

# Miniaturizing Atatürk

## Privatization of state imagery and ideology in Turkey

### ABSTRACT

Since the late 1990s Turkish consumers have purchased pictures of Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey and the most potent symbol of the Turkish state, as popular commodities, displaying them in homes and private businesses. In this article, I argue that these consumer citizens seek to reconcile the memory of Atatürk's state-led modernity of the 1930s with recent international pressure to achieve a market-based modernity. As citizens try to mask the authority of secularist state institutions with consumer choice, the market carries state symbolism into new, private spheres, which it previously had not been able to infiltrate. [state, market, privatization, secularism, Islam, Atatürk, Turkey]

Visitors to Turkey are immediately greeted with images and reminders of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founding father of the country. When travelers land at the Atatürk Airport in Istanbul, two gigantic pictures of the leader welcome them. The shuttle from the airport drops travelers in Taksim Square, across from the Atatürk Library. When they tour the city, visitors pass by the Atatürk Culture Center, notice the Atatürk Monument, and cross the Atatürk Bridge. They encounter the numerous statues, portraits, and sayings of the leader that encumber every available public space.

Proliferation of Atatürk images is noticeable not only to newcomers; since the late 1990s Turkish natives have also observed an exponential increase in the already ubiquitous images of Atatürk. Although I grew up under the penetrating gaze of the founding father, on my return to the country after several years' absence, I was astonished by the omnipresence of Atatürk images. What startled me most was not the multiplication of his image, but its appearance in strange, new places and in new poses, its very commodification. Kemalist entrepreneurs and consumers had creatively adopted the leader into their personal lives and ventures. Suddenly, it seemed, there was an appropriate picture of Atatürk for every trade: Atatürk seated at a table for use in restaurants and bars, several poses of Atatürk drinking coffee for coffee shops, a dancing Atatürk for nightclubs, and even Atatürk with cats and dogs for veterinarians. Posters of Atatürk and inscriptions of his image in unusual contexts, such as on T-shirts, mugs, and crystal spheres, had become popular as birthday gifts and wedding favors.

In the 1990s Kemalist politicians and intellectuals frequently reflected on the meaning of this new Atatürk imagery. They contrasted the interest in the Turkish leader with the hatred people elsewhere were displaying toward other state leaders at the time and took the difference as a sign of the strength of Atatürk's principles. Several years ago, for example, the then ex- and future Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit said proudly, "[Hitler, Mussolini, and Stalin] have been buried in the dark pages of history. But Atatürk is still alive in our hearts sixty years after his death" (Sandoğan 1998:15). Many politicians and intellectuals describe the recent interest in Atatürk as a

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kind of resurrection (*yeniden diriliş*) or an awakening (*uyanış*). Although there is something new about this interest in Atatürk, he never really died in the Turkish imagination. Kemalism has been the official ideology of the Turkish republic since the 1930s, and the leader has been venerated by large segments of the population since his death in 1938. I argue that what is new is the privatization of the production, circulation, and consumption of Atatürk's image as well as the form and content of representations of him.

The newly popular images do not depict the leader's usual somber and even frightening expression, familiar to Turkish citizens of all ages—especially to my generation, which grew up under the extensive Atatürk campaign of the 1980 military junta. Instead, the commodified pictures of Atatürk that decorate homes and businesses today depict the leader not as a soldier or a state leader but as a Westernized, urban bourgeois who enjoyed simple but highly marked pleasures, such as wearing European-designed outfits, eating food at a table rather than seated on the floor, drinking alcohol, and being in the company of unveiled, stylish women. Consumers are willing to pay hundreds of dollars for pictures representing the leader enjoying Western, bourgeois pleasures, even though his likeness is the most common item in the Turkish visual repertoire.

This privatization of Atatürk imagery is part of a larger transformation that is shifting the boundaries in Turkey between what is considered political and apolitical, public and private, democratic and undemocratic, and governmental and nongovernmental, as Islam gains visibility in public places and as the symbols of secular state ideology move into private domains. As a nation-state, Turkey was founded on the ideology of homogeneity, self-sufficiency, and secularism, replacing the pluralist Ottoman Empire ruled by Islamic principles. Today, secularist officials and citizens redefine their discourses and practices in relation to challenges from political Islam, on the one hand, and international organizations such as the European Union, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank, on the other. All of these entities criticize the Turkish state and army for repressing economic, social, and political freedom. I argue that secularist Turkish citizens and officials seek to reconcile the memory of the state-led modernity of the 1920s and 1930s during Atatürk's presidency with recent international pressure to construct a market-based modernity. Kemalist citizens express this desire by privatizing the symbols of official ideology and the state, carrying them first into the market and then into their homes. When they voluntarily purchase pictures of Atatürk and carry them to private zones outside the direct control of state authority, Kemalists send a message about their consumer-based and, thus, unforced commitment to the teachings of the founding leader. More approachable pic-

tures of the leader sold in the market, I also argue, evoke a more egalitarian conception of the state, which does not rule its citizens from above but, rather, engages in a contractual relationship necessary for a market-based economy as well as for modernity.

Providing a rigid sociological definition of Kemalism in Turkey is no easy task. Similar to many other ideologies that survived for several generations, Kemalism has been subjected to multiple interpretations and has attracted different kinds of supporters whose commitment to the founding father has changed over time and shifting circumstance (İnsel 2001). In contemporary Turkey it is common to make a distinction between Kemalism and Atatürkism, the former referring to a more left-wing, nationalist, anti-Islamist, and antineoglobal interpretation of the leader's teachings and the latter to a more right-wing, authoritarian understanding. Individuals I vaguely define as *Kemalists* in this article do not necessarily hold strongly to either of these political positions, but they promote teachings and images of the leader. I found that most of the Kemalists in Istanbul who eagerly purchased pictures of the leader to display in their homes and businesses in the late 1990s were middle- and upper-middle-class, Turkish (not Kurdish), secular urbanites who had been living in a major city for two generations, who did not position themselves on either the right or the left end of the political spectrum, but who were adamantly opposed to the emergent Islamist movement.<sup>1</sup>

### Consuming the state's symbol

Philip Abrams's (1977) analytical separation of the state as a system and the state as an idea has become a popular point of departure for, and a nexus of, criticism among anthropologists of the state. In his discussion, Abrams defines the state system as comprising institutionalized practices and the state idea as "an overt symbolic identity progressively divorced from practices as an illusionary account of practice" (1977:82). Rather than a reality, he calls the latter an ideological "mask" that is used to hide relations of power and domination. "The state," he writes, "is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice. It is itself the mask which prevents our seeing political practice as it is" (Abrams 1977:82). Despite Abrams's urging to lift the mask of the state to look at the relations of domination that it hides, contemporary anthropologists are more interested in the formation of the state idea, the process by which disparate sets of activities and institutions are seen as parts of a whole. Fernando Coronil, for example, argues that Abrams's separation between ideology and practice prevents him from understanding the two-way historical relationship between "the practice of masking and the masking of practice" (1997:114) that constitute

the state. “The process of masking,” Coronil states, “is active—it entails not concealing a preexisting reality but trans/forming it” (1997:114–115). Recent scholars have created their own vocabulary, naming the formation of a state ideology the “state effect” (Mitchell 1999), the “State fetish” (Taussig 1993), the “enlarged vision of the state” (Trouillot 2001), and even the “state fantasy” (Aretxaga 2000; Navaro-Yashin 2002). Anthropologists of the state argue that this ideology is constituted in relation to local codes and practices, such as gossip (Gupta 1995), magic (Taussig 1997), and spiritualism (Lan 1985).

