FACES OF THE STATE

SECULARISM AND PUBLIC LIFE IN TURKEY

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The Cult of Ataturk: The Apparition of a Secularist Leader in Uncanny Forms

To expect help from the dead is a disgrace for a civilized society.
—Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, 1925

There are no rules by which intellectuals can know what to say or do, nor for the true secular intellectual are there any gods to be worshipped and looked to for answering guidance.
—Edward W. Said, 1993

This chapter explores the ethnochratic and political context for the contemporary deployment of the image of a former head of state, or public reverence for Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, known as the founder of modern Turkey. In the mid-1990s and in the context of what was called the "politics of identity" among secularists and Islamists, the figure of Ataturk was widely used and massively reproduced by self-declared Ataturkists. The image of Ataturk that used to be an emblem of the sovereignty of the Turkish state, associated with institutions and rituals of state, took on a different dimension in the 1990s, with significant public participation in shows of reverence for the national father figure. At various sites of political conflict in public life, the image of Ataturk was employed in the making of posters, badges, protest photographs, busts, statues, and statuettes. These items were extensively distributed and circulated in public and private secularist venues as well as at demonstrations. Following Michael Taussig's development of the idea of "state fetishism" (1995) to describe feelings of reverence for the state, I study the massive recourse to the image of Ataturk as Ataturk fetishism, or the cult of Ataturk. This chapter explores the form and meaning of this aura around a dead secular head of state.

Anthropological work on what has alternatively been called "secular ritual," "civic religion," or "secular theology" has addressed the religiosity of state practices. The object of secular ritual was to employ the anthropological tools for the study of "ritual" in studies of modern secular politics. There are abundant studies of political ritual, in this framework, on Eastern Europe and many on Israel. No such ethnochratic analysis is available for the phenomenon of Ataturkism in Turkey, one of the contexts for state-gaured secularism in its most militarized form.

Mustafa Kemal Ataturk spent the latter part of his life secularizing and Westernizing state and society. In declaring a "Republic" (Cumhuriyet) in defiance of the dynastic role of Ottoman heads of state, he organized a major transformation from a polity governed by Islamic law to one that strictly separated affairs of religion and state. In the 1920s, under the governance of Ataturk and his associates, the seat of the caliph, last held by the fallen Ottoman sultan, was abolished. Attendance in Sufi orders and dervish lodges, wearing religious garb, and carrying religious titles was made punishable by state decree. Education was centralized and strictly secularized.

Studies of secularism and modernization in the Ottoman Empire and Turkey have generally employed a modernist historical trajectory, whereby the constructed distinction between religion and secularity, tradition and modernity has been naturalized (see Berkes 1964, Marlin 1962, Lewis 1969). Taking the mysticism/rationality opposition for granted, most scholarship on secularism in Turkey has reproduced the classical narrative of history utilized in modern social theory. The assumption is that Turkish national history developed in the terms of "progress," on a linear path "from religion to science." Here, secularism is studied in the self-referential terms of secularism and is associated with other supposedly derivative terms such as "modernity," "rationality," and "democracy.

Scholars bent on critiquing modernization theory in the study of the Middle East by employing postmodern theory have at times ended up reproducing the very binarism—religion versus secularity, tradition versus modernity—which they had intended to deconstruct. Michel Foucault's narrative of history, a shift toward a rationalizing, ordering, and disciplining mode of power (1979), has influenced the work of some of the most important ethnochraticians of the region (see Buhrow 1980, Mitchell 1988, Nessick 1993). In these studies, which take discursive rupture as their main historical referent, religion and secularity are implicitly interpreted as belonging to distinct and noncommensurable, if consecutive, domains of culture and power.

