

特別寄稿

The Present State of Japanology in Turkey

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Turkish interest in Japan as an ideal-model of modernization goes back to the turn of the twentieth century when the Ottomans first took notice of Japan as a possible strong adversary to combat the perennial domination of European powers in the East. Although Europe has always been the major source of inspirations for the Ottoman steps taken toward reform and self-strengthening since the 18th century, the Ottoman public, for the first time, realized that Japan might be an "alternative" model of modernization sometime in the late Meiji years. The conservative Sultan Abdülhamid II, wary of European intrigues in the Middle East, ordered the preparation of an official report on Meiji Japan, which can be considered as the first Japan-study in Turkey. He sent the Ottoman naval ship, the *Ertuğrul* on an official visit to the Emperor in 1889. On the way back, the visit ended in a great tragedy as the ship which faced great storms, sank along the coast of Japan.

In hindsight, Abdülhamid II can be considered as the first individual who expressed avid interest in Japanese affairs. His comments on Japan in his memoirs reveal an astute understanding of the special character of this island nation. The Sultan explains that Japan is a country safely located at a distant corner of the Pacific. A nation of a single race, a single religion, Japan is a great society that has achieved its national unity. He laments further that if there is one land which hardly resembles it, surely it is "our poor country". The Sultan also admires "Mikado Mutsuhito" for never having had to face such difficulties as himself. While if he had had a small road built in Eastern Anatolia, Russia would have raised a fit! comments the Sultan.

Soon, however, the Japanese victory in the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 was received with an overwhelming response in Turkey. As in many Asian capitals, the event began the enduring interest of the Turkish public toward Japan which was colored with a "distant admiration" in Japanese things that has lasted until today.

However, although the Turkish public has been interested in Japanese affairs for a fairly long time, there has been a paucity of scholarly studies on the subject. Studies on Japan have been limited until recently to a few number of works left by the individual visitors to Japan. The Memoirs of Pertev Demirhan, the general who was an on the spot observer in the Russo-Japanese conflict, is an interesting document primarily

reflective of a military officer's view of the conflict. He also reveals sincere admiration of Meiji Japan's progress. The innumerable number of popular articles, and news-reports on Japanese culture, child education, Japanese women, etc, written during and right after the war, dramatically illustrated the account of the battle front in Port Arthur. Probably, the most interesting and historically significant document among these, however, is *Alem-i İslam*, a two volume memoir-travel account of Abdürreşid İbrahim, an Ottoman-Tatar *ulema* who first set foot in Japan in 1908, then left in 1909 and published his book in Istanbul in 1911. Despite his brief stay, he was to return to Japan around 1933 and live there until his death towards the end of the Second World War when he was buried in Tokyo. Most of the first volume of Abdürreşid's work is a vivid account of the Japan around the turn of the century, the rest of the work is about his experiences in Asia. It gives an inside view into the euphoric self-confidence of the Japanese people linked to the emergence of a new strain of nationalism, now strengthened by the victory at the war. İbrahim reveals the growing political conflict between the more pragmatic conservatism of the old Meiji *Genrō* like Itō, and the growing impatient activism of a younger generation of Asianist-nationalists like Sohō Tokutomi. His interviews with sympathizing aristocrats like the liberal Count Ōkuma and Count Matsuura, reflect their critical stand to the increasing anti-Japanese mood in the West, especially the U. S. A., also advocating a solution to Japan's problems on the Chinese mainland beset with dynastic decline and Chinese nationalism.

Abdürreşid, an *ulema* of Tatar lineage had been born in Siberia, was educated in Mecca-Medina, and lived the life of a typical turn of the century political activist, jailed in St. Petersburg where he had published a liberal newspaper, he spent his life between Istanbul, Germany, and Japan. Working for the cause of Islam, Asianism, he was probably the first missionary for the cause of Islam in Japan. He was also one of the founders of the famous *Toa Dōbunkai* affiliated *Ajia Kyokai*, too.

In Turkey, Abdürreşid İbrahim can also be seen as the beginner of the intellectual interest about Japan. A mentor of the Pan-Islamist intellectuals among Turkish nationalists like Mehmet Akif, İbrahim introduced Japan to a sympathetic Turkish-moslem reading public. His series of articles were published while he was in Japan and later, in the *Sırat-ı Müstakim*, a paper of the Islamist-modernizers opposition to the secular movement of the Young Turks and the Kemalists of Republican Turkey. In hindsight, therefore, the effect of *Alem-i İslam* and his other articles, can be traced in the enduring fascination of the more religiously inclined nationalist, conservative groups in Turkey with Japan. For them, Japan is the motif of a traditionalist discourse on modernization without westernization. Even today, articles of Ahmet Kabaklı of the paper *Tercüman*, or the voluminous popular work on Japan published in 1984 by Mehmet Turgut, a former conservative minister, reveals the same psychological response to Japan

that we find in *Alem-i İslam* of 1911. Thus, for the traditionalist argument, Japan has represented and still represents a romanticized image of an "unadulterated" form of modernization without westernization. Those Turkish nationalists with a strong religion bent, have continued to see Japan as a traditional ethical-cultural world which has avoided identity problems. They and *Alem-i İslam* also prefer to see in Japan a new world which is noteworthy for its ability to organize for political power, unlike many western observers of Japan who have tended to focus on Japanese aesthetics and traditional culture.

