



## “The Narrative of Religion” in the High School Textbooks of the Early Republican Period in Turkey \*

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### Abstract

Middle of the 20th century, Turkish Republic was entered nation-construction process. It rebuilt its education system in order to create a new and modern society. Within this scope, one of the main goals of history education was to form a “national identity” and create a “sense of belonging based on ethnicity and language”, as was that of the language education. Most important thing about this identification process is to pass secular identity in spite of traditional religious identity. For secular identity construct religious thought were discussed. This study dealt with the nature of “religious debates” observed in Türk Tarihi'nin Ana Hatları Methal Kısmı (Prolegomena to an Outline of Turkish History) and Tarih I-IV (History I-IV) textbooks, which were among the influential history education instruments of that period, and the reasons for such debates. To this end, the above-mentioned high school history textbooks were subjected to document analysis and discourse analysis. The construction of evaluations made on the phenomenon of religion and the Islam in the relevant textbooks was focused on besides the intellectual infrastructure reflected by this organization. In this context, the suitability of inclusion of religious debates in the high school history textbooks in terms of history education was discussed. As a result it was observed that in spite of religious thought, positivist, naturalist, Darwinist etc. Thought were used to shed religious thought. And was wanted from students to have task awareness by political reaction and using religion for political speech. It was aimed to build secular social structure identity.

### Keywords

History education  
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### Introduction

Education from the 19th century with the arrival of the expansion of the size and mass of political power has continued to increase the interest in textbooks. Social knowledge, attitudes, beliefs and values in the next generation by passing through textbooks loyalty, obedience, and has tried to build a sense of belonging (Doğan, 1994, p. 13-15). Thus, reaching millions of students to maintain social order, and to transmit cultural values needed to determine the various norms that aims to

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ensure legitimacy (İnal, 1996, p. 13). Indeed mandatory reading within the scope of textbooks and curricula in principle the public interest to serve the anticipated because of these "controversial" is rarely allowed and transferred thinking through inquiry does not require a collective memory is constructed (Copeaux, 1998; Van Dijk, 1994; Gürses, 2010). Especially, with the intellectual atmosphere that changed after the French Revolution, king, dynasty, and heroes, which were the subjects of historical narrative in the 18th century, started to be replaced by the stories of nations as a result of romantic and nationalist approaches. European historians embarked on the quest of origin in order to provide nation states with an institutional identity and a historical continuity, and needed history (Safran, 2008, p. 15). According to Tekeli, nation states laid the function of forming a national identity on historiography. "The selection of a new subject and creating an 'other' opposing it", "the narrative nature of historiography", and "the adoption of idiographic understanding in history and geography" made this function easier respectively (Tekeli, 2007, p. 150). As of that period, both historiography and history education became academic disciplines, which aimed to create a historical consciousness decorated with the dominant perceptions of modernity as well as a national consciousness among students (Tekeli, 2004). These perceptions of modernity essentially took shape based on the assumption that historical development would continue with "modernization" and "rationalization" step by step as the time advanced. A *single history* perception involving the Modern Western world was accepted (Iggers, 2007, p. 4). This perception is based on interpreting the "past" phenomena and events to understand the society one lives in, that is "now", and building a new "future" based on such interpretation. Historical consciousness was based on the idea that societies progressed on a single linear line from past to now and to future, and found its shape in the narrative history. Attaching a great importance to history in the formation of a national identity, this approach considers historical consciousness equivalent to national consciousness.

Among the general purposes of history education in societies at nation state stage are to know and introduce the history of nation, to stress that it has a historical continuity, and to illustrate its distinctive characteristics that make it different from other nations. In other words, it is aimed to create a sense of "belonging" individuals by ensuring the legitimacy of society and new state or regime. It is possible to say that the ideology-education relationship took a new status as state shifted from the position of "legitimate monopoly of violence" to the position of "legitimate monopoly of education" after the French Revolution. In this regard, history education was extremely instrumentalized, and charged with the function of building an identity and socializing. By this means, academic platforms about historiography and history education were opened, various organizations were constructed, and the theses to be used in creating the historical consciousness were put forward. Ancient regime was rejected especially in the societies which gained their independencies from empires, or which made an effort for building a new state and a new identity though they had the residues of empire. Thus, a tension-line emerged between this "break" and the "continuity" attempted to be ensured. The metaphor of "dark age" was used for highlighting the break instead of "undesired past", while the metaphors of "golden age" or "lost heaven" in the remote past were used for stressing continuity. For instance, in Turkey, the utmost importance was attached to the history of Central Asian Turkish history in that period. The spread of this civilization across the world through big Turkish migration served as the beginning of "continuity". By this means, an attempt was made for emphasizing historical continuity, and it was paid attention to establishing a bond between "remote past-old motherland" and "recent past-current motherland". With the above-mentioned "break" thought, it was aimed to get rid of the Ottoman traditional structures, institutions, and ideas, and to head for a "Western", "secular", and "modern" society. In this regard, debates on what kind of a place the religion (Islam), which had shaped the traditional structure, could (not) have in the socio-political field were reflected in every field.

This study examines whether narratives of religion were included in the historical consciousness that was tried to be built in the Republican Turkey, which was an empire residual and whose philosophical background was shaped by the final period Ottoman intellectual world, and, if they were, the reasons for the inclusion of these narratives. To this end, the manner of establishing a

relationship between religious thought and the thought of “modern society under the guidance of mind and science”, which could be considered one of the basic propositions of the Turkish History Thesis, one of the most important steps in the pre-Republic period for building an identity, was examined through history textbooks of that period. It goes without saying that a brief description of the intellectual world in the early period of Republic will be beneficial for making sense of all efforts and the intellectual world behind such efforts.

### *The Nature of the Early Republican Period Ideology*

The dominant way of thinking in the early Republican period included a radical process of secularization, an ethnicity-based nationalism, and a quite comprehensive authoritarian centralism. This ideology can be defined as a state mechanism that rejects Islam and tradition on the whole, favors partially ethnical, but cultural homogeneity to the full extent, and covers everything (Yeğen, 2006, p. 58). Also called Kemalism, this ideology believes that democratization cannot be achieved without a positivist progress idea and a scientific and rationalist cultural development through economic development and education. In this context, a field of application was found for modernization, which was set as a target, by saving it from being a utopia, and Western society was taken as model (Köker, 2006, p. 107). Zürcher (2006, p. 54) describes the nature of the ideology of the early Republican period as “a preference of society based on the emphasis of secularism, opposition to ulama, but at the same time the need for the role of an intellectual elite group for science, education, and the transformation of society, regular reforms, progress, and solidarity”. Also highlights that this way of thinking, which can also be considered positivist, finds itself in the concepts of opposition to ulama, scientism, biological materialism, authoritarianism, elitism, lack of confidence in common people, and Darwinism.