The ethnochratic material presented in this chapter leads us to situate secularism in a different trajectory. Within the context of Ataturk fetishism, such terms as "modernity," "rationality," "discipline," "order," or "bureaucracy" are inadequate for the purposes of ethnochratic interpretation. In other words, the terms of secularism are not appropriate for the study of secularism. The material observed includes a peculiar phenomenon of invoking spirits in the name of secularism, employing numerology to validate it, seeing supernatural apparitions or images of Ataturk, and projecting
aura around his image. "Belief," "magic," "mysticism." I suggest that these terms may be more appropriate for the study of contemporary secularist cultures in Turkey, especially those implicated in statism.

Much has been written on participation in Islamist or other religious movements. Less has been said, however, on public participation in secularist movements. To put it another way, the questions asked of communalism or "fundamentalism" have not been asked of secularism. The object of this chapter is to reverse the anthropological and sociological gaze so frequently directed at Islamists. In the mid-1990s, at the time of my field research, Islamists in Turkey complained of having been turned into objects for social scientific analysis. In shifting attention to their rivals, I studied that there was much misconception in analyses that isolated religion from the discussion of secularism, or that approached Islamism as a history apart from Turkish secularism. Indeed, the ethnographic record calls for a deconstruction of the categories "secularity" and "religion," so pitted against one another in both public political discourses and social scientific analyses. This is precisely what this chapter endeavors to do.

Like a Cross That Stops the Devil...

A government formed under the consent of the army in 1997, the coalition between the right-wing ANAP and the social democratic DSP began the process of abolishing the religious schools (Jesuits-Hatt) which were central to the production of Islamist activists and intellectuals. Compulsory elementary education was to be extended from five to eight years, and parents would be officially prevented from sending their children to the religious secondary schools. In reaction to this state-enforced decrease, Islamists organized a major public demonstration in the capital city Ankara to argue for their democratic right to choose how to educate their children. As the demonstrators marched, voicing their anger over state-enforced secularism, a young woman who was standing on the side of the road, bewildered and taken aback, took out a framed portrait of Atatürk from her handbag and lifted it up against the Islamist demonstrators. She stood there for a little while, erect in posture with her hand raised up high, holding the figure of Atatürk with his eyes directed at the marching Islamists. The young woman, Chantal Zakkari, had raised the portrait of Atatürk as the expression of her protest of the Islamist movement and her commitment to the secularist and Westernist worldview of Atatürk. She had deployed the image of Atatürk in that instance of built-up emotion and anxiety, to symbolize her identity, viewpoint, and feelings as if the portrait of the former head of state summed it all up. It was as if she were performing a formal religious rite or holding a cross to stop the devil.

The Cult of Atatürk

On the following day, journalists of the mainstream secular press blew this event out of all proportion in praising the act of Chantal Zakkari. Photos of the young woman in front of images of Atatürk were depicted on the front pages of every important and widely distributed newspaper. Her story was carried in the headlines of every mainstream TV channel. Atatürk was turned into a public hero of Atatürkism. Columnists wrote in praise of her non-Muslim family from Izmir, saying that the greater enemies of the Turkish state were Islamists, and not Atatürkist non-Muslims like Chantal. In reply, the Islamist press predominately focused on the non-Muslimness of Chantal, mostly assuming that she was Jewish, and manufactured conspiracy theories about hidden connections between Atatürkism and non-Muslim minorities in Turkey.

This event, ardently discussed in public life, was only one expression among many in the political battle between secularism and Islamism that had developed in the 1990s and 1980s. Chantal had pulled a portrait of Atatürk from her handbag, others during this period developed a multiplicity of ways in which to commemorate Atatürk, reproducing his portrait as fetish in many forms and contexts. Many of these Atatürkist manifestations took on magical, ritualistic, and secular fashion.