My research on the commodification of the most potent symbol of the state in Turkey builds on insights generated by this emergent literature. At the same time, I aim to integrate a discussion of consumption into the production of the state effect and to historically contextualize state ideologies as they were being transformed at the end of the millennium. It is significant that state ideologies started to attract anthropological attention at a time when many political scientists and sociologists, international political advisors, and local politicians attributed a smaller role to the state in the globally connected and translocally governed world (Jessop 1999; Omae 1995; Sassen 1996). More importantly, political acts of decision making, execution, or redistribution are now increasingly considered more legitimate by political observers if they take place outside the institutional boundaries of the state and, thus, within the context of market mechanisms (Chang 2002; King 1987; McMichael 1998). Today, neoliberal ideologies flourish in debt-dependent countries where international lending organizations and political advisors encourage or coerce governments to transfer their responsibilities of national development, redistribution of wealth, poverty alleviation (Elyachar 2002; Rankin 2001), risk sharing (Erikson et al. 2000), security (Musah 2002), health, education, and even distribution of water (Bakker 2003) to nongovernmental organizations and private companies. State institutions are not disappearing, but their functions and privileges (Steinmetz 1999) as well as their relationship with citizens (Fourcade-Gourinchas and Babb 2002; Paley 2001) are being radically transformed. As the main capacity of state institutions changes from one that serves citizens to one that accommodates multinational corporations, “governance [becomes] evaluated according to how effectively states adopt market-oriented economic policies” (McMichael 1998:95). Recent scholarship shows that state officials take an active role in creating a space for the market (Martin 1999; Verdery 1996) and bureaucrats often have a direct role in managing the newly privatized sectors (Alexander 2002; Tsai 2001). Yet researchers know little about how neoliberal policies transform the imaginations of the state (Grant 2001) as well as of citizens (Morgen 2001; Rankin 2001; Reid 2001). Effects of the increased domination of market metaphors in the political field as well as the

accelerated commodification of new objects and services on the ideologies of the state remain underexplored.

Even when anthropologists concentrate on the recent transformations in beliefs and practices related to the state, they frequently overlook the transformative impact of neoliberalism on countries with strong state ideologies. In her perceptive study of the rituals and fantasies of the Turkish state, Yael Navaro-Yashin (2002) demonstrates that the state effect perseveres in the wake of the state’s recent deconstruction. She argues that despite predominant cynicism, the idea of the state is still alive and well in Turkey, because politicians and intellectuals mistakenly believe that a separation between the state and civil society actually exists. That is why more state rituals, such as farewell ceremonies to soldiers and the display of Turkish flags and pictures of Atatürk, are increasingly practiced as if they exist outside the state. Navaro-Yashin states, “It has recently proven more effective for state power to reproduce itself, not by enforcing narcissistic rituals, but by enabling certain groups outside the center of state practice, to produce in-and-of-themselves . . . rituals of thralldom for the state” (2002:119). Navaro-Yashin’s argument is discerning, but she fails to ask why state power has been reproduced outside the state at this particular moment in history.

A focus on the consumption of the material symbols of the state is crucial for understanding the recent transformations in state ideology in an era when the market has become “a political icon or a formal economic abstraction” (Carrier 1997:1). Just like the “state,” which “arises from techniques that enable mundane material practices to take on the appearance of an abstract, non-material form” (Mitchell 1999:77), daily consumer activity in the market and the concept of “consumer” now appear as abstract realities with political significance. The new emphasis on the citizen as a consumer (Yudice 1995), rather than as a beneficiary of the state, creates new possibilities for people to engage with politics while eliminating others. Such change partly reflects commodification of state services “through the creation and reconstitution of publics [and] displacement of audiences from certain sectors and their reinvention in other contexts” (Martin 1999:36) as consumers. In studying the recent consumption of state symbols in Turkey, I utilize Arjun Appadurai’s (1986:31) insight that consumption is a means to both send and receive messages, and I argue that the market effect has recently made these messages doubly influential. As I compare the recent images of Atatürk in the market with those produced or purchased by state offices, I demonstrate that citizen consumers prefer physically and metaphorically miniaturized images of the founding father that they can incorporate into their private lives and engage in a less hierarchical relationship. Acquiring such imagery allows citizens to send messages to the critics of the

Turkish state (i.e., Islamists, Kurdish nationalists, or liberal intellectuals) that there is a public that voluntarily and personally embraces the founding principles of the Turkish republic. Yet, at the same time, by bringing the image of Atatürk into their businesses and homes, these citizens also receive messages about the ubiquitous authority of the secularist Turkish state.

### The establishment and spread of Atatürk imagery

Shortly after the Turkish republic was founded in 1923, the ruling cadre mobilized the limited resources of the new state to create and disseminate the Atatürk cult as the new symbol to unify the nation. As early as 1927, Atatürk himself defined his role as a charismatic and authoritarian leader of the new regime and nation in his famous marathon speech, delivered in 36 hours over six days to the National Assembly (Parla 1991). Early representations of the leader depict him as the sole victor of the Greco-Turkish War and as the creator of a new nation (Ünder 2001). Such portrayals aimed to legitimate the new leader by locating him at a higher position than that of the sultans of the Ottoman Empire he had replaced.<sup>2</sup> The cult of Atatürk gained further importance following the leader's death in 1938, turning the founder's body into an immortal symbol of the nation (Ökten 2001).

The visual symbolism of the new leadership has been an indispensable part of the Atatürk cult. Personal photographers regularly accompanied the leader to take carefully choreographed pictures depicting Atatürk arrayed in his rich collection of Western clothes and accessories, which included tuxedos, golf pants, capes, and walking sticks, and engaged in "modern" social activities such as dancing the waltz, drinking alcohol, and socializing with women. Well-known European sculptors, such as Henrich Kripll and Peter Canonica, were invited to make statues of Atatürk while he was alive (Bozdoğan 2001; Elibal 1973). They portrayed the leader in Western civilian clothes, in military outfits, and, sometimes, even naked, but always emphasizing his grandiosity. Thus, Atatürk came to represent and embody the new nation and the "new man" that the republic aimed to create (Gür 2001).

From the early days of his rule, Atatürk's statues and their countless replications decorated every city and town center in the country. Laws and regulations were enacted that Atatürk be represented in every public office, classroom, courthouse, prison, and police station. State-funded artists and the State Supplies Office, as well as privately owned businesses, supplied the great demand for imagery from state institutions. The few styles of Atatürk imagery available in the market fit the serious aura of such institutions. As Mehmet İnci, the owner of one of the oldest companies producing Atatürk statues in Istanbul, told me,

there are basically three kinds of statues of Atatürk: as a soldier, as a statesman, and as a man of the people. When I asked him about the possibility of sculpting new kinds of Atatürk statues to add to this stock of molds, he told me that there is no need because these three types are sufficient to meet any demand from governors and mayors with diverse political positions.

Even though the sculpture market still served public needs, the late 1990s witnessed the emergence of a private market that demanded different kinds of Atatürk images than the ones used to decorate state offices. This demand was met by private printing companies and photography studios, which searched for photographs of Atatürk previously hidden from popular gaze. So, the same companies that printed posters of pop stars, small babies wrapped in towels, and dramatic sunsets began to print posters of Atatürk on a swing set or swimming. Some photographers and graphic artists utilized new computer technologies to color the old black-and-white pictures. The owner of one of the oldest and most established photography studios in Turkey, whom I will call Haşim, told me in his office that he is coloring Atatürk's pictures "in order to make Atatürk contemporary and renew his imagery" so that "the new generations also like the leader." Haşim told me that he is constantly in search of new pictures of Atatürk that show him among the people because "when people realize that Atatürk mixed with the people, they like him much more." During our conversation, he repeatedly emphasized that he was not doing this to make money but "to spread love and respect for Atatürk" at a time when a few ignorant people dare to smear his name.