Kemalist modernism can be evaluate formwesternisation and nation –state aim.so it will be a new society building that aim is to become the same with modern civilization. The main purpose for the republicans is to raise secular republican and contemporary citizens. To graze from “Ottoman – Islamicbackground thought” was used to otherize recent past (Aydın, 2006, p. 344). This endeavor, which we may also express as a “break,” appears in the form of a project towards the “nullification” of the most vital tradition in terms of giving society a coherent identity and towards the creation of an organic bond with the distant past. When questions of “continuity” and “legitimacy” arise as an outcome of this process of marginalization, attempts are made to surpass them through the identification of ancient Anatolian peoples with Turks, as well as the introduction of pre-Islamic Turkish culture.

The new regime, in the early stages of its inception, distanced itself from international movements such as Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism, and defined itself in terms of an ethnocentric nationalism in opposition to the monarchy and the caliphate. This mentality, which is also called Kemalist nationalism, made attempts to change the object of loyalty and submission from the monarchy-caliphate duo (as was the case in the past) to that which is territorial. With the discouragement of “pan- movements” in the transition from the empire to the republic, the project of state-centric reformation (which had begun with the Tanzimat) assumed a radical character the aim of which was the achievement of a total change and transformation. The question of salvaging the state, which had previously been thought of in terms of the solutions inspired by the “Üç Tarzı Siyaset” of Yusuf Akçura, instead assumed a territorial aspect interlaced with an ethnocentric mentality which is symbolically reflected in the word “Turk”(Yıldız, 2006, p. 211). In addition, the notion of “civilization through secularism” found a field of application in the policies of the Republican cadres and, coupled with nationalism, banished religion out of social and political life (Mert, 2006, p. 198).

### *The Conception of History in the Early Republican Period*

The great majority of the discussions which transpired during the process of Turkish modernization concerned individual and societal identity and as such had a direct influence on the education of history. The “Eurocentric” and “pro-Enlightenment” understanding of history, which had begun with the Tanzimat and increasingly gained prominence, was slowly replaced by a

“national history” towards the end of the Second Constitutional Era. This mentality was especially predominant in primary schools but was not yet fully reflected in high school curricula (Toprak, 2012, p. 238). High school history textbooks written in this period were focused on the French Revolution (in line with their positivist and pro-Enlightenment perspective) and the subject of Turkishness was generally covered within the context of European relations, in a comparative manner. The sense of national history which was beginning to be taught in primary schools was rooted in Islamic subjects. The sacred narratives which explained how humans were created and how they dispersed all around the world (previously considered to be Classical Age topics) were generally supplanted by the history of civilization with the advent of the Second Constitutional Era (Toprak, 2012, p. 355).

Moving towards the Republican period, historical studies were seen to be directly intertwined with identifying and understanding that which is “national” and, in order to fulfill the nationalist ideals of the time, attempts were made to imbue the national identity with meaning (Ersanlı, 2003, p. 801). It is general knowledge that the sense of history prevalent during the early Republican period was shaped by a Eurocentric perspective. According to this perspective, a great mass of human beings (Turks included) were categorized as “inferior races.” That these masses were incapable of writing history and creating civilization was presented as an “indisputable fact.” The founding cadre, inspired as they were by this dominant perspective, attempted to prove before all else that Turks indeed belong to this civilization-creating category (Aydın, 2006, p. 358) and that they indeed were members of the brachycephalic Arian race, having preserved their purity and continuity in terms of race and descent.

Under the influence of the Eurocentric understanding of civilization as created by modernity, the sentiment of “historical belatedness” which came to the fore among Republican ideologues created a profound sense of “anxiety” in cultural politics. It may be said that this anxiety defined every psychological, intellectual, and theoretical defense mechanism devised in order to escape from it (Koçak, 2006, p. 371). Calamities such as the '93 War, the Balkan Wars, the defeat in World War I and the content of the treaties made in its aftermath, miscellaneous territorial partitions and separatist movements, the invasion of Anatolia by Greeks (who were ruled by Ottomans for centuries) with the support of Western powers left their mark in the collective memory and this state of trauma led the Republican cadres to develop a defensive psychology. The claims made by various nations on Anatolian geography gave rise to the question of “primordality” and attempts were made to prove this state of “autochthony” with the Turkish History Thesis (THT) in a “scientific” manner. With this thesis Turkish history was alienated from Islamic history and the Islamic past was constructed as a “dark age.” The fundamental concern of the thesis is to cast Turks as the eternal root, the creative race, the ancestry of the entire civilizations well as the original “autochthonous” race on Anatolian geography. There was also an attempt at deconstructing religion by explaining its emergence from a background of positivism and biological Darwinism. The notion that “the nation is the apex of the biological evolution which proceeds from the simplest to the most complex,” which is one of the fundamental references of social Darwinism, has deeply influenced THT (Aydın, 2006, p. 347).

Standing at the threshold of a cultural revolution, the Turkey of the Republican period adapted the anthropological accumulation deriving from such a racial understanding of history (as prevalent to the highest degree in Europe at that period) to the THT and entered a process of “alternative Enlightenment,” owing to a sense of deep disillusionment and anger at the West (Toprak, 2012, p. 204). The purpose of this process was nothing else than the effort to invert the negative and condescending outlook of the West towards Turkishness and to prove that Turks indeed had a civilized identity (and that they belonged to the Anatolian geography).

“The past” played a pivotal role in the attempts at the creation of the “new man” and the “new people” which were aimed at by the Republican regime. It is general knowledge that “the past” has always been a source of romanticism for nationalisms, mystified and transformed into a significant concept in the creation of an organic bond among people who live on the same soil “at present” through ample references to their common history, memories, heroic exploits, sorrows, and joys. “The past” in this context has been constructed anachronically and a-historically in order to legitimize “the present,” which in turn has defined Turkishness from past to present on a secular basis in historical narrative (Aydın, 2006, p. 349). With the rejection of the Ottoman-Islamic past and its replacement by a distant Asian variety, a desire to construct the transition into a primordial Turkish identity which was nevertheless “already secular” came to the fore in the THT with an anachronical and a-historical approach. The general claim was that Turks are the ancestors of civilization itself and that they spread this civilization to the corners of the globe through migrations, suggesting that Western civilization was indeed established by Turks who were already “natural members” of the contemporaneous civilization towards which they aspired. To counter the then-popular European thesis including the mentality that “civilization may be only established by advanced races, as a consequence of which the inferior races which do not belong to the brachycephalic Arian race cannot be the creators and conveyors of civilization”, the afore-mentioned THT strove to prove the hypothesis that “we too belong to this race.” Finally, to counter the Greek and Armenian claims on Anatolia, it was argued that Anatolia had already been Turkish since the Neolithic ages with reference to Hittite, Sumerian, and Lydian civilizations.

