian, Jewish and foreign schools where lessons were taught in their languages. In these schools, lessons were taught as they saw fit. We cannot pass comment on the Ottoman government. We could not interfere with these schools’ programs and teachers and their buildings and classrooms could not be inspected. After the Treaty of Lausanne, minority schools submitted to Turkish regulations. The first wave of inspectors entered these schools and monitored classrooms and teachers. Today there is no difference between these schools and our own. They are in obeisance with our laws, regulations and guidelines to the letter” (separately see *Tarih III* 1933: 265).

Non-Muslim minorities were not only seen as politically dangerous but also dangerous economically to Turks and Turkey. In this context, some textbooks contained material conveying the notion that trade in minority hands in Turkey would continue to enrich minorities at great detriment to Turks. Abdühekim Hikmet writes:

“Look ... These minorities that live among us: Christians ... built schools, they worked night and day, advanced, and left us far behind. Look at the Jews ... that condemned people resigned to every remote corner of the world; their strong work ethic led to their accumulation of great wealth, and they now live a life of ease. [...] We Muslims: We did not heed our religion’s directives, we did not work, we remained lazy, [...]. Those around us showed mercy but could not pull us out of the mud we sank in; perhaps they gave us a kick and pushed us deeper into the mud. In the end, while we ruled we became condemned...” (1923: 22).

The following quote, similar to material in other books on the untrustworthiness of non-Muslims, appeared in a religious textbook. The quote reads, “While we were favoring Arabs, Greeks, Armenians, and so on that lived among us, they were providing themselves with opportunities and devising plots and insurrection. As it were, we were engaging in activities to appeal to them” (İhsan 1926: 20).

In essence, textbooks are not the only places that the idea that non-Muslims were exploiting the economy in Turkey appears. As demonstrated above, many statesmen, academics and intellectuals shared the same view on minorities. Âfet İnan, known for her closeness to Atatürk and her compilation of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s Civil Knowledge (*Medeni Bilgiler*) into book form, expressed the following view on the subject: “In all matters foreigners are privileged while Turks are disadvantaged. *Non-Turks live lives of comfort and profitted significantly*” (1998: 201, emphasised by MÇ). A similar but more militarist point of view was held by Şevket Süreyya Aydemir (1968: 231) with a tendency toward the views of Baba Godel and Avram Galanti in terms of its denunciatory quality.

*Ottoman schools for orphans (Dariüşşafaka)* administrator, implementor of sociological instruction and writer of textbook Homeland Knowledge (*Yurt Bilgisi*), Ali Kami, in this book attempted to instigate villagers to wake up to the “fact” that

minorities were “usurers, speculators and swindlers.” To this he wrote, “When the Armenians in Anatolia were in greater numbers they made their living off the backs of the villagers through the swindling activities of Ziraat Bankası, which they achieved through the creation of more branches” (Üstel 2004: 210–11). Kami attempted to instigate students to turn on their own countrymen by exploiting them as targets for this propaganda.

The term nation (*millet*) used in textbooks often does not include non-Muslims and non-Turks in its definition. The term as it appears implies that it is important to be of the same race, the same roots, the same language, and the same blood. According to Muslihiddin Adil’s definition of the term nation in his 1924 textbook Knowledge of the Nation (*Malumat-ı Vatanıye*), a people must come from the same root in order to constitute a nation. Race, language and religion are especially important in binding a nation’s individuals together (Üstel 2004: 161).

Textbooks have also discussed non-Turks and non-Muslims in terms of being Turks. Statements of this kind, however, are designed to ignore the existence of minorities and also the existence of difference. They emphasize the Turkishness of Istanbul and Ankara as much as they do the Turkishness of Kars, Van, Erzurum, Diyarbakır and the eastern provinces. In his edition of the textbook *Yurt Bilgisi* Abdülbaki states that

“It is said that the nation is made up of components such as its mother tongue, the feelings, the wants, and the interests of the individual. (...) I am a Turk. My nation is the land of the Turks. In whatever way I am a citizen of Istanbul or Ankara, in this same way I am also a citizen of Diyarbakır, Van, Erzurum and Kars. *This is because Turks also live there and there Turkish is spoken*” (Üstel 2004: 166, emphasised by MÇ).