A second and more recent interest in Japan as a comparable historical experience emerged amongst the 1960's Marxist discourse on the problem of underdevelopment in Turkish society. Part of a quest for alternative approaches toward Ottoman history, Leftist intellectual trends have always been usually linked to the Europe-centered secular intellectual mainstream in Turkey. But, unlike the rest, for example, Doğan Avcıoğlu whose work '*Türkiye'nin Düzeni*' (The Order of Turkey) in the 60's was a landmark in the intellectual-political debate of recent decades, included a case study of the Meiji experiences as a "revolution model from the top" to illustrate his argument for a Turkish Revolution Model. Noteworthy is the fact that Avcıoğlu used the *Kōzaha* argument of Takahashi stemming from the scholarship of pre-war years. Despite his political differences from the traditionalists, however, Avcıoğlu also used Japanese history to back a present-day political vision, stressing the structures of change rather than those of continuum in this case.

Finally, it is only recently that more specialized study of Japanese language and culture outside of such historical-political interest, has taken place. An important threshold has been the setting up of the first undergraduate Japanology programme in Turkey in the Faculty of Letters of Ankara University during the academic year of 1985/1986. The Sinologist Pulat Otkan, who has conducted extensive research in Tokyo University has also taught Japanese in the Sinology chair which has been in operation since the arrival of the famous German China specialist Wolfram Eberhard in 1936. In 1984, Ankara University initiated steps to set up the Japanology chair. The chair was established with the cooperation of Pulat Otkan and the present writer Selçuk Esenbel (Tözeren), who was specially appointed for this purpose to Ankara from Boğaziçi University of Istanbul. The programme received its first students in 1986, and includes a four year study of language, literature, culture and history. It has also been honored with the visit of H. H. Prince Mikasa to Turkey last year, during which time Japan Foundation also contributed an initial library collection and teaching materials. Presently, professor Masao Mori is a visiting professor as part of a plan to have visiting Japanese scholars, language experts enrich the chair. In Ankara, other Japanese studies activities are concentrated in the efforts of the anthropologist Bozkurt Güvenç of Hacettepe

University, the author of a widely acclaimed work on Japanese culture, the political scientist Mete Tuncoku, a Kyoto University graduate, in Middle East Technical University, specializing in the international affairs of Japan.

In Istanbul, at Boğaziçi University formerly Robert College, Selçuk Esenbel who studied Japanese history in I. C. U. and Columbia University, a Japanese historian by profession, has been teaching Japanese and East Asian history in the Department of History. As part of on going research on Japan and Turkey, a workshop has been held in 1984 on the comparative study of science and society in Japan and Turkey attended by scholars from Japan, Turkey, Canada and the U.S., whose papers are to be published momentarily. Presently, there are also discussions toward setting up a language programme at Boğaziçi University. Other Japan-related activities in Istanbul, are Japanese Language elective courses taught by an experienced Japanese teacher Mariko Erdoğan at Istanbul Technical University and Yıldız University. In addition, the Japanese embassy and consulate also sponsor special Japanese language courses for the public as well.

Though serious work on Japan is still in its infancy in Turkey, recent close contacts between the two countries, especially the Japanese construction of the Second Bosphorus Bridge has, for the first time, truly encouraged interest in Japanese studies in Turkey. For example, in 1984 the Ministry of Education set up a special committee to report on *Japanese Education*. The Report group included most of the Japan experts cited above, and was completed as a detailed, extensive document of about 400 pages. It includes a detailed study of the legal, administrative, educational, historical information on Japanese education today, and was prepared, by the way, two years before the 1986, U. S. Department of Education Report on *Japanese Education*.

In sum, Japanology in Turkey is still in its' beginning stages. However, it is clear that the growth of closer links with Japan are, for the first time, encouraging the development of actual scholarly research on Japan. Yet, the lack of Teaching materials, experts and research funds still makes it very difficult to realize a dramatic increase in the scale of Japanese studies at the moment. Here, it should be added that increasing mutual contacts between Japanese universities such as Kansai University and scholars in Turkey will be of great help in this regard.

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