In this study it was aimed to show the situation of the religion at the Early Republic Period history thought by history textbooks. For this purpose, it has been examined how a relation has been established between considered one of the basic propositions of Turkish History Thesis which is the most important steps of early republican period’s identity construction “contemporary society under the guidance of science and reason” and religious thought. When literature has been scanned, it makes the study important because there has not been encountered any study regarding with religious narrative in history textbooks.



## Method

This study examines the arguments on religion in a series of high school textbooks, *Prolegomena to an Outline of Turkish History* and *History I – IV*, which were taught in the high schools as textbooks in the 1930s and which were taken to be reflective of early Republican ideology. The qualitative research approach was used in this study. According to the qualitative research approach known as there is a political nature of social research and is presented through a number of specific discourses or ideologies. The purpose of qualitative research to look at a situation in a holistic and in depth, to understand complex information in their own context. Because this kind of research on the social behavior of people in general, here searched a "real" context can not be assessed independently from. In other words, it is important to transfer all of the picture in qualitative research (Punch, 2005). Such studies are depend on the method of understanding the complexity, details and context. The main purpose hidden in between the lines or various implications is to disclose content (Kuş, 2003).

### *Data Collection Tool*

Document analysis as data collection techniques were used in this study. Document analysis has as its subject the materials that are informative of the subjects being investigated. Especially in researches related to education, textbooks, curricula and various correspondences are used as a data source. Such researches allows to enlarge the sample with respect to any matters that spread to a wide time period (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008).

### *Analysis of Data*

Qualitative content analysis was used for data analysis in the study. Qualitative content analysis systematically divide and examines the researches data in a phased manner. The dimensions of analysis is determined previously by the classification of the material in various ways . Data are reviewed and appropriate term to the existing list of categories, sentence or paragraph will be added when found after the categories defined (Mayring, 2011, p. 117-119). The main purpose of this analysis is to be understood the situation by reducing the data in complex text. So, have been improved the ability of researchers to interpret data (Altunışık, Coşkun, Bayraktaroğlu & Yıldırım, 2005, p. 258).

Available data has been studied to separate into meaningful sections previously created in the coding phase of data. These sections are sometimes a word, a sentence or a paragraph, sometimes the whole page too. This section indicating a significant coherence within itself named in several ways, in other words, thematically coded (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008, p. 236). For the purposes of such studies, identity-creating factors that occur in textbooks may be examined after being compartmentalized into categories such as *us and others*, *race and descent*, *ethnocentric nationalism*, *nation*, *homeland*, *tools of legitimization*, *religion* etc. This study focuses on the category of religion. The method of *thematic coding* has been implemented to understand how (and using what kind of themes) discussions on religion were structured in such texts. The narrative of religion has been compartmentalized into the following subthemes in the manner of thematic coding: scientist, positivist, Darwinist, naturalist, secularism, marginalization, and re-actionism (the political misuse of religion). Comments and statements which were thought to be relevant in terms of religious discourses were assorted according to the subthemes and provided as direct excerpts. Attempts were made to assign meaning and interrelation to some of the words and sentences (as well as other kinds of significations) which occurred in these excerpts and thus to detect the references, the supplementary and/or secret meanings of the text.

## Results and Discussion

**Finding 1.** The books examined evince the development of a pro-Enlightenment, scientist discourse against religious thought.

It is well known that the philosophy of the Enlightenment had a serious influence on the ideological characteristics of the early Republican period. The most recognizable objectives of Enlightenment philosophy was to liberate human beings from every kind of religious thought and belief (such as myth and superstition) and to usher them from the religion- dominated traditional order to a good and libratory order of reason (and from the ethnocentric worldview to an anthropocentric one). This influence was also reflected in the process of historiography and history education which were instrumentalized for the purposes of identity-building. Below is an excerpt from *Prolegomena to an Outline of Turkish History*:

*“When religious orders supplanted civilization and when libraries and observatories were crowded out by dervish lodges, the very location of this observatory was forgotten. Every conscious Turk who visits the observatory, upon beholding such a stupendous monument to science which is the product of unmixed Turkish genius, feels a profoundly Turkish pride. This observatory is a shining example of what Turks are capable of when they are not the victims of bigotry and ignorance. The scientific monuments of Turkistan are by no means limited to this observatory”*(TTTH, 1931a, p. 31). Here the emphasis is on the opposition between the words “observatory” and “library” on one hand and words such as “dervish lodge,” “bigotry” and “ignorance” on the other. The words “observatory” and “library” refer to the splendor of the civilization in Central Asia and how scientifically advanced it was. The emphasis on ethnocentric expressions such as “Turkish genius” and “Turkish pride” are meant to inspire confidence in students. Meanwhile, the crowding out of libraries by dervish lodges refers to the notion that “bigotry and ignorance” predominated the Ottoman-Islamic past (evoking the scholastic traditions of mediaeval Europe). Similar statements are to be found below:

*“...the year of 1923... in the laws-related clause of the nine principles, which were published after the new election, the following statement was declared: ‘Our laws will be reformed and reinforced anew in line with the requirements of national needs and at the suggestions of legal science. In the arrangement of all laws, organizations of every kind shall act in accordance with the principles of national sovereignty. From these sentences it was lucidly understood that legal and judiciary reformation and revolution were at hand, that the theocratic method was abandoned, that the scholastic method was wholly discarded, and that new forms in accordance with the national constitution and national needs would be codified within democratic principles”* (TTTH, 1931e, p. 206). For the author, the aim was to restrict religious power in social and governmental life, and to ensure the implementation of the secular system of thought, which was assumed to be harmonious with the national character. A similar statement is as follows: *“on one hand a Sharia law, organized to be in accordance with the social character and the needs of a people who led nomadic lives in the deserts of the Arabian peninsula no less than thirteen and a half centuries ago... on the other hand the ‘Mecelle’, a corpus of laws comprised of half Arabic, half Islamic regulations...”*(TTTH, 1931e, p. 205).