The assimilation of the “easterners” described as Turks in textbooks is, however, viewed with doubt. As is clear from official reports, deportation and sentencing laws, they live in constant danger and are seen as an untrustworthy population. Although they are seen as having potential to assimilate as Turks there is also a sense of danger associated with this process.

A highschool textbook of significance in regard to its content accepting non-Muslims Turks was History IV (*Tarih IV*). *Tarih IV* contains a complaint about the rights given to minorities in the Treaty of Lausanne and follows with an account of how the problem has been solved by the Civil Law (*Medeni Kanun*). This law, however, is seen as playing a role in revoking the rights obtained by non-Muslims under the Treaty of Lausanne:

“Indeed, upon the approval of Civil Law (*Medeni Kanun*), by the Turkish Parliament (*Büyük Millet Meclisi*), starting with Jewish Turks, Orthodox, Catholic and Gregorian Turks as well as other citizens of various religions and sects separately applied to our cabinet citing that they had given up all their related rights and asked to be regarded under the same terms as the other Muslim ones before the civil law. This request was supported, thus the Turkish civil law functioned to development of national unity” (N.N. 1934: 215).

It is, on the other hand, a point of contention that non-Muslim minorities consented to giving up their rights under the Treaty of Lausanne. Some Jewish groups did give up these rights of their own will, however, many minority groups were apparently under pressure and unable to effect these rights as indicated in the treaty (Bali 2000). Through such textbooks students were misinformed about the non-Muslim desire to become subject to the Civil Law and citizens of the Turkish Republic; in light of the denial of non-Muslim identities the message conveyed here was that they would be considered Turks.

There is, however, a dearth of information on the subject of how non-Turks and non-Muslims were disregarded and excluded as explained in the nationalist ideology found in textbooks. Nationalist theorists and “practitioners” with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Ziya Gökalp, Yusuf Akçura, Ahmet Ağaoğlu and the like leading way were involved in the development of textbook curriculum. Many of them had emigrated from abroad and were Turkists (*Türkçü*) and believers in the notion of Turan as the original homeland of the Turks (*Turanca*). However, it is known that minority group members also advanced the aims of Turkish nationalism. The above mentioned Tekinalp,<sup>15</sup> Ayaz İshakî and Avram Galanti are a few of those who were at the forefront of this movement. These writers contributed considerable effort in the Turkification of non-Turks and non-Muslims. They served as guides for state officials for the assimilation of minorities through their books and articles in newspapers and magazines. Despite this these writers were not seen to be a part of Turkey’s nationalist movement and were not remembered for their contributions to the development of textbooks. In any case, the distancing of these writers from their peers is an indication of the degree they were considered foreigners. These writers on Turkish nationalism were either ignored for their “independent” research or their Turkish nationalist roles, although influential, were simply not given importance.

### *Education Research: The Traitors Among Us*

Most of the supposed critical research on education (except for some studies after the year 2000) presented Non-Muslim and non-Turk education foundations and

<sup>15</sup> His real name was Mohiz Kohen but he later took the name Munis “Tekinalp”, an indication of the degree to which he espoused nationalist thinking and the concept of Turkishness. In his work Turkification (*Türkleştirme*) (1928) Tekinalp explains in detail how non-Muslims can be Turkified and whether or not they actually can be Turkified. He lays out ten directives (*emavir-i aşere*) for the Turkification process. Tekinalp suggest that despite all the efforts of non-Turks to become Turkish, those who still do not accept Turkishness be made to accept accept it (Tekinalp, 1928). In response, Tanıl Bora states “A dose of cultural racism was added to a quite powerful Turkish nationalist agenda of indoctrination and in response to the effort the honor of Tekinalp’s official nationalism and its reading list experienced a lack of acceptance. It is a tragic case that ‘Turkish’ identity did not seem suitable to non-Muslim minorities” (1997: 57).