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in silence and respect. Antakla had been built in a site that was visible from all points in Antakla, a city founded by Attaruk to set Turkey's course in a direction that counteracted that of the former Ottoman palace in Istanbul. 10

In the 1990s, when tension with Islamists was at its height, secularists from many walks of life began to organize group visits to Attaruk's place of rest. The commemoration of November 10th was significantly more popular among civil servants as well as laypeople in the mid-1990s than it had been in the 1980s. But even on other days of the year, less nationally symbolic occasions, people from different occupational sectors walked in groups to the mausoleum with written complaints in hand. If they had experienced injustice on the part of a state institution, for example, they wrote in the book of commemoration in Antakla in symbolic complaint to the national father figure. 11 So went the visit of university professors, wearing scholarly cloaks, to Antakla in 1994. When their rights were breached by the Institute of Higher Education (YÖK), professors wrote personal complaints in Attaruk's symbolic book and organized a public demonstration by walking together in a large group to the mausoleum. 12

Such performances of loyalty to Attaruk were overinterpreted in public life. In the 1990s, Antakla was turned into symbol of absolute justice by Attarurists of different backgrounds, transcending the vagaries of particular governments. Those who employed the symbol of Antaruk as if it were a cure for their contemporary social and political ills conflated an overarching notion of "state" with his ghost. Attaruk was dead. But people visited his tomb in great numbers and wrote him personally addressed complaints, soliciting his help, as if he were still alive. Standing by his tomb, the imagination colored by mass-produced figures of Attaruk, visitors to the mausoleum personalized their idea of state for themselves. In the act of paying a visit to Attaruk and speaking to him directly, they anthropomorphized the far-too-abstractive notion of the state. 13

Visits to Attaruk's mausoleum were ironically likened by a parliamentarian of the Islamic Welfare Party in 1994, to saint's tomb visitations (türbe ziyaretleri). 14 Even though these practices were performed out of reverence for a secularist head of state by secular individuals, it would be wrong, I think, to construct a radical epiological differentiation between the devotional Sufi practice of visiting a saint's tomb, on the one hand, and the act of visiting Attaruk's mausoleum, on the other hand. In a certain sense, it is difficult not to agree with the Islamist parliamentarian who used the image of a "saint's tomb" to characterize Antakla. Journeys to Attaruk's mausoleum show a resemblance with the practice of visiting a sheikh's tomb as an expression of ongoing devotion and a desire for favors and support. 15

Secularity and religion have been distinguished from one another too categorically by social scientists working under the paradigm of modernization or rationalization. In contrast, a number of anthropologists have studied formalized and secular state ceremonies as forms of ritual comparable to religious practice. 16 I build upon the work of such anthropologists. However, I argue that the concept of secular ritual still operates from within a discourse of secularism, validating secularization without politicizing it or subjecting it to rigorous political critique. I propose, therefore, to investigate the mystical propensity attributed to the "secular" image of Attaruk in terms other than those reified for "secularization." 17 For being an orderly state ritual, Attarukism is expressed in the domains of excessive emotion, waves of feeling for a central signifier of contemporary Turkish identity, or reverence for a personalized image of state. Secularism needs to be studied within this culture of and for the state.

Mystical Apparitions

Yet further Attarukist practices invoked magic and mysticism. In different parts of the country, people fashioned links of sorts between Attaruk and supernatural forces. On October 30, 1994, the secularist Hürriyet newspaper reported that the silhouette of Attaruk's profile had appeared on a mountain across the village of Gümüşeli in Ardahan when a cloud shrouded its shadow (see figure 8). Regularly, in the village of Gümüşeli, the profile of Attaruk appears on the mountains," according to the article in the newspaper that was accompanied by a photograph of this apparition dated June 1994. After the October 30th celebrations of Roma Bolu Day, Hürriyet interpreted this event as proof for "the indivisible unity of our country." 18 In the contest of PKK bombings in İzmir earlier that month, this newspaper's editor was using the symbol of Attaruk to recall Muhsin Mehri, or the 20th declaration of Turkey's national borders and official construction of Turkey as a country. Moreover, Ardahan was a significant place for the shadow of Attaruk to materialize. Nationalist poets always made references to Ardahan as the easternmost province of the empire. The narrative was clear: from Edirne in the west, Ardahan is close to Karabük, which is densely populated by Kurds. Here, there was a recourse to mysticism in the effort to legitimize and reconstitute an Attarukist nationalism. Thegrunt journalists of Hürriyet, as well as (respectably) the villagers of Gümüşeli, were searching for mystical signs of a constructed transcendental truth of Turkey; the materialization and, therefore, affirmation of a central symbol of identity. In this case, the apparition of Attaruk's profile as a shadow on the mountain was taken as supernatural proof of the unity of Turkey's borders against claims made by Kurdish nationalists. The imagining of mystical clues about Attaruk arose out of a desire to render Turkey permanent on
the landscape of this geography. Mysticism was deployed here to suggest the primordiality or naturalness of Turkey against arguments to the contrary.19

