

Chapter 7

Whose Hittites, and Why? Language, Archaeology and the Quest for the Original Turks

WENDY M.K. SHAW

In 1949, the “Trust Press” had the seeming audacity to publish an anonymous book entitled, “Is Ataturk a Dictator?” The answer, of course, was no. By that time, enough time had passed since the 1938 death of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, one of the leading generals of the Turkish War for Independence and the country’s first president, for the question to float in popular discourse, and yet not to consider its full ramifications. The book begins with the tale of an old man who asked Ataturk himself, “Sir, are you a dictator?” The narrator explains, “He looked at the man with a pained expression and asked in return, “If I were, could you ask me that question?” (Anonymous, 1949:13).

What, indeed, is a dictator? The 1920s and 1930s were an era of centralized leadership, often under the auspices of power vested in a single person. The ideals of Franklin Delano Roosevelt marked the identity of the United States no less than those of Mussolini marked that of Italy. The very length of his presidency was later found so potentially detrimental that presidents were soon thereafter barred from holding office for more than two terms lest the act of democracy become a parody of election through the predictability of its results. What, after all, is a dictator? While the word conjures images of an overgrown brat strutting and saying, “what I say goes,” nobody has been anointed dictator since the Roman empire; leaders have tended to choose nicer words like emperor, king, or president. A dictator seems to always be designated as such from outside, tying the term as much to the ideologies outside of a dictatorial realm than to those within it. Moreover, the type

of state bears no relationship to the designation dictatorship. Stalin, for example, is remembered as one of the great dictators of modern history, and yet there was no change in state structure as Kruschchev, Brezhnev, or even Gorbachev—none of whom have been labeled dictators—came to power. A monarch has absolute power, but may be content to maintain the country's borders, collect taxes, and play chess in his spare time. As de Tocqueville pointed out early in the American experiment, even democracy runs the risk of becoming a tyranny of the masses. Indeed, Hitler, one of the most infamous dictators in history, was popularly elected. Moreover, the seal of dictatorship is often tied to one-man rule, yet is that always, by all measures, bad? Although he has been in power for nearly half a century, Castro's Cuba has one of the best educational systems in Latin America. In the US, segregationism and McCarthyism were popular, but neither had a close affiliation with America's purported ideals of freedom or democracy.

All this to say, dictatorship has less to do with state structure or one-man rule or even timespan than with the tyranny of ideas. Dictatorship can emerge in any state, with any form of government, when the mythography of the state becomes so absolute that any form of difference or dissent constitutes treason. An absolute leader may dictate such an ideology, earning the designation of dictator, but just as dangerously, any state may dictate such an ideology, often with the power not of a solo voice but of a monophonic choir. If the former form of dictatorship has a single target, that of the dictator, the latter does not; it insidiously permeates societies, into the realms of that which can be said and that which cannot, and does not die until the mad rush to absolute truth unveils its own falsity and fractures. It is ideology, as much as an individual, that produces dictatorship.

This said, to what extent does the practice of archaeology in early republican Turkey suggest that the era of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk's presidency, from 1923 to 1938, was one of dictatorship?¹ Three factors seem particularly salient to the exploration of this question. First, to what extent was the practice of archaeology limited to support prevalent ideologies of state being developed by the young republic? Secondly, to what extent were the findings of archaeology co-opted to produce state ideology? And finally, if this dictatorship was based on the rule of one man, to what extent did it continue past his death and to the present day?

While European forays into archaeology in the Ottoman Empire began at the turn of the nineteenth century, it was not until the 1880s that the empire began to control its own archaeological programs. Through the establishment of an archaeological collection in 1846, the increasing stringency of a series of antiquities laws in 1874, 1881, and 1906, and an increasing number of site expeditions, the empire began to formulate the Hellenistic era in particular as a legacy of the modern Ottoman state which would incorporate its emerging national identity into a pan-European one.² While the Imperial Museum attempted to control the often secret archaeological activities undertaken by the invading allies until the declaration

of Turkish independence, after the war archaeology was, for many years, at a standstill. Neither scholars nor resources could be spared for new archaeological activity during the first decade of the young republic.

The first republican-era excavation took place under the guidance of the Director of Museums, Hamit Zübeyr Kosay, at a Hittite site near the town of Ahlatlibel, 16 kilometers from Ankara, in 1933. Excavations of other prehistoric sites in central Anatolia—at Karalar (1933), Göllüdag (1934), Alacahöyük (1934–37), Etiyokusu (1937), and Pazarli (1937), soon followed (figure 7.1). All of the sites dated to either the Stone Age, Iron Age, or Hittite and Phrygian civilizations (Inan, 1937). In the meantime, a division of Classical Archaeology was not even founded at Istanbul University until 1946, and it was not until the 1950s that Turks began to excavate Hellenic, Hellenistic, Roman, and later sites with any regularity (Uçankus, 2000:15).

Many things had changed in the interim to shift the focal point of republican archaeology from the Hellenistic to the Hittite era. In scholarship, Hrozny had decyphered the cryptic Hittite language and for the first time made the emerging material remains of their culture understandable in a proto-historical frame. In international politics, Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points had clearly welded the notion of absolute autochtheneity to the right of national autonomy. And locally, after winning its war for independence, Turkey had undergone a sweeping array of reforms which replaced monarchy with republican government, Westernized the clothing, secularized the law, Latinized the alphabet, and was undergoing multiple modernization projects of social engineering, including an extensive language reform. Together, these changes made possible the writing of a new history for the nation.