activities as very dangerous for the nation. Such studies, most of which claiming to be scientific and some written as doctoral thesis, portray minority schools as working closely with foreign schools. Most of these studies depict non-Muslim schools as evil and dens of treason. According to their authors, the view towards minority schools changed from the Ottoman era to the Republic era to one in which they were perceived as being in league with “enemies.” Aside from operating as educational foundations, they were places of traitorous missionary activity. Thus minority schools were evaluated by the same standards as foreign schools even though a separate set of criteria was necessary for each.<sup>16</sup> İlknur Polat Haydaroglu discusses why minority schools were categorized as foreign schools (1990: 4). She states that “Under the concept of ‘Foreign Schools’ on Ottoman soil there were those schools organized by non-Muslim communities, schools under the auspices of foreign nations, and schools that foreign nations had directly opened.” The concept that minority schools are the same as foreign schools is shared by many nationalist writers. The book *Education History in Turkey (Türkiye Maarif Tarihi)* written by Osman Ergin plays an important role in promoting this idea.

Ergin’s book is an important reference work for education history academics. Its premise is that foreign and minority schools have the same aims and are harmful and dangerous foundations, notions that have continued for several generations. Academics and researchers such as Nurettin Polvan, Necdet Sevinç, Necmettin Tozlu, M. Hidayet Vahapoğlu, Süleyman Büyükkarcı, İlknur Haydaroglu, Bayram Kodaman and Salahi Sonyel have tried to show that non-Muslims/non-Turks and foreigners and their schools are dangerous. Through their national and nationalistic ideological perspectives these researchers and academics have painted a picture of minorities and minority schools as dangerous for Turks and Turkey. According to them, due to the tolerance of the Turks and the Republic and the gaps in the law, minorities and foreigners and their schools benefit; They are constantly working to destroy Turkey and are continually trying to find every opportunity to do so. According to these writers, despite the good intentions extended to minorities, such as equal citizenship and the great tolerance extended to them, they are abusing the kindness they have been offered. No matter how great the breadth of Turkey’s and the Turks’ tolerance towards minorities is, they are still “foreigners” according to these writers; the legal acceptance of minorities as Turks thus has little meaning. The embracing of Turkishness in deed, however, is not possible either (Tozlu 1991: 211; Kodaman 1991: XII; Sevinç

<sup>16</sup> As demonstrated above, because they were dealt with as one body, a distinction was not made between minority and foreign schools. This is shown to be the case in many of the existing sources. Private foreign schools and minority schools were dealt with as one entity in official sources as well. As a result they were subject to the same laws and regulations. Studies in this area conclude that these are two different schools combined together into one. However, the nationalist literature that describes each minority school as a den of treason and a place of missionary activity is conscious of the fact that these are two different types of schools described as one.

2002: 218; Vahapoğlu 1990: 40; Haydaroglu 1990: 8).<sup>17</sup> It is thus not surprising that nationalist writers lump foreign schools and minority schools together with missionary schools and view them as dangerous and harmful to Turkishness.

There is, however, an important distinction between these nationalist writers and statesmen and state bureaucrats. Statesmen and bureaucrats generally speak of the non-Turkishness of non-Muslims and non-Turks in a round-about manner and in some cases they consider them Turks and equal citizens. This is especially the case in constitutional amendments and other official documents. In this context, nationalist writers feel justified in claiming that non-Muslims and non-Turks are really not Turks and are dangerous and harmful under the premise that they are writing “bravely” and “honestly”.

### *Conclusion: “They” Will not and Cannot be “Us”!*

The Turkish Republic’s particular legal approach to non-Turk and non-Muslim citizens was based on suspicion and the claim that these groups were dangerous. This fear and suspicion was based on events that transpired between the end of the 1800s and the beginning of the 1900s. According to Turkey (and Turks) these were harrowing events that were endured with much difficulty. Through a state paranoia, the prevailing fear and suspicion began permeating laws which seeped into regulations and affected the national education system down to the textbooks and soon every arena was infected with this fear. Possible external and internal security threats were associated with non-Muslims and non-Turks and their potential for treason became a focus of state agencies.