Calling Spirits

Another common magical link to Ataturk can be observed in the practice of calling upon spirits. Spirit calling is very popular, especially in urban places, and is undertaken by saying Kurnic prayers over a reversed Turkish coffee cup placed in the middle of a circle of Turkish alphabet letters written in Latin script. Those who call upon spirits, sometimes with the help of a medium, recount the coded responses of the spirits through the movement of the coffee cup among the letters of the alphabet. It is interestingthat, as common as it is to call upon spirits in urban Turkey, so is it not unusual to supplicate the spirit of Ataturk. And, invariably it is reported that Ataturk responds with only one sentence, spelling the letters of “Don’t disturb me!” (Don’ rahatset etmecin) with the coffee cup. What is significant in these stories and practices is the widespread phenomenon of wanting spiritually to communicate with the ghost of Ataturk. It seems that those who partake in such spirit-calling sessions have been looking for mystical or supernatural clues for the existence of Turkey and the Turkish state. What is even more interesting to note is the unilaterally identical response of Ataturk. Most other spirits who are invoked through such sessions communicate messages from the other world, including fatal information about the future of individuals in this one. Spirit callers narrate stories of dialogue with dead individuals in this way. But Ataturk always says “Don’t disturb me.” Unlike other spirits, Ataturk is untouchable, in the instance of these practices, even after his death. People attempt to forge spiritual connections with him without committing sacrilege or rendering him ordinary. A mystical contact of sorts is accomplished with Ataturk—an affirmation of his transcendental presence—and his “don’t disturb me” serves in mystifying his image even further.

Numerology

In the context of cultural conflict between secularists and Islamists, as hyped up by the media and politicians in the mic-1990s, certain individuals attempted to forge a bridge of sorts between Ataturk and Islam. The number of people who turned to Islam in this period was so significant that certain Ataturks found that they had to engage with (rather than reject) Islam if they wanted to relegalize Ataturk’s state and worldview. And they had to read Ataturkism into the original sources of Islam—the Koran and the Prophet’s sayings—as recognized by Islamists.

In October 1994, a few months after the Welfare Party assumed municipalities in Istanbul, Cemal Koray, a well-known journalist and public figure, published a book titled Koran, Islam, Ataturk, and the Miracle of 19. The book was meant to present clues to Ataturk’s positivist and scientifick worldview in the Koran. In Cemal Koray’s reading of verses of the Koran, there were traces of scientific findings. He gave citations for evidence about the existence of oxygen in the air, the sphericality of the earth, the law of gravity, the chemical formation of petroleum, the possibility of visiting the moon, and so forth. But most importantly, he drew attention to the “mathematical accuracy” of the Koran through the “miracle of the number 19.” By counting nineteen through the old numerical system (off) in the letters of the names of God and in verses of the Koran, one could arrive at all the secrets of the Koran. According to Koray, the “miracle of 19 will convince atheists as to the existence of God and will open the gates of faith.” “It is not possible,” he noted, “to find a human being who can devise such an extraordinary mathematical play.” (44). The account of nineteen, here, is taken as proof for God.