### Competing with Islamic paraphernalia in the market

An important factor that led to the commercialization and privatization of Atatürk imagery in the 1990s was the emergence of Islamic symbols in the public political market. Veiled female university students crowding the secularist institutions of the modern republic were the first signs of the public visibility of Islam (Göle 1996). This trend reached its climax when the Islamist Welfare Party won local elections and painted the road signs green—the color of Islam—planned a huge mosque complex at the heart of Istanbul's hotel and bar district, and opened Islamic tea gardens in the city (Bartu 1999; Çınar 2001; Gülalp 2001; Houston 2001). Islam increasingly became "an issue, something that [had] to be addressed and confronted" (Öncü 1995:53) by citizens.

The public appearance of Islam was possible partly through the commodification of Islamic symbols. The consumer culture of the 1980s and the 1990s created a commodity-based identity politics and lifestyle. Islamists began to enjoy their own five-star hotels where they

could swim in sex-segregated pools (Bilici 2000), frequent restaurants that did not serve alcohol (Houston 2001), listen to Islamic radio stations (Azak 2000), and attend fashion shows featuring the new designs in head scarves and overcoats (Navaro-Yashin 2002; White 2002). These Islamic symbols and entities were not the first to exist in the market. *Bismillahirrahmanirrahim* (in the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful) stickers have long been popular decorations that protect a car or remind its driver to recite God's name before he turns on the engine.<sup>3</sup> The new stickers of the 1990s, which read "Peace is in Islam" (*Huzur İslamdadır*), were placed in the rear window rather than on the dashboard, and, thus, were directed toward people outside the car but not inside.

Kemalists reacted to the public appearance of Islam in two ways. First, secular state officials and military officers actively added considerable numbers to the tens of thousands of statues, busts, and portraits of Atatürk already displayed in public spaces. The military especially made an effort to erect statues of the founding father in newly developing shantytown neighborhoods, whose inhabitants had predominantly voted for the Islamist party in the 1995 elections. The attempt to suppress Islamic symbolism with republican representation is an old strategy that has been practiced since the founding years of the republic. A new strategy involved the commodification of Kemalist symbolism to compete with Islamic symbols. In the 1990s, the veil and the portrait of Atatürk became symbols of cultural identity through which the two sides competed with one another in the marketplace (Hart 1999; Navaro-Yashin 2002; Türkmen 2000). I argue that competition over potent symbols had significant consequences in changing the way citizens conceptualize the state and their relationship to it. As Kemalist consumers moved the official state imagery into the market and their homes, they privatized state symbolism, which used to define the public sphere. More importantly, for the first time in the history of the Turkish republic, citizens perceived the official state ideology as in need of their personal protection, and they took personal responsibility in promoting it.<sup>4</sup>

In Istanbul, I asked several storeowners why they displayed Atatürk pictures in their stores, and they told me that they wanted to show their love for Atatürk to those who smear his name. An office supplies shop owner in Beyoğlu who displayed several Atatürk posters and a *Bismillahirrahmanirrahim* sign in his store said:

These idiots [Islamists] do not realize that they would not be here if Atatürk did not save this country. Their names would be Elena or Kostas, and they would be crossing themselves in churches. If they can hear the call to prayer five times a day and if they can pray in mosques, it is because Atatürk saved this country from the Greeks and the Westerners. And now, they dare to

bash the name of this beautiful man. These pictures show them that the people of this country love Atatürk. They always did and they always will.

The middle-aged store owner's view is in line with official Kemalism in the sense that he utilizes the post-1980 official discourse on the compatibility of Islam with Kemalism to counter Islamist critiques of the leader and his ideology. Furthermore, he accuses religious Muslims of being unfaithful to their true savior, who prevented the country from being divided and possibly Christianized by the Allies during World War I. What is unusual in the shop owner's stance is that he takes personal responsibility for disseminating this particular version of the official position by conflating Atatürk pictures with Islamic paraphernalia. He clearly does not find the state's efforts sufficient or powerful enough to send a strong message to Islamists. He has made a personal effort to teach Islamists a lesson by showing that Atatürk is not an imposition of the state, that citizens like him love the leader.

A middle-aged Kemalist activist woman who lives in the predominantly secular, upscale neighborhood of Erenköy, Istanbul, told me that she started wearing an Atatürk pin after Islamists gained power in the 1994 local elections: "When I am walking on the street, I want to show that there are people who are dedicated to Atatürk's principles. Look, now there are veiled women walking around even in this neighborhood. Their numbers have increased. I push my chest forward to show them my pin as I pass by them. I have my Atatürk against their veils." This woman utilizes her own body to display pictures of Atatürk in a neighborhood where there is no scarcity of Atatürk statues or busts. As she encounters symbols of the Islamic lifestyle, she feels a personal responsibility to display state symbols as reflecting her individualized political position.

Not only did individual Kemalist citizens and consumers use symbols to challenge the Islamist movement, but companies also dutifully joined the "war of symbols" between Islamists and Kemalists. A middle-aged accountant friend told me the following story in his office:

After the [1994] elections, the Islamist municipality banned posting bathing suit advertisements with women models on billboards. One of the companies, Zeki Triko, put up a picture of Atatürk in his bathing suit on the billboards all over the city. Underneath they wrote: "We miss the sun." It was such a great idea because it was winter time so the sun referred both to the real sun and to Atatürk. Everyone loved it. Zeki Triko sent this ad to everyone; people put it on their desks. It was a great war of symbols.

This advertisement was the first in an extensive series of examples in which companies utilized Atatürk pictures to market their products and mark their companies as

Kemalist. In the 1990s, having Atatürk monuments in city centers was not enough for Kemalist citizens and groups to express popular support for Atatürk. Companies showed their dedication to Atatürk by using him in their advertisements and emphasizing personalized emotions related to the leader. Similarly, lay citizens put his pictures on their desks and jackets and verbalized their feelings of “love” for the leader. To counter the appearance of Islamic symbols in the public sphere and the acceptability of Islamic identity indicated by the consumption of such symbols, Kemalists carried their icons to the private and emotional sphere.

### Forced versus voluntary Kemalism

Although Atatürk symbolism is intended to counter the spread of Islamic paraphernalia, it would be an oversimplification to interpret its spread merely as one of the many end-of-the-20th-century political identities that were expressed through commodities (Yudice 1995). An equally important, if not more significant, factor motivating Kemalist citizens to consume Atatürk symbolism was their desire to demonstrate a voluntary commitment to the leader and his secular teachings. During the 1990s, Islamist, pro-Kurdish, and liberal critics openly accused the Turkish state and its Kemalist ideology of being oppressive of the religious beliefs, cultural identities, and political and economic freedoms of the Turkish citizenry.<sup>5</sup> It is important to note that although proliferation of Atatürk commodities started when political Islam was getting stronger during the mid-1990s, this trend reached its climax following the 1997 military crackdown on Islamism. In response to the political victory of the Islamist Welfare Party in the 1995 general elections, the secularist Turkish army delivered a powerful warning in February 1997, which led to the party’s resignation from power. In the context of possible future integration into the European Union and in keeping with the neoliberal ideology of an aloof and smaller state, the army never implemented a formal coup and did not dissolve the parliament. Instead, the Islamist Welfare Party was dissolved, and its leader, Necmettin Erbakan, was banned from politics. A year later, Turkish generals referred to the event half jokingly as a “postmodern coup” that accomplished the goals of a coup d’état without appearing to be one.

During and after the 1997 intervention, the army and civilian anti-Islamist groups promoted Atatürk as the guiding leader of the nation in achieving a secularist government and lifestyle. His image became a symbol of the freewill support of civilian groups for the army and a statement of an anti-Islamic life choice. The new legitimacy of Atatürk and his ideology was dependent on the fact that his images were chosen and purchased in the market by citizens, rather than distributed to them by the state. At

the end of the 1990s, privatization of the secularist state symbolism was not limited to the commodification of Atatürk images: The 75th anniversary celebrations of the Turkish republic in 1998, for example, were organized by private civil social organizations, rather than the military, and emphasized spontaneity, rather than preplanned choreography (Özyürek n.d.). More importantly, the exhibits organized for these celebrations displayed a history of public intimacy in which citizens appear to have voluntarily and personally internalized republican principles even in areas of everyday life that are outside state authority (Özyürek in press). Celebration of the private engagement with republican ideals was also reflected in an unprecedented interest in the autobiographies of first-generation republican women who willingly transformed both their personal lives and selves according to the new principles of the secularist regime (Özyürek 2002).