The phrases “Arabic” and “the nomadic lives in the deserts” refer to the nomadic lifestyle and the state of ignorance they are in while the emphasis on “Sharia” attempts to illustrate just how distant the Ottoman order was to science, with its religious identity. In addition, the use of the ellipsis at the end of the sentence introduces a chronological and narrative interruption which leaves the desired comment open to the imagination of the student.

In this way of thinking science is the fundamental basis and, elevated to a transcendentalist position, becomes the sole and unique confirmer of objective reality. To give an example, an emphasis is put in the following statement on just what an ignorant position it is to be against Darwinian Theory: *“Students who were punished because they mentioned Darwin’s theory of evolution, teachers who were expelled from their jobs and relieved of their duties were witnessed in this period as well”* (TTTH, 1931e, p. 244). It is general knowledge that various shifts in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Europe such as the transition into

an industrial society, attempts at modernization, and nationalist movements facilitated significant social changes. Materialistic and positivist ways of thinking evolved as a consequence and science outmoded religious explanations (Alkan, 2007, p. 21). The way of thinking was effected Ottoman intellectuals and statesmen. And it was resource of the negative thought about traditional identity structure for Republicans. About this thought only mind is important and there is no intuition (Işın, 1985, p. 363; Akgün, 2007, p. 4). And this way of thinking was reflected to the history textbooks.

**Finding 2.** The books examined evince the development of a positivist discourse against religious thought.

In the textbooks thereby examined, attempts are made to explain how notions of creation and faith in God came into being. To this end, the human intellect is taken as the fulcrum of the argument. To give an example, it is said that: *“all knowledge and faith are the product of the human intellect. Intelligence proceeds out of natural minds. What follows in not only that the intellect is the most important agent and essence in the understanding of nature but also that all conceptions that are above or exterior to nature can be nothing but the inventions of the human intellect itself”* (TTTH, 1931b, p. 2). Another example is as follows: *“these common conventions and convictions created certain intellectual and emotional bonds among people and motivated common thought and common action in them. Today we call this phenomenon religion”* (TTTH, 1931b, p. 23). A statement of the similar kind is as follows: *“It was commonly thought, not even two centuries ago, that the world was made five or six thousand years ago and that Man was created in a paradise which is to be found by the river Euphrates, in two days’ distance to Basra. These opinions arose from the assumption that everything narrated in the religion books happened to be factual. But now it is understood that life on earth did not arise six thousand but several millions of years ago”* (TTTH, 1931b, p. 3). The discourse delineated above attempts to express that religion books are written by human beings and that it is “scientifically” proven that fantastical tales comprise much of their content, that those who believe in them are adopting a position contrary to science. In the same manner, it was said: *“Slowly, atavistic fears were transferred into a fear of the “tribal deity” ... Atavistic fears in humans were intermixed with a fear towards dangerous animals. As a consequence, theriomorphic aspects were symbolically attributed to this ‘elevated ancestor’ who constitutes the nucleus of the notion of God.”* (TTTH, 1931b, p. 23). Here, “fear” plays a central role in the psychological attempts to explain how faith in “God” originates. The primary goal of the discourses quoted above seem to be, first and foremost, the displacement of “religion” as the most fundamental constituent of identity in the society which was a residual of the Ottoman Empire.

One of the main arguments of positivism is that the only valid instrument with which to apprehend objective reality is reason and that everything to fall outside the scope of reason is to be considered as metaphysics devoid of objective reality. An example is as follows: *“...according to these fabrications Abraham had brought his wife Hagar and his son Ishmael to that spot and zamzam had sprouted from the earth for them; Abraham, together with his son Ishmael, had built the Kaaba. Gabriel had then brought them the Black Stone which used to be radiant and white; the stone darkened later because of sinners rubbing their hands against it. These are all fables fabricated at later dates.”* (TTTH, 1931c, p. 85). The words “fabricated” and “fable,” along with the use of the reported past tense, intimate to the students that such discourses have no objective reality and that they are fabricated because they cannot be scientifically proven. The crux of this argument is the representation of religion as a set of superstitions to be combated in the transition from the metaphysical to the positivist phase, as described in the “three styles of politics.”

Following such statements about the emergence of the notion of God and the “superstitions” within Islam, the books examined move on to a similar subject: whether the religion of Islam originated from revelation or whether it began and developed as a product of human reason.

*“There are many constructed details added later to the information on Mohammad’s childhood and youth; more information is available regarding his life once he began to convert his citizens... Mohammad, when he was forty years old, began to invite his citizens to a religion which he devised himself and assumed to be*



*true.*" (TTTH, 1931c, p. 86). The expressions found here, "which he devised himself" and "assumed to be true" suggest that they are indeed to be assumed as such. In a similar vein, the use of the word "constructed" in this explanation attempts to intimate that the source of religious thought is not God but man. That the author avoids the conventional honorific titles attached to Mohammad's name may likewise be considered to be of critical value in revealing his preferences and attitude. This phenomenon, according to Toprak (2012, p. 255), was a consequence of the *anticlerical* winds storming through the world in the aftermath of the World War I which exerted their influence on a Turkey orienting itself towards the West. Within this context, religious sentiments were beginning to be questioned in the aftermath of the war. This effect also made itself felt in the books of History. As a result of this phenomenon, phrases such as "our illustrious lord and Prophet Mohammad" found in the history textbooks of the Constitutional Era in the 1910s were replaced by a simple "Mohammad" following the breaking point of the 1930s. A statement similar to this religious break proceeds to explain Mohammad in the following worldly terms:

*"Mohammad did not proclaim himself to be the Messenger of Allah all of a sudden. He had perceived that Arabic morality and tradition were quite deleterious and primitive and in urgent need of reform. In order to actualize such a reformation he withdrew from the world into the wilderness and contemplated for years. After the contemplative period, notions of revelation and inspiration occurred to him. Such notions were not unknown to the Arabs prior to Mohammad. Like all primitive tribes, Arabs also believed that poets drew inspiration from powers which they might not comprehend. These powers, to the Arabian imagination, were the djinns. Creeds of this sort had always been so deep and vivid in Arabia that even Mohammad himself genuinely believed in the existence of the djinns. He was of the candid opinion that djinns inspired the poets. The things Mohammad learned about the religions of Moses and Jesus had reinforced this creed in him. These prophets had also claimed that they were receiving revelation through the agency of angels (TTTH, 1931b, p. 91). The statement, "even Mohammad himself genuinely believed," refers to the assumption that Mohammad was free of worldly ambition and that he originated a religion in genuine faith. The text does not accuse Mohammad outright but conveys to the students the feeling that he was "misguided."*