But Koray’s real intentions lay elsewhere. To counter polarization between Ataturks and Islam, he wanted to illustrate congruence. He wanted to reassert a politics of culture in which belief in God had been posted as diametrically opposed to a commitment to Ataturk’s principles,
What he called "the miracle of 19" was a guideline for his efforts to "prove" the supernatural (and particularly "Islamic") qualities of Atatürk. As it was in the life of the Prophet Muhammad, so was the number 19 prevalent in the life of Atatürk, in Koray's construction. Atatürk was born in the year 1881 and died in 1938, numbers exactly divisible by 19. His first military assignment was as "commander of the 19th army corps." The number of letters in his name, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, amounted to 19. And Atatürk initiated the War of National Liberation on the memorable date of May 19, 1919. From all these calculations, Çerç Koray derived that "Atatürk was sent to Turkey by the orders of God in order to complete a particular mission" (45-46). Between 1994 and 1997, Koray's book became a best-seller in Turkey. It was advertised in and promoted by mainstream secular newspapers.

Statues and Idols

Such interest in finding supernatural, mystical, or Islamic affirmation for the secularist and modernist worldview of Atatürk and for his successes in founding Turkey has to be placed in the context of a wider social phenomenon of organizing Atatürk events. Efforts to give magical or religious meaning to the Turkish state, to inscribe a lasting presence for "Atatürk's Turkey" in supernatural and natural space, arose in the middle of the 1960s out of anxiety over the possible disintegration of Turkey as a result of attacks from Kemalists and Islamist social movements. Accordingly, people joined forces to organize all sorts of Atatürk events. For example, in April 1994, Bedri Baykam, a well-known artist and Atatürkist activist, dedicated an exhibition to Republic Day and the memory of Atatürk. His paintings, against a backdrop of enlarged clippings from early republican newspapers, were meant to remind the public of the purpose of Atatürk's revolution, especially with regard to the building of Turkey out of a "War for National Liberation." The week of November 10, 1994 was officially organized as "Atatürk Week" (Atatürk Haftası) in memory of the death of the nation's founder. The most popular singers appeared in concert together to sing for Atatürk in an event sponsored by an Atatürkist civic organization, the Mustafa Kemal Foundation. President Demirel ceremonially introduced Atatürk statues into four new schools in Ankara, including one in the neighborhood of Sincan, densely populated by Islamists. Atatürk statues were planted in the main school courtyards, with visitors to the state ceremonies carefully checked by security forces and watched by armed policemen from the roofs of nearby buildings. In his speech on this occasion, President Demirel declared that "1.8 million young Turkish people are taking charge of Atatürk with love" and that "the statue of Atatürk is a symbol of love." The placing of Atatürk statues was the central defining activity of Atatürk Week events.

As institutionalized as these stately reaffirmations of the framework of Turkish statehood were, activity around Atatürk's image was now more widespread among members of society. Demand for Atatürk busts, statues, portraits, and badges grew in the mid-1990s, with people decorating their physical surroundings with images of Atatürk (see figure 9). The image of Atatürk was mechanically reproduced in art studios and in civic gatherings of sorts. In reflecting on this frenzy over Atatürk, the Islamist Yalyan Safak newspaper likened the cult around Atatürk statues to "idolatry" (pattubah) and said that "statues do not fill hungry stomachs.

Indeed, erecting Atatürk statues was an ordinary practice of statecraft in Turkey, ordered by each new government to illustrate authority over different districts of the country and to reproduce an overpowering image of a unified Turkish statehood. More energy was channeled to such ceremonial than were given to education and health. The head of Atatürk, whether in the form of bust, statue, portrait, or badge, was symbol of the existence and longevity of the Turkish state. And politicians at the time...
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It had been given to the state. Oral recitation from memory of Ataturk's history, performed throughout years of schooling, has created a common pool of national reference and identification points. The Turkish state is personalised and imagined necessarily, now, through the symbolic memories and stories. There is a widespread practice of resorting to sayings (knots) of Ataturk for guidance, as if these were fatherly dedications to a book of poems interwoven with images of a weeping statue of Ataturk. In later years, Savaş would pass through a phase of excessive identification with the statue of Ataturk. Volkán, who analyzed him, writes that Savaş thought his skin, if scratched, would chip off like a coat.