Kemalist citizens I talked to frequently contrasted the recent voluntarism in commitment to Kemalism to the forced Atatürk campaign of the three-year military rule between 1980 and 1983. In drawing the distinction, they often referred to the consumer interest in Atatürk paraphernalia and, thus, to Kemalist ideology as having been initiated independently by individuals without the imposition of the state. They defined the new interest as genuine, voluntary, and sincere, in contrast to the previously forced, artificial interest in the leader. Even the most devoted Kemalists agreed that the Atatürk campaign of the post-1980 military regime was “overdone” and had alienated most citizens from his ideology.

The 1980 coup Kemalists referred to was preceded by a decade of political deadlock in the parliament, social violence, and economic crisis.<sup>6</sup> On September 12, 1980, the Turkish army abolished the parliament, which had not been able to control the chaotic situation in the country. The military applied strict measures of depoliticization and economic restructuring.<sup>7</sup> The 1980 military junta used Atatürk as its main symbol to bring the divided nation together and reinstate the authority of the state. For the people I talked to, the most obvious contrast between Atatürk campaigns of the early 1980s and the late 1990s, almost 20 years apart, was that the first one was imposed by the state whereas the second one was initiated by citizens and consumers. A 35-year-old administrator friend in a private school in Istanbul, whom I will call Sinan, compared the two campaigns when I asked him his opinion about the recent interest in Atatürk:

After the 1980 military coup they forced Atatürk on everyone. I remember soldiers used to bring dozens of Atatürk pictures to my father’s electrical supplies store. All storeowners in the mall put them up, because they had to, but they didn’t care. My father put one up on the side of his desk. He did not even

frame it, just attached it with Scotch tape. Other posters yellowed in a corner somewhere.

In 1980 the army worked very hard but could not accomplish what is happening now by the free will of people. Now people are rushing to buy Atatürk pictures and Turkish flags as if they have been starving for them. And they are doing it completely of their own will.

Sinan later said that his father currently has an Atatürk poster in his store, but it is different from the ones the military junta had delivered to him. Recently, he had purchased a commercial poster and had it framed, rather than attaching it to the wall with Scotch tape. According to my friend, and to many other Kemalists in Turkey, the interest in Atatürk in the late 1990s was distinguished by such acts of purchasing Atatürk paraphernalia. The existence of a market for Atatürk's images, in other words, is a sign of people's freewill affection and respect for the leader, which previously had been nonexistent when the army had forced the leader on its citizens.

Another comparison between the two Atatürk campaigns comes from Zülfü Livaneli, a social democrat politician, singer, and journalist. Livaneli was one of the numerous leftist intellectuals who sought political asylum in Europe to escape the brutal oppression of the 1980 military junta. In the late 1990s, he was more of a hard-core Kemalist and an anti-Islamist than a leftist interested in redistribution of wealth. For Republic Day in 1998, he wrote the following piece in the daily *Sabah*:

Our friends and enemies see that the seventy-fifth anniversary is being celebrated with extraordinary splendor. Millions of people are marching, and the love of Atatürk is growing like a snowball rolling down a hill. And all of this is happening with the will of the people. There is no enforcement as some claim. We need to go back seventeen years [to 1981] in order to understand the contemporary situation better. You remember, during [the 1980 military coup] General Evren wanted to deepen the love of Atatürk with the "Atatürk is one-hundred-years-old" campaign. But because it was a top-down effort, people did not embrace it. Celebrations were limited to the official level. Now, it is the opposite. [Livaneli 1998: 5]

Livaneli emphasized the voluntary nature of interest in Atatürk to counter the Islamists' complaints about the pressures they faced as a result of the 1997 military intervention. Just as Islamists defined themselves as the genuine voice of the people who are pressured by the state, Kemalists stressed that their interest in Atatürk is completely voluntary rather than a forced imposition by the state. Commodification of Atatürk symbolism was a

new form of showing support that emphasized a contractual commitment of the citizens to Kemalist state ideology. Changing content of this symbolism in its commodified form, I argue below, also was integral to the new message Kemalist consumers sent about the novel ways they venerate the state and conceptualize their relationship to it.

### Miniaturization of Atatürk

The clearest transformation that took place in Atatürk representations during the late 1990s was not only their commercialization but also a decrease in their size. Susan Stewart's (1993) meditations on objects of desire in Western culture provide insights into the symbolic importance of size for subject formation. Stewart observes that, especially in the West during the 18th century, objects of desire commonly took either "gigantic" or "miniature" forms. She argues that the gigantic form, which is an exaggeration of the exterior, is a "metaphor for the abstract authority of the state, and the collective, public life" (Stewart 1993:xxii). The miniature form, on the other hand, "is a metaphor for the interior space and time of the bourgeois subject" (Stewart 1993:xii). Although Ottoman political aesthetics were quite different from their Western counterparts, Stewart's discussion is still helpful for studying the recent transformation of Turkish images of the state.<sup>8</sup>

Early representations of Atatürk imagery were reminiscent of the fascist political aesthetics of 1930s Europe, which emphasized the omnipotent authority of the state through colossal representations of leaders visible in public spaces (Bonnell 1997; Dickerman 2002; Falasca-Zamponi 1997). Even today, traditional representations of Atatürk that are funded by state institutions depict him in massive sizes whenever possible. All city and town centers in Turkey are marked with towering statues of him, the height determined by local budget. During national holidays, state-funded artists paint building-sized portraits of Atatürk on cloth to hang on the largest state buildings (Figure 1).<sup>9</sup>

The 1980 military junta was successful at covering national time-space with giant representations of Atatürk. In addition to naming all major physical projects for Atatürk, including the largest dams, bridges, and airports, the junta also covered the mountain slopes with his picture. In 1982, the junta made a mountain portrait of Atatürk in Erzincan that covered a 7.5-square-kilometer area. The choice of a mountain slope as a canvas for Atatürk's portrait is symbolically meaningful; it establishes an iconic relationship between the leader and the mountains, implying that the leader and the state he founded are as old and as stable as the mountains. Moreover, through his location on mountaintops Atatürk is seen as above and



**Figure 1.** An Atatürk portrait hung on a government building in Istanbul in 1998. The caption reads “Happy is the one who says I am a Turk.”

beyond ordinary humans.<sup>10</sup> Even today, the Turkish army covers the mountain slopes with giant pictures and sayings of Atatürk, such as “Happy is the one who says I am a Turk.” The production of such paintings increases at times of political crisis.

A particularly interesting practice of naturalizing Atatürk was invented in the Yukarı Gündeş village of Ardahan. For the past several years, between June 25 and July 5, thousands of people gather in this isolated Alevi village to watch Atatürk’s silhouette appear on a mountain slope just before sunset. The silhouette is formed in a valley where the shadow of one hillside reflects on the other. The people of Yukarı Gündeş claim they have multiple reasons to celebrate the Atatürk’ün İzinde ve Gölgesinde Damal Şenlikleri (Damal Festival in Atatürk’s Path and Shadow), including the traditional Alevi dedication to Atatürk and the hope that the festival will bring some wealth to the poverty-stricken village.<sup>11</sup> The Turkish army and the national media take the event quite seriously and send representatives every year. Photographs of the event testify

to a Kemalist miracle and decorate newspapers as well as calendars (Figure 2).