The following statements are made in the textbooks in order to reinforce the discourse quoted above: *"In order to comprehend just what kind of an originator of religion and a religious head of state Muhammad was, it is of particular importance to analyze his military activities. Otherwise it will be impossible to escape the error of reducing Muhammad to an illiterate, ignorant, motionless, and insensate idol to whom everything was revealed by an angel and who conveyed all these to his entourage verbatim. On the contrary, the personage called Muhammad proved, through his works, that he was a very ingenious and adept man: indeed the most excellent of his contemporaries"* (TTTH, 1931b, p. 93). Here the primary concern is to answer how an individual might have founded such a complex and powerful religion. An attempt is made to allay this anxiety through an emphasis on how the prophet of Islam was a genius, a man of high intellect. It is seen that the general purpose of the statements quoted above is to shift the answer to the question of the origination of religion from "God" to "man." As seen the history textbooks sheltered discursive speeches were searched.

In some other passage, the following expressions deal with how religious submission is a product of fear and how this fear suddenly vanishes when the power behind it diminishes:

*"What a lesson it is that at the very moment of Mohammad's passing, all of the ancient hostility, ambition, and lust for power was suddenly unfettered, and to such an extent that the still-warm body of the feared and venerated Prophet was forgotten in the simple room in which he breathed his last breath, neglected... Nor could Abu Bakr and Omar attend his funeral ceremony. Apparently their political occupations were so essential and necessary at that moment that nobody in Arabia had either the time or the desire to deal with the funeral of the mighty owner and ruler of Arabia."* (TTTH, 1931b, p. 115). *"For the tribes who were living under the power of Medina, it was not thus. That is because these people had been the subjects of Mohammad owing not to any kind of religious sentiment but because they had feared the military and political prowess of Mohammad. Accordingly, they considered their subjection to be a kind of servitude and anticipated the day of their freedom."* (TTTH, 1931b, p. 116). With romantic expressions as indicated above, the reason behind

the consolidation of religious loyalty and Islam are presented as political ambitions and fear, as opposed to faith. There is emphasis on the idea that religious feeling is manipulated as an instrument towards the procurement of advantages. In a similar fashion, statements such as, "*The vague spiritual fancies of the people have made it possible for certain kinds of covetous, intelligent, competent or fraudulent individuals to assume the positions of the wizard, the priest, and the king*" (TTTH, 1931b, p. 124) refer to the "present" and attempt to solidify the idea of "the political misuse of religion." The students are reminded of the subtext that in every time and era there will be people to manipulate religion for political ends and that they should carry out the duties incumbent upon them when they encounter situations of this kind.

What is to be inferred from all these discourses is that attempts were made towards the "nullification" of the visibility of religious sentiment and institutions through the use of historical textbooks during the early stages of the Republic. It was furthermore argued that religious phenomena belonged to the individual conscience and private places of worship, and efforts were made towards the remolding of religion through of a discourse of reformism. After the banishment of religion out of the socio-political arena through this positivist operation (Yıldız, 2006, p. 222), the void which emerged in the communal identity (defined as it was decorated by religious sentiments for centuries) was filled by a profane *Turkishness*.

**Finding 3.** The books examined evince the development of a naturalist discourse.

The books examined for the purposes of this study express a "natural order" as opposed to a "divine order" as part of their opposition to religious thinking. The relationship between the universe and the human is explained in accordance with natural laws: "*Thus nature is both the unity among the component entities of the universe and simultaneously their movement or force which is subject to cosmic laws. Nature therefore is both the maker and the subject of the same laws. This is analogous to how the nation is also the state and in that aspect the maker and executor of laws, but also itself the subject of such laws. When all entities are understood to be at once the components of nature and the subjects of natural laws, it becomes clear that no animate creature and nor even a human being can be exterior to and excepted from nature ... In truth man is the creature of nature. And the grand principle of life is subjection to nature. There can be no creation ex nihilo in nature, nor total annihilation. All that ever happens is when the entities which comprise nature, in accordance with natural laws, change their appearances. In the scrutiny and analysis of life and the world, this truth is supremely transparent.*" (TTTH, 1931b, p. 2). With discourses of this kind, an attempt is made to cultivate a spirit of inquiry against all religious thoughts and establishments in the students. In addition, in order to augment the idea of constructing a secular society with the use of scientific explanations, the desire to shift the loyalty felt for traditional and religious references becomes apparent.

**Finding 4.** The books examined evince the development of a Darwinist discourse against religious thought.

As a statesman who ascribed the utmost importance to historical studies and who attended congresses on history quite frequently, Atatürk was of the opinion that the understanding of history prevalent in the early years of the Republic had to be radically altered. Among the books he read regarding history, French books were in the majority. But we may say that the book which left the greatest impression on him was *The Outline of History* by H. G. Wells, which was on the subject of world history. The effect was to such extent that the very name of the book is reflected in the title of *A Prolegomena to the Outline of Turkish History*, published by the solemn guidance and support of Atatürk and published by *Turkish Historical Society*. The book was based on a critique of the West and dwelled in particular detail on the subjects of imperialism, socialism, and Darwinism. Many branches of science were made use of in the writing of the book, which is to say, "a total understanding of history" was adopted. In order to construct a secular social structure, it was necessary to expunge the understanding of history from all religious elements and to establish various subjects, such as the evolution of man, on scientific foundations (and thus make the criticism of religion and God possible).

The theory of evolution was to be covered in all textbooks for a period of ten years (Toprak, 2012, p. 360-362).