Though an extreme case, this story nicely illustrates the extent of symbolic weight attached to statues of Ataturk in the context of Turkish nationalism. Identification is not with a disembodied idea of an institution, but with the figure of a national hero rendered permanent, after death, by being carved in stone. Statues of Ataturk, though dead stone, have a life nec to those who revere them. With the aura that is ascribed to them in the political culture, they have the capacity to move people's innermost senses of personal identification. The state is personified and is therefore rendered closer to human experience. The statue of Ataturk, then, is parament as a marker of Turkish statehood. Much more than a show of faith in secularism, fetishising the statue is also an expression of loyalty to the project of the Turkish state.

Here, I have been illustrating the specific manner in which a particular group of people conceive of themselves as a nation actually imagine their state. Rather than being imagined in the abstract terms suggested by Philip Abrams (1985), the Turkish state materializes in people's semi-consciousness in the figure of the man (man) of Ataturk, in the objectified form of statue, bust, portrait, or badge.

"Ataturk" has a central place in the imaginary lifeworld of those socialized in Turkish nationalist institutions. His life story is taught year after year with incessant repetition in schools. The birth, childhood, and growth of Ataturk into soldier and statesman is narrated very frequently in the political culture, whether it be in schools, on TV, or in newspapers, as metaphor for the birth of a state. Ataturk's life path, turned into mythological, is to be taken as representation of the Turkish state. "Running through the field and chasing cows with his sister, the little Mustafa in the vicinity of Sivas is an image ingrained in the national imaginary of everyone disciplined into subjecthood under the Turkish state. "The little Mustafa, called by his teacher to the front of the classroom and told, 'Your name be Kemal from now on, my child," is another anecdote that rings in the ears of those socialized into Türkülük. He was called by his name, "Kemal," and the name has been blown up in proportion as though
head of state. Istanbul was to be reinvented as the center of state, in
opposition to republican Ankara and in line with the old Ottoman polity.
Wolfsart positioned themselves against the state, at least in the way they
presented themselves in public discourse. And yet, they reinvented the
date in (or "old") form through their practices. Indeed, station has
shown itself to have a remarkable potential for self-preservation in Turkey
at the level not only of state but also of society. The state endures at the
level of a sacrificial animal as it is reemplayed, reconstituted, and
adjusted after it has been deconstructed. More significantly, station is re-
produced on the ground, as organizations, objects, institutions, politi-
al and economic processes, and lives centered on their methods live on. As
the political economy that has been mobilized around the signifier "Turk-
ish state" remains alive and functioning, in spite of its trials and tribulations,
images of "heads of state" are sought time and again for what appear to be
a variety of projects.

The state has particular significance in the ethnographic and historical
context of Turkey, arguably more so than other contexts. More than any
other symbol of identity, the state (devlet) has been central to the consti-
tution of Turkish identity. The practice of statecraft was primarily reserved
for the Muslim subjects (whether born as such or converted) of the Otto-
man empire, with some exceptions. This has been the case in the Turkish
Republic, as well. For many centuries, Turkishness was associated with
the practice of statecraft by those subjects of the empire who were main-
ginalized from it. Turkish identity under nationalism was not, unlike other
nationalisms, imagined in the absence of state, but in the enduring pres-
cence of statecraft. Up to this day, Turkish national identity is devel-
oped in school history books through accounts of a so-called lineage of
Turkish states from the Golden Age and Huns in medieval Central Asia to
Ataturk's Republic of Turkey. Any study of secularism and Islamism in
Turkey, then, would be significantly misplaced without an ethnographic
depiction of the specific culture of states here. I define secularism as some-
thing beyond nationalism, as an identification not only or even necessarily
with a nation, but with a refined and exalted state.