Associating nationalist or state imagery with nature is a strategy commonly used to cover relations of power (Yanagisako and Delaney 1995). Both Israelis and Palestinians associate their nation and land with trees and forests (Bardenstein 1999). For Venezuelans, oil stands for the power of the state (Coronil 1997). Since the 1930s, Atatürk has been associated with the sun, having brought the country from darkness to light. The imagery of the sun naturalizes the abstract authority of Atatürk’s Westernizing state and its enlightenment discourse, which define the religious Ottoman past as darkness and the secularist republican future as illumination.

The newly popular and commercialized Atatürk paraphernalia is significantly different from the gigantic and naturalized representations discussed above. Most often, such material takes miniature forms, for example, as pins, crystal ornaments, and small pictures. As opposed to traditional representations, which occupy public places owned by no one (and, thus, owned only by the state),



**Figure 2.** Celebrating the appearance of Atatürk’s shadow in Damal.

the miniature representations are displayed in private businesses, in homes, and, more importantly, on the bodies of private citizens. In such miniature forms, Atatürk's representations, although still icons of the state, become a part of the domestic sphere of the bourgeois subject. Significantly, these images are privatized through their purchase at the market by individual citizens. Possessing and displaying a miniaturized and commercialized Atatürk image in private indicates a personal relationship with the state that an individual citizen activates through the market mechanisms of consumer choice. Figure 3 shows an example of how Kemalist families willingly include Atatürk's image among their family photographs, turning him from a national ancestor into a familial one.

In examining transformations in Turkish state imagery, I follow Bruce Grant's (2001) take on the meaning of state monuments, which he developed while analyzing the new monuments of Moscow inspired by Russian fairy tales. He claims that "the point, then, is to see monuments and their mythical properties as a form of political practice itself, rather than as a meta-language derived from the hidden realities. They create new subject effects, new cognitions, and new forms of political legitimacy" (2001:340). I argue that the new images of Atatürk point to and produce a different state ideal as well as subject position for the citizen. The new images reduce the (at least mental) effects of an all-powerful state that forces itself on citizens and suggest a less-controlling one, to which citizens can relate less hierarchically through their own choice. Yet, despite its seemingly diminished power, the state symbolism proliferates in private places that are considered outside the state realm.

### The giant and the miniature as metaphors

The contrast between the gigantic and miniature representations of Atatürk in the late 1990s was not limited to



Figure 3. A "mini giant" Atatürk placed among family pictures.

their physical size but emerged in the metaphorical realm, as well. Representations of Atatürk as a supernatural human, more specifically, as a progenitor of the whole nation and of the country were created during the early years of the republican regime. Such portrayals were created to inspire the masses to unquestioningly admire and valorize the leader, and they coexisted with more human ones that circulated within the limited circles of the Kemalist elite. The gigantic portrayals were especially promoted by the military officials of the 1980 coup, who wanted to invoke a strong and unified image of the state. In the 1990s, although the metaphorically gigantic portrayals had not disappeared, other images that depicted Atatürk as an ordinary human with a social life and desires had become exceptionally popular.

Political scientist Claude Lefort (1986) claims that the idea of creation lies at the center of totalitarian politics. Totalitarian leaders who derive their legitimacy by creating a new world out of an older one usually come to be depicted as creators themselves. Mussolini (Falasca-Zamponi 1997), Lenin (Tumarkin 1983), and Mao (Yang 1994) were fetishized as semigodly leaders who created new worlds for their nations. As a totalitarian leader, a contemporary of others, Atatürk has also frequently been depicted as a progenitor and, sometimes, as a creator. Atatürk as progenitor is reflected best in his last name, literally, Father Turk or Ancestor Turk, which he adopted in 1934 following enactment of the law of last names (Delaney 1995).

The concept of "Atatürk as progenitor" was used most recently as a theme for an advertisement entitled "The Unending Dance" (*Bitmeyen Dans*), funded by the Turkish government for the 75th anniversary of the republic in 1998 for broadcast on CNN in the United States and on Turkish television.<sup>12</sup> The commercial was based on a famous photograph of Atatürk dancing with one of his adopted daughters during her wedding. In the ad, actors re-create the moment when Atatürk and the bride dance a waltz. Later, other couples join them on the dance floor. The commercial continues with images of the industrial and technological developments that followed the foundation of the republic in 1923. At the end, a male voice says, "The Turkish republic is rooted and strong as if a thousand years old, and is young and dynamic as if one year old. This dance will never end."

Although the original photograph is of Atatürk's adopted daughter's wedding, Atatürk appears in the ad as the groom, dressed in a black tuxedo and dancing with a bride dressed in white. In this commercial, Atatürk, the father of Turks, metaphorically marries Turkey, which takes the form of the bride. Atatürk's marriage with Turkey gives birth to the Turkish nation, represented by the other couples joining in the dance, and then to the industrial and technological developments depicted following the wedding scene.

In their psychological biography of Atatürk, Namik Volkan and Norman Itzkowitz (1984) argue that Atatürk stands both as a mother and a father to the Turks, displaying characteristics of both. These authors are correct in the sense that Atatürk usually is represented as the sole progenitor of Turkey. The ad described above, which includes a woman, is not typical. One elderly Kemalist woman whom I interviewed succinctly voiced the common perspective on Atatürk as the gender-neutral parent when she said, “Atatürk is my mother, my father, the water I drink, and the earth I step on. I am thankful (*minnettarım*) to Atatürk, the father of fathers, for everything I have.” In keeping with her perspective on the leader, this woman had decorated her apartment in Istanbul only with pictures of her father and Atatürk, both of whom, she told me, have the same death anniversary.

A more classic representation of Atatürk’s generative powers was depicted on the cover of the October 29 issue of the daily *Milliyet*, commemorating the 75th anniversary of the republic.<sup>13</sup> The newspaper section carries a colored drawing of Atatürk’s eyes, the bushy eyebrows and distinctive blue irises familiar to Turkish readers as his. Underneath the drawing of his eyes are 11 photographs showing technological and military developments and the activities of modern youth. These pictures include children playing computer games and the guitar; girls with short skirts in gymnastic demonstrations; major construction projects such as the Keban water dam, the Bosphorus Bridge, the Istanbul metro, and skyscrapers; the first Turkish satellite; and, finally, military equipment, including F-16 planes and tanks. The only writing on the page, found at the bottom in red, reads, “Your product” (*senin eserinin*). In the image, Atatürk’s eyes appear otherworldly, as if he were watching his creations like a god. All of the images of youth and children engaged in Western activities and of technological developments are meant to be seen as his creations or children (Figure 4).

### Humanized Atatürk

Although metaphorically gigantic representations of Atatürk were still produced and distributed in the late 1990s, representations that reduce him to an ordinary human being also became widespread. Atatürk’s private life, especially his relationships with women, became an increasingly popular subject for depiction. *Mustafa Kemal’le 1000 gün* (One Thousand Days with Atatürk), a 1993 book by Nezihe Araz that concentrates on Atatürk’s relationship with his wife, set the tone. Araz, a devoted Kemalist and the daughter of a parliamentarian who served in Atatürk’s single party in the 1930s, states in her acknowledgments that she wrote the book to introduce Atatürk as a mere person to new generations. This approach, she believes,



Figure 4. Cover of *Milliyet* on October 29, 1998. The caption reads “Your product.”

will help to defend the leader against recent criticism from Islamists and liberal intellectuals.