Notions of biological materialism, imported during the process of modernization and extremely influent upon the Ottoman-Turkish intelligentsia (and ultimately bequeathed to the Republican period), adhered closely to the theory of evolution and instrumentalized this theory in its struggle against God and creationism. An example to this way of thinking is as follows: *“The source of all information obtainable hitherto regarding life is the ‘registry of rocks.’ According to this (paleontological) registry, the oldest rocks evince no sign of life whatsoever. The first signs of life to appear after aeons are very simplistic things. Small shells, the stems of seaweeds et cetera ... next to emerge were the fish of the sea ... in a great many ways, animals began to move out of the sea and into the land. These were the amphibious animals. They lived in the swamps of the land”* and *“A new succession of animals evolved. They lived not in swamps but between rocks, crawling on the ground ... grasslands emerged in terra firma. Herbivorous animals evolved to graze on these pastures. Some of these animals were moving in packs and studying each other, imitating each other, understanding the motions and vocalizations of each other. These animals, evincing the very beginnings of a social life, were to be found for the first time on earth ... Ugly and crude generations slowly evolved into the sophisticated mammals of today. To be found at the top of this class of animals are, in that order, monkeys, tailless monkeys and finally humans”* (TTTH, 1931b, p. 3). In a similar vein, anthropological approaches based on the theory of evolution were maintained: *“in any case, it is necessary to accept that life is the product of a material and natural journey immanent to the world, of chemical and physical basis, transpiring without the intervention of any agents whatsoever ... all these in turn derive from the first life-form, the primitive cell ... the human being, at the zygotic and foetal stages of its life, resembles a fish ... then metamorphose into some forms reminiscent of crawling animals ... repeats the constitutions of the simpler mammals, even possesses a tail for a period of time ... to sum up, humans have come to their present form through a very slow process of evolution which began with a living substance simmering in the waters”* (TTTH, 1931b, p. 5) and *“the creature depicted as the ancestor of mankind was an agile creature hiding among the rocks. This creature was capable of climbing trees with ease and holding items between the two bigger toes on each foot”* (TTTH, 1931b, p. 6). Statements of this kind were included in order to emphasize the fact that humans had evolved out of primates and thus refute creationism on a scientific basis, which in turn would constitute a break from religious identity. This is in contrast with the school textbooks of earlier periods in which narratives regarding the birth of mankind were included and subsumed under the subcategories of “Creation” and “The Deluge” (Toprak, 2012, p. 354). It may be said that a deconstruction of religion was attempted through the replacement of religious themes and explanations with Darwinist discourses.

The most significant feature of the “cultural revolution” of the 1930s was its embedding of science onto a non-religious axis. This secular understanding was also reflected in the perception of history. The reflection manifested itself as adherence to a Darwinist line and in the *“identification of the evolution of mankind with the creation of the Turkish identity”* (Toprak, 2012, p. 285). This evolutionist thought was adapted to the society and a quest into the depths of history, for the purposes of finding the primordial unity which was thought to contain the national essence, a kind of fellowship and common culture to be used in the definition of a nation, was undertaken. Attempts were made to reveal the cultural continuity and fortitude of *the present nation* for the sake of proving its legitimacy via a Social Darwinist understanding. These arguments were eventually used in issues of racial purity and came to occupy an important place in the historical studies of physical anthropology. The German thesis, “cultural continuity is also ethnic continuity,” came to the fore during the archaeological and anthropological studies of the early Republican period and became one of the prime agents to define the THT. Another axiom by German historians, “the nation is the apex of the biological evolution which proceeds from the simplest to the most complex” (Ayдын, 2006, p. 346-347) became one of the intellectual cornerstones of historical textbooks (as it also happens to be one of the most fundamental references of Social Darwinist thought). It is possible to paraphrase Social Darwinism, which consists of the application of the theory of evolution (which may be explained as the evolution of living organisms as a consequence of the struggle for survival and natural selection and through the

accumulation of the competences they acquire thereby) into social events and phenomena, in the following words:

*“As the vocabulary of the language expanded, the powers of narrative and commentary available to the human being increased. They began to narrate some stories concerning themselves, their tribes, the world and everything else. In this manner, a tribal mentality and tradition were developed. This situation deprived human beings of the opportunity to entertain a voluntary freedom of thought and opinion and doomed them to accept certain notions and suggestions verbatim. It is seen that humans had to sacrifice some of their individuality after this development. Mankind, even today, follows the same path.”* (TTTH, 1931b, p. 23). *“The feelings of fear and weakness progressively diminished following the enlightenment of the human mind with the last and newest scientific discoveries. Humans began to see the truth with much more lucidity. The human being became capable of comprehending his own inner strength, as well as the social strength of the community of which he was a member. The source of all tranquility and maturation and security for him shall henceforth be his community”* (TTTH, 1931b, p. 23). “Feelings of fear and weakness” were associated with the birth process of religion in earlier commentary. Explained herein is the transition from “God” to “community” and that such fears are now allayed within the community as a consequence of social advancement and progress.

**Finding 5.** Secularism is constructed anachronically in the books examined.

Secularism, one of the essential principles of Kemalism, has been defined as a form of organization which encompasses scientific principles and regulations for the purpose of creating a Westernized social life based on national sovereignty. This is accomplished through the expulsion of religious elements out of the political arena and the secularization of the state apparatus (Çelik, 2006, p. 85). To prove it, the *religiosity* of the Ottoman past was marginalized. The Ottoman period was constructed as a dark age while the Asiatic past of the Turks was evaluated anachronistically: *“During the reign of Akbar, the Turkish state was a lover of liberty in all aspects ... The official religion of the state back in that time period was Islam. Akbar, through the separation of religious and state affairs, ensured the freedom of conscience of individuals and the equal protection of all faiths. In order to bring harmony among the various peoples of India, he even originated a special religion which accepted no priestly class and which demanded nothing more than a simple and clean life”* (TTTH, 1931c, p. 338). That is to say, these texts emphasized the legitimacy of the revolutions which were underway based on the grounds that ancient Turks already had a secular way of thinking. The statements, *“A glimpse into the oldest periods of Turkish history reveals that the Turkish Nation perceived the necessity and the importance of separating religion and creed from affairs of state and politics at a very early stage. This was the product of a sophisticated notion... in the Turkish States founded several millennia BC, all individuals were free to practice their religion and creed ... that Huns, Cumans, Avarsetc ... should attempt to convert the people they conquered or that they should mix affairs of religion and state ... was unheard of”* (TTTH, 1931e, p. 203) idealize historical Turkish states through an ethnocentric perspective and emphasize secularism anachronistically. Comments such as, *“Though prohibited by Islamic bigotry, it is possible to chance upon such images of living beings and even human portraiture in engravings or reliefs of the period of Anatolian Seljuks (along with some statues). That they existed at all during the reign of Anatolian Seljuks demonstrates just how distant Anatolian Turks were to sentiments of bigotry and fanaticism”* (TTTH, 1931b, p. 286) idealize the pre-Ottoman past by virtue of their “secular practices.” In order to construct that secularism is the “correct” way of thinking, even the practices of the Abbasid caliphates were mentioned: *“Abd-ul Malik used to think in material terms insofar as politics were involved, considering himself exempt from statutes of religion and morality”* (TTTH, 1931b, p. 128). The emphasis on this statement is on the extent to which the Abbasid caliph was a pragmatist in worldly affairs.



**Finding 6.** The books examined evince a tendency towards the displacement of an Arab-Turkish “common identity” via “marginalization.”