Ataturk was keenly interested in the supervision of this ideological core, which was pursued primarily through the foundation of two scholarly societies, the Turkish Historical Society and the Turkish Language Society, both of which had their first congresses in mid-1932. In addition, the Ankara Faculty of Linguistics, History, and Geography, founded in 1935, was designed to provide a local educational institution at which to train young Turkish scholars. While at the time of its institution, many believed that it would be more expeditious to send students to Europe for their education, Atatürk emphasized that Turks needed to look for the true sources of their own history; look for new information through archaeology; and determine the historical and contemporary racial characteristics of Turks through anthropological methods.³

Working in an era in which racial science, with its mixture of evidence from physical anthropology, geology, archaeology, and linguistics, permeated the definition of ethnic identity throughout the West, these societies were charged with the complicated task of discursively making Turks, whose language was not among those of the Indo-European family, affiliated with (if not actually) Aryan. They also needed to make Turks—who, in the historical era, had populated Anatolia during

the settlement of Turkoman tribes after the defeat of the Byzantines at the Battle of Malazgirt in 1071—into the racially, and thus ethnically, autochthonous people of Anatolia. Finally, they needed to derive a national culture which would be divorced from the close religious and linguistic traces to Persian, Arab, and Muslim culture which had defined the Ottoman era. The new history and revised language was thus designed for several conjoined purposes: to fight against the all-too-fresh European imperialist aspirations of Turkish territories as they had been distributed by the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres; to argue specifically against competing arguments of prior indigenaity, claims of Christians such as Armenians and, more pervasively, Greeks; to make the history of the country one of the Turkish people rather than of dynasties; and to create roots for a modernized and secularized national identity. Just as history would be rewritten to construct a unitary past for the complex mix of peoples who made up the new country, language would be purged of foreign words, particularly those from Persian and Arabic, which incorporated the complex heritage of Turkey into daily life and communication.⁴

The Turkish Historical Thesis, initiated in the 1930 work, *An Outline of Turkish History*, and developed in the first three congresses of both the historical and linguistic societies, was designed to replace both Ottoman history, which focused on the dynasty rather than the history of Turkish people, and Eurocentric histories of the world, which read the trajectory of progress as linked to a series of migrations—Indo-European, Biblical, and civilizational—with a common Euro-American apogee and terminus. In contrast, the thesis interpreted the migration of Turkomans from Central Asia as the latest of a series of migrations which had begun in prehistoric times.

According to the Turkish Historical Thesis, the original Turks of Central Asia migrated first to nearby China, and soon after to India where they established the civilizations of Mohenjo Daro and Harappa. In both locations, the “true natives had no civilization” (Inan et al., 1930:59). Thereafter, Turkish migrations had always been westward: moving along a northern route from between the Ural Mountains and the Caspian along the north coast of the Black Sea to the Danube River valley and Thrace; and along a southern route which was more convenient after the glaciers had retreated and left swamps in their wake. The southern route took Turkish tribes not only to Mesopotamia, Anatolia, and from there both to the Italian Peninsula (as the Etruscans), to the Aegean islands (particularly Crete) and eventually mainland Greece, but across Syria, Palestine, and Mesopotamia (as the Sumerians and Elamites) to Egypt (as the conquerors from the north). Of these civilizations, the Turkish Historical Thesis laid particular claim to those whose languages had not yet been categorized—Sumerian and Etruscan, which are still unclassified, and Hittite, which was at the time under investigation as a potential proto-Indo-European tongue. The thesis designated all these languages as Turkish. Such associations affiliated Turks with the very foundations of Western Civilization—Sumeria and Egypt no less than Greece and Rome.

A pastiche of archeological and linguistic sources, culled exclusively from Western scholarship, provided the cornerstones of this history based on multiple migrations to provide a counter-narrative to European historiography.⁵ Among its most important sources was the archaeological work of the American geologist Raphael Pumpelly, who in 1903–4 had excavated the site of a ruined Muslim city, Anau, near modern Ashkabad at the foot of the Korpet Dag. Inspired by texts informing him of a “people with red hair and blue eyes” who had once lived there, which he had seen during his 1863–4 work in China and Mongolia, Pumpelly had set out to discover the homeland of the Aryans (Champlin, 1994:165). Using geological stratigraphy, he dated the earliest settlement to the ninth, and subsequent civilizations to the seventh, sixth-third, and first millennia BC. Thus he suggested that an agricultural Stone Age had occurred in Central Asia long before that found to date in other areas, including Mesopotamia, China, and India. While he found his conclusions concerning Aryan origins too inconclusive to publish, his studies suggested that increasing aridity had eventually forced the inhabitants of the region to migrate south of the Caspian and through the Caucasus, through the Armenian highlands to the Black Sea or through Asia Minor to the Aegean.

While by 1936, many archaeologists and anthropologists had abandoned migration theories in favor of theories of independent evolution of cultures, Pumpelly’s theory provided a perfect basis for Turkish historiography (Champlin, 1994:199). It eliminated the stigma of Turkic nomadism by tying migration to climate rather than to culture. Indeed, Arnold Toynbee had used Pumpelly’s results to show that the nomads of Central Asia developed their lifestyle in response to an arid environment, just like the agriculturalists of antiquity (Champlin, 1994:193).⁶ Pumpelly’s hypothesis provided a path through which the people of Central Asia would end up in Anatolia. Moreover, along with several other hypotheses of an Aryan homeland in Central Asia, it provided a geographic link between the Aryans and the Turanians which might serve to bridge the linguistic divide. Several problems, however, remained. The people of the ninth millennium had to be linked to the Central Asian Turks for whom historical sources extend no further back than the sixth century AD, when the Chinese first used the term to designate nomadic tribes who had established an empire to the north. They also had to be linked to the prehistoric peoples of Anatolia. It was not long before linguistics and archaeology would join forces to bridge these gaps.

At the first two linguistic congresses of 1932 and 1934, scholars presented numerous articles with a two-fold objective. The primary concern of many articles was to use language to prove racial affiliation between Turks, Sumerians, and Aryans. Several articles attempted not only to link Turkish with ancient languages, such as Sumerian, Hittite, and Etruscan, which had yet to be affiliated with any modern language families, but also with Indo-European and Semitic languages (Türk Dili, 1933:81–94, 110–124). While Ahmet Cevat (Emre) used linguistic evidence to prove that Sumerians were Turks, Mehmet Saffet used similar evidence to

prove that Hittites were also Turks. Their work went hand in hand with the comparisons made by many Western archaeologists in Anatolia, who often compared modern Turks with ancient Hittites. As the American archaeologist F. Schmidt mused, “There is an idyllic picture, the proud Turkish father with his youngster sucking contentedly at his thumb. The only Anatolian feature of the man’s dress is his rawhide shoes with upturned toes; they are like those on figurines of about four thousand years ago.” Similarly, “the fundamental features of Anatolian houses have not changed very much since these early, long-forgotten people built their houses at the Alishar site. The present Anatolian houses, with their brick walls on stone foundations and their flat-topped roofs composed of beams, layers of branches, and mud, may still illustrate the buildings of their predecessors some five thousand years ago” (Schmidt, 1931:19, 55).