For the first generation of the Republic Atatürk was not a human but almost a God from Olympus. He was an abstract concept, a godly power that can make the impossible possible and perform miracles. Even if people saw him on the roads of Ankara, in his car, in the National Assembly and sometimes in schools, sport arenas, horse races, they actually could not perceive him. [Araz 1993:2–3]

Araz believes that godly presentations of Atatürk, even if done with good intentions, are wrong, because they lead people to question his legacy. If she can show the human side of Atatürk, as a person with weaknesses, she hopes people will feel closer to him. The trend Araz started by discussing the leader’s human qualities reached its climax with the state-sponsored movie, *Cumhuriyet* (The Republic; Öztan 1998), which concentrated on Atatürk’s personal

life.<sup>14</sup> The central story of the movie is Atatürk's relationship with two women—his common-law wife, Fikriye, and his wife, Latife, from whom he was later divorced. Dolunay Sert, who portrays Latife, says in a newspaper interview, "The movie is similar to a documentary. We wanted to break some taboos and shed light on some things. Atatürk is a great leader, but he is also a human. There is a very human side in his relations to Latife and Fikriye" (Toptaş 1998:7). The unprecedented nature of the movie becomes clear when one considers a previous movie sponsored by the official television channel that dealt with the Greco-Turkish War. Even though that movie, shot ten years earlier, had the same director, scriptwriter, and lead actor as *The Republic*, it never made mention of Atatürk's personal life.

*The Republic* had a record number of viewers across the country. Its audience was swelled by the fact that teachers took students to watch it. I viewed it in a theater filled with middle and high school students who were so moved by the film that they booed Atatürk's wife, whom they did not like, and clapped for Mustafa Kemal when he divorced her. Most of the students learned about personal aspects of Atatürk's life for the first time through this film. After the movie was released, I heard and participated in many conversations about Atatürk's personal life. This topic, which previously had been confined to classrooms and political speeches, entered new spheres, such as the gossip circles of family, friends, and neighbors.

The fact that artists could portray Atatürk in such diverse settings as movies, fashion shows, and other events also points to the trend to depict him as an ordinary human. Until the 1980s, actors were not allowed to portray Atatürk in movies and plays. Although Atatürk himself appeared in many documentaries, his portrayal by actors was taboo for more than 40 years after his death.<sup>15</sup> Atatürk wanted Russian directors experienced in making propagandistic documentaries to make a movie about his life. Significantly, rather than having a professional actor depict him, Atatürk suggested that he portray himself, that he wear his old clothes and act out what he had done in previous years. Such a movie, however, was never made (Dorsay 1990). Tapper and Tapper (1991) note that the taboo against portraying Atatürk is similar to that against portraying the prophet Muhammad. In the Saudi Arabian-funded movie about the life of Muhammad, *Al Risâlah* (The Message; Akkad 1976), the prophet never appears on the screen. When Tapper and Tapper asked residents of Eğirdir, Turkey, why they thought no actor had ever played Muhammad or Atatürk, their respondents pointed to the impossibility of such an idea: "What men could possibly play such parts?" (1991:70).

The taboo against portraying Atatürk was first broken in 1981, when a movie about his life was released for his 100th birth anniversary. It is significant that the first actor

to portray Atatürk was not Turkish, but Belgian. As a European actor, Marc Mopty did not challenge the belief that it was impossible to cast a local actor as the leader. A few years after this documentary was filmed, at the end of the 1980s, Turkish actors started to play Atatürk in movies, and by the late 1990s, there were almost no limits on who might perform as Atatürk. Along with *The Republic*, numerous plays depicted Atatürk like any other historical figure. *O Bir İnsan* (He Is Human), a 1998 play, depicted the leader's personal life and was well attended in Istanbul.

The trend toward depicting the human, rather than the authoritarian, side of Atatürk also began to be reflected in Atatürk's statues. The majority of Atatürk sculptures that stand today are replicas of original statues made by European artists and commissioned during his lifetime. During the late 1990s, several artists made innovative paintings and sculptures of Atatürk showing his human side. The first such painting that received public attention was executed by the well-known Kemalist artist Bedri Baykam, who depicted Atatürk playing backgammon. During our conversation about this painting, Baykam declared that he had wanted "to show the leader as a bon vivant, who loves good conversation, pretty women, alcohol, and playing backgammon. You know, he was a real human being." This piece by Baykam, which was never sold or displayed in public other than in an avant-garde gallery, did not raise controversy. A public sculpture depicting Atatürk smiling, however, caused heated public debate. This piece was made in Sincan, a religious town that, in 1997, had witnessed a controversial pro-Palestinian Jerusalem Night meeting organized by the Islamist Welfare Party. The day after this meeting, the Turkish army rolled their tanks through the streets of the town as a warning to those who had made a call for implementing Islamic law during the gathering. Sincan's appointed governor, Ali Gün, and the Atatürkist Thought Association ordered the sculptor Burhan Alkar to make a statue for the town square to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the republic. The sculptor depicted Atatürk as smiling and opening his arms wide to young girls presenting a bunch of tulips to him. After the statue was erected, the governor expressed concern that it was inappropriate to represent Atatürk smiling; rather, he felt the leader should be portrayed as a serious person. Governor Ali Gün even applied to the Association of Artists and Owners of Fine Arts, asking it to report on the appropriateness of the smiling depiction of Atatürk. He told journalists that if the report was not in favor of the sculpture, he would go to court and make sure that it was removed. According to newspaper reports, the vice president of the association declared that his organization would not interfere with the freedom of the artist and that it approved the statue. In the end, the statue was

unveiled for the 75th anniversary, revealing the first publicly smiling Atatürk.

### From head to body

Another contrast between the stately and commercial representations of Atatürk concerns a new representation that transforms the leader from an authoritative head to a full-bodied human being. Atatürk's traditional images, especially those displayed by law in government offices, are limited to his upper body. These portraits, reproductions of photographs or paintings, usually include his neck and shoulders and reveal either a military or a civilian outfit. In addition to portraits, state offices frequently display sculpted busts, which often depict Atatürk's head but not his shoulders or neck. Statues of Atatürk, which decorate all city and town centers in the country display his body. Most of the time, however, the body is clearly sculpted with much less care than the head and often violates even the most basic anatomical rules. It appears as if the body functions as an elevated stand on which to carry the head, the part that receives the most care and attention.

Such a focus on the leader's head reflects both contemporary Western political aesthetics and Turkish physical anthropological inquiry. Contrary to Western political imagery, in Ottoman miniatures sultans were almost always depicted full figure (Necipoğlu 2000). At the same time that commissioned European sculptors were working hard to create the impressive representations of Atatürk's head, the few Turkish anthropologists, including Atatürk's surrogate wife, Afet İnan, were traveling throughout Anatolia, taking skull measurements to prove that the Turkish race was the ancestor of all civilizations. Contemporary accounts and literary works about the leader talk about the superiority of Atatürk's skull. Atatürk's head, on display, not only represented the perfect cranium of the Turkish nation but also indexed the nature of power in the new state. Placing Atatürk's head in a state office turned everything and everyone in the surrounding space into an extension of his head—in other words, into his body. This kind of identification became possible only after turning the masses into the body of the nation, a process that Claude Lefort (1986) describes in fascist politics as making "People-as-One." What Mayfair Mei-hui Yang (1994) argues for the Mao cult holds true for the cult of Atatürk, as well. The flattening of differences and the homogenization of society creates the body of the society and places every individual in society at an equal distance from the head. Yang defines this process as producing "a unified body and a single head" (1994:264).

As opposed to the solemn and solitary portraits of the leader's head, popular photos of Atatürk in the 1990s depict his full body and show him in social contexts.

Moreover, in most of these pictures Atatürk is laughing, dancing, and enjoying simple pleasures such as eating or playing with his youngest adopted daughter. When I asked a street peddler in Istanbul, who mainly sold Atatürk pictures, to identify the most popular pictures in his stand, he pointed to one of Atatürk drinking coffee seated on a white wicker chair. He then pointed to a solemn bust portrait in military outfit as the least popular one. He said, "No one buys this kind of picture any more." The civilians who want an approachable, egalitarian image of Atatürk were repelled by pictures reminiscent of his official portraits, especially by those in military outfits.