Secularist Excesses

The study of nationalism as a mode of discipline (Mitchell 1988) fails to
explain the excess of emotion through which nationalism is felt and ex-
pressed, the search for mystical reassurance, the hallucination of super-
natural presence, the cult of Ataturk. Even at times when modern tech-
tiques of ordering power are not successfully implemented or fully
internalized, or when the organizing operations of nationalism are resisted
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simply punished with confinement. Through the years, antisecular sentiment in Turkey has revolved around the figure of Atatürk, whereby leftist groups have often expressed their disdain by disfiguring Atatürk statues. It is in response to such actions that the law on “Crimes Against Atatürk” was originally developed and why it was still in place during the 1990s. Islamists who target the image of Atatürk in their critiques of secularism nurture the cult around his figure by default. But the aura around Atatürk is not just produced spontaneously by the public. The fetishism of Atatürk is also fed by legal prohibition. Secularism has often been represented through the imagery of sobriety in distinction from religious fundamentalism or communism, especially in scholarship on India. It has explicitly been differentiated from such concepts as statism, nationalism, or fascism. However, at least in the historical context of Turkey, secularism has been manifest not only in the rational and ordered tenets of an analytically refined modernity, but also in the medium of excessive expression, mystical, esoteric, and religious.

In Turkey, the army is the most persistent secularist institution, much more so than political parties or governments, which strategically shuffle their relations with religious constituencies. This army, which uses the terms of “secularism,” “democracy,” “modernity,” “rationality,” “stability,” and “order” under the rubric of “Atatürk” to counter the Islamist movement, is the same army that employs violence in its war against Kurds in southeastern Turkey and against Cypriots in Cyprus. Thus the discourse of secularism is coeval with violence. Secularism in Turkey is the discourse of state power employed by the army. It would be a mistake to evaluate secularism, then, without studying its politics as practiced in the context of a statist culture of violence.

The aura around Atatürk is enforced through specific state practices. In 1951, the Turkish National Parliament passed a law on “Crimes Against Atatürk.” Law number 7872, still on the books in the 1990s, punishes all those who “insult the memory of Atatürk” through words or actions to three years in prison. Those who damage, harass, or deface Atatürk are
are themselves implicated in a modern discourse that works by dividing concepts into binary oppositions, as if everyday practice could be independent of discourse and vice versa. The anthropological notion of practice, like civil society, is an abstraction of power.

Chapter Six

The Cult of Ataturk

1. For this, see also chapter 3.
2. Other anthropologists have studied cults around living or dead political leaders. See Wedergren (1970).
4. For an anthropological study of legal transformations in the Ottoman Empire, see Starr (1992). Secularizing reforms, in the "Westernizing" sense, had precedent in the Ottoman Empire. Yet these were intended systematically and ideologically promoted as the national ideal only in the transformative years of Turkey as a nation-state.
6. See, for example, Ekip (1997).
7. For the concept of state fetishism, see Tuzigut (1992).
8. For a study of the public funeral organized for Atatürk, see Sürer and Woydow (1994).
9. Only in the late 1960s had a government, that of Turgut Oal, lifted the obligations to practice November 10 as a date of commemoration. But in the 1960s, civic organizations were observing the ritual once again.
10. For an ethnography of Ankara as architectural and symbolic site, see Meeker (1993).
11. Delaney (1995) has written about the gendered dimension of statism in Turkey with reference to patriarchal attachments to Atatürk. Although I find her work far too essentialist and anachronistic to understand, the article is interesting in its focus on gendered aspirations to land and state.
13. For a study of the state as an abstract idea, see Alaerts (1996).
14. The parliamentary, Hasan Memarci, was involved in many heated debates between republicans and Islamists.
15. Abdelhamid Hammad (1997) has studied the more direct links between Moroccan Sufism and monarchism. I do not claim such direct links between Turkish traditions of tutelage, on the one hand, and Turkic-speaking, on the other hand, in this ethnography simply because I am not sure that such cultural continuity could be cited in the Ottoman-Turkish case in terms of a culture of state. This question would require separate ethnographic research, as exhibited in the work of Hamzouchi. My claim in the above paragraph is more modest. I mean only to juxtapose the two traditions with variation to Ataturk so as to reshuffle the boundaries between what we, in contemporary political terms, assume to be the separate spheres of secularity and religion.