Back at the linguistics conferences, the scholar Saim Ali, proposed that Turkish was an Indo-European language. His comments show his objectives: “Today,” he explained, “there are numerous nations which use a language with which they share no racial relationship. The reason that the most ancient language in Central Asia was used in the homeland of the Turkish language is because the political upheavals taking place in their own land always occurred between racially and linguistically equivalent Turks” (Türk Dili, 1933:73). Others, such as Agop Martayan (Dilacar), were interested in utilizing the contemporary Russian “Linguistic Paleontology,” also known as “Japhetology,” developed by N. A. Marr to postulate a Central Asian origin for the language, and thus to use Sumerian as the missing link between Turkish and Indo-European languages (Türk Dili, 1933:94–104). Another member of the congress, Artin Cebeli, proposed that Indo-European languages and races would better be termed Turco-European, given their shared geographic and thus racial origins (Türk Dili, 1933:126).

The subtext of much of this linguistic acrobatics was to simplify the process of the nationalization of language, a central objective of the “Pure Turkish” movement instituted by Atatürk. Soon after his above comments, for example, Artin Cebeli explained that the words which people assumed had come from Arabic and Persian, and thus needed to be purged from a pure Turkish, had actually entered those languages from Sumerian Turkish. Thus if linguists could prove a “Turkish” etymology for a seemingly foreign word, it could remain in popular usage. The concern for expelling foreign elements clearly parallels the expulsion of invaders from Turkey during the war for independence, only a decade earlier. As Serif Bey exhorted, “On the day that, growling from the borders of our land, the voice great Turkish child—who forced those who attacked Turks and Turkishness in the hope suppressing and dislodging them to bow before history—yelled at the attackers, ‘It is forbidden to enter the Turkish land!’ Turkish lands were saved. (Applause) And today that voice, that voice that Turkish children and all of humanity have come to know so well, declared to the words which have entered the Turkish language and have for thousands of years struggled to imprison it, ‘The Turkish

language is a mother tongue. A foreigner cannot enter it. It is forbidden!” (Türk Dili, 1933:249–50).

How much was this the doing of Atatürk? Seref Bey went on to say, “So now, the Turkish language has been saved. As this red-headed Turkish child, whom the Turkish god has painted with sunlight on top of the gold mountain, here among us listens to us today, who knows what novelties are welling to the surface of that great head and that warm heart to raise Turkish existence to bring Turks many clear days?” (Türk Dili, 1933:249–50). Atatürk was, of course (by Turkish standards) a redhead. But to what extent could one attribute this ideological madness to him, and to what extent was it part of the general intellectual milieu? Discussions of how Turkish could modernize had been underway since rising concerns in the nineteenth century with both popular use of language and with national identity. Ideas to change the alphabet—either to a Latin script or other alternatives, such as one based on Orhun inscriptions—had been underway for decades. Similarly, discussions of revising the Turkish dictionary using folk and historical Turkic sources had begun before the fall of the empire. But it was Atatürk who made these into a concerted effort sponsored by the state. Language became the cornerstone of a modern Turkish identity which could supplant the more common identifiers of religion and regionalism. His role in the development of Turkish linguistic theories becomes most clear as they developed into the Sun-Language Theory.

In his memoirs, Ahmet Cevat Emre expulcates himself in explaining how what he calls this “freak” theory came into being:

I received a 47-page typed dossier written in poor French entitled, “Psychologie des Langues Turques” and signed by a Dr. des lettres orientales, H. F. Kvergic (Vienna). The author had sent it to me thinking I was the head of the language association . . . After having understood its unfoundedness and valuelessness through a quick perusal of the beginning and middle of this strange study, I threw the dossier which looked like a school notebook into a drawer and saw no need to even mention it to my colleagues. However, when he received no reply from me, Dr. Kvergic found a way to send it to Atatürk through some other means. After having read it with great curiosity, he gave it to the general secretary of the association Ibrahim Necmi Dilmen, saying, “it looks important, it should be carefully considered.” (Korkmaz, 1992:321–324)

Memoirs of the author Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu suggest how this came about.

A linguist from Vienna . . . sent this thesis to Vedat Nedim Tör, who at that time was the General Publications Director. Vedat Nedim is my friend. He brought the thesis to me. When I saw that it was on the subject of language, I took it to Atatürk. When Atatürk read the thesis, he said, “OK, I have found what I wanted!” (Laut, 2000:100)

Thus it seems that the search for Turkish linguistics was on, at the behest of the president, before it had any content as would soon be tailor-made by scholars.

What was it in Kvergic's theory that Atatürk found so appealing? Emre continues his description of the theory as follows:

... In it, by tying psychological spaces to the birth of language and demonstrative signals to these psychic spaces, Dr. Kvergic attempted to supposedly conduct a psychological analysis as follows: psychic spaces and the expression of objects through signs has been the same ever since the beginning of humanity! Very long ago, at the beginning, these psychic spaces would be expressed through gestures; grunts would accompany these gestures; phonemes and the sounds of language emerged from these grunts. Sound signals were used with these gestures; even today, gesture strengthens the spoken word and enlivens it... According to Dr. Kvergic, the closest psychic space is the "ben men" (ego) space; from "ben-men" came "m"... (Korkmaz, 1992:321–324)

For non-Turkish speakers, it is important to note here that "ben" means I or me in Turkish, while "m" added as a suffix to a noun is the singular possessive and added to a verb is the first person singular. Thus for psychic reasons, Kvergic's theory makes Turkish into the root language, the *Ursprache*, for which so many linguists of the early twentieth century had been searching. After explaining Kvergic's theory, Emre goes on to explain how it became central to the development of the Sun-Language Theory.

Having read my hesitation as professional competitiveness, Atatürk said, "the psychological analyses look important to me," and insisted on his old idea. He explained that people could well have exclaimed things like Aa! Oo! Ag! Og! from fear or amazement or respect towards things like lightning, the east, the west, clouds, and rain and that language could have emerged from these exclamations. Listening to this opinion of Atatürk, Ibrahim Necmi joined with his friends Hasan Resit and Naim Hazim, as well as Abdülkadir, to place this business under discussion. Applying to theories of the birth of language (*glottogonie*), particularly the monogenist theories of linguistic scholars such as Trombetti and N. Marr, they eventually managed to discover important essentials in Dr. Kvergic's work!... When Dr. Kvergic came by invitation from Vienna, he also was surprised by the inventiveness of the new theory, but did not dare to contradict it... (Korkmaz, 1992:321–324)

What was this new theory?