Some consumers told me that what drew them to the new pictures was Atatürk's smiling, unofficial expression, which was something they had never seen before. Consider the following narrative of a 40-year-old bank employee, discussing his excitement when he saw such a picture on sale, leading him to purchase an Atatürk picture for the first time in his life:

Three years ago I saw an amazing picture in the window of a photo store. They colored it, enlarged it and put it in the window. I heard about it through a friend and went there to check it out. It was so different from the ones we are used to. He was lying down on the grass, singing with the villagers. Clearly he was drunk and he looked so happy. I loved this picture; I immediately bought the picture for myself. Then my father-in-law saw it, and then I gave it to him and bought another one for myself.

The sight of Atatürk in social contexts and engaged in pleasurable activities created excitement among Kemalist citizens. A picture of Atatürk drinking, lying on the ground, and singing with villagers is dramatically different from those that hang in government offices. Such pictures, which include the whole body of the leader and show him engaged in mundane activities, also help to desacralize him. Furthermore, the photographs allow the viewer to establish a more egalitarian relationship with him. By giving contextual clues about the state he was in, such pictures refer to him as a part of the past rather than the present. The less-hierarchical position of the leader located in the past creates the emotional space needed for consumer-citizens to admire the leader and then to purchase his representation.

Because of the way they reflect Atatürk's daily life, these pictures also serve as icons of a Westernized, secular, bourgeois lifestyle. Photographs of Atatürk posing at *rakı* tables (*rakı* is the national alcoholic beverage flavored with anise) were especially popular among secular Turks, who started to see their lifestyle threatened after the victory of political Islam in the 1990s. Thereafter, Kemalism represented not only the state ideology but

also the secular, bourgeois lifestyle particular to Turkey, which involved wearing European clothes, having mixed-gender social gatherings, and drinking alcohol. The newly popular pictures of the leader associated certain commodities and expenditure contexts with his teachings and encouraged Kemalist citizens to practice consumption-based political identity.

### Changing relations of the gaze

Traditional and commercial representations of Atatürk also differ in the quality of the gaze between the leader and the viewer that each type of image displays. The former representations and narratives of Atatürk tended to focus on his eyes. Atatürk's bushy eyebrows and distinctive blue eyes are familiar to Turkish citizens. Occasionally, traditional Atatürk representations are limited to his eyes, as in a relief or painting from which he metaphorically watches his citizens. There are many rumors about the special quality of Atatürk's eyes, including his ability to look right into the eye of every person in a crowd. His contemporaries also report that it was impossible for people to look directly into his eyes (Urgan 1998; Volkan and Itzkowitz 1984). Sixty or even 70 years later, elderly teachers I interviewed still trembled with fear, joy, and pride as they recounted the moment they made eye contact with the founding leader during parades.

In his discussion of the Ottoman imperial order, Michael Meeker (2002) suggests valuable clues to the roots in Turkish–Ottoman political culture of this fascination with and fear of Atatürk's gaze. On the basis of an analysis of the ceremonial architecture of the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, Meeker argues that the sultan's gaze was so central to his rule that it was inscribed in the structural design: The elevated pierced windows and the overlooks represent "the sight of the sovereign" (2002:119). Meeker contends that "each instance of the relationship [of gaze and rule] symbolizes the sovereign situated within an interior space overlooking an external space occupied by subjects" (2002:119). Although such overlooks may make the palace appear as a Benthamian panopticon, Meeker maintains that the palace is essentially different from a modern prison because the one who is looking out of these windows is the sultan himself rather than some other warden.

It is clear that Atatürk inherited the authority associated with the personal gaze of the ruler from his Ottoman predecessors and utilized it effectively to symbolize the new kind of powers the republican regime aimed to engage with its citizens. Unlike the sultan, who observed his subjects only from the pierced windows without being seen himself, Atatürk presented his citizens with a direct and, thus, reciprocal gaze available to any individual who was willing to greet him in public. This new practice was

not only shocking to contemporary citizens but also representative of the new and direct gaze of the republican regime. Atatürk's frequent tours around the country during his presidency and the fact that all students in the area were made to parade in front of him were important to the creation of citizenship as a new sense of subjectivity. In his study of the 19th-century Meiji era in Japan, Takashi Fujitani argues that similar instances of imperial pageantry "coerced people into becoming objects of the emperor's gaze" (1996:24). This created an interiorized sense of surveillance, and, hence, the populace was turned into citizenry. Turkish subjects were already under the ruler's surveillance long before the new regime was established. Yet the newly widespread availability of the ruler's gaze and the direct relationship they could engage with it symbolized a new and symbolically unmediated connection between the state and the citizen.

Unlike Ottoman sultans who, on death, smoothly passed on the duty of gazing at the imperial subjects to their sons, the republican rule is still closely linked with Atatürk's gaze. More than 70 years after his death Atatürk still keeps his citizens under surveillance through the millions of painted and sculpted busts that decorate public spaces throughout the country. Elementary school students memorize poems about the power of Atatürk's gaze, as if he is personally looking at them from pictures.<sup>16</sup> Although not linked to any technology with surveillance capabilities, Atatürk's pictures in the state's modernized institutions, such as schools, hospitals, prisons, and factories, are reminiscent of the undifferentiatingly disciplining gaze of the modern state (Foucault 1979). Ironically, attaching a person's face to such a gaze helps to depersonalize the real officials who carry out the regulations.

Many of his followers believe that Atatürk's eyes had other special abilities, such as seeing into the future in a way that ordinary people could not. In 1998, Ali Bektan published *Atatürk'ün Kehanetleri* (Prophecies of Atatürk). Despite being printed on cheap paper, the book's red cover is striking, emphasizing Atatürk's radiant blue eyes. Prepared by Bektan, a journalist, after 18 years of research, the book argues that Atatürk had a supernatural power to predict the future:

Why did Mustafa Kemal have access to this skill? Because he had a mission. . . . He was going to save the country. . . . He was going to found a brand new modern state on top of the crumbling Ottoman Empire. . . . Atatürk used his ability to predict the future while encountering difficulties during this process. We can accept that he received this power from God. [1998:31]

Bektan's book contains a list of cases in which Atatürk predicted the future. These events range from simple facts

relating to own his life to military attacks and international developments that would take place after his death. The author notes, for example, that Atatürk predicted that World War II would take place and that it would be begun by Germany and ended by the United States. He also predicted that the USSR would split at the end of the century. The Turkish general Çevik Bir, at a May 1998 NATO meeting, also mentioned how Atatürk had predicted these international developments. The forecasting ability of the modernizing leader and the state promised to propel the nation toward a utopian future.

Although pictures of Atatürk keep looking at students and all other citizens, the newly popular pictures offer a different kind of gaze between leader and citizen. In most of these pictures, Atatürk does not look back at the camera and, thus, at the viewer. His attention is often concentrated on the activity in which he is engaged, such as rowing, dancing, or watching military games. In the most popular picture on the street peddler's stand, Atatürk is sipping coffee and holding a cigarette. Either his eyes are closed or he is looking into the coffee cup. As one looks at the picture, one sees how much Atatürk is enjoying the coffee. In other words, he is indulging in pleasure, rather than screening the people around him.

Looking at a picture in which Atatürk does not look back gives pleasure to the viewer rather than instilling fear. In the widespread exhibition of Atatürk's photographs in social contexts for the 75th anniversary of the republic in 1998, I frequently observed visitors approach the pictures closely, enjoying the rare pleasure of looking at Atatürk without him looking back at them. Many times I heard cheerful exclamations such as, "He is such a handsome man!" Only in pictures where Atatürk did not look back could visitors see him as a fellow individual and comment on his looks. In November 1998, for the 60th anniversary of his death, numerous daily newspapers published photo spreads of Atatürk and emphasized that these were "very special" or "never before seen" pictures. They showed him not as a leader but as an ordinary individual engaged in mundane activities. Although not secret, these photographs had never before been widely circulated or popularly consumed. The phrase "never before seen" alluded to a sense of lifting the veil and looking at Atatürk in a way that had not been possible before.