Despite a state decree that abolished saints' tombs and derived lodges (as in the 1920s), saint's tomb veneration has been a popular and common practice all over Turkey. This practice is periodically repressed both by the secularist state Ministry of Religious Affairs and by Islamist movements in search of religious purity. Though it is not possible to draw direct links between popular religion and popular veneration of Atatürk's mausoleum, a metaphorical comparison is, I think, very appropriate.

18. The border of territories indicated in Mısır-ı Milli were decided by members of the Erzurum and Erzincan Congresses who were leading the War for Turkey's liberation from occupying Allied forces in 1920. Indeed, the Turkish parliament (TBMM) voted to defend the principles of Mısır-ı Milli. Since then, the declaration has been officially defined as a founding constitution of Turkey as a country. Atatürk had defined Mısır-ı Milli as an agreement that guaranteed the wholesomeness and independence of the country, lifting all obstacles to its achievement.
19. In contrast to public consciousness in Greece vis-à-vis Turkey, in Turkey " Threats to the country's unity," as they are called, are generally perceived to be internal, rather than external. Significantly, there does not exist, in public consciousness in Turkey, a general fear of possible attack by Greece.
20. Such apparitions of Atatürk have been reported by residents of various areas in Turkey, as well. Kummel (1997) gives several other examples of this phenomenon of searching for Atatürk mystically. For example, he notes that such a hill close to Sivrihisar, bushes grow in a manner that resembles the profile of Atatürk, and they remain that way no matter how one tries to cut them. And in some cases, residents have reported that a UFO appeared on the spot from which Atatürk historically saw İzmir for the first time at 6:20 in the morning (65).
21. Komşu's efforts to inscribe Atatürkism in Islam and therefore to legitimize and naturalize it in the eyes of believers is not an original phenomenon. Atatürk's work is heir to a tradition of "scholarship" in this line, dating back to the years 1950. Nationalist Turkish writers have attempted to establish their legitimacy in terms of the Koran before. See, for example Saygin (1952) and Cerman (1956). In the 1950s, Osman Necmi Cerman led a movement of reform to reinterpret the Koran in the light of Atatürkism, an effort that is observed in the state-organized Mısır-ı Milli Religious Affairs' textbooks on Islam for schoolchildren of the early republic period. This movement was called "reform in religion" (dinsel reforma) and it has been countered by contemporary Islamists such as Abdullah Dılenkop. In his book This Is Not My Religion (Bu Din Benim DinSetUp), for our present purposes, it is interesting that these "forms in religion" in the year 1991/94, assimilated intensifies between secularists and Islamists. By 1997, the "reform in Islam" ("İslamda reforma") movement was fully revived, with Turkish intellectuals upholding an Atatürkism opposed to an Islamist Islam, seeking for a "modern Muslim identity," inspired by the charisms of Yasar Kemal. With the phenomenon of "reform in Islam," a religious grid was constructed for the work of Atatürk. In an effort to counter an Islamist monopoly over Islamic symbols and identity.
24. For a comparable study of objects of nationalism with emphasis on uses of the Turkish flag, see Seufert (1997).
25. Yeni Şafak, November 11, 1996 and akit, November 11, 1996. Islamist intellectual Abdurrahman Dilipak (1988) had compiled a reference book of primary sources on what he called the "deification of Atatürk" (see especially 375–408). Journalists of Yeni Şafak and akit (where Dilipak is editor-in-chief) would have been aware of this book.
26. Connerton (1989) has found "commemorative ceremonies and bodily practices" to be central to the making of history.
28. By making this point, I depart from the terminology of Peter van der Veer (1994). I think that the concept of "religious nationalism," which van der Veer has coined, is misleading in that it assumes separate spheres of religion and secularity and fails to study what could be called the religion-like operations of secularism.
30. For an account of secularism in India, see Khilnani (1997).