While exposition of the theory began with its publication in the Ankara daily newspaper *Ulus* in November of 1935 and was soon followed with extensive articles in the national daily *Cumhuriyet*, its full expression was born at the Third Linguistic Congress of 1936. There, Ibrahim Necmi Dilmen, General Secretary of the Turkish Language Association, introduced the Sun-Language Theory as the key to the primary puzzle that had troubled linguists since the establishment of linguistics, a great Turkish find, summarized as, "the search and discovery of their mother tongue by primitive man's mind as he emerged from efforts to express

emotions and thoughts coming alive as animal instincts made way for the rise of consciousness and comprehension” (Üçüncü Türk Dil Kurultayı 1937:56). At this point, primitive man naturally focused his attention to the all-powerful sun, the earliest of the sky totems associated by modern science with ancestral man. He then said “a,” the simplest phoneme of the human vocal system since it is the sound produced without any labial manipulation. Slightly elongated, it would produce the sound “ağ,” where the ğ—a sign unique to Turkish—represents the elongation of the preceding vowel. What Necmen never mentions is that “ağ” in modern Turkish means net, not sun; what was supposed to be clear from this explanation, presumably, was that it was not modern Turkish that was the mother tongue, but the original language of the Turks. This could be proven because of the brachicephalous racial superiority of Central Asians, who were Turks, who had spread language and culture—historical evidence—and the continuation of root words in Turkic dialects—linguistic evidence.

From this starting point, primitive phonemes could be organized according to the concepts associated with the sun, such as heat, light, westerly movement, color seen in the light, and sound from lightning—a series of phoneme structures remarkably similar to the so-called “tribal” elements of Japhetic linguistics. Dilmen proceeded to explain how all sounds were, in the Sun-Language Theory, categorized by level of difficulty in pronunciation, and could be manipulated through the addition of ağ-like phonemes in an agglutinative process akin to modern Turkish. For example,

man who said «ağ» to designate the sun, said «ağ + ağ = ağağ» and with the mixture of these sounds said «aağ = ağ». Thus the phoneme was created.

The combination of phonemes created the “syllable.” For example, the forms «ok + uğ = okuğ = oku = ku» and «ak + ap = akap = kap» emerged in this way. (Üçüncü Türk Dil Kurultayı, 1937:63)

Some elements clearly came from Atatürk’s interpretation of Kvergiec’s theory, which was based on the original grunts of man. But somewhere along the way, something had changed. His assertions of grunts had come to use a ğ, a silent letter (indicating extension of the previous vowel, derived from the ‘ghayn of Arabic script) in the Latinized Turkish alphabet not found in any other language. The analysis had come to rely on a complex series of derivational equations. Central Asia had become the locus of the theory. And the sun had become the sole object of early man’s amazement. Why?

As Emre suggests, many of these elements come from linguistic theories of the 1920s. Among these, the theories of N. Marr, the premier linguist of the Soviet Union until the refutation of his theories by Stalin in the 1950s, bear the closest resemblance. Indeed, Marr had visited Turkey in 1932, where he had delivered a

speech concerning the origin of language. Developed at the Academy of Sciences in Leningrad between 1923 and 1930 out of his initial studies of Armenian and Georgian linguistics published in 1908, the first part of Marr's work concerned the languages labeled as Japhetic—those of the Caucasus, particularly the various Turkic languages, Armenian, and Georgian, Basque, Etruscan, Berber, Hottentot, Pamirian dialects, and Elamite among others. Marr chose the name Japhetology as a specifically anti-Indo-Europeanist act: in the late nineteenth century, Biblical renditions of Indo-European languages generally associated Aryan languages with those of the descendants of Noah's son Japheth (Ballantyne, 2002:26). The second part comprised a general linguistic theory which favored the dynamic comparison of languages over their developmental categorization. Thus instead of written documents, reflecting an already overly developed stage of the language, Japhetology proposed the research of surviving elements of living and dead languages alike from material culture in order to place them on a single, diachronic plane of study. Steeped in Marxist thought, Marr argued that the morphological study of languages reflected a proprietary social structure rather than favoring the collectivity which, in its labor and worship, would develop language. In an effort to construct a method of linguistic paleontology, Japhetic linguistics compared words through function rather than derivation, declaring war on the "formalism" of traditional comparative linguistics. Whereas neogrammarian philology posits a developmental scheme for language in the form of an inverted triangle emerging from a proto-language of indeterminate origin, Marr posited that early man had spoken through common gestures and mimicry which at first had magical signification which words eventually lost (Murra et al., 1951:2).⁷ Japhetology denied the existence of linguistic families in favor of viewing differences as various phases of linguistic evolution, akin to Marxist historicism. "For Japhetology, the culminating point resides in this question: will one succeed in seizing the continued creative march of culture, will one know to read its imprints on the perimeters of forms as they change, or will one instead rest all efforts in the definition of races, appraising each as the depository of a new culture in this promised land where the forms of culture surge like a *deus ex machina*? For the Japhetic practitioner, the ancient forms were not additive, but transformatively adapted as part of an eternal crossing of the ancient with the new" (Nikitine, 1933:669–71). Methodologically, Japhetology proposed that words were "glotogenetically" related, and emerged from four elements corresponding to the "tribal" elements—SAL, BER, YON, and ROSH—which changed through various functional changes, such as vowel shifts, in the articulation structure of primitive man (Murra et al., 1951:11).⁸ A typical analysis would go as follows:

The Georgian word "mukha" ("oak") is recognized to be made up of two elements: "mu" (the BER element) and "kha" (the SAL element). Academician N. Ya. Marr "links" the first element "mu" to the Chinese mu ("tree"), the

Mordvinian *pu* (“tree”), and the Georgian *pur-i* (“grain” [or “bread”]), the Greek *bal-an-os* (“acorn”), the Megrelian *ko-bal-i* (“grain” [or “bread”]). But he links the second element “*kha*” to the Georgian words *khe* (“tree”), *tkhe* (“forest”), etc. Thus, one and the same element “*mu*” and its variants (*pu*, *pur*, *bal*, etc.) signify: tree—acorn—grain [or bread]. Conclusion: at one time mankind lived on acorns. (Chikobava in Murra et al., 1951:17)

Utilizing this method, Marr asserted that, “Not only the so-called Indo-European and Semitic languages, but also Turkic, Mongolian, Ugro-Finnic, Chinese, African, Oceanian as well as Australian, native American languages, all turned out to be incontrovertibly related to one degree or another.”⁹