The attitude of the Arabs during the World War I and the coldness between them and the Istanbul Government made the secularization of national identity an easier challenge. The legitimacy of the new order was attempted to be consolidated within this framework (Mert, 2006, p. 205). Frequently addressed topics from the textbooks of the period include how the Turkish nation possessed the intrinsic capability of distinguishing between worldly and religious affairs, how these enlightened ideas were swamped out by the darkness of Arabian and Persian culture, etc. The necessity of the Cultural Revolution was therefore emphasized through an attempted construction of secularism within history.

The books examined underline the deleterious practices of the Umayyads in a desire to marginalize all Arabs. The primary purpose is to displace the Arab-Turkish common identity which developed on the basis of a common denominator, i.e. being Muslims, in the Ottoman-Islamic past. Some example statements are as follows: “*It is by no means correct to identify the purpose of the Arabic invasions with lofty aims such as the propagation of Islam. Assigning such a purpose to them and especially to the Umayyad caliphs (who did not believe in the religion of Mohammad and who not infrequently disparaged it) would be a grave deviation from actuality. The ambitions they pursued were exclusively avaricious, such as the plunder of opulent and prosperous countries and to find new sources of taxation in order to supply their ever-increasing wealth*” (TTTH, 1931c, p. 146) ; “*The people were witnessing the Arabs oppressing the Turks, even those who had already converted. As a consequence, they had never warmed up to the religion. But when those who were of their own race seized the government, they began to accept Islam en masse*” (TTTH, 1931a, p. 68). These comments emphasize that the Umayyads were inclined towards the misuse of religion for political ambitions and ends. Generalizations are made over such negative attitudes and all Arabs are marginalized. Even though the particular topic of discussion in this statement happens to be the Umayyad Arabs, that the emphasis is on “Arabs” pure and simple demonstrates that the reference of the discourse is to “the present” and that it has been constructed a-historically. Comments of this kind are especially frequent in the book History II: “*Almost none of the Umayyad caliphs displayed any kind of respect towards Islam. These individuals wielded Islam as a tool in their hands towards the preservation of their thrones. There were some among them who ridiculed the Quran and even bade their concubines wear the mantle of Mohammad, only to dispatch them to the mosque where they might lead the prayers*” (TTTH, 1931c, p. 128), with such comments an evil and fraudulent stereotype of the Umayyads is portrayed, emphasizing that “the political misuse of religion will necessarily create such results.”

It is of great interest that in the textbooks thereby examined, the struggles between Arabs and Turks were expressed in a romantic language: “*The vigorous military strikes of the Turks were heaping defeat after defeat on the Arabs ... they devastated the Arab forces...*” (TTTH, 1931c, p. 129); “*...skirmishes began among Turkish chieftains and khans. Arabs made use of this opportunity and ... began to violate Turkish lands*” (TTTH, 1931c, p. 141). “*A torrent of Bedouins was flowing from the Arabian deserts, crossing over the Iranian plains to scourge these cultivated lands. When Arabs saw the opulence and prosperity of the Turkish heartland, they endeavored with all their might to possess these territories. The hope of great plunder was a strong factor which provoked them*” (TTTH, 1931c, p. 143). An ethnocentric and romantic discourse of this kind refers to the battles between Turks and Umayyads, while again making sweeping generalizations about Arabs: “*When Arabs grew tired of putting to sword the Turks who had surrendered, they began to hang these wretches from rows upon rows of trees. The road to Talkan, for a length of six kilometers, became a lurid grove with corpses hanging from the trees on either side*” (TTTH, 1931c, p. 143). The reason behind the romantic depiction of these massacres is to draw the student into the event and to consolidate the organic bond which excludes the marginalized.

Sometimes true information is given, albeit purposefully: “*While the Arab armies which disseminated the religion of Islam approached the vicinity of the Amu Darya river, Central Asian Turkishness was in a state of grave peril*” (TTTH, 1931a, p. 64). “*It was during the time when Qutayba was the governor of the Khorasan province that Arabs began to advance into the Turkish heartland. Qutayba, drowning every place*



he visited in blood, devastated everything after his plunder of the illustrious city of Baykent (located between the river of Amu Darya and the city of Bukhara). He had the resident population put to the sword. After a long and continuous struggle, Qutayba was able to conquer the resident populations of Toharistan, Fergana, Bukhara, and Samarkand and make them the vassals of the Arabs. But the overwhelming rapine and violence of the Arab commanders, coupled with the lust for conquest displayed by these armies (the nominal purpose of which was the dissemination of Islam) made it impossible for the populace to embrace Islam even in the conquered territories. After thirteen years of shedding Turkish blood and laboring to win glory in the name of the Umayyad ingrates, Qutayba at long last paid the price for his cruelties. The Arab caliph... had him executed, along with his family members" (TTTH, 1931a, p. 65). The narrative is once again romantic and piquant in this passage. The purpose is to draw the student into the event and to forge an ethnocentric bond. Some other comments attempt to create the same impression by providing false information deliberately, such as: "Arabs learned their military science and virtues from the Turks who were working for them" (TTTH, 1931c, p. 147).

One may think that the erasure of certain previous loyalties, their trivialization, (Tekeli, 2007, p. 142) and their eventual marginalization are understandable initiatives in the process towards modern nation-building. In this fashion, it has become easier to position "us" versus "them." As can be understood from the excerpts above, Arabs are one of the "others." The negative attributions made in the textbooks of history regarding Arabs were used in particular towards the creation of a "national prejudice" in students and one may furthermore claim that they were constructed for the general purpose of displacing the discourse of "brotherhood" which used to be prevalent in the past.

**Finding 7.** The books examined contain discourses about "re-actionism and the political misuse of religion" in order to legitimize the new regime.

The primary discourse on religion during the Kemalist transformation was its banishment out of the social sphere and into private space. Within this framework, even as secularism claimed to establish a new order and a new identity, Islam was defined to be in opposition to this process. In order to transform the traditional social structure which took religion to be its fundamental point of reference, three different methods were followed. The first method was to identify Islam as the reason behind the backwardness of the Republic and thus to situate it as the other. The second was the attempted restriction of the religious space in accordance with the principle of secularism. In other words, this was the banishment of all things religious into the private conscience and the personal space of worship, as required by the axiom "science is the most reliable guide in life" by Atatürk. The third was to maintain a state of vigilance through a constant discourse on re-actionism. This latter method did not implicate the religion of Islam directly but rather those who manipulated religion for political ends (Çelik, 2006, p. 87).