## Conclusion

Transformations in the dissemination and content of Atatürk imagery confirm the findings of the emergent literature on the anthropology of the state by showing that conceptualizing the state is a dynamic and contested process. New developments in the Turkish political market also add a new dimension to the same literature, which has mainly focused on the representation of the state rather

than on its active reception. Commodification of Atatürk imagery reveals that citizens are actively involved in recirculating and remaking the state's representations through their direct actions, such as purchasing and carrying images to places that have been defined as outside the state institution, and also by preferring friendly, approachable pictures of the leader over solitary, serious ones.

In the late 1990s, individual Kemalist citizens were not the only ones who sought such friendly images of Atatürk to incorporate into their personal lives. Dozens of companies, especially during the 75th anniversary of the Turkish republic and the 60th anniversary of Atatürk's death in 1998, utilized the founding father's imagery to advertise their products. Many of the photographs used in advertisements depicted Atatürk as an elegant leader with an expensive taste for high-quality consumer goods. Although still referring to his role as teacher, visionary, and leader, such advertisements highlight the consumerist nature of his teachings. They emphasize how affiliating with Atatürk is not only about a political perspective but also about choosing a lifestyle that can be attained through consuming certain commodities. Such a representation of Atatürk was a novel construction that appeared only in the 1990s. It was radically different from the traditional view of the early republican years, a time of hardship that emphasized state-controlled production and that undermined consumption. The nationalist, single-party regime under Atatürk strongly emphasized avoiding conspicuous consumption and even associated excessive expenditure with the religious minorities, who were seen as leeches living off of the republic (Bali 2000). The new image of Atatürk as an elite consumer reflects a desire to establish a connection between the founding principles and the lifestyle of the contemporary elite, rather than a historical statement. Such an association allows secularism to construct itself as a consumption-based political identity that can compete with an emergent Islamic identity visible through the consumption of religious symbols. More importantly, it allows symbols of state secularism to materialize as commodities and to be carried into the private sphere, which gained increased importance with the spread of neoliberal ideology.

The recent conflation of consumerism and politics is far from unique to Turkey. In the late 1980s and the 1990s, international lending organizations and policy makers have made connections between free-market economies and democracies. For example, the 1990 World Bank development report mentions, as goals in the 1980s, trade liberalization and the privatization of national economies, with a limited role for the state. Since then, many economists and international policy makers have strongly believed that "capitalist development will create the necessary conditions for the construction of democracy" (Oxhorn and Ducatenzelier 1998:8). In the last few years,

several scholars have observed some of the ways in which consumption has become a new form of political expression but has not always furthered democracy (Moore 2001; Reid 2001).

One way scholars study the relationship between consumerism and citizenship is to look at markets as a form of civil society that opens new spaces for political engagement, rather than alienation (Canclini 2001; Yudice 1995). Others claim that consumer- and company-based politics actually limit the political field or eliminate it by making it a private matter (Comaroff and Comaroff 2000). Government technocrats even utilize market metaphors and tools such as opinion polls to make their country appear democratic and, thus, more appealing to foreign investors (Paley 2001). In such instances, corporations and government offices highlight superficial consensus within society and avoid voicing conflicting interests.

The consumption of actual representations of the state by Turkish citizens suggests a unique form of political engagement that does not exactly fit into either the celebratory or the denigrating discussions about the integration of the market and the political field. Purchasing state symbols is an especially loaded act at a time when market ideologies are being imported into so-called Second and Third World countries with the intention of minimizing inefficient and cumbersome states. The most important aspect that this phenomenon reveals is that market behavior does not necessarily slip into the fields that have been left vacant by withdrawing governments. The commercialization of the most potent symbol of the state in Turkey is a demonstration of the fact that being enmeshed in market symbolism neither eradicates nor democratizes state politics. Rather, some citizens take on the responsibility for defending and disseminating state ideology against its critics. Under the market symbolism that prioritizes consumer choice over state distribution, Kemalist citizens utilize new concepts such as “voluntary support” and “love” to legitimate the founding principles of the Turkish state and the military pressures against Islamists. As Turkish consumers try to mask the prominence of brute state power with market behavior, their new consumption patterns make state secularism more ubiquitous by carrying it into spheres previously not infiltrated.

## Notes

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1. During the 1999 national elections, most Kemalist individuals I interviewed declared that they voted for the nationalist, center-left Democratic Left Party, which received 29 percent of the votes, and the secularist, center-left Republican People’s Party, which received 9 percent of the votes. A few voted for the secular, proprivatization, center-right Motherland Party, which received 15 percent of the votes.

2. I am thankful to an anonymous *AE* reviewer for helping me to make this connection.

3. In the 1990s, religious commodities were common and shared many characteristics with those in places such as in Cairo, as discussed by Starrett 1997.

4. Islamists, in turn, reacted to the secularist commodification and privatization of Atatürk by reappropriating the leader and displaying his pictures in religious contexts (Özyürek in press). Through this move, Islamists created a legitimate space in which to represent themselves in the formal political scene, which was strictly monitored by the secular army.

5. Liberal, secular intellectuals who were critical of the state’s control of the economy and politics, the İkinci Cumhuriyetçiler (Second Republicans), received the harshest criticism from Kemalists.

6. See Zürcher 1997 for a discussion of this period.

7. When the military coup was first declared, the majority of citizens welcomed it, having lived with civil unrest for almost a decade. Although the Kurdish insurgence in southeastern Turkey soon turned into a full-fledged war between Kurdish guerillas and the Turkish army, the military junta was successful in bringing the urban political violence to an end. The depoliticization measures were also key in implementing the strict economic reforms suggested by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, lowering wages and weakening labor unions. The junta’s measures left Turkey with an undemocratic constitution, which is still in effect.

8. For the Ottoman political aesthetics of representation, see Necipoğlu 2000, Renda 2000, and Çağman 2000.

9. Hafiz al-Asad’s (Wedeen 1999) and Saddam Hussein’s (Bengio 1998) imagery, in the Middle Eastern context, shows striking parallels to that of earlier depictions of Atatürk.

10. I would like to thank one of the *AE* anonymous reviewers who made this point.

11. In her analysis of the same event, Yael Navaro-Yashin (2002) argues that its main symbolic importance lies in the fact that Yukarı Gündeş is located in a predominantly Kurdish area. This interpretation may resonate with Turks who live outside the area. During my interviews with the predominantly Alevi residents of Damal, however, it became clear to me that they have utilized the event to assert their identity against the Turkish government, which prioritizes Sunni beliefs and practices.

12. For almost one hundred years, Ottoman Turks have paid the Western press to promote a positive image, first, of their empire and, then, of their republic (Deringil 1998).

13. I saw numerous depictions of Atatürk similar to the one in *Milliyet* when I researched older journals from the 1930s to the 1970s, including the weekly *Hayat* magazine.

14. Neither these nor other works that concentrated on the private life of Atatürk, however, explore the nature of his relationship with the numerous daughters whom he adopted after his divorce (Deliorman 1999; Özverim 1998; Sönmez 1998).

15. Documentaries made in the early years of the republic include *Zafer Yollarında* (In the Paths of Victory), by Fuat Uzkınay, *Ankara, Türkiye'nin Kalbi* (Ankara, Heart of Turkey), by Soviet directors Sergey Yutkevich and Lev Oskarovic, and *Türk İnkılabında Terakki Hamleleri* (Forward Steps in the Turkish Revolution), by Ester Sub (Dorsay 1990).

16. A well-known poem by Behçet Necatigil entitled "Your Picture" describes well how students internalize the gaze of Atatürk. This poem appears in elementary and middle school textbooks and is studied and often memorized by students.

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