Perhaps as attractive as its staunch denial of linguistic families and ensuing universalism was Japhetology’s avowedly anti-imperialist content. Spirkin, discussing Marr, accuses traditional linguistics of being “permeated with the spirit of racism and serves as justification of the imperialists’ colonial policy . . . Marr’s teaching in all its purpose is anti-imperialistic. He protests against the completely unfounded division of peoples and languages into ‘superior’ and ‘inferior,’ into ‘capable’ and ‘incapable’ of development, seeing rightly the introduction into linguistics of racism and the national colonial policy of bourgeois imperialist states” (Spirkin in Murra et al., 1951:4). Ironically, it was this very universalism that must have made this theory an effective tool in uniting many ethnic and linguistically divided republics under the banner of the Soviet Union, even as the theory ardently professed its opposition to the imperialist aims of “bourgeois,” “Anglo-American” linguistics. “Hitler’s fascism tried a broader use, in its own interests, of the antiquated concept of Indo-Germanic racial superiority, but failed in the attempt. Today, with these aims, Anglo-American imperialism uses the contemporary Saussure and other neo-idealist schools for their propaganda of the notorious cosmopolitan theory of the superiority of analytical over inflected languages. This pseudo-science is used as a theoretical foundation for Anglo-American racism and contrasts the Western European peoples, as allegedly ‘chosen’ to the remainder of the world and in particular to the people’s democracies of the Soviet Union” (Spirkin in Murra et al., 1951:17). Apparently, imperialism without racism in the name of universalism posed no problem for Soviet Marrists. Likewise, construction of a unified Turkish nation grounded in a common linguistic and racial heritage allowed for an integration of ethnic minorities not possible or even conceivable in contemporary Europe, its colonial extensions, or the contemporary United States. However, it did so at the cost of suppressing ethnic difference and losing the richness which that had provided in earlier eras. Whereas many in Europe and the United States had turned to utilizing philology and archaeological diffusionism as evidence for racial superiority and as promotion for Eugenics, the Turkish answer to the problem of difference in an era of nations went to the opposite extreme, denying racial differences by making everybody, monomaniacally, Turkish.

Abdulkadir Inan, one of the authors of the Sun-Language Theory, commented extensively on Marr's 1932 lecture in Turkey, entitled "The Separation of Languages and Nations and the Issue of Turkish Dialects."¹⁰ While Inan admits that, as in his other works, Marr's lecture is disorganized, confusing, and full of contradictions, he expresses an admiration for his theories both for their express fight against the canonical Indo-Europeanism pervading Western theology, which he compares to the rule of medieval popes, and their desire to give Turks an appropriate place at the center of world linguistic history. Furthermore, while Inan doubted that Marrism would succeed in fighting against the wave of racism filling countries like Germany, he expressed the hope that it would aid in that fight among the various nations of Russia—an objective quite similar to the pattern of making everybody Turkish, shared by both the Turkish historical and linguistic theses.

Under Atatürk's order to produce a comprehensive theory, the linguists made extensive use of Marr's theory to modify that of Herman Kvergic, an otherwise completely unknown scholar of Slovakian descent working in Vienna, who cited the work of Wilhelm Czermak as the source for his investigations (Laut, 2000:95). Unlike Kvergic's system of grunts, Marr's work suggested a sacred use of language, which had developed from pointing at objects—a system which eventually made its way into the Sun-Language Theory. The emphasis on the sacred most likely appealed to a newly developing sense of the pre-Islamic identity of Turks as nature-worshipping shamanists. Indeed, Abdulkadir supported his faith in such aspects of Marr's theories with derivations from various dialects of Turkish. Perhaps most importantly, Marr's vision of a pre-historic language of the Central Asian Japhetic tribes from which all languages had developed rescued the emerging theory from comparisons with modern Turkish which had made up such an awkward part of Kvergic's theory.

Unlike the other European scientific theories which had been pieced together in the formulation of the Turkish Historical Thesis, those used for the Sun-Language Theory were never cited, and have disappeared into near-oblivion. Whereas one of the objectives of the historical thesis was to deconstruct European historiography through reusing its parts (supposedly) exposing its failures, the Sun-Language Theory was to show the height of the Turkish genius in full bloom. Indeed, Lewis points out that the "authorship of the theory is archly hinted at by the anonymous writer of 'A Short Look at the Essentials of the Sun-Language Theory,' which speaks of it as a product of 'Türk jenisi' (the Turkish genius)" (Lewis, 1999:58). As Lewis interprets the phrase, it refers to Atatürk; it could just as well refer to a broad Turkish genius floating in the national psyche.

But how and why did the sun become the sole focal point of all this pointing and grunting? The association between the sun and language was not a new discovery. In his "Essay on Comparative Mythology," Max Müller explained the primacy of the sun for primitive man, describing it as the key element linking Aryan mythologies (Cox, 1963:22). Moreover, with an inconsistent flourish connecting



Figure 7.2. The “sun disks” lying in the site, supposedly as they were found. (Ank, 1937:56).

all languages with Indo-European languages, Müller declared, “Never in the history of man has there been a new language. What does this mean? Neither more nor less than that in speaking as we do, we are using the same materials, however broken-up, crushed, and put together anew, which were handled by the first speaker, i.e. the first real ancestor of our race” (quoted in Cox, 1963:16).

Yet the Turkish association between the sun and language was not founded in distant mythological theories, but in the very soil of the young country. In 1935, Remzi Oguz Arık supervised the excavation of Alacahöyük, a Hittite site between the modern cities of Çorum and Ankara; the findings were published in a handsome volume in French in 1937. In several tombs there, they found a series of small objects with no apparent use value which varied between abstract forms and representations of deer (figures 7.2–7.5). Innocently, Arık explains that “Having arrived at a depth of 6.20–6.25 meters, we found works in bronze, iron, and even silver which we called ‘solar disks’” (Arık, 1937:61). But why, and why did this initial attribution become conclusive? Arık does not say. But by the end of the book, the name had stuck.