Particular state agency reports reflect the view of the presidency, the Prime Ministry as well as other top agencies that minorities legally recognized as citizens were not actually accepted as Turks (these documents were often given a “secret” stamp of approval). Such reports, which use language that suggests insecurity, offer suggestions on how to Turkify non-Turks and outline Turkification activities for the education system and education foundations. In 1925, the general staff’s Orient Restructuring Plan (*Şark Islahat Planı*) included a requirement that forbade any language other than Turkish and thematically focused on “assimilation into Turkishness through education.” According to this plan, one assimilation method was to carry out education activities in areas where other languages were spoken. The plan stated, “*In regions where Turks are being assimilated into Kurdish culture as well as in Arab speaking areas such as Siirt, Mardin and Savur, Turkish Hearths (Türk Ocakları) and schools must be opened, especially girls schools*” (Yıldız 2001: 247, emphasised by MÇ).

<sup>17</sup> These and other writers of the same milieu make much of the same claims throughout their works. For this reason their entire works have been referenced without page numbers.



On the other hand, in reports presented to Şükrü Saraçoğlu of the Public Inspectors (*Umumî Müfettişlik*), such as İsmet Pasha's "Report on the Kurds", and Prime Public Inspector Abidin Özmen's report, appear many similar dictums to the ones above. Their essence is this: Those who have been accepted as Turks are in reality not Turks. There was never a period when minorities were not considered to be Turkifiable as is apparent by emmigration movements, deportation and penal oriented practices operating in parallel with education policies.

According to reports and plans from various periods, boarding schools, especially those for girls, were to have been opened in provincial centers. These schools were to give special importance to Turkish language instruction and an emphasis on being a Turk in the national sense. Every morning before the start of lessons a flag ceremony was to be held where simple poems were read aloud in unison about Turkishness and its virtues. After some time students were required to speak Turkish and successful students were encouraged with rewards. Upon finishing school some students were sent to western provinces to integrate into Turkish populations and eventually marry and stay in the region. These and similar methods would be impemented to further Turkify non-Turk populations. Male and female teachers from western provinces and of "Turkish race" would be chosen to teach in the east. Administrators would most certainly be required to speak Turkish. Administrators who spoke Kurdish would receive a salary cut as punishment and a repeated offense would result in termination (Öztürk 2007; *Rapor* 1944).

This demonstrates that while state laws emphasize an inclusive position towards non-Turks and non-Muslims they are in reality placed in the "other" category. On the one hand, the state ignored differences in communities through the filter of the law and applied the same requirements to all citizens as it made claims that all were "equal citizens." On the other hand, the state utilized various foundations to monitor and regulate non-Muslims and non-Turks on the premise that they were potentially dangerous. As a consequence, this approach was applied to an entire community. As discussed by Kazamias (1966: 222), this greater community became a symbol of resistance to Atatürk's concept of Turkish nationalism (and as a result to the Turkish nation and the Turkish Republic) in the minds of Turks. In the view of many Turks, minorities are still seen as dangerous and for this reason there is no place for minorities in Turkey. As a result, if the constitution is not clear in places on this matter, state officials claim that non-Turks and non-Muslims are Turks but in reality they are still considered "the foreigners among us." In the other words, as discussed by Ahmet Yıldız (2001: 138), "In official discourse and Kemalist period publications, non-Muslims are not 'real Turks' but 'basic law Turks' (*Kanun-ı Esasî Türkleri*) or 'civil code Turks' (*Kanun-ı Medenî Türkleri*)". But it means little if non-Turks and non-Muslims identify as Turks because, say what they will, in reality they are not Turks and they cannot be Turks. They are foreign and other. This is clearly seen in the education sphere: They (non-Muslims and non-Turks) are "others" living under the



egis and tolerance of Turks in the “Turkish homeland.” Despite the constitution’s emphasis on the inclusion of minorities through such terms as “our [citizens]” the real practice is one of exclusion from the dominant group because “they” carry “treasonous” potential to “harm”, “betray” and are “extensions of powerful [and harmful] external forces.”

(Translated from Turkish by Daniel Auger)

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