The following statements which reinforced the discourse on reactionism were spotted in the books examined:

*"In the massacre of Kabakçioğlu, those who whipped up the populace into a frenzy were the ulama class themselves: the massacre was commanded by the Sheikh-al Islam and the grand vizier ... this act of violence was of a re-actionist disposition brought into being by an alliance of some statesmen, Janissary organizations who enjoyed their financial pay and would have been displeased at any changes implemented upon the old system, and the ulama class, who manipulated religion for political ends" (TTTH, 1931d, p. 35); "The general endeavor in Europe, since the period of the Renaissance (the 15<sup>th</sup> century), has been to construct social and political life on the basis of the positive sciences thanks to the relative weakening of religious fanaticism. Year every year, Europe was making fresh progress in the fields of science and the arts. And yet in the land of the Ottomans, even at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, ignorance and religious fanaticism were erecting such bloody obstacles in the path of very kind of progress and innovation" (TTTH, 1931d, p. 95). A similar statement is as follows: "The majority of the ulama class were unaware of daily occurrences and the general condition of the world; they were unable to comprehend the needs of their age ... Most of them were conservative and narrow-minded ... The ulama class was a strong obstacle in the establishment and the free exercise of the central government" (TTTH,*

1931d, p. 106). These kinds of comments disparage the ulama class and emphasize the necessity of shifting from a traditional-religious worldview to a secular one. Also, re-actionism and the political manipulation of religion were deemed equivalent: *“What is so strange in all these is that when the fez was first introduced to society, the entirety of the ulama class (including the Sheikh-al Islam himself) and the fanatical, backward circles began to murmur their complaints about how impermissible it was. This had made it necessary to take rigorous precautions against them, including the replacement of the Sheikh-al Islam. Not much time had passed when the same throngs of ulama, fanatics, and sanctimonious believers began to proclaim that the fez was a sure sign of religion and faith”* (TTTH, 1931e, p. 230). The goal was to inspire a feeling of duty in the student.

On the other hand, the comments such as, *“science and knowledge increasingly fell out of favor during the reigns of ignorant sultans and statesmen. Superstitious sanctimony, feeding from religious fanaticism, began to supplant genuine science”* (TTTH, 1931e, p. 242) reveal a constructive and anachronical perspective offering negative examples against the assumptions of a total idealism in history. We encounter specifically chosen phrases such as “ignorant sultan” and “superstitious sanctimony.” It is not incorrect to say that an interpretation of Islam in a fanatical vein was predominant in certain periods of the Ottoman history, but this statement is too blatant a supporting argument for an approach which may be summarized as: “it was not so before, but then it was so.”

In the comments regarding the quality of madrasah education, *“The backward and regressive mentality of the time period became at once the fount and the stronghold of all fanaticism and re-actionism which opposed all progress through accusations of heathenism. Rolling a piece of rag around your head and enrolling in any kind of madrasah was considered to be a sufficient criterion to become a member of the ulama class. Hodjas who were incapable of writing a well-organized sentence despite spending decades in madrasah were indeed in the majority. Even in the inspections carried out in the field of education circa 1925, it was discovered that many of the madrasah graduates who were able to find their way into the cadres of education were capable of reading but not writing”* (TTTH, 1931e, p. 249), we encounter a trick which the proponents of the Enlightenment frequently make use of. It is known that these examples indeed did occur in the past, but the Enlightenment discourse stretches out this fact a-historically and without making any distinctions of periodicity, thus reinforcing the construction of the Ottomans being perennially backward and malignant. The comments such as, *“The madrasah and the fanaticism had extended their hands even into the military. Ignorant commanders who became the toys and tools of the sanctimonious class, as long as they were not given permission by the chief augur ... might not engage in battle. Military actions were decided in accordance not with the condition of the enemy army but with the motions of the stars, according to the hocus-pocus of fortune-telling and charlatanry”* (TTTH, 1931e, p. 332) provided imaginary and a-historical statements which revealed an anxiety to displace the continuity of the Islamic past and the traditional identity molded into shape by it, not to mention the marginalization of the near past.

Hence, expressions regarding with beliefs and emotions remain far from being scientific. As seen, it can be said that there is a radical disengagement at history perception as a result of history studies which was initiated under the guidance of Atatürk. It can be said that there has been an emergence regarding with the altogether transformation of social, cultural and religious thoughts which have reminded, especially in 1930s, traditional identity. In other words, it has been wanted to achieve the idea of creating “western”, “secular” and “contemporary” society secluded from all kinds of structures, institutions and thoughts regarding to the recent past. In this context, it is understood that debates related to what it will place of religion which is a constituent element of old identity in the sociopolitical field affect also history education. In examined textbooks, it is observed that there was a quite distant approach to notion of religion and the notion was even denied. It is intended to adapt students to think and behave in a secular style with such type of identity fiction.

## Conclusion and Suggestions

Efforts to mobilize society towards a secular ideal during the early Republican period were reflected in history education as well. To create western, secular and modern society was instrumentalized. Religious affiliations and to use an opposite thought about religious thought, it was aimed to avoid identity construction. The main objective of opposite discourses about the religion is to construct secular identity. These texts narrate from a "scientific" perspective that the reason behind the emergence of "religion" is to allay the feelings of weakness and fear that human's experience, as well as the satisfaction of their social needs. The prime objective of this discourse is to replace "God" with "man" and to question all religious institutions and thoughts hitherto existing. It attempts to refute religious thinking from positivist, naturalist, and Darwinian perspectives. In addition, it utilizes construction in order to provide legitimacy to the revolutions and to ascribe a historical continuity to secularism, constructing "a history of the present" with an anachronistic perspective. The discourse on re-actionism and the political misuse of religion was used for inspiring a state of permanent vigilance among students. Arabs in particular were marginalized and attempts were made to displace the feeling of common identity among Turks and Arabs, which was built on the basis of religion.

Finally, an attempt was made to supplant the organic bonds felt for the religious tradition with an emphasis on what is scientific and rational, geared towards the goal of constructing a secular identity. The reference of the religious discourse that is presented in the high school textbooks of Republican Turkey is geared towards the construction of "the present", and its context is geared towards the assurance of "legitimacy and continuity." When we consider the "in-disciplinary" and "extra-disciplinary" purposes of history education, it becomes obvious that nation-states focus on the latter, which is aimed at socialization and the construction of identity. However, the mention of religious beliefs (which are directly related to the lifestyles of individuals) for the purposes of constructing an identity in high school textbooks falls outside the scope of historical science and education.

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