Among the votive monuments of the three tombs, the different “solar disks” remain the most truly unique documents. In all these “solar disks” the horn of the ox, the stag, the idea of the sun remain in common and dominant. The images of the stag, so obstinately repeated on each occasion, either separately

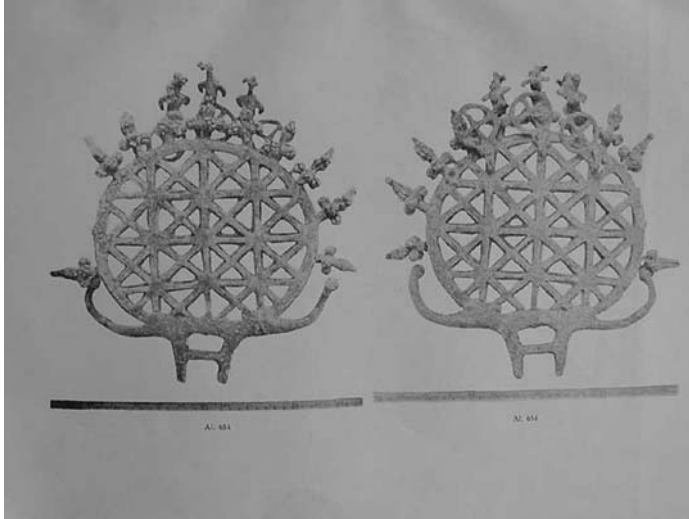


Figure 7.3. "Sun disk," Bronze, .237 × .340 m; collection of the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara (Arik, 1937:CXCII).

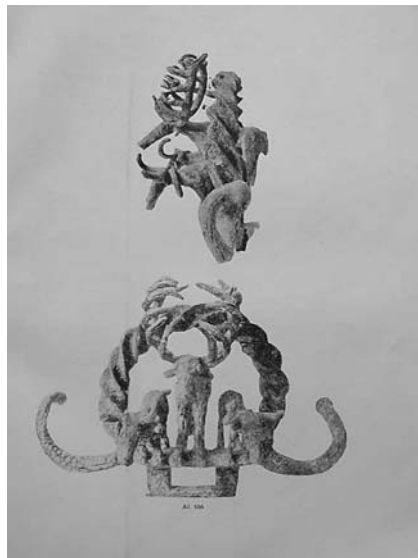


Figure 7.4. "Sun disk" with deer, Bronze, .220 × .170 m, collection of the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara (Arik, 1937:CXCVI).

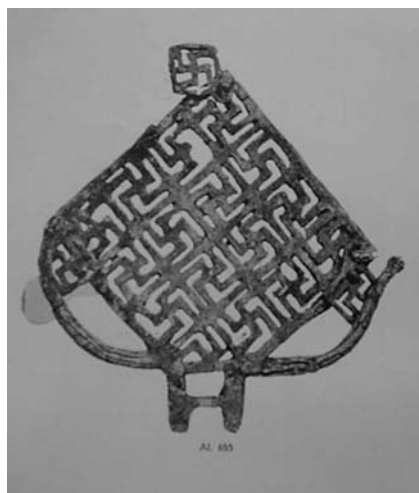


Figure 7.5. “Sun disk” with swastikas, Bronze, .350 × .325 m, collection of the Museum of Anatolian Civilizations, Ankara (Ank, 1937:CXCV).

or such that they furnish the principle theme on these ex-voto take us above all to Central and Northern Asia. Does not the “swastica” symbolize the sun and heavenly continuation? In all the cases, one encounters the same constitutive elements of the discs in the monuments of Mesopotamia. (Ank, 1937:119)

Thus Ank’s interpretation of the findings were well in line with those of the first Turkish Historical Thesis, attempting to link the Sumerians with Anatolia. And yet there was more. For the first time, local archaeological finds utilized images like the swastica. It was not the first time that somebody had used archaeological finds to suggest that the swastica had actually been a Turkish icon. For example, as an article in the June 5, 1935 issue of *Cumhuriyet* explained, during a visit to the “Museum for Getting to Know Nations” in Berlin, their reporters had been shown an example of a ninth-century Uygur mosaic floor inscribed with a swastica, which had been found in Turfan by Professor Bang. The article proceeds to explain that the sacred symbol had entered Buddhism from Central Asian roots.

While the discovery of an object decorated with a swastica design brought this claim home to Anatolia, two other discs were chosen to become iconic as sun disks. While the new objects fit with Aryan symbolism, they were also used to subtly distinguish between Turkish race theories related to Aryanism and the use of the swastica by the Nazis.

By the time of the Second Turkish Historical Congress in 1937, it had all come together. With an enlarged image of the sun disk behind the podium, Afet Inan (figure 7.6) explained the role of the sun as she introduced the congress:



Figure 7.6. Afet Inan at the Second Turkish Historical Congress, 1937 [La Turquie Kemaliste, 21–22 (12/1937):2].

The Turkish revolution, which has squeezed the work of centuries into years, has discovered its own mihrab, that of the sun. In the voyage of history, it is us the Turks who most frequently encounter the traces of the sun's inspiration. The Turkish race discovered its culture in such a place that there the sun was the most productive. The Turks who had to leave their first home chose their primary routes of migration by following the guidance of the sun.

They spread to the East and to the West; in those wide countries, they left the documents of their exalted existence. And our ancestors the Hittites, the first to establish the culture of our own home Anatolia, made a symbol of the sun. They made it the subject of the intricacy of their arts. Several sun disks found during the Turkish Historical Foundation's excavations at Alacahöyük provide incontestable proof of this . . . These sun disks, decorated with various geometrical designs, will take an important position in our history as the symbol of Turkish thought and art. (Üçüncü Türk Dil Kurultayı, 1937:7)

The same year, a line-drawing of the sun-disk adorned the cover of the first issue of the Turkish Historical Association's journal *Belleten*. Already at the third Linguistic Congress in 1936, Ibrahim Necmi Dilmen had explained that "The word Ari is contended to be the first name of the Indo-European race. . . it is thought that the primitive location of this race was the southwest of the Central Asian plains. . . [and] analysis by the Sun-Language Theory shows that the word

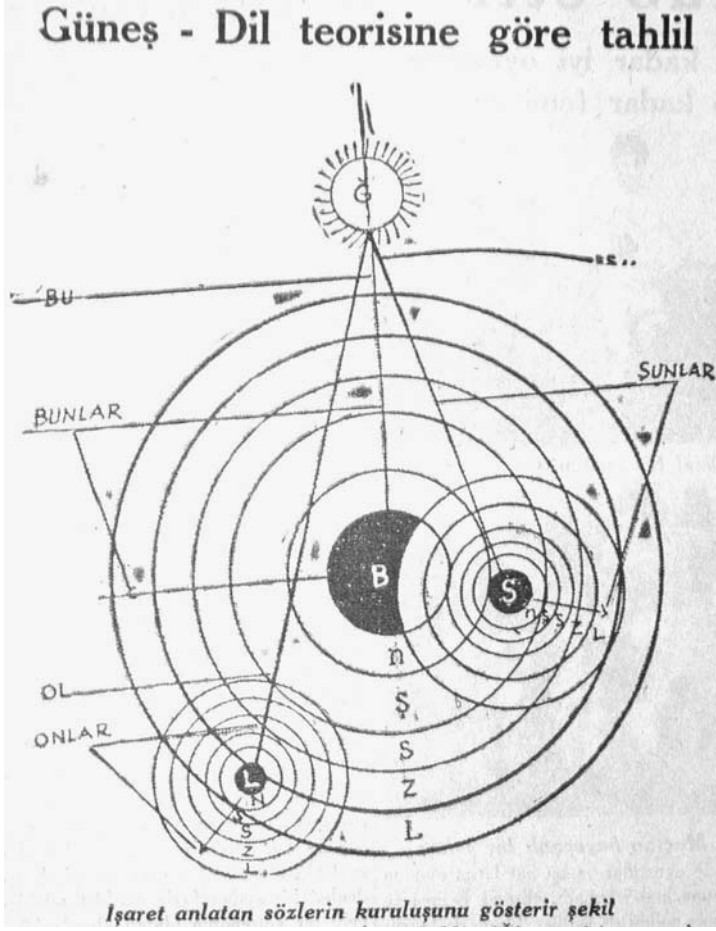


Figure 7.7. Diagram of the etymology of indicative pronouns (*Cumhuriyet*, February 24, 1936).

is Turkish” (Üçüncü Türk Dil Kurultayı, 1937:90). Along similar lines, in the first issue of *Belleten*, Professor H. Reşit Tankut, one of the authors of the Sun-Language Theory, explained the word “Alp and the Homeland of the Alpine Race” through a Sun-Language Theory bolstered by the image of a sun-symbol native to Anatolia.

The Sun-Language Theory and the sun disk did not remain cloistered in scholarly conferences. Explanations of the theory in the newspaper *Cumhuriyet* used diagrams comparing the role of language to the solar system (figure 7.7). The solar disk became the symbol of the state-controlled Eti (Hittite) Bank, founded in 1935 to finance mining, as articles in *Cumhuriyet* explained that the Hittites had brought metallurgy and mining to the world.¹²

All this, it seems, from a strange 47-page package that came in the mail; from a gullible (as Ahmet Cevat Emre tells it) leader whose authority extended beyond his knowledge; and from an academic structure which favored an ideologically useful opinion over a correct one. Or, if we dispute Ahmet Cevat Emre's narrative, from an ideology based on a megalomaniac vision of universal racial and ethnic uniformity in which just about everybody was, at the root of their tongue, a Turk.

Ahmet Cevat Emre continues the above reminiscences about the birth of the Sun-Language Theory as follows:

Ataturk was not considering the possibility that so many respectable people whom he trusted would be able to ally themselves in fooling the nation and him. He became angry at my criticisms, attributing them to my high self-opinion, saying, "professors are doing it, why don't you understand?" I came to have no answer other than, "I am trying to understand, sir."

... When the theory encountered the criticism of Western Turkologists at the congress, Ataturk's confidence in our professors was shaken, and he came to understand that he had been fooled. From that point on, analyses of the Sun-Language Theory took the form of a fun puzzle-game. Ataturk from then on allowed anybody who wanted to go ahead and publish an analysis; he even ordered that one analysis be published under the name of the boy Nuri, who had been hired to dust the shelves and bring books! Thus the sharlitanism of the professors was slapped into their faces.

Thus Ahmet Cevat Emre removes the stigma—even the embarrassment—that such a bizarre theory had been supported by Ataturk himself, and places it squarely on the backs of the colleagues from whom he was all too eager to disassociate himself—even though he too had, at the 1932 congress, made a bid for the Turkish identity of the Sumerians. Clearly, numerous motivations lie behind Ahmet Cevat's recollections, including an effort to maintain a clean slate for the country's great leader. The increasing use of the Sun-Language Theory after its publication for racial investigations, particularly during the early years of World War II, suggest that while its uses were nowhere as innocent as Emre would have us believe, they also suggest that the most insidious uses of the theory appeared during the era when Ataturk's health was in severe decline and after his death.

The dictator had outlived the man. Do the rise and fall of the Sun-Language Theory and the archaeology which supported it suggest that Ataturk was a dictator?

The elevation of the sun-disk artifact to an icon during the very era of the Sun-Language Theory suggests that it functioned not only as a sign for the prehistoric Hittite past of Turkey, but also for the theory which linked the pre-historic Hittite Turks with their brethren in Central Asia, and thence the world. Yet it was the ideology constructed by historiography and linguistics, more than direct control, which made the archaeological activity of the first decades of the Turkish Republic focus on Hittitology, to the exclusion of all other interests. At the same time,

it must be remembered that while Turks did not excavate classical sites, many foreigners did do so throughout the republican period (Uçankus, 2000:16).¹³ Thus the historiography of the state clearly dictated not the archaeology which was conducted as much as its utilization for the production of a centralized nationalist history. Much like the events leading to the formulation of the Sun-Language Theory, this history was written by scholars who earned their high standing through satisfying the aspirations of the nation's leader, and those who displeased him ran the risk of losing their status. In other words, it was to the benefit of historians and archaeologists alike to make their findings fit with the historical outline at hand, and archaeology was clearly used and supported for the purpose of bolstering state ideology. Was this hand that of a dictator, or was it that of the era which many people participated in producing and maintaining? Is there a difference?

Decades after Atatürk's death, the Sun-Language Theory has been long-since abandoned into the wastepile of bad, embarrassing, and all-too-telling ideologies, where it finds good company with phrenology, eugenicism, and segregationism among others. But the Hittite Sun, with its Aryanist implications long-since forgotten, became the emblem of Ankara in 1974, and remained in place until it was replaced by an Islamicist emblem in 1995 (figure 7.8). The sun remains the symbol of the Ministry of Tourism, and is a popular design for jewelry. In his work *The Black Book*, the renowned Turkish author Orhan Pamuk, for example, uses it as a typical gift that a secularist, upper-middle class husband might give his wife. Looking at some snapshots, he sees "Rüya, five months ago at most . . . wearing the Hittite Sun medallion Galip had given her on her last birthday" (Pamuk, 1994:353). A monumental statue of another of the sun-disks has adorned a major artery of Ankara since 1977 (figure 7.9).

Not only do the sun disks persist as an emblem of identification with the pre-historic, but links between contemporary Turks and the Hittites continue to draw



Figure 7.8. Former emblem of the city of Ankara, compared to the new one, on the front page of the newspaper *Yeniyüzyıl* (7/5/2000).



Figure 7.9. Monument on Ataturk Bulvari, Ankara.

public attention. For example, on December 10, 2002, the Turkish news service NTV reported that a Hittitologist, Assistant Professor Sedat Erkut of the Ankara Faculty of Language and Geography had used cuneiform tablets in the Norbert Schimmel collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art to link elements of the Santa Claus myth (Saint Nicholas is already associated with Demre in the municipal district of Antalya, in southern Turkey) with the Hittite Myth of Telapinu. According to the tablet, “They go to the mountain of Shiduva to cut an Eya tree. They bring him and put a statue of the god behind it. They bring a deer to place under it . . . Then they say to the mountain, we are going to take this tree in order to decorate it.”¹⁴ Such a link may be real or not; what is of interest is the persistent attempt to prove a share in European heritage through archaeological evidence, which has been part of the Turkish formulation of identity since the late Ottoman era.

The actual ideology which Ataturk supported may have been discarded, but its spawn is ubiquitous as an element of Turkey’s national mythology of Anatolian autochtheneity and European commonality. Is an individual responsible for the dictatorship of an ideology which remains in place so many years after his death? Or is its continuation simply a sign of the mythology which such power put in place?

Notes

1. Any consideration of Atatürk's role as a political dictator—discussion of the “Freedom Courts” soon after the revolution or his party's control of the opposition party during his presidency—is well outside the scope of this paper.
2. For a complete discussion of archaeology in the Ottoman Empire, see Shaw (2003).
3. See Korkmaz (1992), citing memoirs of Afet Inan, an anthropologist whom Atatürk had personally selected to accelerate her studies in order to help lead the crusade of the new history while also serving as a role model for women in modern Turkish society.
4. For more information on Turkish language reform, see Lewis (1999).
5. For an examination of contexts and the anti-imperialist implications of this historiography, see Shaw (N. D.).
6. Champlin (1994:193), quoting Toynbee (1947:167).
7. A. G. Spirkin, “Scientific Session Devoted to Marr Anniversary,” *Voprosy filosofii*, No. 3, 1949 [published April, 1950, pp. 326–327], translated in Murra, Hankin, and Holling (1951).
8. A. Chikobava, “On Certain Problems of Soviet Linguistics,” *Pravda*, May 9, 1950; translated in Murra, Hankin, and Holling (1951).
9. Quoted from N. Ya. Marr, “Language,” *Selected Works*, Vol. II, p. 135 in Chikobava, 16 [see note 8].
10. Unpublished typed manuscript, *Türk Dil Kurumu* (Turkish Linguistics Foundation) Library.
11. Cox (1963:16), quoting Müller (*Chips from a German Workshop II*, London: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1880: 255).
12. “Türklerde Madencilik: Demir sanaiini dünyaya tanıtan bir millet,” (*Turkish Metallurgy: A Nation That Introduced Metallurgy to the World*), *Cumhuriyet* (April 6, 1937).
13. Among these, Th. Wiegand worked in Didima (1924–25) and J. Keil worked in Ephesus (1926–1935) during the early years of the republic (Uçankus, 2000:16).
14. <http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/news/191843.asp?0m=-16b>

Bibliography

- Anonymous, 1949, *Atatürk Diktatör Müdür? Güven Matbaası*, Istanbul.
- Arık, R. O., 1937, *Les Fouilles d'Alajahöyük*. Devlet Matbaası, Istanbul.
- Ballantyne, T., 2002, *Orientalism and Race: Aryanism in the British Empire*. Palgrave Books, London.
- Champlin, P., 1994, *Raphael Pumpelly: Gentleman Geologist of the Gilded Age*. University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa.
- Cox, G. W., 1963, *The Mythology of the Aryan Nations*. Choukhambhu Sanscrit Series, Varanasi (reprint from the revised edition of 1882).
- Inan, A., 1937, L'Activite Archaeologique de la Société d'Histoire Turque. *La Turquie Kemaliste* 20–21 (December):6–12.
- Inan, A. et al., 1930, *Türk Tarihinin Ana Hatları* [Outline of Turkish History]. Devlet Matbaası, Istanbul (reprint, 1999, Kaynak Yayınları, Istanbul).
- Korkmaz, Z. (ed.), 1992, *Atatürk ve Türk Dili: Belgeler*. Türk Dil Kurumu, Ankara.
- Laut, J., 2000, *Das Türkische als Ursprache?* Harrassowitz Verlag, Weisbaden.
- Lewis, G., 1999, *Turkish Language Reform: A Catastrophic Success*. Oxford University Press, London.
- Murra, J., Hankin, R., and Holling, F., 1951, *The Soviet Linguistic Controversy*. King's Crown Press, New York.

- Nikitine, B., 1933, *L'Importance de la Théorie Japhétique pour les Études Ethnographiques*, XVe Congrès International d'Anthropologie & d'Archaeologie Préhistorique, V^e Session de l'Institut Internationale d'Anthropologie, Paris, 1933. (Kraus reprint, 1970.)
- Pamuk, O., 1994, *The Black Book*. Güneli Gün, trans. Harvest Books, New York.
- Schmidt, F., 1931, *Anatolia Through the Ages: Discoveries at the Alishar Mound, 1927–29*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Shaw, W., 2003, *Possessors and Possessed: Museums, Archaeology, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire*. University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Shaw, W., N. D., The Rise of the Hittite Sun. In *Peddling the Past*, edited by P. Kohl, in progress.
- Toynbee, A., 1947, *A Short Study of History*, abridgement of vols. 1–6 by D.C. Somerville. Oxford University Press, New York.
- Türk Dili Birinci Kurultayı. [First Congress of Turkish Linguistics], 1933. Türk Dil Kurumu, Ankara.
- Uçankus, H., 2000, *Bir İnsan ve Uygarlık Bilimi, Arkeoloji: Tarih Öncesi Çağlardan Perslere Kadar Anadolu*. Kültür Bakanlığı Yayınları, Ankara.
- Üçüncü Türk Dil Kurultayı. [Third Congress of Turkish Linguistics], 1937. Türk Dil Kurumu, Ankara.